

# MERION CIVIC ASSOCIATION

TEL 610-664-0441 E-MAIL: [merioncivic@yahoo.com](mailto:merioncivic@yahoo.com) [www.merioncivic.org](http://www.merioncivic.org) Merion, PA 19066  
Spring 2012

## Merion is our Home

By Emily Murphy,  
Seventh grade Bala Cynwyd Middle School

Merion is a very special place. It is our home. Our schools, jobs, friends and lives are here. That's why we need to help it thrive, even if it's in small ways. For my family, each spring and fall my dad, brother and I help clean up the Merion train station. We pull weeds, clear out the brush, plant hydrangeas, and whatever else the adults ask us to do. When we were younger, my brother and I would spend more time eating munchkin doughnuts than anything else, but we still found time to help my mom "plant flowers." Now we actually help. We also help in the overall community. We donated a bunch of VCR tapes to a family at CHOP and some old coats at the coat drive. Also each year we donate canned food at the food drive at school. So, if a 13-year-old can do these small things to help Merion and the community, just imagine what everyone in Merion can do!

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## From the editor

By Michael Seiden

This newsletter has the theme *What we do for Merion*, which is intended to lead into our centennial year. Our civic association has been working for our community for many years.

Our Mission Statement is on our website (see <http://www.merioncivic.org/about/mission.htm>):

- Monitoring the condition of street lights, trees, and road conditions and reporting problems to the township.
- Monitoring plans for development and renovations within Merion's boundaries and the surrounding area to assess any impact on Merion residents.
- Serving as a liaison to Lower Merion Township and other neighboring organizations to keep residents apprised of issues affecting Merion residents.
- Offering educational and cultural activities to enrich and inform the residents of Merion.

### Additional News:

Four Merion Civic Association board members are volunteers on the committees to prepare the new Lower Merion Township comprehensive plan. And we are not the only volunteers from Merion on these committees.

### Directors

Scott Kalner: Land Use  
Leslie Greenberg: Housing  
Dolores Browne: Water & Energy Resource Conservation  
Michael Seiden: Community Facilities & Infrastructure

### Neighbor

David Feldman: Housing

## THE MERION CIVIC ASSOCIATION

### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President	Kevin Murphy
1 <sup>st</sup> Vice President	Scott Kalner
2 <sup>nd</sup> Vice President	Michael Seiden
Treasurer	Bob Marmon
Secretary	Helen Guy

### DIRECTORS

Ann Bagley	Scott Kalner
Randy Blakeney	Harriet Lam
Dolores Browne	Vivian Lapes
Bruce Eisenberg	Carol Lavoritano
James Ettelson	Bob Marmon
Scott Feuer	Kevin Murphy
Tami Fratis	Adena Potok
Judith Flaks	Frances Quinn
Brian Gordon	Dave Rutzel
Leslie Greenberg	Michael Seiden
Renee Hill	

### YOUR NAME HERE

Board Members Wanted

### NEWSLETTER

Michael Seiden, editor  
Helen Guy, Kevin Murphy, Scott Kalner

### MEETING TIMES

Meets at 7:45 PM (7:30 PM in winter months) the fourth Tuesday of each month except July, August and December at the Merion Tribute House. Call 610.664.0441 to confirm time, or check website.

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.

Mail: Merion Civic Association  
P.O. Box 263, Merion PA 19066  
Phone: 610:664.0441  
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[www.merioncivic.org](http://www.merioncivic.org)

## President's Message

By Kevin Murphy



In 1917, Theodore Roosevelt's "Model Merion" says "to be nation right and state right we must first be community right." Roosevelt

described Merion as the Model Community for all of the advancements it achieved for the betterment of the neighborhood such as street signs, paved roads, street lights and tree planting along streets.

While the work can be read on our website in its entirety (<http://www.merioncivic.org/about/Mo delMerion.pdf>), these standards are still relevant to the Merion Civic Association. Our Civic has many committees addressing the aspects of everyday life in our community that impact us. The quality of life that we all enjoy in Merion is preserved through the efforts of civic minded individuals and their voluntary efforts. This is what maintains our property values in Merion.

The community watch group helps with looking out for criminal activity in the area. Beyond that, civic representatives report on developments within the Union and Narberth Fire Departments while other committees look out for potholes and failed street lights. The same concerns are addressed by civic representatives for the botanical park, train station, post office and the Barnes Foundation.

Issues that may impact the Merion community are monitored such as local zoning hearings, the school district and historical characteristics of the neighborhood. It is a group effort to keep up the standards that we have become accustomed to in Merion. We are always looking for help with these committees.

The Federation of Civics is a forum for the exchange of ideas and cooperation among the civic associations in Lower Merion. It is through communication with the Federation that guest speakers such as U.S. Representative Chaka Fattah and LMSD Superintendent Dr. McGinley are presented to address residents on current issues. As the topics are not specific to one area of the township, residents of nearby communities such as Wynnewood, Ardmore and Gladwyne attend to become more informed about these subjects.

As we approach our Centennial at Merion Civic Association, we continue to face challenges presented to our community on a daily basis. The flow of information is crucial in our current environment and our website is a key to keeping Merion residents informed. Visit [www.merioncivic.org](http://www.merioncivic.org) for further details or contact information.

## In Memoriam

### What they did for Merion

In the past two years we lost two residents who made substantial contributions to our Civic Association and community.

**Phil Bagley**, husband of former Merion Civic Association President Ann Bagley was our first Webmaster. He also participated in the Merion Botanical Society and was Treasurer of the Lower Merion Historical Society.

**Marty Piltch** was a past President of the Merion Civic Association. He was very active in Lower Merion civic activities. "Co-author of Lower Merion's historic-preservation ordinance and past chair of the Historical Commission. Vice chair of the Shade Tree Commission, and director of the Botanical Society of Lower Merion that manages Merion Botanical Park. Involved in the City Avenue redevelopment discussions." (from [Mike Weilbacher article on Marty Piltch](#))

# Commissioner's Report

By Brian Gordon

**Lower Merion Commissioner, 12<sup>th</sup> Ward & Merion Civic Association Board Member**



Recently, the editor of the Merion Civic Association Newsletter asked me to write a short piece about what makes a good neighbor.

My answer is both philosophical and practical.

On the philosophical side, I am reminded of Rabbi Hillel's puzzling incantation: "If I am only for myself what am I? And, if I am not for myself who be?" This formulation of a life in balance is as relevant to being a good neighbor as it is to any other sphere of life.

To be a good neighbor, you first have to take care of your own property and the needs of your own family. Keep your property in great condition. Make it look beautiful for yourself and for your community. This is something Merion families do well. I have been impressed and delighted at the level of care which our neighbors have displayed in repairing and restoring their homes. Slate roofs have been replaced with slate roofs. Lead or wood divided light windows have been replaced in kind. Plantings in Merion range from attractive gardens to outstanding arboreta. It is clear that we are both house proud and wish to contribute to the beauty of our neighborhood.

As for families, our focus is to raise children well. We take joy and pride in both their education and accomplishments and their values. As commissioner, I get a crime report every week. I cannot remember an act of vandalism or theft that was committed by a young member of our community.

So can we stop there and still be a good neighbor? Probably so. But if you want to be an even better neighbor, here are some ideas of what you can do help your community.

## **Introduce yourself to your neighbors: new and old.**

We feel safer and are safer when we know who lives around us. Help your neighbor. Keep an eye out for his home and family and he or she will do the same for you.

**Join the Merion Civic Association.** By Charter, the Merion Civic is an advocate to protect the quality of life of the community. The Merion Civic, which is almost 100 years old, once provided police and sewers and underground power lines. Our Civic continues to solve neighborhood problems and ensure representation with the Township in zoning and other matters. Its members also sponsor an interesting speaker's series, concerts and community gatherings throughout the year.

**Keep your sidewalk clear of brush, mud, snow and free of cracks** – Under Pennsylvania and local law, the sidewalk is your responsibility. This is true even when you live near a busy street or a bridge. We are a walking community. By keeping your sidewalk in good repair, you help your neighbors get from one place to another without walking onto the street.

**Join the Merion Botanical Society** – This wonderful group organizes two big clean-ups a year in Merion Botanical Park and its members help select trees and maintain the Park all year long.

**Become active in the larger community** – Lower Merion Township has 6 great libraries, art centers, the Cynwyd Heritage Trail, 44 parks and plenty of social organizations which would appreciate your time and energy. Pursue your passion and make friends, too.

**Support Historic Preservation** – Merion residents are exploring the creation of an historic district to protect and preserve the beautiful historic community in which we live.

There are many ways to be a good neighbor. It is part of a balanced and happy life.

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## **City Avenue Zoning Passed**

The Lower Merion Board of Commissioners just passed (on April 25, 2012) the largest zoning change in township history, for the City Avenue Special Services District in Bala Cynwyd. Your civic association participated in the many hearings and workshops over a period of four years to work on the provisions of the new ordinance.

The new zoning encourages mixed-use buildings (offices & residences), with allowed density three times greater than before, and buildings up to 200 feet high.

The developers can earn the right to increase density based on incentives for amenities such as public gathering spaces, and enclosed parking.

## **Service to Lower Merion**

**By Scott Kalner,**

**1<sup>st</sup> VP and**

**project manager for the new Harriton School**

There are probably few places where the residents feel as passionate about the neighborhood and the environs as the people who live in Lower Merion. Through my own involvement in civic affairs I am frequently amazed at the time, energy and effort that our neighbors put toward keeping their community a beautiful and endearing place. Typically, community building is more about the people than the place but in Lower Merion – and in Merion, in particular, the story is about both.

Of course, as an architect, I would have to say that. Only a few short months after moving into the Township, I began work on the design for the addition and renovations to the Merion Elementary School. I could walk to meetings at the site, learn first-hand about the potential teachers that my daughter might have, and what a way to meet my neighbors. A great way, as it turned out. Although the process to get a project approved in the Township does seem a bit tortured to the architect unfamiliar with the community, it did provide me with an opportunity to meet my neighbors and learn about the burning issues of the time. The project turned out to be a successful one and it inspired me to look around for other opportunities to engage with the neighborhood.

I volunteered as a director on the Bala Cynwyd Library board, staying on for six years and serving as facilities chairman during the planning of the renovations and additions now under construction. As part of my duties, I participated in the selection process to pick the architect for the Township library capital program. I now have a project under construction with the contractor who is the general contractor at Bala Cynwyd and I like to remind him that I will be watching his work in both places.

As my tenure was about to end on the Bala Cynwyd Library board, I was asked to become a director on the board of the Merion Civic Association. My earliest exposure to the

organization was as an architect presenting the design for the Merion Elementary School project. I was glad to join this group to learn about and help out on community issues.

After a few years on MCA's board, I volunteered for one of Lower Merion Township's advisory committees. I was selected for the Historical Architectural Review Board and I have served as its chairman for the last two years. While at HARB, I have reviewed projects all over the Township while gaining a better understanding of the area's rich historic heritage. I am currently working with several other MCA volunteers to have a portion of our neighborhood designated as a historic district to protect the special physical character that helps define the community. I have also participated in meetings with neighbors and other MCA members and St. Joseph's University, drawing upon my training as an architect and planner to help advise on the changes at the Maguire Campus.

Most recently, I was selected for another advisory committee – to represent Merion and to assist the Township planners in producing a new comprehensive plan for the Township. This new plan replaces the current one, produced in 1979, and is intended to serve as a guiding document for future development in the Township. It will be an interesting process, working with a very talented group of dedicated professionals, all donating their time in the interests of making their community a better place.

To that end, I encourage all Merion residents to get involved and become aware of what is going on in their neighborhood and the Township. There are many opportunities for engaged citizens and a great need for active voices to express our hopes for the future.

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### **Plan for our Centennial Year**

The Centennial Committee of the Merion Civic Association asks residents to share your knowledge of our rich history with the community. Contact the Civic Association to contribute.

# Membership

**By Kevin Murphy**

The Merion Civic Association has been the “voice of our community” for nearly 100 years and we need your support! While the payment of dues is appreciated, your active participation regarding issues that impact the Merion community is imperative. To maintain the quality of life that we enjoy and expect in Merion, the Merion Civic Association has standing committees monitoring our local police & fire departments, zoning issues, the school district, community action and more. We encourage you to come to our meetings and have your voice heard!

Please circle any Committees you wish to join. See the website for descriptions of the committees:

- Arts & Education
- Community Action, Zoning & Public Relations
- Finance
- History
- Membership
- Newsletter
- Social
- Station & Grounds & Post Office
- Streets, Lights & Traffic
- Website
- School Board
- Centennial

Enclosed are my/our dues for 2011-12.

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

The MCA is a 501 (c)(3) organization.  
Your dues are tax-deductible.

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY/STATE/ZIP

PHONE/EMAIL

*Please make checks payable to MCA and mail to:*

*Merion Civic Association, Box 263, Merion, PA 19066*

## Station & Grounds Update

**By Carol Lavoritano, Director**

### Train Station Gardens

Once again, we were edged out by other community gardens for the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society Community Greening Award, but a judges' review in September gave us some constructive criticism and good tips. One note was that our garden needs more color. While we have a lot of spring color, this is hard to maintain all summer, especially in a desperately hot and dry, then seriously soggy summer like last summer. We'll be adding more geraniums and begonias, as well as local bargains to fill in empty spaces and perk up the late summer landscape over this summer. We are pleased that the Horticultural Society recognized our community effort as well as the vagaries of Amtrak track maintenance and misdirected spraying.

### On working with SEPTA:

SEPTA made several station improvements after we wrote to General Manager Joe Casey. Excess signage was removed, steps to the outbound side of the tunnel were refurbished, and the boarding platforms (raised boxes along the platform edge) were resurfaced. Restoration of the inbound platform and outbound canopy await appropriation of capital funds for larger projects. In the meantime, we have thanked Mr. Casey for his support and the cooperation of his staff, and we look forward to continuing a neighborly relationship with SEPTA.

### Window Box Flowers 2012



Merion Civic Association  
P.O. Box 263,  
Merion PA 19066

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Non-Profit Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Upper Darby, PA  
19082  
Permit No. 86

## **COMMUNITY CALENDAR**

See [www.merioncivic.org](http://www.merioncivic.org) Calendar for updates and other events.

Unless noted, events at: Merion Tribute House, 625 Hazelhurst Ave  
Open to the public. Please park in the lot behind the Tribute House.

***Tuesday, May 22, 7:30pm***

**Merion Civic Association May Board Meeting**  
**Jointly with Gladwyne and Wynnewood Civic Associations**  
**Lower Merion School Superintendent Dr. McGinley**  
**Community Conversations**

***Thursday, June 14, 6:30pm-8:15pm***

**Merion Civic Association Flag Day Concert**  
Merion Concert Band. Arrive early, bring a picnic dinner.  
Will be held indoors in event of rain.

***Tuesday, June 26, 7:45pm***

**Merion Civic Association June Board Meeting**  
No Board Meetings in July and August.

***Please check website for updated date***

**Merion Civic Association September Board Meeting**

***Sunday, October 28, 4:00pm -7pm***

**Merion Civic Association Annual Meeting**  
Speakers and light supper. Open to all members. Details to follow.