

The Neighborhood Club of Bala Cynwyd
Board Meeting
December 13, 2011
Lower Merion Academy Building

Board Attendees: Amara Briggs, Eric Foster, Maxine Goldberg, John Grugan, David Haas, Mark Kocent , Roger Moog, Alison Munoz, Casey O'Bannon, Dan Russoniello , Sara Schuh, Jerry Skillings, Meredith Toole, Eric Foster, Ellen Wertheimer, Bob Zimmerman and Merle Zucker.

Excused: Anne Greenhalgh, Casey O'Bannon

Officials Attending: Commissioners George Manos, Paul McElhaney and Brian McGuire; Lower Merion Police Officer Celera

Call to order:

President Grugan called the meeting to order at 7:39 pm.

LMPD

Officer Celera provided an overview of recent police activity which includes an uptick in daytime burglaries and several thefts from vehicles.

Minutes

With respect to the November minutes, Roger Moog moved to approve the minutes, Merle Zucker seconded the motion and they were unanimously approved.

Treasurer's Report

Amara reported that our revenues are ahead of last year and budget at \$32,653. We are at 726 household members, ahead of last year's level of 651 members. We saw a 28% increase in members who upgraded to Patron level and 7% that upgraded to Advocate level. Business memberships were down this year, 29 versus 42 last year

Amara also reported that we'll need to effectively plan ahead for the 4th of July celebration so we can keep expenses in line with the budget.

Merle Zucker moved to approve the Treasurer's report, Roger Moog seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

SOLICITOR'S REPORT

No Report

COMMISSIONERS' REPORT

The Commissioners provided a robust update with respect to township matters which include:

1. Bala Cynwyd library renovation – the library is scheduled to close on 12/31/11 for renovations.
2. Township budget – the proposed budget was developed based on a 0% tax increase. The township also received a “business tax windfall” of \$6.9 million in business taxes that have been unpaid over the last 6-7 years. This windfall puts the Township reserves well above the amount required by policy and therefore the Commissioners will discuss how that money should be utilized. Ideas have included using the funds to enhance the General Fund, allocate it to the Equipment Fund, use it so the township won't need to float bonds, pay down our debt, storm water management and/or traffic improvements.
3. City Ave zoning – the Board of Commissioners are considering voting on the ordinance at the next meeting on 12/14. The Commissioners acknowledged the outstanding concerns that NCBC has, however are considering the impact of voting on the ordinance in its current form versus the unintended consequences that tabling the discussion could have. Commissioner McGuire did inform the group that in the most recent iteration of the draft ordinance, developers must have a commitment to public space in order to received FAR incentives.

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS

Zoning

The Board discussed the current state of the proposed City Avenue ordinance in light of the December 14th potential vote. The overarching concern is the increased sense of urgency for the Commissioners to vote on the ordinance despite the concerns that continue to be raised by the NCBC, other civics and the public at large. The NCBC Board position remains the same. While we are supportive of an ordinance that promotes responsible development along City Avenue, we are opposing the ordinance in its current form.

As raised during the last meeting, there are several critical issues which must be further considered and addressed. Those issues include creating a fund for traffic improvements, increasing spacing between buildings (particularly in areas where commercial and residential areas abut) and refining the definition of an “indoor entertainment facility.”

Further, there have been two new developments which should be considered before moving forward with the ordinance. First, in light of the business tax “windfall”, the NCBC would like the Board of Commissioners to consider using some or all of these funds for the traffic improvement fund for City Avenue. Second, the Township is working on creating an “official map” to serve as a “master plan” which aides in visualizing how the City Ave. corridor could appear (location of buildings, inclusion of pedestrian trail etc) which the NCBC feels is a critical component which should be part of the ordinance, not an addendum provided at a later date.

Mark Kocent made a motion that the “official map” be prepared as an exhibit in the ordinance and passed contemporaneously with the ordinance. The motion was seconded by Roger Moog and unanimously approved.

Therefore, the inclusion of an “official map” has been added to the list of requests the NCBC would like to see considered and addressed before we could support the ordinance.

Schuylkill River Development

Ellen Wertheimer reported that there is a proposed settlement between the Township and O’Neill Properties Group relative to the M District Development. The conditional use for the development was granted, with conditions, and both O’Neill and Penn Real Estate Group appealed. O’Neill and Township staff developed a proposed settlement agreement for the Board of Commissioners to consider which includes items such as awarding incentives for proximity to transit and reduction in parking spaces for the residential units. The Board of Commissioners will vote at the next meeting as to whether to accept the proposed agreement or not.

Max Frable, an architect who works at Penn Real Estate Group and who attended the NCBC meeting, supplied further information on the proposed settlement, and indicated that Penn Real Estate Group is not party to and was not involved in negotiating the settlement proposal between O’Neill Properties and the Township. Whether or not the Board of Commissioners agrees to the settlement, the appeal process will continue.

New Business

Merle Zucker reported that the program at the Bala Theatre on the history of Bala Cynwyd was so well received that the Conservancy is considering hosting it again.

10:02 pm Amara Briggs moved to adjourn, Mark Kocent seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Meredith Toole
Secretary