

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE MERION CIVIC ASSOCIATION
JANUARY 27, 2015 MEETING HELD ON FEBRUARY 3, 2015

The regular January meeting of the Board of Directors of the Merion Civic Association was held on Tuesday, February 3, 2015, postponed due to weather forecasts, 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, Rutzel, Seiden and Sinai.

Directors absent and excused were Anderson, Browne, Ettelson, Flaks, Marmon, Murphy, Quinn, Ross and Potok.

Ellis Weinberger 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 the speakers of the evening, Karen Hinckley and Lt. Al Davey from the Volunteer Medical Services Corps of Lower Merion and Narberth (VMSC). Ms. Hinckley is a Board Member of VMSC, Financial Secretary, and an EMT. She has been a volunteer at VMSC for 5 years, having joined after retiring from a career in pharmaceuticals. Lt. Davey is an Officer, a career paramedic, and VMSC Director of Training. He also directs CPR training for professionals as well as for members of the community.

Ms. Hinckley and Lt. Al Davey presented a detailed and comprehensive overview of the services provided by the Narberth Ambulance. The service has been in operation for 70 years; employs more than 35 full and parttime staff, which is largely volunteer, and is a 503C company, operating 9 fully equipped ambulances, whose territory extends from City Avenue to Conshohocken. The ambulances are parked in a lot behind the farmer's market in Ardmore. The company is funded entirely by insurance billings and donations from the public, and receives no taxpayer dollars.

The company operates as a state-of-the art organization, responding to about 6,500 calls a year, or about 20 per week. A volunteer medical leadership team of six physicians from local hospitals oversees the medical capabilities of vehicles and staff, while the operational leadership team assures the day-to-day operations.

Narberth Ambulance staff are fully trained to be in a state of readiness for such events as natural disasters, school shootings, hospital rescues, SWAT and tactical medical care, national crises, mass casualties, and has a Rehab bus which can be dispatched to be on-scene to assist first responders. Services also include a wide range of community outreach activities, which include teaching CPR courses to such groups as the Boy Scouts, reading to children's groups regarding safety, and fall prevention for seniors. Anyone who is concerned about a loved one can call for an ambulance to come to the place of residence to assess a citizen and help make a determination of whether treatment can be rendered in the home, or whether the hospital is the best choice for treatment. There is no cost for care administered in the home if there is no need for a trip to a hospital. The ambulances are fully equipped to begin treatment of a person in the home, and continue that treatment en route to the hospital with the aim of assuring that the person is receiving care in advance to prevent more serious or permanent damage, such as in the case of a stroke victim.

The VMSC needs funds and volunteers and will be starting a capital project fund in the near future.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made and seconded and the Annual Meeting Minutes of October 26, 2014 as well as the November 25, 2014 minutes were approved unanimously.

Treasurer's Report – Dave Rutzel presented the Treasurer's report for January, Preliminary review of dues received suggests that the decision to raise the dues amount of each category of membership has resulted in an increase of assets. In addition, there was praise for the dues letter itself, the content of which was a group effort, in stimulating higher revenues. A motion was made and seconded and the Treasurer's Report was approved unanimously.

A discussion followed the Treasurer's report regarding the payment of \$1,000 for the 20 banners to be placed in the Merion/Cynwyd Business District, the sum which was allocated from profits earned from the Centennial Celebration Beer fest in 2013. The payment had been scheduled to be paid out of last year's budget, but that did not occur and the amount was not carried over to the current budget. Treasurer Bob Marmon requested a resolution be passed by the Directors to approve inclusion of the amount in the current budget, and further, to approve payment of the Merion Civic Association portion of the invoice, to be sent to Buddy Bear in Bala Cynwyd.

Brian Gordon moved that the Treasurer pay the Merion/Cynwyd District issue a check for \$1,000 and send it to Buddy Bear. Bruce Eisenberg seconded the motion and the motion was carried unanimously. Les Greenberg has already provided the mailing address to the Treasurer.

President's Report – President Seiden began his report by reiterating his intention to have Committees meet, establish goals and report on their plans to achieve those goals, and offered his time to participate in helping the Committees establish effective operation.

Committee/Representative Reports:

Finance Committee: Dave Rutzel affirmed that the payment for the banners for the Merion/Cynwyd Business District has been effectively inserted into the current budget by the motion just approved.

Train Station: Scott Feuer reported that SEPTA will begin in the Spring of this year, to make repairs and repaint the station platform structures, which have fallen into disrepair over the last few years due to a lack of state funding. The Post Office will be erecting signage to indicate the location of the postal services building.

Land Use, Zoning and Community Relations: Les Greenberg reported that George Manos, Commissioner for Bala Cynwyd, has agreed to the lower 65 foot height maximum to 38 feet between Orchard Avenue and Oakland Terrace along City Avenue, which was recommended by a Merion Civic Association resolution. In addition, community leaders are trying to get the same height limit applied to buildings from Orchard Avenue to Bala Avenue. Todd Sinai, Merion Civic Association Director, was instrumental in obtaining Mr. Manos' agreement to the lower height at this meeting of concerned neighbors.

The Wendy's restaurant on City Avenue will be demolished in March and will be rebuilt with Zoning Hearing Board approval of all requests made by the restaurant chain. It is hoped that the façade that faces City Avenue can be made more appealing than the proposed cinder block construction.

An addition to the residence at 740 S. Highland Avenue in Merion will be proposed at the February 12th Zoning Hearing Board.

Todd Sinai reported that the appeals hearing to the Zoning Board approval of variance requests from St. Charles Seminary has been pushed back to April 2. The items to be appealed by the Coalition for Neighborhood Character and Quality (CNCQ) regard the use of the gate on Wynnewood Avenue across from Highland Avenue. The driveway is proposed to be shorter than earlier announced; parking spots have been moved closer to the Indian Creek development, and no buffers are being required. Mr. Sinai also reported that the appeal will also include an objection to St. Charles being exempt from zoning rules because the institution has been in existence for such a long period of time.

Commissioner's Report -- Commissioner Brian Gordon began his report on the proposed Noise Ordinance change, which would allow such groups as construction and landscaping crews to begin work at 7:30 a.m. on weekdays, and suggesting that police cars should be equipped with noise meter technology in order to be able to measure noise levels on the spot and issue a citation if there is an infraction. The equipment, however, is prohibitively expensive. Commissioner Gordon then surveyed Civic members present with a vote for either the current 8:00 a.m. ordinance, or the amended version, allowing noise to begin at 7:30 a.m. The group voted unanimously to keep the ordinance as is and that 9:00 a.m. should be the earliest time allowed on weekends.

Commissioner Gordon proposed that a resolution reflecting the wishes of the Civic to maintain the current code be written and so moved. It was seconded and approved. President Seiden stated that an ad hoc committee would write the resolution to be presented at the February 24 meeting for Board approval.

Following the noise ordinance discussion, Les Greenberg reported that at the January 28th Building and Planning Committee, the Commissioners voted to recommend authorizing advertisement of an ordinance that would ban new townhouse development in R6 and R6A zoning districts (comprised of single family detached homes, two-family detached, single semi-detached and townhouses). R6 and R6A districts are typically located near business districts and have denser development. Developers would like to demolish smaller houses in these districts, combine the lots and build townhouses, which would change the character of those neighborhoods. Townhouses would continue to be permitted in R7 zones (which include all of structures in R6 as well as 2-family semi-detached homes and apartments).

An example of the tear-down approach is the building of Waterford Walk Townhouses on S. Wyoming St. in Ardmore. The site at Cricket and Spring Avenues is another site under developer consideration, which would involve the demolition of 4 houses, for a total area of 1.3 acres for the construction of townhouses.

Commissioner Gordon added to his earlier report that Terry Foley of the City Avenue Development District has proposed converting the lot at the corner of Merion Road and City Avenue into additional parking for the SEPTA Overbrook station across the Avenue. The site

has stood empty for several years. Commissioner Gordon does not necessarily think this new use is a poor idea, however, if the neighborhood is opposed, action would need to be taken. Commissioner Gordon cautioned that Terry Foley has been successful in the past in achieving proposed changes to the district.

Commissioner Gordon reported on the “snow shoveling” incident of January 27 in Penn Wynne, characterized by some Lower Merion residents as an example of racial profiling on the part of the Lower Merion police. The incident involved African American males who were seen shoveling sidewalks during the heavy snow storm, and a call was made to the police to come investigate. One group of shovelers was described as young kids, the other older men. The police have stated that they do not harass youngsters, African American or white, who are shoveling, and tried to clarify the issue by stating that the age group of the people in question ranged from 18-35 and none of them had a work permit. The men detained were ordered to sit in the snow while waiting to be questioned, and some residents thought this type of treatment was inhumane. The men were subsequently released.

Based on these events, Commissioner Gordon, a member of the Township Police Committee, approached African American churches in Lower Merion to ask if they would like to participate in an open dialogue regarding police, recruitment, training, interactions with residents and profiling. The response was positive, and a meeting open to the community is scheduled for Sunday, February 8, 3:00-5:00 p.m. at the P.A.L.M. Senior Center at 117 Ardmore Avenue.

Old Business – None

New Business – Les Greenberg proposed that Directors contribute a modest refreshment for each meeting, and there was informal agreement to do so. There being no other new business, a motion was made and seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 9:40 p.m. The next meeting of the Board of Directors will be held at the Merion Tribute House on Tuesday, February 24, 2015.

Respectfully submitted,
Helen Guy, Secretary