

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF  
THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE MERION CIVIC ASSOCIATION  
MARCH 19, 2013

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the Merion Civic Association was held on Tuesday, March 19, 2013, beginning at 7:30 p.m. at the Merion Tribute House with President Scott Kalner presiding.

Directors present were, Browne, Feuer, Gordon, Greenberg, Hill, Kalner, Lam, Marmon, Quinn, Rutzel, and Seiden.

Directors absent and excused were Bagley, Blakeney, Eisenberg, Ettelson, Flaks, Fratis, Lavoritano, Murphy and Potok.

In addition, about 35 Merion residents were in attendance.

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by President Kalner. On motion by Dave Rutzel and seconded by Les Greenberg, the February 2013 minutes were approved unanimously.

Don Cannon, Director of Lower Merion Township Public Works, reported that meetings with Amtrak and interested neighbors will be scheduled to further plan the project which will draw water away from the low point along the tracks where Idris and S. Highland Roads intersect. Federal inspectors have been aware of safety issues caused by the spongy rail bed. Drainage pipes will carry the water from Highland to a pipe running underground parallel to the railroad tracks to an existing pipe that crosses under the tracks to flow into the Botanical Park creek. Improvement of the location where the water will enter the creek will ensure that the volume of water expected will not damage or erode the creek banks.

Diane Mancini, landscape architect with Pennoni Associates (Township Engineer) described the available space along the tracks as limited by the roadway right-of-way, the tracks, wires and cables. A berm of about 18 inches will be built and planted with specimens that will not exceed 20 feet in height, with a spread of about 10 feet. The plants that are selected will be a mix of shrubs and trees, evergreen and deciduous, and will need to survive weather, wind, salt and dry soil conditions.

The plant maintenance contract will guarantee plant materials for 18 months, with replacement of plants that fail; watering and weeding. It is expected that community volunteers will take over the weeding, watering, pruning, mulching and care of seasonal plantings.

Construction will begin in the summer of 2013 with landscaping installed in the fall.

**Treasurer's Report** – Bob Marmon presented the Treasurer's report for February, 2013.

**President's Report** – President Kalner announced that Lindsay Taylor, Township Director of Parks & Recreation, will be next month's guest speaker.

Members from the Merion, Shortridge and Wynnewood Civic Associations met last Sunday with Bishop Timothy Senior, the Rector of St. Charles of Borromeo Seminary, for his announcement that the Seminary will be decreasing the size of its campus from 75 acres to 30. Existing buildings are underutilized by about 100,000 square feet and the burden of maintaining that space has become unsustainable. Operations of the Seminary will be consolidated at the northern section (closer to the Indian Creek housing development). The acreage that will be sold extends along City Avenue between Wynnewood Road and Lancaster Avenue. It is the hope of both the Seminary leadership and the community that by working together the best use of the land will be made, preserving the beautiful vistas and avoiding many small, quarter-acre lots with a preference for something denser, such as condos. It is also hoped that the chapel can be preserved. There is no historic preservation protections currently in place for any of the existing buildings. The civic associations will maintain close contact with the Township Commissioners as well as the Seminary and hope to be involved in the drafting of the request for proposals being formulated for potential developers of the property.

Specific concerns about the property include increased traffic on Wynnewood Road, the preservation of vistas, and the lack of historic designation, which would preserve buildings. The future developer of the property would be responsible for obtaining historic designation in order to get the associated tax benefits.

The next topic in the president's report was the Land Use Committee of the Comprehensive Plan. President Kalner stated that it is desirable to move away from the special exception process for obtaining land use approval, citing the constant use of the special exception process to modify the use of the athletic fields developed by St. Joe's University as an example. Every year there are more requests for special use of fields. It is hoped that institutional zoning will make development more predictable and create standards that will direct growth within the institutions' property. A meeting to discuss the proposed text recommending institutional zoning districts will be heard by the Land Use Committee at its scheduled meeting on March 21.

**Commissioner** -- Commissioner Gordon took questions from the audience regarding the pace of change in the community (the moves of the Barnes, Akiba and Episcopal Academy, and Palmer Seminary) and in his opinion these institutions needed to evolve and/or relocate, and the Seminary also must downsize in order to remain viable. He noted that, as a matter of practice, the Township does not designate buildings as historic without the consent of the property owner.

Commissioner Gordon will be meeting with Bishop Senior of St. Charles Seminary with a Merion neighbor who specializes in real estate development this week to offer assistance in the drafting of the request for proposals.

Discussion led to the importance of creating an historic district in Merion to preserve the feel and the architecture of the community, including specifically the area including Latch's Lane, Highland and Sycamore Avenues, between Merion and Old Lancaster Roads. Commissioner Gordon continues to meet with the Lower Merion Conservancy to attempt to move forward on this issue.

**Federation of Civic Associations** – The last meeting of the Federation included a discussion about lighting, noise, and parking issues at educational institutions. The Federation also been debated its ongoing purpose, with information sharing and collective action on issues seen as

the two main functions of the group, but not all the civics work in concert with the others, so there is a questioning of purpose. Following the discussion, President Kalner called for a vote on the proposal from the Federation of Civic Associations concerning athletic fields in Lower Merion Township. Michael Seiden made a motion to approve, seconded by Brian Gordon. A unanimous vote from the Board carried the motion. The proposal, in its entirety, follows.

## *PROPOSAL CONCERNING ATHLETIC FIELDS IN LOWER MERION TOWNSHIP*

### *Background*

*The limited supply of athletic fields in the Township creates increasing pressure for longer hours of use. The expanded use of athletic fields abutting or near residential neighborhoods, regardless of whether the fields are publicly or privately owned, can impose a substantial burden on the quiet use and enjoyment of residents of their homes if athletic field use is not subject to reasonable limitation and regulation, including lighting, traffic, and the noise from public address systems, bands, and crowds. These burdens need to be mitigated in light of the legitimate expectations of residents of a predominantly residential suburban community.*

### *Proposal:*

*The Federation proposes that the Lower Merion Township Board of Commissioners direct Township staff to consider revisions of ordinances that govern athletic fields within the Township in order to provide more stringent standards with respect to lighting, traffic, noise, and hours and intensity of use of fields within the Township. It is further proposed that as part of the ordinance revision process the Township staff consult with representatives from the Federation, individual civics, community groups, and members of the public at large. Such consultation may be conducted through workshops or other venues as the Township staff may deem appropriate.*

**MCA Centennial Celebration Planning** – President Kalner announced there is a website with information about the various events that are being planned -- [www.MCA100.org](http://www.MCA100.org) and encouraged everyone to purchase their tickets for events at the site. There are four main events being planned:

1. Craft Beer tasting – May 17, at the Tribute House
2. Centennial Celebration with Merion Concert Band performing - June 13, with three speakers (Brian Gordon, Dalen Leach and Chaka Fattah), at the Tribute House
3. Phillies game – July 8, at Citizens Bank Park
4. House and Garden tour – September 22

President Kalner reported that Sharon Wolfson, a Merion resident aiding in the event planning, has been contacting businesses in the Merion-Cynwyd business district to encourage their sponsorship for some of the planned events. President Kalner also acknowledged Gary Blum who has provided support for graphics and the development of the Centennial website. .

**MCA Committee Reorganization** -- President Kalner announced that the Committee reorganization will go forward as drafted and asked for a motion to approve; Les Greenberg so moved, Bob Marmon seconded, the Board votes were unanimous, and the motion carried. The revised list will be published and distributed to Board members.

**Newsletter** – The spring issue of the newsletter will go out in May. Articles need to be finished by mid-April.

**Community Action, Zoning & PR** – Les Greenberg reported on the condo project proposed for Righter’s Mill Ferry Road and the restaurant project at the location of the old Wynnewood Post Office. The proposed condominium is the first City Avenue rezoning project is being developed as of right and there are some issues about access that are to be resolved with the neighbors. The restaurant development was approved by the Board of Commissioners with several conditions of approval that may be challenged by the developer in the Court of Common Pleas.

**Old Business** – None

**New Business** – None

There being no more new business, a motion was made and seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 9:50 p.m. The next meeting of the Board of Directors will be held at the Merion Tribute House on Tuesday, April 23, 2013 at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Helen Guy, Secretary