

Neighborhood Club of Bala Cynwyd
Board Meeting December 11, 2007
Lower Merion Academy

Board Attendees: Casey O'Bannon, Dan Russoniello, Michael Taichman-Robins, Bob Zimmerman, Deedee Litvin, Ellen Wertheimer, Phyllis Faber Kelley, Eric Foster, Maxine Goldberg, Roger Moog, John Grugan, Meredith Toole and Mark Kocent

Excused: Ilene McCaffrey, Jerry Skillings, Judy Strazzella, Ann Cotton Serge Nalbantian, Anne Greenhalgh, and David Haas

Officials Attending: LMPD Officer Tubman(?), Commissioner Bruce D. Reed, and Commissioner George Manos

Call to order:

President O'Bannon called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m.

PRESIDENT'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

January meeting - presentation from Welcome Wagon; Mon, Dec. 17 is Civic Assoc Workshop for Bala, Merion, Narberth & Belmont Hills – to get feedback on the comprehensive plan being advanced by the Township, please attend – it is 7-9 p.m. on the 2nd floor of the Township Building -- or provide feedback to Casey. TreeVitalize – 17 trees planted on Bala Avenue a few weeks ago, over 20 volunteers participated in this initiative.

Meeting Minutes: Meredith circulated minutes from the November meeting, a couple corrections were received. Maxine Goldberg moved to accept, Phyllis Faber Kelley seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

POLICE REPORT

Another car jacking happened on November 14 in Havertown, so continue to exercise caution and contact the police if you suspect that you are being followed. On November 16, there was a robbery at gun point on Llanberris.

TREASURER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Motion to approve by Phyllis, seconded by Michael, unanimous approval.
No major changes expected in 2008.

SOLICITOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

None

MEMBERSHIP ANNOUNCEMENTS

Membership letter is on schedule to go out in January.

COMMISSIONER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Comm'r Reed indicated that on December 3 the Historical Society's lease for Cynwyd Train Station was signed and there is sufficient funding to cover the projected expenses for stabilizing the Station. Paul McElhaney, Commissioner-elect, was introduced. The Georgia Pacific site, at the base of Righters Ferry Road, will house LMSD school buses on a temporary basis, which will permit construction to begin at Lower Merion H.S.

Ardmore RFP responses, a public hearing was held on Dec. 5, questions from the Township and public will be provided to bidders, responses will be received and another hearing will be held on January 10.

Township budget – minority of commissioners oppose spending and the majority is focused on the provision of services for the Township. The average tax increase per household is \$250.

Comm'r Manos indicated that only a couple issues remain outstanding on Rock Hill Road. The M District will soon be advertised. In that district there is also an issue of height.

Comm'r-elect Paul McElhaney explained there is a 1-acre parcel in Belmont Hills that the Township is interested in purchasing through the Open Space Initiative. This space adjoins an area which is used for construction debris disposal but is slated to eventually be converted into a park and also addresses an existing need to allow better access for emergency vehicles to surrounding properties.

PRESENTATIONS:

CHRIS LESWING, LOWER MERION TOWNSHIP – OPEN SPACE

Chris Leswing presented on the Open Space initiative focused on the Bala Cynwyd R6 rail path and various pedestrian bridges across the Schuylkill. The idea is to have a 10-12 ft. wide paved trail, like they have in Radnor. 18-months would be the expected time for construction.

KEN BRIER, ZONING HEARING BOARD

Ken Brier, former NCBC president and current Zoning Hearing Board member. Planning Commission makes recommendations to the Board of Commissioners. Zoning Hearing Board is a legally constituted body and cannot be overruled by the Board of Commissioners. The zoning regulations should be rewritten to be consistent with the objectives defined in the Comprehensive Plan. Petitioners to the zoning hearing board must bring up relevant code citations and, if they don't zoning board members may not bring it up.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

ROHO ORDINANCE COMMITTEE

Dan Russoniello reported on a December 3, 2007 Planning Committee (“PC”) Meeting that he attended:

The tweaking of the height limits has stopped. It seems to be an issue upon which full consensus cannot be reached. Therefore, the original height language of the ordinance will be left as is.

The workforce housing incentive has been removed for the time being. This is to give the Township the opportunity to fully define the term so that it can be equitably used in this and other zoning regulations (such as MUST).

The PC asked that staff look at adding the following uses:

Coffee house and convenience store (w/o gas station)

The PC asked that staff look at specifically excluding the following uses:

- Gas station
- Pawnshop
- Adult entertainment

Other items discussed include:

- Reduced parking of 1.5 spaces (from 2) per residential development w/ 65% of the units being 1 bedroom and shuttle service to mass transit stations provided.

- Use of common drives between properties

- Limited allowance of “drive-through” facilities.

There was an update on available funding for RHR/Belmont Ave and RHR/CSR intersection improvements.

Independence Day Celebration Committee

John Grugan reported the committee met twice, first an open meeting for community in September and several written communications were received. The committee met two additional times and has a recommendation for the Board. Our community is more diverse than ever and we do not want to exclude anyone, including those who believe religion should play no part of an Independence Day celebration.

The following statement was submitted by the by the sub-committee:

The Sub-committee recommends that future 4th of July celebrations include two speakers - one who is a "religious" speaker and one who is a "patriotic" speaker. As to what constitutes a "religious" speaker, we believe the speaker need not be a clergy member and should be representative of the religious diversity that exists in Bala Cynwyd. With respect to the selection of the speakers, we believe that the Fourth of July Committee should continue to be vested with the discretion to make its selection and recommendation to the full Board.

President O'Bannon suggested, and the Board agreed, that this issue should be discussed during the regularly scheduled meeting on January 8, 2008.

Zoning

Michael Taichman-Robins raised the issue of the Rock Hill Road retaining wall. Township has contracted with Penn Valley Associates to do a study of both retaining walls behind Rock Hill Road to define what needs to be done to bring the walls into compliance. Township sent the adjoining property owners a letter explaining the costs associated with the survey (about \$300/household). Responsibility for both walls falls on Rock Hill Road properties. 25-33 households. Worst-case scenario – Township could do it and assess liens on the properties. The survey will include recommendations about which sections of the walls require repairs and the associated costs, but all repairs should be made at the same time for a variety of reasons.

Public Service & Improvements

Roger Moog had nothing to report.

Transportation

Meredith Toole had nothing to report.

City Ave & St. Joseph's

Mark Kocent reported on discussions about re-zoning parcels on both sides of City Avenue to provide incentives to developers to make more desirable use of the land.

FEDERATION OF CIVIC ASSOCIATIONS

Maxine Goldberg reported that the last Federation meeting focused on the budget, the proposed M district, and other ordinances under consideration by the Township.

ADJOURNMENT

Michael Taichman-Robins moved to adjourn at 9:50 p.m.; the motion was seconded by Bob Zimmerman and unanimously approved.

Tuesday, January 8, 2008 - NCBC monthly meeting

Respectfully submitted,

Deedee Litvin
Secretary