

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF  
THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE MERION CIVIC ASSOCIATION

May 28, 2013

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the Merion Civic Association was held on Tuesday, May 28, 2013, beginning at 7:30 p.m. at the Merion Tribute House with President Scott Kalner presiding.

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

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

In addition, about 15 Merion residents were in attendance.

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by President Kalner. On motion by Michael Seiden and second by Bob Marmon, the April 23, 2013 minutes were approved unanimously.

President Kalner introduced the first speaker of the evening, Officer Harper, of the Lower Merion Police Department. Officer Harper began his report with the positive news that two individuals were arrested who were involved in the armed robbery incident in the township. Daytime burglaries are ongoing in Bala Cynwyd as well as vandalism to automobiles on Bala Avenue. A neighbor from Melrose Avenue spoke up that his black handyman has been picked up twice by the police as a suspicious character. Officer Harper spoke to that, saying that because of the increased crime in Merion it is quite possible that neighbors reported the man's presence and thought they were being prudent in calling the police to come investigate.

The second speaker of the evening was State Representative Mary Jo Dailey, of the 148<sup>th</sup> District, who was invited to give an update on legislative activities in Harrisburg and to address questions and concerns of the neighbors in attendance. Representative Dailey spoke about redistricting; her efforts to go out into the communities of her district to meet her constituents; her role as our liaison in Harrisburg. She spoke about the upcoming budget process, sustainable funding for education, her principal goal for her district, and transportation infrastructure. Other topics included the liquor control board vote to maintain the current system, the teacher's pension system and the fracking industry, which she believes would bring jobs and increase energy sources.

The third speaker of the evening was Christian Busch, chairman of Lower Merion Township Historical Commission, who was invited to speak on the preservation of the Township's historic street signs. Mr. Busch began his talk with a history of markers in the Township dating from colonial times up to the present day green signs that date from the early days of the Merion Civic Association and are beloved by the community, which would like them to be preserved. Mr. Busch announced that lobbying in favor of keeping the signs has been successful and that he is working on a plan of their refurbishment and maintenance. He encouraged Merion residents to think about how they might support the effort financially, such as earmarking

donations for the preservation of the signs. Fund raising would be best directed to the making of new sign patterns, which is an expensive undertaking. A complete inventory of the signs in the Township needs to be made.

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

**President's Report** – President Kalner reported that the first Centennial event, the craft beer fest, was a success, with 78 tickets sold. There was a nice age range, with many young people in attendance. The proceeds, about \$1,000, will go to the business district of Bala/Merion. The next event is the Centennial celebration on June 13, which will include a performance by the Merion Concert Band, followed by the Phillies game on July 8.

President Kalner gave a Comprehensive Plan update that there is a recommendation to abolish the special exception method to give greater predictability to development. The next meeting in June will focus on a discussion of specific strategies and the formation of districts. The planning process is expected to take two more years. The Federation of Civic Associations has gone ahead and hired a lawyer to represent the views of the residents.

**Commissioner** -- Commissioner Gordon's report included his meetings with representatives from St. Charles Seminary, the Comprehensive Plan and Amtrak plans to upgrade the catenaries from Philadelphia, all along the line out to the western suburbs. The planned structures are much larger than what now exists and brings up many questions about further clearing of trees, greater use of the right of way, and the impact of such large structures on the communities through which the rail lines pass. There is a need to upgrade the faltering infrastructure at the same time that residents are very concerned about the impact on quality of life in the suburbs.

Regarding St. Charles, a neighborhood group has formed to work with the Seminary in discussions about how to convert the long building on the campus to another use such as high-end condos. Questions about density of development have come up and the Township is in favor of using the open space for athletic fields. Developers are eager to enter the dialogue.

Regarding the Comprehensive Plan, Commissioner Gordon stated that he has no strong objectives to the special exception method. The problem he sees is that courts now demand that residents prove their side, which is unfair and very expensive when those residents try to organize their opposition with representation by legal services. Bob Marmon offered an opposing view that there is no protection to the taxpayers when the special exception process is followed. Institutional lawyers wait out the special exception process when the neighbors eventually run out of funds to fight the system.

Commissioner Gordon spoke about the Bala business district, which is characterized by traffic speeding through the posted 25 mile/hour zone. He is in favor of beautification, slowing traffic and decreasing the number of lanes from four to three, with a center lane designated for turning.

**Committee Reports:** As the meeting ran long, there were no reports.

**Old Business** – None

**New Business** – None

There being no more new business, a motion was made and seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 10:30 p.m. The next meeting of the Board of Directors will be held at the Merion Tribute House on Tuesday, June 25, 2013 at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Helen Guy, Secretary