

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

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

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

Directors absent and excused were Anderson, Ettelson, Flaks, Lavoritano, and Potok.

Karla Moras from Merion was also in attendance.

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by President Seiden, who first welcomed all present and then introduced Bob Kagan, board member of the Jewish Family and Children's Services, which is planning to purchase and renovate the former Tuttleman-owned (also known as the Tarnopol Furs) building on Montgomery Avenue in Bala Cynwyd across from the C&R Kitchen, formerly known as Citron and Rose, restaurant for office space totaling about 13,000 square feet, pending approval of a request for more parking. Mr. Kagan gave some background on the agency, which has four locations across the city and sees the purchase of the building as an opportunity to serve the growing Jewish community in the western suburbs. The zoning of the site is part residential, part commercial. The residential portion is located across the driveway from the main building and has a carriage house and lawn, and is not seen as a viable tract of land upon which to build housing, and is therefore the spot most suitable for adding 14 parking spaces to the already existing 25. Parking accessed from Parson Street would be joined to the added 14 spaces on the residential portion of the property. The Jewish Family Services will be requesting a variance to establish the new parking spots at the December 9 Zoning Hearing Board meeting. They will use a traffic study which will recommend access from the Montgomery Avenue entrance to support their request which must be approved before purchasing the property. Financing has been secured from board members and other donors in the community.

Mr. Kagan described the Services as a Jewish agency that serves the entire community with services such as adoptions, financial counseling, divorce counseling, truancy counseling, special needs counseling; aids Holocaust survivors and will have a teaching kitchen, a thrift shop and an arts studio. The agency will employ about 30 employees, none of whom are expected to be at the agency offices every day on a 9-5 p.m. schedule. Clients will come for appointments, so there will be in and out traffic during the day. It is not expected that the agency will be creating new jobs in the Merion/Bala Cynwyd community, but will draw employees from other locations.

Mr. Kagan distributed drawings showing the current and proposed layouts of the space, as well as a computerized depiction of what the building exterior might look like. These documents will be added to the MCA website. Mr. Kagan thanked all for their interest and will be happy to entertain any future questions or thoughts on the project. Although the project is not in Merion, he appreciates the Merion Civic's support of the project.

A motion was made and seconded and the October 28, 2014 minutes were approved unanimously.

**Treasurer's Report** – Bob Marmon presented the Treasurer's report for October. A motion was made and seconded and the Treasurer's Report was approved unanimously. Mr. Marmon spoke about the necessity to increase membership to stem the flow of funds.

**Commissioner's Report** -- Commissioner Brian Gordon began his report by announcing that there is no real estate tax increase in the new budget. Real estate transactions are picking up, thus there is an increase in transfer tax increase. In addition, the Township received \$6 million settlement for unpaid business taxes and the tax increases the Township would have approved are being masked by spending down the settlement. He also announced that some Township employees who were laid off in the recession have been rehired as some essential services were not being performed. Township expenses are increasing by about 3% a year and a small increase in taxes may come next year or the following year.

The Dranoff project has seen strong community opposition because of the scope and height of the buildings proposed in the project. Commissioners at the Zoning Hearing Board were not receptive to the opposition, accusing the public of not having come forward in the early hearings, and implying that the project will go forward. Commissioner Gordon rebutted that opposition has been building for several years. He promised the Civic Association to work towards lowering the height of the proposed buildings.

A Township ordinance is being drafted to preserve the Haas estate in Rosemont as open space with the mansion being used commercially as an event space under conditional use terms. Conditional use is meant to protect residential areas.

Commissioner Gordon reported on the disagreement between the Commissioners and the Merion neighbors regarding the 65' building height being proposed along City Avenue. Quality of life issues are of concern to the homes which would be shaded from sunlight. Winter months will see the area in shadow. Commissioner Gordon proposed that a resolution be written expressing the Merion Civic Association's opposition to the proposed building height. A motion was made and seconded, and approved unanimously. Mr. Gordon dictated a draft resolution which will be revised by the directors and presented to the Commissioners, and is attached.

**President's Report** – President Seiden began his report by reiterating his desire for greater director participation in all projects and committees.

President Seiden brought up the open item of the \$1,000 contribution to the Merion/Cynwyd Business District which appeared in the budget for 2013-14 but was never paid and was not carried over into the current budget. Treasurer Bob Marmon asked to read the resolution that approved the contribution and affirms that the money was never sent. He also requested that he be sent the details of the account the money will go into, who is cutting the check, and would like to see a mock-up of the banners. This information will be provided to the Treasurer and the approval of the distribution will come up for a vote at the January, 2015 meeting.

## **Committee/Representative Reports:**

**Land Use, Zoning and Community Relations:** Les Greenberg reported that the Wendy's restaurant project in the Bala Village was discussed at the last Zoning Hearing Board on November 6 for four hours. He emphasized that it is vital for the community to get involved early in the process when new projects are proposed to have a voice in the outcome. Otherwise, once a project has been developed, it is virtually too late to make any changes. Wendy's may have an angle on avoiding following old building codes if 25% of the existing structure is preserved. The restaurant could then not be said to be a tear down, but a renovation and therefore not subject to old rules.

The Land Use Committee of the Comprehensive plan will be finishing its work in the near future. The "mean grade" ordinance needs to be re-worked so that a property does not include sections that have very different building heights, such as is proposed at the YMCA project in Ardmore where the rear of property height will be considerably higher than the section fronting on Montgomery. Residential neighbors at the rear of the property oppose the height being proposed.

Todd Sinai reported on the school bus issue regarding where to park the buses that will be moved off the Lower Merion High School property for lack of space. One proposal was to relocate them at the St. Charles Seminary, about which the Seminary was apparently never contacted. Another proposal is to use the Matson Ford Road depot or to build a structure at the Lower Merion High School. Harriton High School enrollment is down, while Lower Merion's is up. In the lower schools, growth in the kindergarten, first and second grades is up and for the rest of the grades through 12<sup>th</sup>, it is down.

**Botanical** -- Scott Feuer reported that he proposed to the Botanical board the idea of taking on the maintenance of the Idris Road strip -- there is no interest in taking on the project as the park itself constitutes a large project. Scott will remind George Ross that he volunteered to present an outline or plan for maintenance to the Botanical Association.

**Old Business** – None

**New Business** – There being no 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, January 27, 2015.

Respectfully submitted,  
Helen Guy, Secretary