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MERION, PA 1906

FALL ISSUE 2012

#### COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

By Brian Gordon Commissioner 12th Ward & a Director of MCA



You can't always get what you want, but if you try sometimes... As I think about what to include in this report, these Rolling Stones lyrics came to mind as fitting for my work on the Board of Commissioners over the past year. I tend to seek perfection. I am a bit stubborn. I fight for what I believe in. I try my best to persuade 13 or at least 7 other commissioners. Sometimes I get frustrated

in not being able to do more. But when I look back, I believe that I, or more correctly we, have achieved a lot over the past year. I do have to remember that there are 13 other commissioners who sometime see the world differently than I do.I wish to thank the Merion Civic, other Civics, the Federation of Civic Associations and individual members of our community for their advocacy. We have accomplished a lot.

City Ave Re-Zoning – The late Marty Piltch loudly and clearly articulated the character of our community and, with the help of others, slew the proposal in the draft City Ave Rezoning for a 300 feet building height limit down to 200 feet height limit and then only buildings closer to the Philadelphia Expressway. As a community we got planners to break the District into separate zones with individual heights. I was able to carve out and save space for future recreational paths and green buffers by conveying a vision of the new Zoning District as one which included linear parks and important connections for bikers, and joggers and people with disabilities who may wish to travel along recreation pathways which now can become part of the new Zoning District.

Anti-Discrimination Ordinance – I was honored to co-author an ordinance, that, for the first time in Lower Merion, made discrimination based on sexual orientation in housing, public accommodations and employment unlawful. The ordinance created a local Human Relations Commission (HRC) to mediate discrimination cases for all protected classes (race, religion, gender, national origin, etc.) and a hearing board to decide cases involving victims of discrimination based on sexual orientation who have no place else to go to resolve claims at an administrative level. Over the past year, I worked closely with the LM HRC to adopt regulations and procedures to ensure the creation of a Human Relations Commission as envisioned by the Board of Commissioners.

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#### PRESIDENT'S WORD

By Kevin Murphy



The past two years as President of the Merion Civic Association have been a life altering experience. I have really learned a lot

and met new and interesting members of our community along the way. I hope that in some small way my efforts within the Merion Civic Association, not just as President but over the past 13 years, has made an impact in the community that I am proud to call home. It truly has been an honor to serve the residents of Merion.

There have been many events both locally and nationally that have impacted the citizens of Merion. As we all know, the art collection of the Barnes Museum leaving Merion was a great disappointment. Many feel as if we have lost a huge part of Merion's

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#### COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

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Green Parking Lot Ordinance – I am continuing to work with the Lower Merion Environmental Advisory Council (EAC) and Township staff to create a cutting edge ordinance that will mandate groves of trees across parking lots instead of a sea of asphalt. The ordinance will also require rain gardens in parking lots to help recharge storm water on-site instead of overloading our creeks and streams with excessive storm water.

#### **Religious Property Conversion**

**Ordinance** – Older religious properties with historic character are unprotected by historic ordinances and are at risk of being torn down when congregations move on or dwindle in size and members. We are now working on an ordinance to allow conversion of religious to residential properties based on the underlying zoning, where their property is designated as an historic resource. This designation will promote development which complies with the Department of the Interior Standards for Historic Structures which will ensure compatibility with the surrounding often historic community.

**Police** – I am pleased to report the hiring, training and swearing in of new police officers and we are back up to our force levels of 136 officers.

Call me any time to discuss Township or neighborhood issues.

Yours sincerely, Brian Gordon, Commissioner 12th Ward

O: 610.667.4500 H: 610.667.4445 M: 215.939.1441

#### PRESIDENT'S WORD

Continued from Cover

history with the move to Philadelphia. Looking forward, the plans for the grounds and to enhance the Arboretum at the Barnes will hopefully make a place that the community will enjoy.

The purchase of the former Episcopal Academy by St. Joseph's University has also affected our Merion community. There have been many challenges between the goals of SJU and the impact on the neighborhood. St. Joseph's has been a neighbor and participant in the Civic Association for many years. Recognizing that they will be here for many more decades, we hope to redevelop a relationship with the University so that their college community and our civic community can work together on issues that impact both of us.

Redistricting is a national topic that will impact many in Lower Merion Township. Merion will soon have a new Congressman, Chaka Fattah, who came to a well-attended civic association meeting to introduce himself. As our guest, he began to establish a solid relationship with the Merion community for the years to come.

Lastly, the redevelopment of City Avenue will greatly impact Merion. This has been a topic within the Township that has caused much discussion. As the Township moves forward with their plans, we hope to have input and relay the concerns of Merion residents. We are optimistic that with open lines of communication, the Township will integrate the ideas brought forth from our civic.

With all of that said, I moved to Merion to raise a family, to send my children to one of the best school districts in the country and to get involved in a community that has a bright future. We live in a beautiful, safe and friendly environment which is due to our concerned citizens. I feel very fortunate to be a resident of Merion.

Looking forward, Scott Kalner is Merion Civic Association's incoming President. Scott will continue to look out for the best interests of the Merion Community. Scott has been an advocate for our schools and is active in the Township as a participant in the Comprehensive Plan and currently chairs the Historical Architectural Review Board. He is well qualified for the job. I wish Scott luck and will do what I can to assist him as Merion Civic celebrates 100 years in existence. As we reach this milestone, check with Civic Board members that you know to see if there's something that you can do to help. The time commitment is not huge but the impact is significant.

"We live in a beautiful, safe and friendly environment which is due to our concerned citizens. I feel very fortunate to be a resident of Merion."

## WHAT HAS BEEN DONE IN SIXTEEN YEARS BY THE MERION CIVIC ASSOCIATION

(From the Sixteenth Year Book, 1929)

- Changed an intermittent police force of one policeman at night to six policemen at night and from one to three during the day;
- Employs two special policemen of its own for the additional protection of the community from burglary;
- 3. Rearranged the Cynwyd and Narberth fire engine service so that both companies will respond to an alarm;
- 4. Reduced fire insurance rates in Merion from 12% to 30%;
- 5. Had new fire hydrants placed in Merion, so that now no house is farther than 700 feet from a hydrant;
- 6. Placed maps, showing the location of every house in Merion, in the {ire engine houses;
- 7. Erected eight fire gongs, to be rung in case of absence of telephone communication at a fire;
- 8. Signed a contract, by which the electric and telephone companies will, in time, both string on one set of poles instead of two as now, eliminating highway poles;
- 9. Has started to remove every electric light and telephone pole from the roads of Merion;
- 10. Has a continuous authoritative analysis made of the milk and cream supplied in Merion;
- 11. Has regular monthly analysis made by an expert chemist of the water supplied to Merion homes;
- 12. For greater safety of children, it had the automobile speed limit reduced from 24 to 15 miles on three of its principal roads;
- 13. Has pressure tests made of all of the fire hydrants in Merion;
- 14. Placed the first map ever made of Merion in the railroad station for the information of strangers;
- 15. Has eliminated public dumps in Merion;
- 16. Put thirty-four litter cans on the roads;
- 17. Has had miles of new roadways laid, and is taking up each road in Merion and having new roads laid down or old roads resurfaced;
- 18. Has started to have all new roadways laid down from curb to curb, thus eliminating all maintenance of gutters to property owner;
- 19. Has induced property owners to lay uniform sidewalks;
- 20. Has induced property owners to set back their fences and hedges so as to eliminate the danger to pedestrians and motorists at corners;
- 21. Has created community bulletin boards of cast iron and cork face for the posting of notices;



# ROSTER OF MEMBERS OF THE MERION CIVIC ASSOCIATE MEN—306 MEMBERS pertian arcelherchine are divided into six clauses, reliant memberships are divided into six clauses, reliant to trult privileges in the Association. The auxiliary of the member for the support too, which depends entirely for the second of memberships are accorded to the control of the support too, which depends entirely for the second of the control of the support too, and the control of the support too, and the support to the suppo

# MERION COMMUNITY GARDEN AT THE TRAIN STATION By Carol Lavoritano

Our community garden at the Merion train station continues to thrive. Most of the areas left blank and weedy by Amtrak spraying have been filled with a variety of hardy perennials, with a goal of low maintenance with four season interest and color. This year we added a few more annuals for a bright pop. The Merion train

station was again
nominated for a
Community
Greening
Award from
the Philadelphia
Horticultural Society.

The Community Greening Award celebrates public green spaces in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware. The annual award is a joint project of **PHS and Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful**, a nonprofit that promotes and protects Pennsylvania's natural and community environments. It recognizes those who have made a difference by planting and maintaining

quality green spaces that are open to the public.

The notice of the nomination came fortuitously – right after Scott

Feuer and Helen Guy

had made a midseason cleanup. They did a great job trimming away dead growth, weeding and refreshing the stone edging. At this writing, award winners have not yet been announced.

Fall clean up and planting is scheduled for Sunday, October 21st, starting at 9:30am.

## MARTY PILTCH (1926-2011)

#### Past President and Director of Merion Civic Association



Marty was a civicminded citizen who believed in actively participating in community affairs. He attended many meetings in the

Township building and was known throughout the Township as someone who knew how his Township worked. Having been active in the Wynnefield Civic Association he joined the Merion Civic Association after moving into Lower Merion. He eventually became President of Merion Civic and then continued as a Director.

In addition to Township affairs in general, Marty was very interested in the care and replacement of the street trees in Merion. Marty had taken the horticulture courses at the Barnes Foundation and became interested in how Lower Merion took care of its trees. He concentrated on the street trees in his part of the township.

He belonged to the Lower Merion Botanical Society and contributed his advice to the township about the trees along the streets of Merion. Eventually he was asked to join the Shade Tree Commission. When he had served that group and had retired to private citizenship he was asked to join the group putting together the guiding rules for overseeing and preserving the historic buildings remaining in the township.

He then joined the Historic Commission and became the chairman. Marty was not afraid to speak up and did so regularly at various commissioners'

Continued on page 6

## WHAT HAS BEEN DONE IN SIXTEEN YEARS BY THE MERION CIVIC ASSOCIATION

Continued from page 3

- 22. Erected 115 road-signs, all at its own expense, so that now Merion is the only community on the Main Line that has every road marked;
- 23. Erected 208 new electric lamps, which have been pronounced by experts and architects to be the most beautiful and practical lamps ever designed for any community;
- 24. Removed all of the old wooden and disfiguring "Blow Your Horn-Danger" signs and substituted fifty-four cast iron and artistic signs;
- 25. Erected five boundary signs, showing the boundaries of Merion, for the convenience of motorists;
- 26. Abolished the toll-gates on the Lancaster and Montgomery Pikes. The abolishment of the toll-gates on Lancaster Pike as entirely of its own initiative;
- 27. Changed the method of lighting of the roads from the old-fashioned method of gas to the modern method of electricity;
- 28. Has started the uniform tree planting of roads;
- 29. Has had a path made through the snow on every sidewalk with a plow drawn by a horse after each snowfall;
- 30. Arranged for the free transportation of pupils to and from the township public schools;
- 31. Caused burglary insurance rates to be reduced by its protective service, so that Merion now has the same rates as the central part of Philadelphia;
- 32. Put in the homes of members of the Association police whistles to be used in case of emergency;
- 33. Secured a division of the old election district, so that

  Merion now has its own election district with the polling-place
  on the Community Grounds;
- 34. Secured a separate Commissioner for Merion's own representation on The Lower Merion Township Commission;
- 35. Secured a new railroad station and a new and separate post office building and a more adequate postal equipment;
- 36. Contributed \$1,356 for the equipment of the new post-office building;
- 37. Inspired a new landscape gardening effect of the railroad station grounds, giving to Merion the most artistically planted station on the Main Line;
- 38. Established the first Red Cross house, entirely devoted to Red Cross activities, in the United States;

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### WHAT HAS BEEN DONE IN SIXTEEN YEARS BY THE MERION CIVIC ASSOCIATION

Continued from page 4

- 39. Created the first Honor Roll in this vicinity of the residents of Merion who entered the service of their country during the Great War;
- 40. Financed the starting of 30 war gardens for those of moderate incomes in Merion;
- 41. Created, directly after the Great War, a neighborhood sentiment for a Community House, raised \$81,000 for such a purpose, accepted, on behalf of the community, the munificent gift of Mr. Eldridge R. Johnson, and originated and furthered the idea of a separate organization, The Merion Community Association, for the carrying out and maintenance of Mr. Johnson's gift to the community.
- 42. Inaugurated a company of 10 "Minute Men"; residents of Merion sworn in as special policemen with power to arrest in emergencies;
- 43. Arranged for weekly pistol practice for the policemen of Lower Merion Township, in specially constructed concrete range, contributing ammunition;
- 44. Arranged for the establishment of the Merion Post of the American Legion;
- 45. Paid the expenses of an entymologist to examine and report on the existence of oystershell scale in Merion, with written notice to the owner of each property affected;
- 46. Secured a Merion Representative on The Lower Merion Township Board of Health;
- 47. Placed in the hands of every member of The Merion Civic Association a complete map of Merion, showing the name of each property owner;
- 48. Induced Commission of Lower Merion Township to have a research made of the township government;
- 49. Placed flower boxes at the windows of the railroad station, post office building and new waiting room;
- 50. Created sentiment for the placing of the Township Fire Association under the control of a Fire Marshal.
- 51. Negotiated with the United States postal authorities and officials of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company for enlarging and improving the facilities of the post office to meet the present and future need of the community.
- 52. Secured through the result of urgent representations and many conferences with officials of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company a waiting room and an enlarged shelter shed on the north platform, for the convenience and comfort of westbound passengers.

#### ROLF CHARLSTON – MERION HISTORY TOUR

Sunday, October 7 at 2:00 PM

Let's take a hike – a tour of architecture and history in Merion, led by Rolf Charlston, classical music



radio host on WRTI, former dean of graduate programs at Saint Joseph's University, and a tour guide and lecturer in architecture, literature, and music. Ann Bagley, former President of the MCA, a board member of the Botanical Society of Lower Merion, and a tour guide at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, will talk about the Botanical Park and the history of the MCA.

The coming of the railroad spurred the development of Merion and other communities along the Main Line.



"Nothing was so holy as the Local to Paoli" (Christopher Morley). We'll walk on the north (outbound) side of the tracks, and examine English-influenced architectural styles, of course, but there's also a touch of gothic, Mediterranean, and modern.

We'll see the houses of significant personages from the past: Edward W. Bok, editor of *The Ladies Home Journal* and the first president of the Merion Civic Association, and the Trapp Family, having escaped the Nazis and making sounds of music in Merion.

Meet at the inbound side of the Merion Train Station, Sunday, October 7, 2:00 pm. The Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia, dedicated to promoting and protecting historic buildings, communities, and

Continued on page 7

#### THE BARNES FOUNDATION, MERION CAMPUS

The Barnes Foundation has undertaken a number of improvements and initiatives to the Merion campus since it closed to the public in July 2011. The campus has re-opened this September for educational courses with a full enrollment while planning for the public component of the campus continues.

Barnes in Merion improvements and initiatives:

- Completed a comprehensive conditions assessment of the living collections, which provides a series of recommendations for the conservation and care of the living collections and the Board approved \$100,000 in urgent collections.
- Completed a repair of the historic fence
- Completed a stabilization of the Paul Cret Tea House
- The Foundation is piloting an exciting partnership with Pennsylvania Horticultural Society to bring programming to the Arboretum this fall.
- Launched a new volunteer program for the care of the Arboretum, where volunteers are not only working in the garden, but designing for future.
- Planted a new Hosta collection in partnership with the Delaware Valley Hosta Society.
- As plans for the re-opening of the campus in the spring evolve, there are a number of community events planned, such as a Merion Community Day, Alumni Day, Member Days and the Annual Plant sale.

To learn more about programming offerings and other developments, please visit barnesfoundation.org

#### BOTANICAL SOCIETY OF LOWER MERION

By Bill Earley, new President of the BSLM



Take a walk in the serene, green, leafy Botanical Park which runs along Merion Road and you might spot a tall gentleman working with a crew of volunteers, cleaning up storm damage, cutting back overgrown shrubs, pulling down invasive vines or anything else which needs doing at that moment. If you see the tall gentleman, usually in a broad-brimmed hat and with

a mustache, that person is Bill Earley, the newly elected President of the Botanical Society.

He recently took over the job from Frank Strawbridge, a long time member of the Botanical Society and most recent president, who wished to retire. The presidency, a volunteer position, as are all the board members of the Society, can be an all-consuming position because it is difficult to predict what nature is going to do and quite often nature is unkind.

Bill brings to the position a unique assortment of qualifications for the presidency: a business career, from which he recently retired, and a love of nature and preservation of open space. He really enjoys the physical work involved as well as the planning for what must be done. He has found ways to obtain volunteers and has introduced himself to the township departments which deal with parks.

So, as a beginning challenge, there was a grant given anonymously to the society to buy 65 new trees, with the stipulation that the trees must be planted by the end of June. These trees were to replace dead and dying trees, some of which were planted over 70 years ago. The job was done on time. Go for a walk and you will spot these newcomers right away. Not all of the challenges are as pleasant as the planting of new trees. Most of nature's challenges are of the destructive kind. Bill has his work cut out for him. From the recent work done in the park there is evidence that he's settling in quite nicely. Introduce yourself to Bill if you spot him at work.

You may even want to help work in the park from time to time. It's quite rewarding. Just ask Bill. For more information please visit: www.BotanicalSocietylm.org or call 610.664.4226.

#### MARTY PILTCH (1926–2011) Continued from page 4

meetings. He spoke eloquently against the proposed demolition of the magnificent "La Ronda" mansion which ultimately was destroyed. His presence in the Township will be felt for years.

He was truly a public spirited citizen who wanted his community to continue to be known as a beautiful, well run Township.

## 99<sup>™</sup> ANNUAL MEETING OF THE MERION CIVIC ASSOCIATION –

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 28, 4:00-7:00 PM At the Tribute House, 625 Hazelhurst Avenue, Merion, PA



All Merion residents, including children, are welcome. This is an opportunity for Merion neighbors to meet and socialize with other members of the community. Light food and refreshments will be served following the meeting and the speaker.

At this year's annual meeting our featured guest speaker will be Dr. F. Graham Lee, professor of political

science at St. Joseph's University. In a timely and exciting presentation coming less than two weeks before the general election, Dr. Lee's talk is entitled "Back to the Future: Is 2012 a Repeat of 1980 or 2004?" The lecture will be followed by what promises to be a lively question and answer period.

Professor Lee's primary specialty is American constitutional law. He has authored six books focused on constitutional issues including First Amendment controversies, Supreme Court analysis and church-state relations. He has been an instructor dedicated to both research and the advancement of his students in many different capacities. In addition to his academic responsibilities, Dr. Lee currently serves as treasurer of the Radnor Haverford Marple Sewer Authority. He is active in local politics, serving as a judge of elections and as parliamentarian for his ward committee. Previously, he was a member of the Haverford Township Planning Commission. Dr. Lee has served as chairman of the Diocesan Appeals Board, and chaired both the Faculty and Education and Planning Committees at the Academy of Notre Dame de Namur where he also was a member of the board of trustees.

The Merion Civic Association welcomes and thanks Dr. Lee for his gracious acceptance of our invitation to be part of our annual meeting. The Civic Association is also grateful to the Office of External Affairs at St. Joseph's University for their assistance in making the arrangements for Dr. Lee's appearance. The community is cordially invited to participate in this thought-provoking discussion.

#### ROLF CHARLSTON - MERION HISTORY TOUR Continued from page 5

landscapes, is the sponsor for this tour and over 50 other tours in the Philadelphia region.

\$10.00 for adults, \$8.00 for students

FREE for children under 10 accompanied by an adult

\$5.00 for Preservation Alliance members (please show your member card)

Please arrive 15 minutes prior to 2:00 pm

#### MCA BOARD MEMBERS



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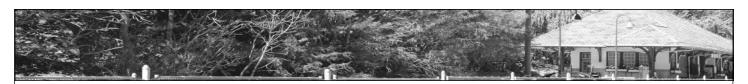
To address the MCA
Association, please call
610.664.0441 and request
to be added to the agenda.

Community members are always invited to attend the meetings, contact the Association with a concern or submit articles of community interest to the newsletter.

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## THE MERION CIVIC ASSOCIATION PRESENTS 99TH ANNUAL MEETING

Merion Tribute House | 625 Hazelhurst Avenue, Merion, PA 19066 Sunday October 28, 2012 | Time: 4:00 - 7:00 pm



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