

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF  
THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE MERION CIVIC ASSOCIATION  
February 25, 2014

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the Merion Civic Association was held on Tuesday, February 25, 2014, beginning at 7:30 p.m. at the Merion Tribute House with President Scott Kalner presiding.

Directors present were Browne, Copeland, Eisenberg, Flaks, Gordon, Greenberg, Hill, Kalner, Lam, Ross, Seiden.

Directors absent and excused were Anderson, Ettelson, Feuer, Fratis, Lavoritano, Marmon, Murphy, Potok, Quinn, Rutzel, Sinai and Stark.

Other Merion residents included Bill Kuttruff, Paul Schick, Susan Guthrie, Christina Borgeest, Bill Katz, Charles Cohen, Adam Rosen, Atul Shah and Sharon Wolfson.

The meeting was called to order at 7:40 p.m. by President Kalner. A motion was made and seconded and the January 28, 2014 minutes were approved unanimously.

**Treasurer's Report** – In the absence of Robert Marmon and Dave Rutzel, Helen Guy, Secretary, presented the Treasurer's report for January 2014. A motion was made and seconded and the Treasurer's Report was approved unanimously.

**Guest Speaker:**

President Kalner introduced Kevin Maurer, president of the Overbrook Farms Club, the civic association representing the Philadelphia neighborhood bounded by 58<sup>th</sup> Street, City Avenue, 68<sup>th</sup> Street and Woodbine Avenue. Mr. Maurer began his presentation with a history of the Club, founded in 1892, and now encompassing about 400 buildings. The neighborhood was a planned community, designed by Price and Trumbauer, to attract prosperous Philadelphians out to the suburbs along the train line. Most of the housing stock was built between the 1880's and the 1920's. Up until the 1930's the Club maintained the infrastructure of Overbrook Farms, after which time services were turned over to the city of Philadelphia. In the 1970's and 80's, many properties fell into disrepair for lack of maintenance and some houses were boarded up. Neighbors decided to take action to clean up the neighborhood and gained U.S. National Historic District designation. Since those decades, much has been done to continue refurbishing properties and some large houses have remained single homes.

Mr. Maurer continued with a description of the most important issues facing the group, many of which mirror the concerns of the Merion Civic Association: St. Joseph's University, St. Charles Borromeo Seminary and City Avenue. All three of these concerns involve land development and traffic problems; Overbrook Farms also deals with the overflow from St. Joe's that include after-hours noise and overcrowding of students who live in rental apartments in Overbrook Farms with large sections of streets taken over with student parking. Over time, and after many meetings with St. Joe's, Mr. Maurer was happy to report that the University has been very cooperative in monitoring its students to a degree that the Club is now satisfied with the status quo, and he described the relationship with St. Joe's as "phenomenal." The Club's greatest concern about the redevelopment of the St. Charles Seminary property is traffic. It doesn't want any curb cuts along the City Avenue frontage and hopes the bulk of the new traffic will be

directed on to Lancaster Avenue. Mr. Maurer reported that the Club has a good relationship with the City Avenue Special Services organization and is pleased with the new lighting on 63<sup>rd</sup> Street, which was a joint project between St. Joe's and the City Avenue Special Services District. Overbrook Farms did its own traffic study of City Avenue at a cost of about \$21,000 and found one of the best solutions to keeping an even flow of traffic along the corridor is for the appropriate sequencing of the traffic lights from the Expressway down to Lancaster Avenue.

**President's Report** – President Kalner began his report with reference to the Merion/Cynwyd Business District. By spring, short-term beautification efforts featuring planters are hoped to be in place, with funding coming from Merion Civic Association, the Neighborhood Club of Bala Cynwyd and the Township.. Other plans for the district include unifying and improving parking lots at the rear of retail properties on the north side of Montgomery Avenue, a traffic study, hopefully to be funded by the Township in the next year's capital budget, and business district events to encourage cooperation amongst the store owners and the local residential neighborhoods. Merion Civic Association is willing to cooperate in these events once the business district is ready to sponsor them.

President Kalner, along with director Les Greenberg, met with Bishop Senior at St. Charles Seminary in mid-February. They learned that none of the potential developers submitted plans that would raze the College building on the campus and all suggested that the building be put to some new use. St. Charles has no plans to use any portion of the College building and will keep its operations on the northern side of the campus. There is no requirement to get land development approval for the renovations of other buildings that are being kept by the Seminary. However, St. Charles will need to create approximately 64 new parking spaces to have the full complement of 300 parking spaces they determined will be required and the parking and associated stormwater management will be subject to Township land development approval. Bishop Senior said he would announce the development plans sometime in mid to late spring.

In a discussion with the Bishop about the Narberth Rugby Club's proposed formalized use of its fields, President Kalner learned that St. Charles withdrew its support of the Rugby Club based on Merion Civic's conditional support of the Club's Special Exception request, and a number of its own reservations about allowing the Club access to the fields.

The Comprehensive Plan meeting discussion of the Merion/Cynwyd business district originally scheduled by the Township for tonight was postponed due to the conflict with the Merion Civic Association board meeting; the discussion will occur at next month's meeting, on March 24. President Kalner reported that planning staff was instructed to complete the committees' work has by September of 2014 with a initial draft to be completed by the end of the year for the Commissioners to review and make their own recommendations. Board of Commissioner discussion of the Compendium, a progress document prepared by planning staff, has been delayed because numerous meetings have been cancelled due to bad weather as well as other Township business matters taking priority.

JulieAnn Murphy of the Lower Merion Conservancy will be having a telephone conference call this week with the Pennsylvania Historic and Museum Commission's Preservation Coordinator to discuss the potential boundaries of the historic district in Merion. JulieAnn will be attending the next meeting of the Merion Civic Association, on March 25, to give us an update.

A beer tasting fundraiser is being planned for Friday, June 13 at the Tribute House. President Kalner invited all to contribute their ideas and efforts to make the fund-raising event successful.

Funds raised would be shared by the Civic Association and the Merion/Cynwyd business district.

The Flag Day Concert is scheduled for Wednesday, June 11.

### **Commissioner's Report:**

Commissioner Brian Gordon reported that repair of potholes in Lower Merion has begun; snow removal by Township crews has been poor this year, possibly due to a turnover in the crew, and new, inexperienced crews were not well managed by the Director of Public Works. Winter storms also brought loss of power to many homes and trash removal has been less than optimal.

An offer of employment has been made to one of the candidates for Township Manager. Commissioner Gordon will keep us informed on the status of the new hire.

Land use in the Township needs neighborhood support and historic district designation is essential to prevent tear-downs of architecturally important structures.

Commissioner Gordon met with Police Chief Mike McGrath to discuss ideas to get more policing in Ardmore and Lower Merion, which have been experiencing burglaries. A burglary on Merbrook Lane in Merion indicates shifts in crime trends, as this street is in a neighborhood pocket that had not been hit before.

Superintendent of Schools Dr. McGinley, has resigned, effective in June and the School District will be searching for a replacement.

The Barnes Foundation board chairman has resigned and has been replaced by Joseph Neubauer.

Susan Guthrie, Merion neighbor, commented on the large trees which were cut down along Old Lancaster Avenue next to the Kohelet School and wanted to know about their replacement. President Kalner will get in touch with the school to find out what the tentative planting schedule is for the replacement trees. Susan also noted that the Merion Botanical Park needs funds. It was clarified that the Park Board solicits memberships and the Township is responsible for much of the heavy work such as mowing and tree removal that comprise normal maintenance.

Commissioner Gordon suggested a neighborhood project of canvassing home owners about their desire to have a street tree planted in their right of way.

### **Committee/Representative Reports:**

**Federation of Civic Associations --** No report

**Community Action, Zoning and PR --** Les Greenberg announced the Planning Commission will meet on March 3 to discuss the reconstruction of BMW on Bala Avenue. A condominium development, planned for the former YMCA site on Montgomery Avenue in Ardmore, will also be discussed. After the Planning Commission meeting, it will be presented on March 12 at the Building and Planning Committee of the Township. Les encouraged all to consult the Township website for more details on the Planning Commission, Zoning Hearing Board and the Building

and Planning Committee. The Cricket Avenue project being developed by Dranoff Properties has been halted because needed state grant money has been withdrawn.

Director Dolores Browne inquired about getting another sign announcing the Civic Association meetings which she had posted on her property at the corner of Bowman and Wynnewood. President Kalner will follow up with Kevin Murphy. Dolores will print out new maps for the cases located at the Merion train station.

**Old Business** – None

**New Business** – None

There being no more new business, a motion was made and seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 9:10 p.m. The next meeting of the Board of Directors will be held at the Merion Tribute House on Tuesday, March 25, 2014 at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Helen Guy, Secretary