

The Neighborhood Club of Bala Cynwyd  
Board Meeting September 8, 2009  
Lower Merion Academy Building

Board Attendees: Casey O'Bannon, Deedee Litvin, Jerry Skillings, Ellen Wertheimer, Anne Greenhalgh, David Haas, Bob Zimmerman, Meredith Toole, Mark Kocent, Phyllis Faber Kelley, John Grugan, Judy Strazzella, Amara Briggs, Michael Taichman-Robins, Roger Moog, Merle Zucker, Maxine Goldberg, Eric Foster and Dan Russoniello

Officials Attending: Commissioners Bruce D. Reed and George Manos; LM Police Officer Michael Rigby

Call to order:

President Greenhalgh called the meeting to order at 7:33 pm.

LMPD

LM Officer Rigby reported a few burglaries over the summer, both residential and commercial, and sporadic thefts from vehicles. There was a bank robbery at the Bala Cynwyd Wachovia in August.

President's Announcements

President Greenhalgh received an invitation from West Laurel Hill Cemetery; it is interested in becoming more "green" and would welcome community members to serve on a taskforce.

There is a new composting program in Lower Merion and Anne has more information that she will provide to anyone who is interested.

MINUTES

John Grugan moved to approve June 2009 minutes; the motion was seconded by Jerry Skillings and unanimously approved.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Treasurer Amara Briggs took questions on her report, which was previously circulated. John Grugan reviewed the financial records prior to the June meeting and found everything in order. The NCBC has a general liability policy, primarily to address potential risks associated with the July 4 celebration. John Grugan requested a copy of the insurance policy. Casey O'Bannon moved to approve the treasurer's report, Judy Strazzella seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

SOLICITOR'S REPORT

Bob Zimmerman had nothing to report.

## COMMISSIONERS' REPORT

Commissioner Reed indicated that the Township had been reviewing trash collection and the potential of automated collection. The community responded overwhelmingly in favor of the status quo. In addition to the community response, there are some issues about whether a mechanized approach would be feasible. The majority of the Board agreed that they should stay with the status quo. There will be a new fee for those residents who want to have rear yard collection.

The Township budget must be passed by December. Last year, with a 2% tax increase, the Township had a great year and cut costs quite successfully. However, this cannot continue and there are many open Township positions that need to be filled. Capital Improvement Projects are separate from the operating budget. Quotes for capital improvements are coming in 19-47% lower as a result of the current economic conditions.

The Cynwyd Trail construction will start in the spring. Township has spent about \$2 million on the Trail. The Cynwyd Station renovation resumed in April 2009 and may be completed late 4Q 2009 or early 1Q 2010.

Bryn Mawr Farmers' Market has been very successful and Commissioner Manos has been working through the legislative issues that must be addressed in order for a farmers' market to proceed in Bala Cynwyd.

### Commissioners' Discussion in Response to NCBC Letter re: City Avenue Development Issues.

The NCBC Board sent a letter to all of the Township Commissioners regarding concerns of The NCBC with regard to proposed developments, and Commissioners Reed and Manos met with The NCBC officers before tonight's meeting to discuss this issue. During the Board meeting, the Board, assembled neighbors and Commissioners Reed and Manos had a good discussion about many of the issues and the Commissioners clarified some of the technical issues surrounding the drafting, introduction and passage of ordinances.

Commissioner Manos noted that some of the suggestions in The NCBC letter were initiatives already underway at the Township level. The Commissioners and The NCBC officers agreed that a broader committee of The NCBC should be established to work with the Commissioners and Township consultant Liz Rogan to collaborate together about how the issues proceed and to keep each other abreast of who is doing what.

Traffic impact – the idea is to do what was done with Rock Hill Road, to identify a transportation services district, which includes a three steps: use analysis, impact analysis, and a capital improvements plan. This can be done as the development ordinance is being refined.

Federal Realty has a new plan, which was revealed two days ago, for the Bala Cynwyd Shopping Center. Federal Realty is no longer proposing the development we last saw, which was an office building with mixed-use retail. Rather, Federal is now proposing more pad sites, like it has with Chili's and that's something Federal can do as a matter of right under the current ordinance. It

appears this change of plans reflects a new emphasis on asset management as opposed to long-term growth.

The City Avenue ordinance would be brought forward for discussion. The transportation services district traffic study would be concluded before the ordinance is finalized. The cost of this comprehensive study is about \$35,000.

A sub-committee of The NCBC will be formed to work on this issue and interested volunteers should contact Anne. Anne will decide who participates on the committee; the goal is to have a robust but productive committee.

### Membership

#### ➤ Membership – Judy Strazzella

As of August 15<sup>th</sup>, Amara's records show 678 household members from 701 last year (3% decline), but business membership is up from 58 to 62 for an 8% increase. President Greenhalgh will email a reminder and the next Newsletter will include another reminder about The NCBC dues.

President Greenhalgh's Wharton's students (a team of 10 undergraduates) – external communications audit – the students do a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This would be free. Someone from the Board would need to serve as the client/contact for the students, and it would start in January.

#### ➤ Nominations – Casey O'Bannon

The Nominating Committee met on August 31<sup>st</sup> and recommends Merle Zucker to the Board to fill Serge Nalbantian's unexpired term.

Phyllis and Judy are also leaving the Board this year. Club by-laws confirm that the committee needs to report on its progress in September but not on all nominees.

Action Step: The committee will conclude interviews in September and report selections to the greater Board by email. The committee will seek the Board's approval.

#### ➤ Federation – Maxine Goldberg

See June and July minutes (AMG will attach)

### Activities

#### ➤ Programs – Roger Moog

No report to date.

#### ➤ Independence Day – Anne Greenhalgh ~

Amara and Anne worked together to send a thank you letter to all sponsors.

Action step: We need help collecting residual donations from the individuals and businesses involved. Amara will email the Board with the names of the individuals and business; Board members are encouraged to volunteer to assist with collections.

### Communications

#### ➤ Publicity/Newsletter/Website – Casey O'Bannon

- ❖ Fred Fischer rolled over our account with Advantage.com without interrupting service to our email account and publicity package.
- ❖ The NCBC 4<sup>th</sup> of July Video is now being cablecast on Lower Merion & Narberth Public Access Television. It can be viewed by over 90% of the 60,000 residents on Comcast 99 and Verizon 34. To view the replay schedule, visit the following website and click on the "TV schedule" button under the TV set: <http://www.lowermerionandnarberth.tv/>
- ❖ The next issue of The Gateway needs to be in homes in October.  
Action Step: Copy is due to Casey ASAP.

#### Township, County and State Services

- Schools – Jerry Skillings
  1. Harriton School is open; Welcome & Open House scheduled for October 18th
  2. Lower Merion High School construction is on track; Steel Top Ceremony scheduled for September 17th
  3. Lawsuits are weakening as major plaintiffs withdraw
  4. Philadelphia Magazine names Harriton #1 school in region with LMHS as #3
- Transportation – Meredith Toole  
No report to date.
- Public Service – Roger Moog  
Roger Moog will contact the Fire Station and Bala Pizza to make arrangements for the annual meeting in November.

#### Planning, Zoning, and Building

- Zoning – David Haas  
No additional report to date.
- Bala Avenue – Michael Taichman-Robins
  - ❖ Abstracted from an email from Sara Pevaroff Schuh, Friends of the Bala Cynwyd Farmers Market [balafarmersmarket@yahoo.com](mailto:balafarmersmarket@yahoo.com), to AMG:

We selected the Parking Lot of St. Matthias Church on Bryn Mawr Avenue in Bala Cynwyd and chose Thursdays 3-7pm from May to October as our time slot. This site is big enough to host at least 10-12 farmers/vendors and their trucks, and support a minimum of 50 cars on site. The Township required that our site provide adequate parking for those who wish to drive to the market and the farmers need good access for their trucks. The Church heartily supports the idea and is willing to loan the site for this use throughout the summer. The time slot was chosen to enable the maximum members of our community to participate.

Since the site is zoned residential, a Conditional Use Amendment is required to use the site for the market. The Board of Commissioners will consider whether to permit the market to operate on this site on Wednesday, September 23 via advertisement of this Conditional Use Amendment. The Amendment is being reviewed by Bob Duncan and Mike Wylie at the Township and we understand how important it is for this Amendment to not open the door to other commercial activity in a residential neighborhood. We

need to show the Commissioners that this market has broad support across our communities, so we are trying to get a big turnout that night and the Neighborhood Club is key to this effort. We have the support of Whole Foods in Wynnewood, numerous members of Lower Merion Synagogue and a growing list of Bala Ave businesses. We would like to be able to say we have the support of the Neighborhood Club as well - what would it take for that to happen?

In addition, we are trying to organize a Harvest Festival on Thursday 24 September from 3-7pm, which would introduce the farmers to the community, allow neighbors to mingle while they buy vegetables, fruits, baked goods, flowers, cornstalks, etc. Sweet Mabel will be hosting a craft table for kids, we have two local musicians who will be playing and another neighbor will be doing face painting. We are hoping to make it a great fall community event.

Finally, we have our own website: <http://balacynwydfarmersmarket.weebly.com/> and a ever expanding listserve of supporters in Bala, Merion and Narberth.

Action Step: Michael Taichman-Robins will serve as point person and determine whether the Friends of the Bala Cynwyd Farmer's Market have the Club's support.

Farm to City is the organization the Friends of the Bala Cynwyd Farmers Market are partnering, Farm to City does the Bryn Mawr market.

Sara Pevaroff Schuh, of Friends of the Bala Cynwyd Farmers Market, explained that the original goal was to have the market on Bala Avenue, but there is not a suitable site with sufficient parking, visibility and pedestrian safety. This is the reason that the St. Mathias site is being considered. The proposed hours would be 3-7 pm every Thursday from May through October. The Bryn Mawr Farmers' Market is on Saturdays.

A neighbor of St. Mathias objected to the farmers market at the site and indicated the ample parking lot is never utilized (or not fully utilized) and creates problems. The neighbor also raised questions about whether there are farmers from whom many orthodox residents would purchase meat or dairy items. She also objected to September 24 as the date for the Harvest Festival because of the timing with respect to the Jewish Holidays. An open discussion of these points started and the neighbors agreed to continue their conversation after the Board meeting.

- ❖ Applicant: Rosemarie (Straface) Schreiner  
Property: 19 Highland Avenue, Bala Cynwyd, PA 19004  
(Election District #3). R 5 Residence District  
The applicant proposes to build a one-story rear addition inline with the dwelling wall parallel to Fairview Avenue (with the option to build a two-story addition) and seeks a variance from §§155-37 A(3), A(4) & A(6) to allow the addition to project into the required front and side yard setbacks, and exceed the allowable impervious surface limit. The applicant also seeks to the extent required, a variance from §§155-37 A(2) and/or 155-100 C to exceed the allowable building area.

From Michael to AMG:

I did get this file from Mike Wylie and was not troubled by the relief being sought. The twin house built in approximately 1920 is on a corner lot and is currently legally nonconforming in many respects. The applicant is seeking to build a 17x15 one story addition for a family room, possibly two stories if the budget permits. The addition will be at the back of the house in line with the rest of the structure and the rear yard set back will still be satisfied, but since the house is currently nonconforming with respect to front yard and side yard set backs as well as building area coverage and impervious coverage, a variance is required. It appears the addition will cause the building area and impervious coverage limits to be further exceeded by a minimal amount. There appears to be no neighbor opposition and the relief being sought appears to be de minimis. I do not see this matter as a community wide, precedent setting issue.

➤ City Avenue – Mark Kocent  
No report to date.

➤ Rock Hill Road – Dan Russoniello

From Kevin Kyle to Dan:

- ❖ Let's start with 600 Righter's Ferry Rd. We have renderings have been submitted as part of the conditional use process. I can forward those onto you, if you would like. Our next meeting is September 10th and we hope to finish up our testimony. I believe Sean McCloskey is going to have his consultant give some testimony. After 9/10 the following meetings have been scheduled: 9/14, 9/16, 9/21, 9/29, 10/1, 10/6 and 10/29. The Commissioners have 45 days to render their opinion from the close of the hearings. Therefore, at the very latest we should hear something back by the end of November.
- ❖ 131/151 - Still waiting on financing to take place. We are in talks with a bank right now about vertical financing. If all goes well, we could start by November 2009.
- ❖ 211 Belmont - we are not ready to submit a plan just yet.
- ❖ 132/134 - We might be in a position to submit a revised plan by the August 21 SOPI date. We are still on the building layout, parking layout with relation to the steep slopes and ROHO requirements (10' wide side walk, 10' wide planting strip).

From Ellen Wertheimer:

- ❖ 132/ 134 is on the agenda for the next planning commission meeting scheduled for September 14<sup>th</sup>. Dan will attend.

From Mike Wylie about 131-151 RHR:

- ❖ A zoning application has been submitted by the downhill contiguous property owner (Nicola Falcone @ 161 Rock Hill Road) appealing the Zoning Officer's letter of interpretation not requiring a 50' side yard setback previously imposed in Appeal No. 3992 (11/10/2005) and not requiring a special exception to cross the floodplain within the flume with a bridge.

Owner: Rock Hill Road Associates, LP

Appellant: Nicola Falcone

Contact: Dan Coval, Esq. 610-617-1776

This application is tentatively scheduled for the October 15, 2009 ZHB meeting.

➤ Schuylkill River Development – Ellen Werthheimer

Ellen reports:

- ❖ I attended the continuation of the conditional use hearing for 600 Rights Ferry Road last night. Two witnesses testified, Mr. Connelly, who was the prior owner of the site, and Mr. DeSantis, a traffic expert. I see some real traffic issues coming for Bala Cynwyd as a whole, as the traffic expert did a lot of talking about new lights and changing the timing on existing lights to allow for the huge flow into and out of the site. The intersections discussed included Monument and Presidential, Monument and Righters Ferry, and Belmont and Righters Ferry (by Hillgate). Specifics were not given in the hearing; presumably they are included in a traffic report that the NCBC does not have.
  - ❖ There are six more dates for further continuations of the hearing: Sept. 10, 21, and 29, and Oct. 1, 6, and 29. Ellen will attend the meetings on September 21<sup>st</sup>, October 1, and October 6<sup>th</sup>. Michael will attend the meetings on September 10<sup>th</sup> and October 29<sup>th</sup> (unless Mark takes one of those dates).
- Action Step: The committee would like to confirm that all dates are covered.

➤ Old Lancaster Road/ Buildings—Michael Taichman-Robins

- ❖ A Preliminary Land Development Plan Application No. 3632, proposing the consolidation of three properties and the construction of a three-story, 50-unit assisted living facility with 50 parking spaces located beneath the building, has been submitted to the Department of Building and Planning. This application is tentatively scheduled to be heard by the Planning Commission on September 14<sup>th</sup>.
- Action Step: Michael is planning on attending the meeting on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

➤ Historic Preservation – Jerry Francis

Jerry Francis reports:

- ❖ Work is progressing nicely...we have all the necessary Township permits and Fire Marshall approvals to move onto the next stage of restoration. Working with Aqua PA on the installation of new water lines that will be used as part of the fire suppression system. Working with SEPTA on the installation of a new sewer line and the installation of an ejector pump. New second floor windows, electrical and HVAC systems will be installed in mid-September. More updates forthcoming.

Gardens, Parks, Trails, and Open Space

➤ Beautification – Phyllis Faber Kelley

Phyllis reports:

- ❖ The Beautification Committee is sponsoring its 7<sup>th</sup> Fall Perennial Plant Exchange at the Cynwyd Station Park on Oct. 18 at 10 am.
- Action Step: The Chair of the Beautification Committee is relocating to California.

➤ Open Space – Mark Kocent

Lindsay Taylor writes:

- ❖ The Township of Lower Merion is about to begin the exciting process of designing the main spine of the Cynwyd Heritage Trail. Bryan Hanes of Studio Bryan Hanes of Philadelphia, with support from Kim Douglas of Studio Gaea, has been contracted to design the trail and complete construction documents for the first phase of

construction. The public will continue to be involved as this wonderful project moves forward.

A Study Committee comprised of Township staff and key members of the Township, Bala Cynwyd and Belmont Hills communities will assist us in this process. The Study Committee provides public and community leaders with an opportunity to continue to be involved and to provide important feedback to the design team.

Action Step: Mark Kocent will represent The NCBC on the Study Committee. The representative will be asked to review information and provide input towards the ultimate design this exciting new greenway and trail.

9:20 pm NEW BUSINESS

President Greenhalgh received a letter from Lower Merion Community Watch requesting a director to be appointed to Community Watch. The NCBC was one of the groups that founded and initiated the group. Being a director does not mean that that person also has to do community watch. We will include this opportunity in our upcoming Newsletter.

Motion to adjourn by Dan Russoniello at 9:55 pm, the motion was seconded by many and unanimously approved.

Next meeting: October 13, 2009 AT THE ACADEMY BUILDING