

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF  
THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE MERION CIVIC ASSOCIATION  
November 26, 2013

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the Merion Civic Association was held on Tuesday, November 26, 2013, beginning at 7:30 p.m. at the Merion Tribute House with President Scott Kalner presiding.

Directors present were Anderson, Browne, Copeland, Eisenberg, Flaks, Gordon, Greenberg, Hill, Kalner, Lam, Lavoritano, Marmon, Murphy, Quinn, Ross, Rutzel, Seiden, Sinai and Stark.

Directors absent and excused were Ettelson, Feuer, Fratis, and Potok.

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by President Kalner. A motion was made and seconded and the October 22, 2013 minutes were approved unanimously.

**Treasurer's Report** – Robert Marmon presented the Treasurer's report for October 2013. We must reach out for new members and engage in fundraising to restore our assets to the higher previous levels. Upon motion made and seconded, the treasurer's report was approved unanimously.

**Guest Speakers:**

President Kalner introduced the first speaker of the evening, Lower Merion Police Officer Dave Herbst, who reported a copper downspout theft on Hazelhurst Avenue; there have been some early evening burglaries, but a decrease in burglaries overall the last couple of weeks. Surveillance cameras at the Hazelhurst address aided in capturing the burglars. Please be alert and call the police if you see any suspicious activity.

The second speaker of the evening was Eric Persson, Economic Development Specialist of Lower Merion Township, who was invited to present ideas to improve the Merion/Cynwyd Business District. The original master plan for the district was created in 2004, and is not a document many have seen, and is in need of an update. Mr. Persson's role is to energize the business community and to interest its members in implementing ideas in the plan. Mr. Persson's presentation included a list of improvements such as renovations to building facades, streetscape improvements, pedestrian crossings, as well as modifications to traffic flow. Store signage could be improved with the use of fabric awnings. There are parking opportunities in the lots behind businesses and meter parking could be increased. Cooperation amongst the store owners to provide a more attractive environment could increase the use of the lots, which would in turn increase convenience for more shoppers. Well-marked pedestrian crossings would improve safety across what is a very busy thoroughfare. PennDOT is not enthusiastic, however, about installing mid-block crossings as have been added in Ardmore – although this section of Montgomery Avenue is not a PennDOT road unlike Lancaster Avenue (Route 30) is in Ardmore. Other pedestrian safety improvements could include wider sidewalks and curb extensions. Wider sidewalks could also provide space for additional tree and landscape plantings, benches, lighting, trash receptacles and art work for a higher quality environment. Mr. Persson spent considerable time outlining the history of various traffic studies in the district, noting that because so much time has passed since the last study was done, a fresh look is required to examine how best to calm traffic, facilitate turns at crowded intersections and coordinate those plans with on-street parking. His presentation focused on specific trouble

stops of particular businesses and mentioned the difficulties presented to emergency vehicles trying to navigate busy intersections.

Bruce Eisenberg suggested that the residential and commercial property owners need to be more engaged with the business owners to energize change. The Merion Civic Association could get involved by giving neighborhood feedback to the business community.

Eric Persson could encourage property owners into becoming more involved by offering an anecdotal, informational and visual presentation of some of the possibilities. Mr. Persson is familiar with the solutions developed by other communities in the region and across the country, and showed slides with those examples. He noted that pedestrians feel safer when there are cars parked on the street to buffer the traffic, as opposed to being exposed to high speed traffic passing right next to the sidewalks, so on-street parking should be preserved as much as practical.

Mr. Persson offered a short term goal of meeting with the business partners (a meeting is scheduled for December 5), and a mid-term goal of creating consolidating parking. Monthly meetings with the business owners and representatives from the Merion and Bala Cynwyd civic organizations are tentatively scheduled for January and February.

Business owners can work with the Township through Mr. Persson to discuss façade change possibilities.

A motion was made and seconded to approve a resolution supporting the redevelopment of the Merion-Cynwyd Business District. Some of the wording was changed and the amended resolution was approved unanimously. The resolution supports decreasing 3 lanes of traffic to 2 lanes with a dedicated center left-turn lane. The resolution requests that the Township perform a traffic study for clearer direction on how to proceed. The resolution will be presented to the Township.

The amended and approved Resolution appears below:

#### RESOLUTION SUPPORTING REDEVELOPMENT OF THE MERION-CYNWYD BUSINESS DISTRICT

WHEREAS, in April 2004, the Neighborhood Club of Bala Cynwyd, the Merion Civic Association, the Lower Merion Commissioners representing Bala Cynwyd and Merion, and the Lower Merino Township staff commissioned a report (the "Report" that studied the intersection of Montgomery, Old Lancaster, and Levering Mill Roads in Lower Merion Township (the "Intersection");

WHEREAS, The Report concluded that Intersection, as then configured, could not fully accommodate the traffic volume experienced in the Intersection, resulting in repeated long waits on Montgomery, Levering Mill and Old Lancaster;

WHEREAS, the Intersection has been and continues to be hampered by the lack of a signaled and controlled left-hand turn signal onto Levering Mill and Old Lancaster Road(s);

WHEREAS, traffic experts report that left-hand turning lanes at traffic lights with a controlled left-hand turn signal can ease traffic congestion in intersections with up to 60,000 cars per day;

WHEREAS, the current traffic pattern at Levering Mill and Old Lancaster Road(s) result in a back-up of cars going east in the morning and west in the afternoon, consistently on all weekdays.

WHEREAS, it is the desire of the Merion community to have wider sidewalks, more street trees, more easily accessible and safer on-street parking in the business district that serves the neighborhood,

THEREFORE, IT IS RESOLVED: The Merion Civic Association requests that Lower Merion Township

1. Engage a consultant to perform a traffic study and analysis for Montgomery Ave. from Meeting House Road to Bangor Road to explore the feasibility of installing a temporary three lane configuration to assess the long-term feasibility and desirability of this arrangement.
2. Develop plans for streetscape improvements in the business district including additional street trees, planters, awnings, green spaces and uniform sidewalks.
3. Consider providing a crosswalk with flashing warning lights at the intersection of Montgomery Ave. and Parsons Road to facilitate a pedestrian crossing at this point and we reaffirm our support of this measure as an important traffic calming device that can also enhance pedestrian safety.
4. Consider providing a new traffic signal or crosswalk with flashing warning lights at Bangor Road and Montgomery Avenue to facilitate the walkability and improve pedestrian safety within this portion of the Merion Cynwyd Business District

Adopted this 26<sup>th</sup> Day of November 2013 by the Merion Civic Association.

Scott J. Kalner  
President, Merion Civic Association

**President's Report** – President Kalner reported that Bishop Senior of St. Charles Borromeo Seminary met separately with him and with the neighborhood group led by Todd Sinai. Requests for proposals have gone out and about 40 developers may be interested in submitting plans. A decision on a short list will likely be made in January. Bishop Senior said that the Archdiocese did not wish to provide a copy of the RFP to the MCA and limited its availability to potential developers. President Kalner also stated that St. Charles is not interested in having an adversarial relationship with the Wynnewood and Merion communities. According to Bishop Senior, the developers will not be able to control the property until the issues concerning entitlements has been resolved and it is in the Seminary's interest to have the zoning issues settled expeditiously to allow them to receive payments from the developer as expeditiously as possible.

President Kalner moved on to a report of the Comprehensive Plan, which the Township hopes to finish by September 2014. The Comprehensive Plan is focusing on some of the smaller commercial districts, such as Penn Wynne, Gladwyne, Penn Valley and Merion.

Before receiving Committee reports, President Kalner briefly described his goals for the Civic Association committees. He would like them to become more active, more effective, and better defined as working committees. To that end he will be scheduling meetings in December and January to meet with the committees that have the most urgent work to do, which includes

increasing membership, collecting more dues, brainstorming fund-raising ideas and revising the by-laws, which have not been updated for over 20 years.

The Committee member assignments are still in draft form and Scott would like to finalize them at the meeting in January.

### **Commissioner's Report:**

Commissioner Gordon reported on a community meeting regarding the Merion Botanical Garden, the purpose of which was to gather ideas about how park users envision the park in the future after so many changes which took place in the last couple of years. The consensus was a wish to have the park revert to what it was before the major clean-up began and maintaining the plant materials in a healthy condition. The landscape architect at the meeting, Diana Mancini from Pennoni, the Township Engineer, gave the opinion that some of the stepping stones are hazardous and need to be reworked. Tami Stark objected to the idea of making the stones "too safe" for children, a trend that has been incorporated into many playgrounds locally and across the country. Tami's children enjoy the adventure of crossing the stream and an informal hand vote was unanimous that the stepping stones should be left as they are.

Commissioner Gordon reported on other topics: There appears to be no available Township funding for building a pedestrian crossing over the train bridge on Rockland Avenue, so the idea has little traction. Township Manager Doug Cleland will be retiring at the end of January 2014 and the Commissioners have enlisted the services of a recruiter to find a candidate to fill the position. The new Township Manager position is being advertised with a base salary of \$180,000 for the position.

### **Committee/Representative Reports:**

**Federation of Civic Associations** -- Kevin Murphy reported that an email voting method is being looked at as a more efficient option for carrying on the business of the Federation.

**Community Action, Zoning and PR** -- Les Greenberg reported that there are several barns on the Ashbridge Park property that are in danger of being demolished as part of a Township effort to repurpose a portion of the park with private developers.

**Website** – Michael Seiden reported that he has added 6 more Merion Civic Association Yearbooks to the website. A discussion followed about composing a 2013 yearbook to mark the Centennial

**Old Business** – None

**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, January 28, 2014 at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Helen Guy, Secretary