

Neighborhood Club of Bala Cynwyd
January 8, 2008
The Academy Building

Board Attendees: Casey O'Bannon, Jerry Skillings, Ellen Wertheimer, Maxine Goldberg, Anne Greenhalgh, Ilene McCaffrey, Judy Strazzella, Phyllis Faber Kelley, Roger Moog, John Grugan, Meredith Toole, Mark Kocent, David Haas, Bob Zimmerman

Excused: Michael Taichman-Robins, Dee Dee Litvin, Dan Russoniello, Eric Foster, Serge Nalbantian, Ann Cotton

Officials Attending: LMPD Officer Cullin, Commissioner Bruce Reed, Commissioner Paul McElhaney

Call to order:

President O'Bannon called the meeting to order at 7:36 p.m.

Meeting Minutes: Roger Moog moved to approve the minutes from the December meeting, the motion was seconded by Phyllis Faber Kelley and unanimously approved.

POLICE REPORT

Office Cullin reported that it has been a quiet month in the neighborhood citing only a few minor incidents. The car-jackings that occurred several months ago have ceased. No new incidents have been reported.

A recent vehicle theft in Narberth led to a low speed chase into Bala Cynwyd. The suspect was apprehended after crashing on Presidential Blvd.

Traffic at the elementary and middle schools has been alleviated during morning hours but remains an issue in the afternoon. Office Cullin will report this to the Watch Commander.

A member requested consideration of a roadside speed limit indicator on St. Asaph's Road. This will also be looked into.

PRESIDENT'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

President O'Bannon requested the Board to keep all draft documents (meeting agenda and minutes) among the Board and not send out to members of the community. If there is something Board members wish to share, requests should be made to President O'Bannon.

Cross Country Development Corporation sent the lot plans for 207 Conshohocken State Road for the Board to review though the Board chose to take no action back in September.

Pamphlets from the City Avenue Special Services District were also made available.

O'Bannon further recognized Dan Russoniello, Serge Nalbantian and Mark Kocent for their exceptional work on behalf of the Board with respect to the City Ave and Rock Hill Road revitalization projects. These projects are just a small sampling of how the Neighborhood Club is involved in activities that benefit the entire community.

President O'Bannon asked that ideas for the LMT Comprehensive Plan be provided to the LMT staff or him.

TREASURER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ilene McCaffrey presented to the Board the financial statements to date. Anne Greenhalgh moved to accept the report, seconded by David Haas and unanimously approved.

SOLICITOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

None

MEMBERSHIP ANNOUNCEMENTS

Judy Strazzella reported total membership for 2007 was 832, up from 2006 but not as strong as in 2005. Jerry Skillings is going to work with Judy to go through the real estate transfers to identify new homeowners and make "house calls" to welcome new neighbors. The 2008 solicitation is scheduled to go out in two weeks and neighbors are asked to pay as early as possible.

The membership committee is also going to work harder to focus on way to get more local businesses and the condominiums involved.

COMMISSIONER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner Reed reported the reorganization of the township board as a result of the November election. Commissioner Reed will serve as President.

Reed reported he attended newly elected Mayor Michael Nutter's inauguration and the importance of both the township and the NCBC maintaining a good relationship with Mayor Nutter and his administration. Of particular importance to the Board is the funding and support for the R6 Cynwyd regional rail train. David Haas suggested that the Board send a letter to Mayor Nutter supporting him in his role as Mayor and a separate letter to Joe Casey, SEPTA General Manager in an attempt to keep an open dialogue.

The planning commission will have sketch plans for 131/151 Rock Hill Road available in the next 30 days.

Initial plans for the Cynwyd Trail will be available in the next week. The goal is to have the trail up and running in the next 18 months. The township is currently negotiating with Westminster Cemetery for an 8 acre parcel which could be converted into a dog park. These 8 acres coupled with the entire plan will create 50 acres of open space.

Renovations on the Cynwyd Train Station are slated to begin mid-January.

City Avenue revitalization efforts are underway. The township is working with Philadelphia to develop a plan that encourages both a residential district from the shopping center to St. Joe's University and a business district from the shopping center down to the river.

The township has received a request from Cynwyd Circle residents to have additional street lights put in. Generally, these requests are honored when there are crime or safety issues. Under this rule, Cynwyd Circle does not qualify. Commissioner Reed asked that due to the proximity to the school, this rule be overridden. Reed asked the Board to support this.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Zoning

The Board reviewed NOTICE of Application Appeal No. 4122 which is the School District's application before the zoning hearing board. The appeal seeks a special exception to install a 12' by 60' modular driver/aide building and a 10' by 26' modular restroom building on the Connelly Container site. This would provide temporary office and restroom space as a result of the temporary storage of buses during the high school construction.

Significant debate ensued and presentations from Dr. Savedoff Superintendent of Schools and Les Littman, owner of the Aquatic and Fitness Center. The debate seemed to revisit the issue of where to park the buses during the high school construction. Commissioner McElhaney reminded the group that the appeal was not regarding the storage of the buses, rather it was to seek a variance for the temporary shelter. The decision to use the site for storage had already been determined. Mr. Littman stated that he didn't feel the township posted the appeal in the appropriate time frame or in plain view. Commissioner Reed stated this is a separate issue.

In an effort to address Mr. Littman's concerns regarding the traffic in the area and how it would affect his business, a suggestion was made that school bus drivers enter the site via the O'Neill bridge from the Manayunk side. Commissioner Reed indicated this has been discussed as an option.

Public Service and Improvements

Mr. Moog presented options for the Annual Elected Officials dinner. The dinner is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, April 29th at 7:00 p.m. at The New Tavern to be confirmed at Feb. or March meeting.

Publicity/Newsletter/Website

The newsletter is schedule to go out in April and is expected to be 6 or 8 pages.

Merion-Cynwyd Business District and Bala Avenue Business District

None

ROHO ORDINANCE COMMITTEE

No report

Schools

Construction is ahead of schedule at Harriton High School. Lower Merion High School construction should begin the first week of February.

The School Board continues the search for a new Superintendent.

Independence Day Celebration Committee

Because the topic of the speaker has sparked spirited debate, Phyllis Faber Kelley made a motion to conduct a vote by ballot on the proposed recommendation so that Board members were comfortable voting without any peer pressure. Ms. Kelley made the following motion:

Motion, that the Neighborhood Club use the ballot method when addressing the selection process of the July 4th event. The motion was seconded by Roger Moog and unanimously approved.

John Grugan thanked those who participated on the subcommittee and presented the recommendation to the Board:

The subcommittee 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 a representative of the religious diversity that exists in Bala Cynwyd. With respect to the selection of the speakers, we believe that the 4th of July Committee should continue to be vested with the discretion to make its selection and recommendation to the full Board.

Discussion ensued around whether this was a resolution or a recommendation as members did not want to put a resolution in place that would affect the ability of future boards to handle this issue as they see fit. The Board agreed this would be a recommendation and President O'Bannon suggested that 2008 be added as an end date.

President O'Bannon put forth the following motion to the Board:

Motion, The Board vote on the recommendation from the subcommittee with the amendment that July 4, 2008, be added as the end date for the recommendation. The motion was seconded by Bob Zimmerman and was unanimously approved.

The Board then voted on the motion by private ballot. The results were tallied and the recommendation from the subcommittee with the above amendment was approved with a vote of 12 for and 1 opposed. There was one spoiled ballot.

FEDERATION OF CIVIC ASSOCIATIONS

No report

Transportation

No report

Open Space Initiative

None

City Ave & St. Joseph's

No report

New Business

President O'Bannon discussed with the Board the suggestion the Club add an online neighborhood forum on the website. It would contain topics of interest where anyone from the neighborhood could post questions, concerns

etc. The Board agreed this is something that should be considered. Neighbor Laurie Actman will research and report to the Board.

The Board discussed the petition regarding the addition of lights on Cynwyd Circle. The Board discussed that historically we do not take a position on issues such as this. But, the Board indicated that due to the safety concerns with this street and the frequency of people walking this street because of events at the school, we would write a letter of support.

The Board revisited the earlier discussion around zoning Appeal 4122. Anne Greenhalgh made the following motion:

Motion, The Board will not oppose Appeal 4122 but will compose a letter to the school district summarizing the Board's interest in looking at additional solutions regarding the potential traffic congestion at the Connelly Container site in an effort to work with the fitness center and neighbors in the area. The motion was seconded by President O'Bannon and unanimously approved.

Finally, the Club discussed a letter from Diane Blum who expressed concern over previous interactions with the Club. The Board agreed to make better introductions of ourselves and background on issues so that participants are provided with more detailed information during meetings.

ADJOURNMENT

President O'Bannon moved to adjourn the meeting; the motion was seconded by Judy Strazzella and unanimously approved.

Tuesday, February 12, 2008 -- NCBC monthly meeting

Respectfully submitted,

Meredith Toole
Acting Secretary