

The Neighborhood Club of Bala Cynwyd  
Board Meeting March 5, 2010  
Lower Merion Academy Building

Board Attendees: Casey O'Bannon, Deedee Litvin, Ellen Wertheimer, Anne Greenhalgh, Merle Zucker, Patty Smith, Katherine Foy, Dan Russoniello, David Haas, Meredith Toole, Phyllis Faber Kelley, Roger Moog, Jerry Skillings, Mark Kocent, Michael Taichman-Robins, and Maxine Goldberg

Officials Attending: Commissioners Bruce D. Reed, Paul McElhaney and George Manos; LM Police Officer McCormick

Excused: Eric Foster, Bob Zimmerman, John Grugan, and Amara Briggs

Call to order:

President Greenhalgh called the meeting to order at 7:35 pm.

LMPD

LM Officer McCormick reported residential and commercial burglaries in the area, including thefts from vehicles and businesses at the Bala Cynwyd Shopping Center and elsewhere. The residential burglaries usually have been daytime, forced entry to an empty house and theft of cash and jewelry.

President's Announcements

President Greenhalgh announced that she has received invitations from the Crime Prevention Unit and she will share the details with anyone who is interested. The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission has an upcoming meeting on March 25

Minutes

Secretary Deedee Litvin reported that she received changes to the proposed January minutes so a new version will be circulated before our April meeting.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Treasurer Amara Briggs circulated the treasurer's report. Portions of our budget are restricted funds, which can be used only for specified purposes. Phyllis Faber Kelley moved to accept the treasurer's report, Merle Zucker seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

SOLICITOR'S REPORT

Bob Zimmerman was not present.

## COMMISSIONERS' REPORT

Commissioner Reed addressed the farmers market and the challenges of a suitable location in Bala Cynwyd. There will be a hearing this month with respect to a proposed farmer's market ordinance. They may make it a use as of right in commercial areas, such as the Bala Cynwyd Shopping Center. Commissioner Manos clarified that over 400 residents signed a petition in favor of the market at St. Mathias, but a few residents (between 3 and 10) opposed it and St. Mathias did not want to sponsor something that could be divisive in the community and therefore withdrew its petition.

Ludington Library is the largest in Montgomery County and its construction has started. Original projections were \$11 million and with the current economic conditions, it is expected it will be done for \$9 million.

Bala Cynwyd Library is also in need of renovations and it shares space with the French International School, and the school will contribute to the library's renovations.

Commissioner McElhaney addressed the Township's capital improvement plan (CIP), which is a 5-year plan for spending projects. These projects were recently reviewed and reclassified to help prioritize and manage spending on these projects. A bond issue will be addressed this week, and one option is a two-year bond that would enable the Township to fund the library projects, some emergency funds, and typical services/infrastructure.

Township staff continues to operate at less than capacity. The Township is down roughly 25 employees. Some of these staffing shortages result in additional expenses for the Township; for example, repair work for steps at General Wayne and Bala parks had to be bid out for a contractor because the Township did not have sufficient staff to address this need due to the staff shortages. There are other examples of impacts on our service levels (street repairs, clearing sidewalks of snow and ice, and addressing damaged trees) and this is starting to create a visible impact on residents.

Commissioner Manos indicated that with respect to the Township budget, some people are talking about "a systemic spending problem." Commissioner Manos indicated that the Township does not have a spending problem; it is facing the challenge of increasing costs and decreasing revenues, such as transfer taxes and other revenue-generating taxes.

Commissioner Manos briefly addressed the parking ordinance for "homes for the aged." The Township's ordinances use language that is not defined and terms that are not used anymore. Commissioner Manos is urging the Township to revise its ordinances in such a way to make it consistent with the terms and definitions set forth by the Department of Welfare.

## **PRESENTATIONS TO THE BOARD**

- Friends of the Cynwyd Heritage Trail, Nancy Winkler, President

This is a not-for-profit organization; its mission is to support Township by organizing volunteers and providing some resources to support the trail. A generous PECO grant provided 250 trees that are worth roughly \$30,000 and volunteers are needed to plant and care for these young trees. These are bare-root trees. Design costs for the Trail have come in at the budget amount, so there is a lot of excitement. The design for the Trail includes asphalt and crushed-stone paths.

Relevant dates for Trail relates activities include:

March 20 – volunteers needed to help prepare the trail for the plantings.

March 23 – PA Horticultural Society workshop – 2 hour training on caring for bare root trees.

April 10-11 – actual planting days. Also supporting volunteers with food and drinks, so volunteers can help by supporting this event even if not by planting the trees. Also on April 11 there will be a tour of West Laurel Hill.

➤ West Laurel Hill, Pete Hoskins, President and CEO

With regard to the creation of a Jewish cemetery, plans and designs are proceeding and they hope to have the necessary Township approvals in April and to begin servicing the Jewish community by mid-June.

Waivers being requested include land development, which can be a very lengthy process and, if necessary, would not enable them to meet their June goal. West Laurel does not view this as a new development as this location is covered by a development plan submitted long ago by West Laurel Hill.

Waiver from requirement of deciduous trees in favor of evergreen trees in order to allow West Laurel Hill to satisfy the buffering needs unique to the separateness required by the Jewish cemetery.

➤ Federal Realty Investment Trust, Dave Joss, Development Manager

On March 1 at the Planning Commission meeting a few issues came up, including the process of pursuing development and the importance of communicating with the community, which is understood and Federal wants to handle the process appropriately. The Board first learned on February 22 that Federal was already moving forward with development plans and no outreach had been made to the Board before that date. With regard to the quiet title action, the title insurance from First American that Federal Realty secured for the property warranted that there was no restriction or buffer on the property. Dave Joss also agreed that prior communications about that action were not handled well and he apologized for that history. None of the plans presented tonight impact the buffer zone, which is the subject of the quiet title action.

The focus of the current development ideas pertain to the Lord & Taylor corner of the Bala Cynwyd Shopping Center and there are 3 concepts being proposed. In the first concept, the access points and circulation remain the same. There would be a bank site (4300 sq ft) in front of Lord & Taylor on City Avenue side and a large retail building (6,000 sq ft) behind Lord & Taylor on the St. Asaph's side.

A second scenario is to put one retail building along Belmont (10,000 sq ft) next to Lord & Taylor and to put a bank in front on the City Avenue side. They have done a short-term lease with Lord & Taylor and their intentions are still not clear, which is part of the reason for these various options. Residents in attendance questioned the business judgment of planning for a bank when there is so much media reporting on banks closing. Federal indicated that of entities moving forward with sites at this time, it is mostly banks and our area is attractive to banks.

There is a third option in the event Lord & Taylor vacates the space, the structure would be revised to bring the new space to street level and it would make the building more shallow so the line of the shopping center would be straight the entire strip. And there would be a building (also 31,000 sq feet, one floor) on the side, along Belmont, and a bank pad in the front. Each of these 3 plans represents as-of-right uses. See attachments from Anne regarding sizes of buildings.

After hearing residents comments and questions, Patty Smith indicated that people are concerned about the quality of the businesses that would occupy these proposed buildings, and Federal would be well-served if it spoke to the issue of the types of tenants it would anticipate in this space. Ellen Wertheimer observed that a prior plan included a 10-story office building, which residents found very objectionable. In addition, the people who go to the Bala Cynwyd Shopping Center are very diverse, more diverse than Bala Cynwyd and in planning and developing the property Federal should consider its customer base.

## **STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS**

- Annual Elected Officials Dinner – Tuesday April 27 is a potential date and Roger will investigate whether the Tavern is available that evening.
- Independence Day Celebration – Anne M. Greenhalgh - we need an inspirational speaker – recommendation is Rabbi Sherman. He has spoken at this event before with an inclusive and uplifting message. Patriotic speaker – Ted Goldsboro. Sons of the American Legion - Thomas Shallow is the squadron leader. They offer scholarships to boys and girls, and Anne suggests they be honored as citizen of the year. Merchant of the year – Anne proposes Aldar.
- Schools – Patty Smith (School Board update) - Dr. McGinley would like to get on the agenda. Laptops and redistricting lawsuits discussed. OSHA is investigating an injury to a worker at Lower Merion H.S. construction site. A group of concerned Lower Merion citizens are considering school board candidates on March 14 or 21, and Patty welcomes input.

➤ Federation meeting – the best one Maxine Goldberg has attended. A speaker addressed the requirements of all the different tax-exempt entities. Maxine will pass that information along to Treasurer Amara Briggs.

9:30 pm NEW BUSINESS ~ Candidates for the 149th District - Merle Zucker indicated that there are 7 people running for Kathy Manderino's seat. Some of these candidates may want to come to a meeting and there will also be a candidate night.

David Haas reported that Chef Charin is closing soon.

10:25 Adjourn

Maxine Goldberg moved to adjourn at 10:00 pm, the motion was seconded by Patty Smith and unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Deedee Litvin  
Secretary