

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE MERION CIVIC ASSOCIATION
October 22, 2013

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the Merion Civic Association was held on Tuesday, October 22, 2013, beginning at 7:30 p.m. at the Merion Tribute House with President Scott Kalner presiding.

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

Directors absent and excused were Ettelson, Flaks, Fratis, Lam, Marmon and Potok.

Merion neighbors Karla Moras, Ed Greenberg, Tom West, Dotty Brown, Bill Katz, and Roz Seiden also attended.

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by President Kalner. A motion was made and seconded and the September 24, 2013 minutes were approved unanimously.

Treasurer's Report – Dave Rutzel presented the Treasurer's report for September 2013

President Kalner called upon Kevin Murphy, chair of the Nominating Committee, to proceed with the nominations for the Executive Committee members of president, first vice-president, third vice-president and treasurer, who were respectively, as follows: Scott Kalner, Michael Seiden, Les Greenberg and Bob Marmon. Nominations were made and seconded and all were approved unanimously.

Kevin Murphy introduced and welcomed the new directors who were approved at the Annual Meeting: Cary Anderson, Graham Copeland, George Ross, Todd Sinai and Tami Stark.

Guest Speakers:

President Kalner introduced Adath Israel Rabbi Eric Yanoff, who, unable to attend the entire meeting, introduced the guest speakers of the evening, [George Broseman was supposed to attend but was not able to be there] Greg Adelman, the land use attorney working for Adath Israel, Natalie Malawey from Becker & Frondorf, project manager for the synagogue Lisa Dustin of Atkin Olshin Schade, project architect and Lisa Sandler, past president of Adath Israel who each addressed aspects of the planned renovation project at Adath Israel synagogue, which is located at the corner of Highland Avenue and Old Lancaster Road, across the street from the Bala Cynwyd Library and the Kohelet school.

The Adath Israel renovation and addition project will take place in 3 phases: roof replacement, sanctuary renovation and replacement of the entry lobby. There will be minimal visible change to the exterior of the buildings; offices will be moved; the courtyard will be renovated; there will be a 4500 sq ft increase in floor space; the parking lot will be resurfaced, and the number of parking spaces will remain the same. Green space within the parking lot will be increased as part of this work. The sanctuary is scheduled to be completed in the summer of 2014. Depending on available funding and the financing process, the project may be pushed out one year. Stormwater runoff management will be introduced to minimize damage to adjacent residential properties.

President's Report – President Kalner noted that, upon receiving an official notification of the ZHB hearing, he contacted the land use attorney to request that a presentation be made to the MCA. President Kalner said that the current Township policy on the notification of civic associations of a pending zoning hearing board (ZHB) application or land development application. As told to President Kalner by Bob Duncan, head of the Township Department of Building and Planning, applicants may be told about the local active civic association but are not required to contact or appear before that organization. President Kalner also brought this issue to the attention of the Federation of Civic Associations and a letter to the Township requesting a change in current policy, requiring those with a land use application appear before the local civic association, will be drafted.

President Kalner gave an update on the St. Charles Borromeo Seminary land use decisions. Bishop Senior has engaged a consultant to manage its request for proposals and an RFP is expected to be out in the next month. President Kalner reported that Bishop Senior has been reasonably willing so far to share the details of the process, and he will look to meet with Bishop Senior to get an update on the RFP process.

Frances Quinn presented the details of the neighborhood group called the Coalition for Neighborhood Character and Quality, formed with the purpose of maintaining open communication between the Merion community and St. Charles Borromeo Seminary regarding land development of the 45 of 75 acres to be sold by the Seminary. The area proposed to be sold is bounded by Lancaster, City and East Wynnewood Avenues. The neighborhood concerns are greater density, parking and traffic problems, the destruction of open space, with a loss of quality and aesthetics of the Merion neighborhood.

A meeting of the Coalition is scheduled for Wednesday, November 6 at 7:30 p.m. at the Merion Tribute House, to inform the audience of what is known to date about plans. The goals of the group include focusing on preserving the quality of life in the community, green space, low density of development; participating in land use planning; informing members of the Coalition and the surrounding neighborhoods of the progress of planning; and providing advice to affected neighborhoods regarding other developments along East Wynnewood Road. More information is available at www.stopmakingdense.org

A discussion followed, in which it was noted that the Parks and Recreation department of the Township submitted a proposal to use some of the open space for fields for sports activities, presumably in order to establish a presence for such use before developers enter the picture. Commissioner Liz Rogan has led this effort to use the fields and the initial proposal was modified in response to concerns voiced by neighbors regarding traffic access from Wynnewood Road. The modified proposal has not yet been addressed by Bishop Senior, the Rector of the school and it is expected that no action will be taken on it, pending the review of development proposals for the site.

President Kalner said that he and Michael Seiden met with Mary Jo Daley and her local chief of staff, David Toth, regarding the potential to provide a pedestrian bridge at Rockland Avenue. Ms. Daley noted the difficulty of obtaining funding for this type of projects, particularly in the climate of the stalled transportation funding bill in the state legislature. Following the meeting, David Toth contacted President Kalner to say that Narberth is interested in the project and he will be setting up a meeting with the Borough and the Township to discuss the issue further.

On October 28 there will be a review of the work to date performed by the Comprehensive Plan committees. The written summary of their work is entitled by the Township staff as the 'Compendium.' Commissioner Gordon asked President Kalner, a member of the Land Use Committee, to assure that the outline of the work faithfully depicts their ideas and not those superimposed by the Township. The Land Use Committee will meet on November 12, focusing on the commercial districts in the Township.

Commissioner -- Commissioner Gordon began his report with an update on the neighborhood policing meetings that were held to discuss the recent spate of burglaries in Merion and what the Lower Merion police are doing to prevent burglaries and apprehend the burglars. He acknowledged that there was some negative feedback from the community because the "parlor" meetings were not advertised, but Commissioner Gordon stated that his intent in holding these meetings was to keep them small and manageable, and said the meetings were a success in getting the word out on how to protect homes from burglary. He urged all to get out into the neighborhood, especially on foot, to help in reporting any unusual activity. The next parlor meeting is scheduled for November 14 at 431 N. Latch's Lane.

The next update concerned the Merion/Cynwyd Business district. Commissioner Gordon spoke with Eric Persson, the Township staff person responsible for economic development, to discuss improving the appeal of the area with awnings, plantings, improved sidewalks; he proposed a pilot study for redesigning turning lanes; Mr. Persson will next be meeting with the business owners to re-establish the business association.

Commissioner Gordon spoke about the M.U.S.T. district in Ardmore where the zoning incentives could lead to buildings of up to 9 floors to be developed; Commissioner Gordon is in favor of changing the zoning to restrict the height of buildings to six floors. The discussion that followed was in agreement that "high rises" in Ardmore would be overwhelming and change the character of the community.

Commissioner Gordon spoke about the Township budget process. The Commissioners would like the Township to focus on the pay scale of Township workers and their benefits packages. These items are a sizable part of the budget and Commissioner Gordon noted that there is little in the formula to stop their growth. There has been a budget surplus in the Township over the last 4-5 years without an increase in the real estate tax assessment for the last 2-3 years.

Committee/Representative Reports:

Federation of Civic Associations -- Kevin Murphy reported that the main topic at the last Federation meeting was effort to make the Commissioners more accountable to the civic associations, and more effort will go into becoming a presence at Township meetings. On school district issues, the Federation is requesting a delay in the decision on redistricting for the two high schools.

Each civic association gave a "state of the civic" report at the last Federation meeting.

Train Station/Post Office and Grounds - Scott Feuer reported that the Merion train station clean-up was successful and the Idris Road project is almost complete, a project that has taken a year of planning. New drains, curbing and plantings are complete, with special thanks to Merion neighbor and new director, George Ross, for his efforts to assure neighborhood

participation in the decisions made. Commissioner Gordon and Scott Feuer will contact Amtrak regarding maintaining a clean environment around the tracks after work is completed.

Botanical - President of the Botanical Association, Jeff Cepull, reported that the remediation project on the park side of the tracks has begun. The banks of the stream are to be reinforced to accept the additional water that will flow into the stream as a result of the pipework laid on the Idris Rd. side to draw excess water away from the railroad tracks.

Community Action, Zoning and PR -- Les Greenberg reported that the developers of the Wynnewood shopping center restaurant are appealing the Zoning Hearing Board rulings on square footage, hours of operation and noise. Adath Israel is planning renovations to the synagogue. The Schiller Avenue townhouse proposal is drawing attention to a density issue.

Narberth Fire Company/Union Fire Company - Kevin Murphy reported there were 23 fire alarms in the past month, 20 of them in Lower Merion. Both firehouses need more volunteers and are also in the middle of fundraising campaigns.

Website – Michael Seiden reported that he has added 4 more Merion Civic Association Yearbooks to the website: 1914, 1915, 1919 and 1927.

Old Business – None

New Business – Karla Moras asked if there was any news about the catenaries along the railroad tracks which Amtrak is planning to install. Amtrak is supposed to be presenting a report on the impact of their proposed work on the area.

There being no more 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, November 26, 2013 at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Helen Guy, Secretary