

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE MERION CIVIC ASSOCIATION
MAY 26, 2015

The regular March meeting of the Board of Directors of the Merion Civic Association was held on Tuesday, May 26, 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, Ross, Rutzel, Seiden and Sinai.

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

Merion residents Karen Kotapka, Veniese Pommer, Roz Seiden, and Barbara Sylk 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 April meeting minutes were approved unanimously.

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

Speaker – The scheduled speaker, Al Wulff, of Symphony Square, cancelled his appearance before the Directors and neighbors due to unforeseen circumstances, and will reschedule.

President's Report – President Seiden announced that the second dues letter is being revised and will be sent out to all directors for comments and suggestions. The approximate mailing time is mid-late June.

President Seiden announced that Merion Civic Association director, George Ross, has been appointed to a four-year term on the Planning Commission, which oversees the Comprehensive Plan and reviews Building and Planning requests before they come before the Board of Commissioners. We congratulate Mr. Ross on his appointment and will look forward to monthly reports from him.

President Seiden requested a motion that the June 23 meeting start time be changed from 7:30 p.m. to 6:15 p.m. The motion was passed. The short business meeting will be followed by the traditional Directors annual picnic, which this year, will include Merion residents. Scott Feuer will invite post office staff and members of the Botanical Association. President Seiden will reach out to the Merion Community Association.

The Annual Flag Day Concert is scheduled for Thursday, June 11, starting at 7:00 on the lawn of the Tribute House. The concert will move indoors in the event of inclement weather.

Social Committee Members will meet to plan the June 23 picnic; the Membership Committee will meet during the summer to explore ways of bringing on new members. The Annual Meeting is scheduled for Sunday, October 18, 4:00-7:00 p.m.

Committee/Representative Reports:

Land Use, Zoning and Community Relations: Les Greenberg reported that Wendy's has still not appeared before the Planning Commission and may be rescheduled for July or August. Mr. Greenberg asked Director Sinai to report on the issue regarding Township exemption from following codes at properties leased by the Township. This exemption gives the Commissioners the power to use properties as they wish, without the consent of Lower Merion citizens. Two projects that fall in this category were the proposed move of the Bala Cynwyd farmer's market and the paving over of the Cricket Avenue parking lot. Township residents protested the power grab represented by the exemption and successfully urged the Commissioners to back down. It is encouraging to the citizenry that they are gaining some say in the affairs of the community and assuming their right to be fairly represented by the Board of Commissioners.

To quote the Main Line Times article on the subject, "The topic is a proposed ordinance that would extend the current exemption of township-owned properties used for governmental purposes from provisions of the zoning code. It would expand the relief to properties leased by the municipality.

One involves creation of a temporary public parking lot on a parcel at 47 and 55 Cricket Avenue, where two buildings in the Ardmore Historic District, a part of the former Gillane's Tavern and the former Cardone Printing building, have been approved for demolition.

The site is to be redeveloped in future with a mixed-use building of up to four stories, the owners have told the township. In the interim, the owners will lease the site to the township for parking during construction of Dranoff Properties' One Ardmore Place apartment-retail-parking project across the street.

At the same meeting, planners were asked to make a recommendation on a full waiver of the land development process for construction of the temporary lot. Exemption from code is being sought because a surface parking lot is not a permitted use in Ardmore's MUST (Mixed-Use Special Transit) zoning district. As planned, the lot would exceed a limit on impervious surface. Paving of 100 percent of the lot is proposed to maximize parking spaces at 45.

In the second situation, the Bala Cynwyd Farmers Market, which operated for its first five years on a portion of the parking lot of the GSB Building on Belmont Avenue, needs a new home for the 2015 season and future. Due to tenant needs, the GSB lot is no longer available."

The next discussion involved the amended height code in Bala Village along City Avenue extending from Orchard Lane to Oakland Terrace. Mr. Greenberg stressed that it is essential to push the Commissioners to extend the 38 ft. building height farther along City Avenue to Maple where the liquor store is, and possibly all the way to Bala Avenue.

There was a discussion about the empty lot at the intersection of Merion Road and City Avenue, on the Merion side. The lot appears to be cared for as there are potted planters along the lot, but there is an environmental question about whether the lot has been remediated from an oil spill several years ago.

Les Greenberg reported there was discussion at the last Federation meeting regarding the conversion by Federal Realty of second floor office space in the Wynnewood Shopping Center to apartments.

Train Station: Scott Feuer reported that the May 3 cleanup and planting of the flower boxes at the station and post office was a success and added that “Build On” volunteers from Harriton and Lower Merion High Schools came out to help and worked hard. The students worked hard and were receptive to learning some gardening skills. SEPTA is painting the train station buildings and structures, a long overdue project. Mr. Feuer reported that the steel beams supporting the canopy are eroding, and repair or replacement needs to be addressed. Mr. Feuer initiated a discussion about the Civic Association making a monetary donation to Build On in appreciation of the work done by the students. Not all directors were in favor of making the donation, however, Brian Gordon made a motion to make a donation of \$150 to Build On as a thank you to the group. The motion was seconded and passed by a majority vote count by Bruce Eisenberg.

Commissioner’s Report – Brian Gordon began his report by speaking to the “Merion” point of view in the Township, that of being aware of and protective of the quality of life we enjoy and making every effort to preserve that quality. He went on to congratulate and thank Director George Ross for his participation as a newly appointed member of the Planning Commission.

The topic of building height in Bala Village along City Avenue once again came up, and Commissioner Gordon stated that he will speak to Philip Rosenzweig of Ward 6 about this. The limit on building height needs to be firmed up as soon as possible in order to prevent builders from being able to increase the height. Bala Village has a guarantee for two blocks and seeks an additional 2-3 blocks.

Resident Barbara Sylk opened the topic of St. Joseph’s University student parking along Raynham Road. The students do not use the parking spaces that are provided for them on campus, and the University, although it does periodically patrol the street parking situation, has not mandated on-site parking. Ms. Sylk suggested that the 2-hour parking limit now posted could be dropped to 1-hour to discourage students from using neighborhood streets. It was noted that some students have parking at their dorm, but they find it easier to drive to the campus, where they park on the street. The Township would like to try the 1-hour parking along Raynham.

Old Business – None

New Business – There being no other new business, a motion was made and seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m. The next meeting of the Board of Directors will be held at the Merion Tribute House on Tuesday, June 23, 2015. The meeting will start at 6:15 p.m. with a picnic to follow the business meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Helen Guy, Secretary