

Merion

Civic Association



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Merion, PA 19066

President's Message

By Scott Feuer



Dear Neighbors,
Summer is over and the Merion Civic Association (MCA) is back in session and focused on issues of concern to our community. As some of you are aware, due to the passing of Margot Flaks, who was our current president, I am assuming her responsibilities as first vice president for the remainder of her designated term. With the start of this new year for our Civic, I am happy to begin my two-year term as President.

There are some very important issues that we will be monitoring throughout the year, all of which affect us as neighbors.

- Saint Joseph's University and the use of the old Episcopal Academy property. Please see a related article by Merion Commissioner Brian Gordon on page 2 of this newsletter.

- Amtrak spraying pesticides along the railroad tracks
- Lower Merion Comprehensive Plan Land Development
- Pilot Program for Off-Leash Dog areas in Lower Merion
- Ardmore Transit Project
- "Lock for Life" Program
- School Board issues, related to the new high school

Let me invite you to attend our MCA meetings, to become more informed, express your thoughts on and take an active role with respect to these pertinent issues. Every resident needs to be involved in the community process in order to keep our community a desirable place to live. We value your input and are always looking for new Directors of our association.

Finally, the Merion Civic Association has planned several events for the fall season. They include:

- **Annual Meeting on Sunday October 19th** at the Merion Tribute House. Our speaker will be Brenda Viola. Please see the related article on this page.

- Merion Fall Station and Grounds Clean-up on Sunday November 2nd
- Neighbor-to-Neighbor Lecture Series

Please feel free to contact me or any member of the Board of Directors with any questions or concerns you may have.

Merion Civic Annual Meeting Speaker to Highlight Importance of Local Government Communication

By Janet Rutzel



On Sunday October 19th from 4:00 - 7:00 PM, the Merion Civic Association will host its Annual

Meeting at the Merion Tribute House. After a brief meeting and a talk by a guest speaker, a light dinner will follow. Please come out for this interesting, informative and fun gathering.

This year, our special guest speaker will be **Ms. Brenda Viola**, Lower Merion Township Public Information Officer. She will be speaking on the importance of local government communicating with its citizens.

Joining the staff at Lower Merion Township in July 2001 brought Public Information Officer Brenda Viola's career full circle. Starting out as a news reporter/anchor for a local TV station in South Jersey, she moved to Pennsylvania in the late 80's, winning a slot as one of the original QVC show hosts.

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Commissioner's Report

By Brian Gordon

Merion Civic Annual Meeting Speaker

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Moving behind the scenes into TV production and community relations, Ms. Viola was Program Director for the former Harron Cable Television and is now back in front of the camera as producer/host for many of Lower Merion's Government Access Channel (LMTV) programs. Recently, Ms. Viola produced a series of programs highlighting area communities and their civic associations. The Merion Civic Association thanks Ms. Viola for giving it the opportunity to promote Merion as part of this series.

Along with her television duties, Ms. Viola writes and publishes the quarterly Information Newsletter, which is mailed to all residents. The Civic Express publication, sent quarterly to all business and civic associations, also falls under her purview.

Handling press inquiries, writing news releases and coordinating special events, while serving as the Township's liaison to the Cable TV Advisory Committee and responding to open records policy requests are also the responsibilities of the Public Information Officer.

Named the Township's "Outstanding Senior Manager" in 2003 and Manager of the 2004 "Outstanding Work Unit - LMTV," Ms. Viola enjoys using all forms of media to educate citizens about their Township government. She received her BA in Communications, specializing in Radio/Television and Film from Glassboro State College (Rowan University).



As I consider the conflict between the neighbors and Saint Joseph's University, one passage from Deuteronomy 19 comes to mind. "You shall not move your neighbor's landmarks set up by previous generations..." The logic of this 3,000 year-old rule, which is the cornerstone of Anglo-American property law, is clear. If you move your neighbor's boundary markers,

at best, you will create confusion as to who owns what, whose flocks may graze where, and who may till and reap crops from land to survive. At worst, moving a boundary marker in your favor is like stealing and will cause anger and conflict. We all know that no boundary marker whatsoever was moved as Saint Joseph's University moved into its new property on the former Episcopal Academy campus. But to each side, it does not feel that way.

The neighbors feel as though the new proposed fields have moved a marker in time as to hours of play and days of the week when fields would be used. The neighbors recall that most of the Episcopal Academy games were played while neighbors were at work with a limited number of games on the weekends and are concerned that the University's use may entail a wholesale shift to times of rest when neighbors will want some relief from cheering fans and player names and stats. Neighbors are worried that a public address system or over-use, by any number of teams attracted to NCAA fields, will end their quiet enjoyment of the neighborhood. Neighbors also feel the home-run net and artificial turf will be an eyesore.

Saint Joseph's University feels that their boundary marker has been moved as well. They purchased the Episcopal Academy site with a clear vision of what they wished to do with the property. They shared their ideas with the neighbors before and after the sale. The University relied on what appeared to be neighborhood acceptance of their plans as well as their property rights in agreeing to a substantial purchase price. However, as their plans became more concrete, proposed uses alarmed neighbors and a sound sensitivity issue surfaced. The University is now being told their plans and vision must be timed in order to make their uses fit within a neighborhood.

A resolution of this conflict can and will be found. Ultimately, the solution should be negotiated rather than one imposed from on high. The reason is that land use boards and the courts are not only expensive, but the law does not allow the same precision in crafting a resolution as the parties can reach on their own.

To negotiate a solution, the University must understand deeply the impact of its various proposed uses on the neighborhood. Likewise, the neighbors must understand deeply the vision, needs and desires of the University and how they may be accommodated while preserving the quiet enjoyment and character of this remarkably beautiful neighborhood. Both sides have exhibited a capacity for this understanding. Now they must work to achieve it.

Brian Gordon, Township Commissioner may be reached at

biangordon4@aol.com • Cell 215.939.1441



Déjà Vu – All Over Again

By Janet Rutzel

Based heavily on excerpts from an article written by Margot Flaks for the Fall 2002 issue of this newsletter.

As discussions continue over proposed renovations to the Maguire Campus of Saint Joseph’s University (formerly Episcopal Academy), we are reminded that certain issues repeatedly pop up in our community...

BUDGET

Item 2008: At this juncture, township commissioners are grappling with the issue of balancing the township budget. This may require an increase in taxes OR the scaling back of services. It is thought that cuts such as reduced library hours, changes in trash pick-up, etc. may be required.

Item 2002: There has been much discussion lately about the need to increase revenue and pare expenses in the township. As the township manager and the commissioners have sought ways to cut costs, it has been suggested that the cessation of rear yard trash collections might be one way to conserve funds. In 1914, residents paid to have trash (which also included ashes that had to be handled separately) and garbage disposed of. Apparently there was some dissatisfaction with the procedure for in 1914, the members of the Civic Association were promised that a new means of collection had “been perfected” and would be carried out as soon as the contract was “placed in more efficient hands.” In 1915, it was announced that the system was indeed perfected and that the township would now collect garbage free of charge.

MOSQUITOS

Item 2008: This summer, a case of West Nile virus was identified in the township. As a result, aerial spraying in the township took place amidst some controversy.

Item 2002: During the last two summers the West Nile Virus has been a source of concern and has prompted health officials to remind us of the need to keep mosquito populations down.

In the 1915 an inspector from Philadelphia’s Department of Health found the (mosquito) problem overwhelming for there were “faulty garbage receptacles, impractical manure piles, stagnant water...” The president stated that he had hoped the Civic Association might provide a solution, but the problem was so widespread that all the Association could do was to offer a simple set of rules that individual homeowners might carry out independently. The problems must have continued, for in 1917, the president reprimanded the community saying that when homeowners left for vacations no provisions were made to eliminate breeding places and earlier efforts “were rendered useless.”

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Item 2008: In July, a group of citizens concerned about proposed changes to Saint Joseph’s Maguire Campus formed the Merion Community Coalition (MCC). The MCC is concerned that changes from the property’s current use might adversely impact the tranquility of their neighborhood. Most at issue is the possibility of increased noise from athletic fields, increased traffic from collegiate sports fans and the use of netting to contain baseballs from exiting the fields and injuring neighbors.

Item 2002: During the past year and a half there have been many meetings with very heated discussions concerning the renovation of the Merion School. Most would agree that an enlarged library is important and a new gymnasium would be a plus, but what about the loss of green space and increased traffic the gym would bring as community groups use the gym in the evening hours?

Continued on next column

Please Join the Merion Civic Association

Enclosed are my/our dues for 2008:

- \$15.00 Individual
- \$25.00 Couples
- \$35.00 Family
- \$50.00 Business
- \$100.00 Institutional
- \$100.00 Patron
- \$500.00 Sponsor

Other _____

Name

Address

City/State/Zip

Phone Number

E-Mail

Merion Civic Association is a 501(c)(3) organization. Your dues are tax-deductible. Please ask your company if they will match your donation.

Please make checks payable to **MCA** and return with this form to:

**Merion Civic Association,
Merion Station, PA 19066**

Déjà Vu

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It’s difficult to believe there was a time when there was no public school in Merion. The Annual Report for 1921 informed the community that a committee from the Civic Association met with the School Board to review two possible sites for a school on Bowman Avenue. It was hoped that a purchase would be made. “However, it was not proposed to erect the building for there was not yet a sufficient demand for the school.”



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The Merion Civic Association

Meets at 7:45 PM (7:30 PM in winter months) the fourth Tuesday of each month except December, July and August at the Merion Tribute House. (call 610.664.0441 to confirm time). To address the association, please call 610.664.0441 and request to be added to the agenda. Community members are always invited to attend the meetings, contact the Association with a concern or submit articles of community interest to the newsletter (c/o Merion Civic Association, Merion, PA 19066).

Officers and Directors of

The Merion Civic Association

President **Scott Feuer**
1st Vice President **Kevin Murphy**
2nd Vice President **Janet Rutzel**
Treasurer **Bob Levin**
Secretary **Cynthia DeStefano**

Ann Bagley **Renee Hill**
Randy Blakeney **Scott Kalner**
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James Ettelson **Marjorie Mudrick**
Francis Ferdinand **Martin Piltch**
Irene Frank **Frances Quinn**
Peter Gardner **Jim Stevenson**
Brian Gordon **Nancy Tompkins**

Newsletter Committee

Janet Rutzel, editor
Scott Feuer, design & layout
Cynthia DeStefano, distribution

Streets, Lights, Traffic and Potholes!

For any concerns you may have, please phone Renee Hill, chairperson of the Merion Civic Association's Streets, Lights and Traffic Committee. 610-664-0441

Please Remember to Pick Up After Your Dogs

To those residents...and there are many of you...who pick up after your dogs in our neighborhoods, **THANK YOU!** To the few of you who do not, please understand that cleaning up after your pet is the law in Merion.

Community Calendar

Saturday October 11th and Sunday October 12th, Fall Clean-up Weekend

8:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Robert J. Koegel Public Works Complex, Woodbine Avenue. Free disposal of refuse and recycling material. NO HAZARDOUS WASTE. Proof of Residency required.

Sunday October 19th, Merion Civic Association Annual Meeting

4:00 - 7:00 PM, Merion Tribute House, Hazelhurst Avenue.

Ms. Brenda Viola will speak on "Local Government Communicating with its Citizens" after a brief meeting. A reception with light hors d'oeuvres will follow.

Saturday October 25th, Hazardous Waste Drop-Off

9:00 PM - 3:00 PM, Robert J. Koegel Public Works Complex, Woodbine Avenue. Free disposal of Hazardous Waste. Proof of Residency required.

Sunday November 2nd, Fall Station Clean-up

9:30 AM, Merion Train Station

Bring gloves, rakes and clippers and join your neighbors to keep the station sparkling!

Merion Civic Association Meetings at Merion Tribute House:

October 28th, 7:45 PM

November 25th, 7:30 PM

January 27th, 7:30 PM

