

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE MERION CIVIC ASSOCIATION
January 28, 2014

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the Merion Civic Association was held on Tuesday, January 28, 2014, beginning at 7:30 p.m. at the Merion Tribute House with President Scott Kalner presiding.

Directors present were Anderson, Browne, Copeland, Feuer, Gordon, Greenberg, Hill, Kalner, Lam, Lavoritano, Murphy, Quinn, Ross, Seiden, Sinai.

Directors absent and excused were Eisenberg, Ettelson, Flaks, Fratis, Marmon, Potok, Rutzel and Stark.

Other Merion residents included Karla Moras, Peter Underwood, David Frankford, Tom McConnell, Ellis Weinberger, Bill Katz, Devin Grosh, Susan Guthrie, Dottie Brown, Julie Kiene.

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by President Kalner. A motion was made and seconded and the November 26, 2013 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 November and December 2013. A motion was made and seconded and the Treasurer's Report was approved unanimously.

Guest Speakers:

President Kalner introduced Simon Herriott, president of the Narberth Rugby Club (NRC), who was accompanied by Chris Metzger and Robert DeLuca, the coach of the team. The Rugby Club organizers attended the Civic Association to discuss the club's use of a portion of the St. Charles Borromeo grounds for practice and games. Before coming to St. Charles, the team had moved from institution to institution along the Main Line for the last 6 years, but as all schools use their own playing fields at maximum capacity, there were no further options. The Seminary gave the club access last year and intended to offer the use of its field on a year-to-year basis. When the Seminary became aware of the need to file an application with the Township for a special exception in order to allow outside groups to use their fields, they asked the NRC to file the request. As part of their application process, the NRC came to ask the Merion Civic Association for its support for the special exception request.

Rob DeLuca, head coach of the team at Harriton High School gave some background on the founding of the group, fund-raising activities, and the growing popularity of the program which now includes 75 kids, who are required, as part of their membership on the team, to perform community service, participate in fund-raising activities -- parental participation in the activities promotes a very family-oriented group. The team plays locally, regionally and plans a trip to Wales to play its "sister" team this coming summer.

Mr. Herriott further described the Club's activities at St. Charles. The team plays there on 8 Sundays out of the year, bringing in 20-40 cars, each required to present a security pass; practice is on Tuesday and Thursday evenings, March-July. The field is 75x100 yards, on a sloped piece of ground where the NRC has installed rugby goal posts.

Merion residents raised many questions about the formal approval allowing the use of the grounds for athletic play, with concerns centering on the uncertainty surrounding the potential development of the Seminary's property. Issues centered on the potential additional traffic and the potential precedent for expanded use of the fields by other outside groups. However, there was substantial support expressed for the NRC's program and it was noted that there would be fewer concerns if the Seminary was not about to embark on a plan that will likely bring greater intensity and different uses to the site.

The NRC emphasized that their use of the grounds is not heavy, noting that their use in the previous year did not create any issues for the community. Graham Copeland proposed a motion, seconded by Carol Lavoritano, to write a letter from the Merion Civic Association in support of the NRC's special exception request with no conditions. Mr. Copeland turned down a request to accept a friendly amendment to his proposal to allow for conditions to be attached to the support of the special exception request. A polling of the directors present indicated that 4 directors were in favor of the motion, without conditions, and, 6 directors opposed.

Discussion continued along the lines of suggesting that the Civic Association could possibly lend support if there could be agreement on restrictions on the use, such as the number of participants and the number of days of operation, which would be negotiated between the Land Use Committee and the NRC. Accordingly, President Kalner proposed a second motion which was seconded by Leslie Greenberg, in favor of offering support for the special exception request if agreement with the NRC on conditions for the operating parameters could be attained. The motion was approved with 9 votes in favor and one opposed. The application for the special exception must be submitted to the Township Zoning Officer by February 3 in order for the request to be heard at the March 6 meeting of the Zoning Hearing Board.

President's Report – President Kalner began his report with reference to the Merion/Cynwyd Business District. There will be a meeting of the Merion Civic, the Bala Neighborhood Club, and various Township representatives to consider use of the seed money that is available for improvements. A traffic study with the focus on reducing the number of travel lanes on Montgomery Avenue from 4 to 3 with a center turning lane and other changes designed to enhance pedestrian safety will be requested.

St. Charles Seminary has received proposals from 14 developers; the Seminary will likely narrow the list down to 5 or 6 during the month of February. St. Charles will be looking at how to accommodate existing activities into the buildings to be kept. Director Todd Sinai added that, although no details have been revealed about the possible plans, he did know that no "big box" retail buildings have been proposed at this point. The MCA and the Coalition for Neighborhood Character and Quality will continue their efforts to get information on the potential developments at the Seminary and to express community sentiment on the proposed changes for the site to Bishop Senior, the Rector of St. Charles.

The Comprehensive Plan meeting of February 6, 6:00 p.m. at the Township Building, will focus on the Merion/Cynwyd and Penn Valley retail areas. Community feedback to the Township's on-line preference survey on the topic was good, with 274 responses received on the Merion/Cynwyd business district.

President Kalner and Commissioner Gordon have been discussing the Historic District initiative with the Lower Merion Conservancy. The neighborhood historic narrative and the boundaries of the area to be designated are still being studied by the Conservancy. It is hoped that the Pennsylvania Historic and Museum Commission will give its tentative approval sometime early

in the summer. JulieAnn Murphy of the Conservancy will speak at the March meeting of the MCA to provide an update.

Several members of the Cultural and Social Programming/Development Committee (Cary Anderson, Graham Copeland, Renee Hill, Harriet Lam, and Scott Kalner) met in January to discuss fund-raising activities tied to an event to be organized for some time in the spring. .

Miscellaneous items included Kevin Murphy's request for a letter of support from the Merion Civic Association for the Union Fire Company in their request for a grant for protective equipment from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Kevin Maurer, president of the Overbrook Farms Civic Association in Philadelphia will be the guest speaker at the February 25 meeting.

Commissioner's Report:

Commissioner Gordon reported on the search for a new Township Manager. Two candidates have been identified as potential finalists. Both candidates appear to have collaborative working styles and could bring fresh ideas to the community.

The Commissioners have voted to borrow \$10 million this year to take advantage of preferential bond rates.

Although the number of burglaries is down, Commissioner Gordon is working with the Lower Merion Police Department to get more officers on the road and in the Merion neighborhood.

Committee/Representative Reports:

Federation of Civic Associations -- Kevin Murphy reported that discussion at the Federation meeting focused on how best to get the Federation's view on development projects brought before the Board of Commissioners. The Federation guest speaker was Matt Peskin of the Community Watch program. One topic discussed was the idea of the Union and Narberth firehouses wanting to unionize. Cozen & O'Connor has been retained for its experience in union issues.

Community Action, Zoning and PR -- Les Greenberg reported that a kosher dairy restaurant is planned on Montgomery Avenue opposite Hymie's restaurant; however, as renovations began, it became evident that the building has significant structural problems, so there is no certainty that the building can be salvaged. In the interest of time, Mr. Greenberg directed all to consult the Township website for more information on the planned girls' and boys' schools in the Bala neighborhood.

By-Laws Review Ad-Hoc Committee -- The By-Laws Review Ad-Hoc Committee (Chair, Michael Seiden, Directors Les Greenberg and Tami Stark; ex-officio Scott Kalner) also met to begin reviewing the Civic Association by-laws and to look at the by-laws currently used by other civic associations. It was noted that MCA's by-laws have not been revised for 20 years and need to be updated to reflect the development of technology in conducting the business of the Association. Michael Seiden reported that topics also being looked at include the Board nominations process.

Cultural and Social Programming -- The focus of this committee will be fundraising and attracting new members.

Old Business – Graham Copeland commented that he was pleased with the Idris Road project plantings and infrastructure. George Ross noted that an extra storm drain needs to be placed near the Merion Manor condominium. A great deal of water pours down the Merion Manor driveway and washes down Idris to Highland Avenue, leaving large puddles along the way. There is also a problem with leaf build-up on the drains in the fall that will require routine Township maintenance to address.

New Business – None

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

Respectfully submitted,

Helen Guy, Secretary