

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF  
THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE MERION CIVIC ASSOCIATION  
APRIL 28, 2015

The regular March meeting of the Board of Directors of the Merion Civic Association was held on Tuesday, April 28, 2015, beginning at 7:30 p.m. at the Merion Tribute House with President Michael Seiden presiding.

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

Directors absent and excused were Anderson, Ettelson, Flaks, and Quinn.

Karla Moras of Merion and Ricky Guerra of Bala Cynwyd were also in attendance.

The meeting was called to order at 7:40 p.m. by President Seiden, who first welcomed all present.

### **Approval of Minutes**

A motion was made and seconded and the March meeting minutes were approved unanimously.

**Treasurer's Report** – Robert Marmon presented the Treasurer's report for March, 2015. A motion was made and seconded and the Treasurer's Report was approved unanimously.

Following approval of the Treasurer's Report, director George Ross asked Treasurer Marmon why the Merion Civic Association does not use any of its funds to promote the mission of the Merion Civic Association to support issues, and influence outcomes of Township debates which are important to the Merion community and the quality of life so valued by the community, such as preventing over-development. Treasurer Marmon explained that the Civic Association is registered with the Internal Revenue Services as a 501C3 organization, and is, therefore, forbidden to engage in backing political positions. Director Bruce Eisenberg added that the By-laws would need to be changed if the decision were made to change the tax status of the Association. Karla Moras stated that Wynnewood and Overbrook Civic Associations do hire attorneys to advance their agendas and President Seiden stated that Overbrook has both a 501(C)3 and 501(C)4 organization. Funds are raised on the C3 side of the organization and transferred to the C4 side to be used for attorney fees. Treasurer Marmon wrapped up the discussion by stating that the most effective way for the community to halt the "pro-development" Board of Commissioners is to vote on election day.

There was then a spontaneous invitation to have Ricky Guerra, who was in attendance, to come forward and speak to the issues he would support in his candidacy to unseat Commissioner George Manos, whose district includes a small portion of Merion along City Avenue. Director Eisenberg objected on the grounds that in fairness to other candidates seeking to unseat incumbents, the Merion Civic Association must invite all to come speak. Mr. Guerra graciously accepted this rule and took his seat.

**Speaker** - President Seiden introduced the speaker of the evening, Mark Shaw, a Board Certified Master Arborist and the manager of Bartlett Tree Experts in Bala Cynwyd. Mr. Shaw teaches classes at the Barnes Foundation, is on the board of the Lower Merion Botanical

Society, and involved in the Shade Tree Commission. Mr. Shaw was accompanied by Botanical Society vice president, Dave Richards.

Mr. Shaw presented information on tree species that are under threat in Lower Merion and offered choices for ornamental replacement of trees being lost. The list of endangered trees includes: American elm, destroyed by Dutch elm disease; American ash, being attacked by the emerald ash borer; Eastern hemlock; black, pin and red oaks, the pointy-leaf oaks, which are dying of bacterial leaf scorch. The copper beach, not native to our area, is dwindling in stock.

These endangered trees can be replaced by white oaks, the Asian species of hemlocks, and the Asian ash, which is resistant to the borer. Flowering trees, such as dogwoods and red buds, although not as long-lived as the hardwoods, are lovely ornamental replacements. Hybridization will help save trees that are prone to diseases.

The cost of treating ash trees against the borer ranges between \$50-75/year, which is a very reasonable amount to spend to save mature trees and such treatments are being applied at the Botanical Park.

The Shade Tree Commission plants lindens, red maples, swamp white oaks and London plane trees, while gradually eliminating sugar maples.

Dave Richards presented information about Botanical Society projects initiated in the last couple of years, including cutting down diseased Norway maples and ashes on the other side of the creek; destruction of poison ivy patches; conservation of stream banks; implementation of the master plan; restoration of the other side of the stream to a native forest, funded in part by the Philadelphia Electric Company (PECO). Native dogwoods, hazelnuts and oaks are replacing the trees that were taken down.

As an organization, the Botanical Society has revised its by-laws and there are Board slots open to residents interested in becoming involved. Election day is June 8. The charter of the organization describes its mission as an educational and scientific group. Trees and plant material in the park are labeled, as are trees that are being treated against disease, and there are fun and educational activity sheets that help residents learn how to identify trees. Scheduled workshops teach pruning techniques.

**President's Report** – President Seiden began his report by announcing that Director Dolores Browne has resigned her position and moved out of the community.

President Seiden asked Kevin Murphy, president of the Federation of Civic Associations about the status of the Noise Resolution, which was a topic at the February meeting of the Merion Civic Association. Mr. Murphy was not sure of that status.

The June meeting of the Merion Civic Association will be open to the Merion community and all invited will be asked to contribute to the refreshments.

JulieAnn Murphy has resigned from the Lower Merion Conservancy, which may impact the Conservancy's plan to consider historic designation for Merion, as the Conservancy will re-start the project when Ms. Murphy's replacement is hired. In the meantime, the Ardmore historic district designation project is in its last phases.

**Committee/Representative Reports:**

**Train Station:** Scott Feuer reminded all of the scheduled May 3 cleanup and planting of the flower boxes at the station and post office and said that “Build On” volunteers from Harriton and Lower Merion High Schools would be coming out to help. SEPTA is painting the train station buildings and structures, a long overdue project.

**Land Use, Zoning and Community Relations:** Les Greenberg reported that Symphony Square's plans regarding eliminating parking spaces on-site are up in the air. A representative of the assisted living institution will attend the May meeting of the Civic Association prior to their Zoning Hearing Board appearance in June. Several questions about the parking issue arose, and Les explained that the underground spaces are limited and none should be eliminated. The ratio of parking spots to beds is 0.7/bed. The underground space is very tight, parking is difficult and both employees and visitors park on the side streets. The institution wants to eliminate spaces to accommodate a hair salon, or something similar. The reserved spaces in the back are difficult to access and the existing wall in the rear would have to be removed. When we are presented with the new proposed plans at the next meeting, we need to find out if the number of beds in the facility has changed, which would determine how many spaces are needed.

The Planning Commission is tentatively scheduled to discuss the Wendy's restaurant on City Avenue at the May 4 meeting. [Postponed to a future date.]

Commissioner candidate forums for Wards 7, 9 and 13 are scheduled to introduce to the community candidates who are running against George Manos and Liz Rogan. President Seiden attended both candidate forums in which candidates and incumbents spoke on issues and took questions from the audience.

**Commissioner's Report** – Brian Gordon began his report by announcing that portions of the Comprehensive Plan have been provided, and spoke at length that the purpose of the Merion Civic Association is to protect the quality of life of Merion, keep development slow and thoughtful. He feels that the message from residents is beginning to be heard by Township planners that there is a growing protest against high-density development in Lower Merion Township. Higher density satisfies pro-development aims of increasing property taxes received, but higher density also means upgrading schools, roads, sewer, water, utilities services. The Comprehensive Plan aims at encouraging high density within a half-mile radius of train stations, which in the case of Merion would mean most of our community.

Commissioner Gordon reported that African Americans in Ardmore object to the tearing down of affordable housing in their neighborhood, to be replaced by expensive townhouses. In response to the community, the Commissioners decided to “zone down” to accommodate the Ardmore residents and halt further tear downs.

The Lower Merion police have developed a plan to combat racial profiling in diverse neighborhoods and to promote better relations between law enforcement and residents by putting more police on bikes in dense areas, more officers on foot, and implement best practices.

**Old Business** – None

**New Business** –There being no other new business, a motion was made and seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 9:32 p.m. The next meeting of the Board of Directors will be held at the Merion Tribute House on Tuesday, May 26, 2015.

Respectfully submitted,  
Helen Guy, Secretary