

The Neighborhood Club of Bala Cynwyd
Board Meeting May 12, 2009
Lower Merion Academy Building

Board Attendees: Jerry Skillings, Anne Greenhalgh, David Haas, Meredith Toole, Phyllis Faber Kelley, Judy Strazzella, Amara Briggs, Dan Russoniello, Eric Foster, Maxine Goldberg, Mark Kocent, John Grugan, and Roger Moog

Excused: Casey O'Bannon, Deedee Litvin, Michael Taichman-Robins, Katherine Schieffelin, Ellen Wertheimer, Bob Zimmerman

Officials Attending: Commissioner George Manos; Commissioner Bruce D. Reed; LM Police Officer

Call to order:

President Greenhalgh called the meeting to order at 7:38 pm.

LMPD

LM Officer reported that there was one robbery of a flower vendor on City Ave. on Mother's Day. There was one attempted residential burglary on Bryn Mawr and two attempts on businesses. Officer reminded neighbors of elevated number of thefts from cars in spring and summer.

President's Announcements

Anne Greenhalgh read an email from a neighbor renewing dues but expressing disappointment that the Board did not oppose construction on Derwen Rd. Anne read a letter from West Laurel Hill Cemetery announcing a "Green" Funeral Service. City Ave. Spring Fling was announced for 5/13/09 from 5-8pm to support the Urban-Suburban Film Festival.

MINUTES

Votes on the March and April Minutes were deferred until June as the Secretary was not present.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Treasurer Amara Briggs asked for the Board's involvement next year in reviewing fundraising tiers well before July 4th event in order to consider impact on budget.

The Treasurer's Report was unanimously approved.

SOLICITOR'S REPORT

Bob Zimmerman was not present.

COMMISSIONERS' REPORT

Commissioner Reed reported that the Township borrowed money at an interest rate of just over 3%, which is the most favorable rate in recent history. He reported that Township revenue is currently on budget despite low transfer taxes. Township has initiated negotiations with FRAP whose contract is expiring this year; are hopeful that this will not need to go to arbitration.

Commissioner Reed noted that construction has begun again on Cynwyd Station and are still targeting a post-July 4th celebration.

Commissioner Reed gave an update on Cynwyd Trail and stated that volunteer days are strong. He also noted that a grant has been applied for a parking lot from DVCF. The Township must match, but credit may be in the form of labor, supply and grant of other items.

Commissioner Reed also expanded on the La Ronda situation which was in the *Inquirer* on Monday, May 11. He noted that the Township applied for a 90 day demolition stay. Meanwhile, the Township may initiate a Foundation to salvage the property with the oversight of the National Historical Trust.

Commissioner Manos stated that Friends of the Cynwyd Trail want to collaborate with the NCBC. Maxine Goldberg also suggested that Friends make a presentation to the Federation. A suggestion was also made for Friends to send a representative to NCBC monthly meetings.

Commissioner Manos stated that he is working on conditional use amendment for potential site of Bala Cynwyd Farmer's Market. He also announced that he will be holding an "Open House" discussing trash collection on 5/18/09.

Meet and Greet of Lower Merion School Board candidates

Present were Peter Lee, Ivan Haskell and Melissa Gilbert representing one slate; Fran Hoover, Gary Frielander, and Jerry Novick representing the incumbent slate. Anne Greenhalgh served as Moderator and asked each guest to write name, the candidate the question was directed to, and a question.

Each candidate began with a brief bio.

Peter Lee has an degree in engineering from Carnegie Mellon. Currently works as a consultant to improve efficiency with schools, looks at budgeting, operating efficiency, curricula. Feels strongly about injecting real world applicability into school curriculum. Believes in civic duty and making education equal for all students. Stated that he would not plan on reopening redistricting issues if reelected.

Ivan Haskell lives in Ardmore and has two children who attend LM schools. Currently serves as an Clinical Administrator for Pharmaceutical companies and schools to help set policy and survey. Running as a complimentary party to fill the slate. Stated that he doesn't plan to open redistricting issue.

Melissa Gilbert is parent of two kids in LM School District. She has 15 years experience as a Professional Educator. Education: BA of Political Science from Clark University, Masters from University of Sussex. Has worked at Temple since 1996. Volunteers as a homeroom parent. Her

focus is to help direct school board from capital improvements to improving curriculum and recruiting/retaining teachers. Believes that her skills as a professional educator compliment existing Board strengths.

Fran Hoover is a native of South Ardmore. Education: Graduate of LMHS in 1980, Florida A&M with Degree in Accounting, Columbia University with an MBA. Currently works as a consultant integrating data and use of resources. She is President of Ardmore Ave. Community Center, Member of the Coalition for Youth, serves on BOD of Main Line Art Center. Her children attend private school.

Gary Frieland has lived in LM for over 25 years. Wife teaches fifth grade. Education: BA from Dickinson College, JD Villanova MBA from Drexel. On Board of LMSD for 7 years. Chair of Finance and Allocation Cmtes. Next steps for the Board is to ensure consistent curricula in high schools.

Jerry Novick served for five years on LMSD Board. Kids attend LM schools. Education: Accounting degree from Penn, JD, Duke. Practices law focusing on RE development.

Question and Answer Session

Question from Rosa Sarrota to Jerry Novick: How has the Board met funding mandate challenges? **Answer:** Met challenges through 1) commercial taxes 2) high residential taxes 3) City Manager weighs debt allocation to taxes. Act I proscribes a cap on taxation annually and this has been a challenge to meet and will be a challenge to the Board in future.

Question Nancy Bentsen to Ivan Haskell: If issue of redistricting came up again, how would you vote? **Answer:** It would depend upon what the purpose of redistricting was, i.e. increased population may lead to one type of consideration, while another purpose may lead to a different outcome.

Question from Andrea Torque to Gary Frieland: Is trust important to you and how do you maintain it? **Answer:** Very critical. Transparency to the community is critical. Communication will be improved and is part of his five year plan. Viewpoints must be offered and debated. District Digest will be increased in circulation.

Question from Rosa Sarrota to Melissa Gilbert: How can we fund your proposal for a full-day kindergarten? **Answer:** Achievement gap is clear; we can begin to close in kindergarten. Act I proposes a challenge to this issue. However, she believes that money spent in the child's formative years will save in the long-term.

Question from Patti Smith to Fran Hoover: How does your work with children in Ardmore help with BOD role? **Answer:** She organized a college selection workshop with high school counselors; felt this helped students believe in themselves. She has also constructed seminars to help students with course selection in early years and with extra help.

Question from Merle Zucker to Peter Lee: What would you do to help change curriculum? **Answer:** He would rely on experts. He also believes in adding courses about other cultures and ethnic backgrounds, believes there is evidence to support that kids fare better in school when they are in classes that touch on their background.

Question from Alison Munoz to Jerry Novick: How have you worked with the state? **Answer:** He has been able to work with other districts to draft opposition language to Act I. Also has helped to craft exceptions to the Act which entailed working with the state.

Question from Patti Smith to Ivan Haskell: Please clarify an email circulated by you during redistricting plan regarding recertification. **Answer:** Wrote an email regarding shrinkage of the Walk Zone and how this would not impact lead certification. He reiterated that he was supportive of the construction of both LM and Harriton High Schools.

Question from Eric Foster to Gary Frielander: How does your slate differ from the other? **Answer:** More prepared to deal with Act I. State support is shrinking as a percentage of budget, and he is more prepared to deal with this issue than the other slate given experience. He is more experienced to deal with Teachers and the unions. He is better able to deal with Achievement Gap and how to fund through Act I.

Question from Lynn Thomas to Melissa Gilbert: How does your work with Narberth Kindergarten/Elementary interfere with your role on the Board? **Answer:** She doesn't plan to focus on one particular school, but on representing the entire district.

Question from Kate Galer to Fran Hoover: Why do you want to serve on a public school Board when your kids are in private school? **Answer:** She had intended to place her children in public school, but initially could only put in private school for daycare when she returned to work and then move the kids to public school. When it came time to move the kids, they had made friends and established a base at the school; thus she made the decision to make the best move for them personally than to move them for her own reasons.

Question from Anne Greenhalgh to Ivan Haskell: How can Board bring communities together? **Answer:** Ardmore perceives that it is not listened to. Need to improve transparency and communication. Administration should contact all 30 students/families who are impacted by the change and meet with them to assist with transition. He said that the Board had planned to do this but this hadn't happened with everyone.

Question from a neighbor to Gary Frielander: Please discuss how Act I impacts school budget? **Answer:** Act I sets threshold of state support; if school district exceeds this threshold; then must get referendum from community to approve budget. If lose the referendum, then must cut to state specifications. Under Act I, most of the cuts are in operations of the schools, nothing to impact the children.

Question from Gilda Kramer to Peter Lee: Please clarify your support of a petition that would have stopped the construction of Harriton High School. **Answer:** He noted that this was a mistake. He received an email from a friend of his from a man who purportedly had a solid background in education. The data he quoted regarding new high schools looked correct, so he signed the petition. Later, he learned that the man was always anti-public schools.

Question from Kate Galer to Fran Hoover: Did the LMSD interact with Ardmore Ave. Community Center? **Answer:** No, the Center is partially funded by the Township so could not be directly involved in the issue. However, District members did involve her as a private citizen.

Question from a neighbor to Melissa Gilbert: If schools are of unequal parity, how will you ensure good curriculum? **Answer:** Issue is not unequal program at high school, but at the middle school level.

Question from a neighbor to Jerry Novick : Why aren't school board meetings live? **Answer:** Supporter overall. Meetings are available on the web 24/7. Agrees that there are transparency issues and trust issues if meetings are not live. However, at times there are topics that are shared that aren't necessary for public live broadcast (human resource issues for example).

Question from Audrey Romasco to Peter Lee: What is your view on open meetings? **Answer:** Believes that all meetings should be open to improve communication. Board members should expect to answer questions as asked. Currently, there is no visibility into private discussions between members which he views as problematic.

Question from Kate Galer to Gary Frieland: Do you foresee any cuts in one particular school, particularly BC and Welsh Valley? **Answer:** No.

Question from Sara to Ivan Haskell: With the loss of DARE, will you approve or oppose school district funding of education on alcohol/drugs if elected? **Answer:** Didn't believe that DARE was that successful. He is supportive of use of public funds to fund drug/alcohol awareness.

As a follow-up to previous question, believe that funding to a school should be reviewed on a per capita basis.

Question from a neighbor to Fran Hoover: How would you handle the upcoming union negotiations with teachers? **Answer:** We want the best and brightest teachers. Must balance this need with current economic challenges, perhaps by deferring some portion of promised raise, etc. Believes that the teachers are aware of these issues and want to work with LMSD.

Question from Eric Foster to Melissa Gilbert: How would you distinguish your slate from the other? **Answer:** We focus on: 1) 21st century curriculum; 2) achievement gap; 3) efficiency of operations, particularly in regard to Act I. Collective skills of Lee, Haskell and Gilbert would help achieve these goals ; need new faces and perspective to Board to move it forward.

Committee Report:

Membership

- Membership – Judy Strazzella
No report to date.
- Nominations – Casey O'Bannon
No report.
- Federation – Maxine Goldberg
 - ❖ See minutes from April 13th meeting (to be attached).
 - ❖ Federation Resolution on Billboards. Maxine voted “Yes” for The NCBC (11, yes; 3 abstain; 2, no). The following Civics have voted to endorse the Federation resolution opposing billboards:

- Merion
- North Ardmore
- Gladwyne
- Bryn Mawr
- Wynnewood
- Haverford
- Narberth
- Shortridge
- Neighborhood Club of B.C.
- Ard-Wood
- Penn Wynne
- Belmont Hills

Activities

- Programs – Roger Moog
Action step: Thank Roger for a great event at our annual dinner! Roger approved the bill for payment.

- Independence Day – Anne Greenhalgh ~
Action Steps:
 - Get board’s support in fundraising.
 - Get help with band! Anne requested Board’s help in raising funds for the Fourth. Noted that one donation has been made to date from West Laurel Hill. Asks each Board Member to send an email on who they wished to solicit so she may coordinate. David Haas asked about LA Fitness and Dan Russoniello agreed to ask for a donation. Amara confirmed that she had requested a donation from Riverside.

Communications

- Publicity/Newsletter/Website – Casey O’Bannon
Action step: Anne would like Board’s support in using the balacynwyd.org domain name for e-mail. The cheapest is \$15/year for a single e-mail account with up to 500 MB storage. We can increase storage to 10 GB for \$35/year. If we want multiple accounts, it's \$100/year. See <http://www.register.com/titan/product/email.rcmx> Anne said that she would follow up via email to Board to confirm pricing and for approval.

Township, County and State Services

- Schools – Jerry Skillings
Action step: Should The NCBC sponsor “Run for Our Schools”?
When: *Sunday, June 14, 2009, rain or shine!*
Where: Harriton High School, 600 N. Ithan Avenue, Rosemont PA 19010
Check-in: 7:45-8:30 a.m. (*All runners must check in to receive their bib number*)
Race Time: 9:00 a.m. SHARP!
Track Trot: 10:00 a.m.
Registration Fees:
 \$20 5K/Walk
 \$10 Track Trot
 \$50 for family registration
Why: Benefits the Education Foundation of Lower Merion

Parking: Parking is available on the Harriton site before 8:15 a.m.

Timing: Professional timing and results by **Run the Day**.

Age Categories: 13 Years and Under, 14-19 Years, 20-29 Years, 30-39 Years, 40-49 Years, 50-59 Years, 60 Years and Over.

➤ **Transportation – Meredith Toole**

Meredith sent thank you note to Joe Casey for his attendance at our annual dinner. We will be working directly through Joe to re establish our bimonthly meetings as soon as possible....After speaking with Joe last night, I don't think we need to move forward with the letter re: the 44/52 bus routes.

➤ **Public Service – Roger Moog**

No report to date.

Planning, Zoning, and Building

➤ **Zoning – David Haas**

No report to date.

➤ **Bala Avenue – Michael Taichman-Robins**

No report to date.

➤ **City Avenue – Mark Kocent**

Mark Kocent reports that meeting on April 29th was cordial and useful. Terry and Angela were able to hear the Club's concerns regarding cumulative traffic impact on Bala Cynwyd if Rock Hill, Righter Ferry and City Ave rezoning all move ahead. Terry shared the City Ave traffic study (Mark will bring copies to our meeting). The focus is on City Ave. Mark identified the broader impact on neighborhoods and indicated intersections that warrant study. The question is whether the Township will be willing to commit resources to expanding the study.

Action step: Bob, Ellen, and Mark would like The NCBC board to consider submitting a formal request to the Twp planners/commissioners to expand this traffic study or to commission a broader one.

Mark distributed a copy of the draft traffic study for the Board's review. The traffic study was commissioned by the Township. Questions were raised asked about who should contribute to the commissioning of a traffic study, i.e. the various merchants of City Avenue. David asked again about how public transportation planning wasn't part of the City Avenue overlay. John Grugan suggested that a letter be drafted by the Board to the Commissioners to discuss the Board's view on how transportation issues should be discussed within the Overlay. The Board agreed.

➤ **Rock Hill Road – Dan Russoniello**

No report to date.

➤ **Schuylkill River Development – Ellen Werthheimer**

❖ **Planning Commission Meeting, May 4th.**

CONDITIONAL USE APPLICATION – 600 Righters Ferry Road, Bala Cynwyd, CU# 3620C, Ward 9.

A proposal to construct five residential apartment houses containing 580 units. Conditional Use is requested pursuant to Section 155-89D to permit the development of an apartment house in the Manufacturing and Industrial District and pursuant to Section 155-90.1(A) to permit development within the floodway fringe of the Schuylkill River.

- ❖ Ellen reports: The Planning Commission decided to recommend denial of the conditional use application for 600 Righter's Ferry Road this evening....This does not affect the hearings that are going on before the Board of Commissioners/Building and Planning Committee.

➤ **Old Lancaster Road/ Buildings—Michael Taichman-Robins**

- ❖ Michael writes: *Here is a quick summary of last Thursday's ZBA hearing. Just before the hearing Morris and the Bala Cynwyd neighbor group entered into a written agreement and the neighbors and Morris seemed relatively satisfied with their agreement. A large group of Latches Lane (Merion) neighbors, however, appeared to oppose the project. The Latches Lane group is not well organized and they have not done their homework, so I don't expect them to be effective in raising any legitimate issues. What they did accomplish was to prolong the hearing enough that another hearing will be necessary. A special hearing was been scheduled for May 14.*

- ❖ Zoning Hearing Board, Special Hearing:

Appeal No. 4168

Applicant: Traditional Properties, LP c/o Ed Morris

Property: 27, 29, 31 & 33 Old Lancaster Road, Bala-Cynwyd, PA 19004

(Election District #9). R 6A Residence District

This is a continuation of a hearing from 4/23/09. The applicant received Preliminary Land Development approval (LD#3548-6/28/06) to construct a 4-story 21-unit condominium building but has not pursued the project, and now proposes to construct a similar building and seeks a special exception under §155-47 D to operate a home for the aged for up to 60 residents, and also seeks a special exception under §155-94 B to allow a portion of the garage under the front yard and to deem the area above the garage to be part of the open space on the lot.

➤ **Historic Preservation – Jerry Francis**

Contract Awarded for the Cynwyd Train Station Project

The Lower Merion Historical Society has selected a new General Contractor, Ned Stumpo of Stumpo Construction Inc. of Conshohocken, PA to complete the Phase I renovations to the Cynwyd Train Station. Founded in 1951, they are a third generation family from Belmont Hills, who specialize in residential, commercial and institutional construction. The scope of their work shifts to the interior mechanicals (plumbing, electrical, HVAC, fire suppression, etc.) and build-out of the office and apartment areas. The exterior stabilization, wood and brick finishes, and storm water control still need to be done. Mobilization has begun and the project is expected take 4 to 5 months to complete.

The previous General Contractor, Jim Easter of JECB Construction, LLC passed away in early December 2008. JECB Construction had completed the labor-intensive interior

stabilization of the building. The stone foundation walls have been rebuilt, the worn and damaged beams have been repaired/replaced, and the bearing walls have been shored up and leveled.

After a 5-month suspension of work, The Lower Merion Historical Society and Broadlands Financial Group, LLC are ready to restart the project with a new set of challenges and opportunities.

“The Historical Society is pleased with every aspect of the selection of the Stumpo family to complete this project. When work is completed, the Cynwyd Train Station will become a contributing asset to the adjoining Cynwyd Heritage Trail and to the community,” said Jerry Francis, President of the Historical Society.

➤ **Beautification – Phyllis Faber Kelley**

No report to date.

➤ **Open Space – Mark Kocent**

Cynwyd Heritage Trail

Action Step: The Friends of the Cynwyd Heritage Trail continue to seek volunteer assistance and leaders for their monthly clean up days. Next scheduled dates are May 16 and 17 (with the Lower Merion Boy Scouts); June 20 and 21. More info is available at the Friends website (www.cynwydtrail.org).

New Business

Anne invited suggestions for the June meeting. She offered to have Penn Realty and O’Neill come to discuss developments on Righters Ferry. Mark also stated that Terry would be interested in discussing the Traffic Study with the Board.

Mark asked Commissioner Manos about the status of the abandoned gas station on Belmont Ave. and Rock Hill Rd. Commissioner Manos stated that Chris Lesswig was using the site for storage for the Cynwyd Trail cleanup.

At the closure of New Business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:21pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Amara Briggs
Treasurer