



The Gateway

Newsletter of The Neighborhood Club of Bala Cynwyd

The Oldest of the Main Line Civic Associations – 1906

P.O. Box 717, Bala Cynwyd, Pennsylvania 19004 • www.balacynwyd.org

TheNeighborhoodClub@BalaCynwyd.org

Roger Moog, *president* • Courtenay Harris Bond, *editor*

President's Letter

Dear Members and Neighbors,



Since this is my first newsletter as the new president of your civic association, I would like to introduce myself. My family has lived on Kent Road in Bala Cynwyd since 1979,

and I have served on The Neighborhood Club of Bala Cynwyd Board of Directors, either as a member or an officer, for 32 years. In addition, I worked in the field of transportation planning and engineering in the Delaware Valley for more than three decades before retiring in 2011.

During my years of involvement with the Neighborhood Club, the community has faced many transportation issues and development proposals. However, considering the state of Bala Cynwyd in 2015 and looking toward the future, the neighborhood faces a level of residential and commercial expansion that will strain roadways and intensify business activity like never before.

In recent years, the Lower Merion government has generally facilitated this development expansion through zoning modifications along City Avenue as well as project approvals in other areas of the township. These actions will have a mixed impact. While more commercial and residential building will yield increased tax revenue and greater options for shopping, recreation, employment and cultural enrichment, there will be increased building density and traffic. Our elected leaders must make provisions for remedial actions.

(continued on pg. 2)

BMW Construction Drives Forward

A steel beam skeleton has emerged on the corner of Conshohocken State Road and Bala Avenue — the site of the new BMW of the Main Line building.

Construction continues to progress and remains on schedule, despite winter storms and cold, according to Amanda Baldwin, business development manager for Euro Motorcars of the Main Line.

“We are hoping to keep up the pace to reach our goal for our service center to move **into** its new home on the first floor in the new facility by the end of July,” Baldwin said.

Plans call for combining sales and service under one roof. During the construction, both operations remain open, with signs directing customers to the service center on Bala Avenue and a temporary showroom across the street from the construction site.

Euro Motorcars is still aiming for the new BMW building to be finished by the end of the year, though it has not yet settled on a grand opening date, Baldwin said.

“Even though we know the challenges that this project has faced in terms of construction — and not just meeting the needs of the business but also the needs of the community — and even though we know what the final design will bring, we have been continuously surprised by seeing the actual structure take shape,” Baldwin said. “Hardly anyone here quite expected such a dramatic change. Each day we see change, and it keeps us excited.”

The company is continuing to try to minimize traffic disruptions during construction. Bala Avenue has been open throughout the work thus far, and no road closures are anticipated for the foreseeable future, Baldwin said.

“The steel beams and the scale of the building might seem overwhelming for the corner of Bala Avenue now, but there’s much more to the final design than meets the eye in the meantime,” Baldwin said.

The company provided The Neighborhood Club of Bala Cynwyd with a rendering of the new building for readers to view.



Photo by Amanda Baldwin, Euro Motocars Main Line Inc.

Commissioner's Corner



Greetings, Neighbors!

"It was a cold and rainy night . . ." No, it was just **cold**. Consider: this time last year there was record-setting snow. This year there was record-setting **cold**. Just another day in the life of Lower Merion residents? Perhaps. As importantly, however, it was another winter season in the life of the township's public works division.

Public works has truly been challenged in the last few years to meet the demands of mother nature at its extreme ends. To its credit, the Lower Merion Township Public Works Division reassessed its storm response program following last year's winter season and took action to improve performance where it could. It purchased GPS units for all plow and salt trucks and mapped them to the township's GIS system, making it possible to monitor progress and confirm that assigned plow routes were followed and completed. This also made it possible to reroute plows when appropriate to respond to emergency conditions. Also, new plows were purchased that made clearing of roadways more effective, and drivers were retrained as to plow routes and plowing and salting procedures.

Thankfully, most residents living on cul-de-sacs dispensed with a lingering old habit: they did as prescribed in the township's code and parked their vehicles in their driveways during snow events, making it possible for plows to clear the circles. A hearty thanks to all who cooperated in this.

In any case one would hope that by the time this edition of *The Gateway* arrives in your mailboxes, the bitter cold of February is but a memory and signs of warming weather are on the horizon, giving you and the township's work crews a moment of respite from weather woes.

On the local commercial front, the unexpected closing of the Bala Theater surprised and disappointed many residents, including yours truly. Prospects for resumption of operations are bright, however, since at least two entities have expressed interest in aiding in the restoration of operations at the Bala both physically and with respect to program material. The building owners are evaluating alternatives as well, including returning to their former status as both owners and operators of the facility. The theater is listed as a Class II resource on the township's historic inventory, and accordingly, discussions to date as to physical condition have focused on preservation of the historic character of the building. To that end the building owners recently launched a crowd-funding effort on the Internet at GoFundMe.com/mz9ovg to aid in the building's restoration.

On the vehicular traffic front, installation of Phase I of the new adaptive traffic signal system has begun and is scheduled for completion in mid-March, weather permitting. Phase I encompasses the stretch of Presidential Boulevard that includes St. Asaph's Road and that runs from City Avenue to Conshohocken State Road. This plus Phase II, a \$3.6 million traffic mitigation initiative, is detailed in another section of this *Gateway* edition.

Regarding future development, the apartment complex planned for 335 **Righters Ferry Road** has been scaled back from its original 283 units to a mix of 210 efficiency and one- and two-bedroom units. Its side yard neighbor at 150 **Monument Road** has also submitted preliminary plans for 207 apartment units and a four-level structured parking garage that will include a public plaza and retail uses on the ground level. The township's building and planning division and our engineering consultants are reviewing these plans to ensure that the very understandable concerns expressed by residents in the vicinity of these developments — about vehicular congestion that could occur at the intersection of **Righters Ferry and Monument roads** — are appropriately addressed. Both projects conform to the new official map for the district that provides for separate vehicular, multi-purpose pedestrian and bicycle paths and open naturally occurring public gathering and recreational spaces.

For further information about any of these matters please do not hesitate to contact either me at george@gtmanos.com or at (610) 664-4534 or the Lower Merion Township Building and Planning Department at (610) 645-6200.

Happy Spring, everyone, and see you in the neighborhood!

Sincerely,
George T. Manos
Lower Merion Township Commissioner

President's Message *(continued from pg. 1)*

Over the next several years, it should be the Neighborhood Club's mission to act in an oversight/review capacity to encourage local, state and federal funding of necessary roadway improvements and transit service enhancements to manage transportation demands safely and with minimum additional delay; to monitor development proposals so that new densities do not infringe on neighborhood comfort and property values; and to interface with local government officials to insure efficient use of tax dollars for schools, other public investments, adequate police coverage and code enforcement.

The Neighborhood Club has no legal standing to influence these issues. Instead, we rely on the influence of our board and its members working together to make our opinions known and acted on by our government representatives and the local business community. The board welcomes your input and participation in this ongoing process.

Please attend board meetings the second Tuesday of every month, except in July and August. Contact me, or any board member, with comments and concerns by visiting our website: www.balacynwyd.org. Together we can make a significant contribution to the community we have all chosen to call home.

Sincerely,
Roger Moog

City Avenue District to Ease Traffic with Addition of Adaptive Signals

The City Avenue Special Services District is adding adaptive signals to the area to reduce traffic delays and allow safer pedestrian crossing.

Adaptive signals work by using video cameras to measure both traffic volume and queues on each approach. They interface with existing traffic signal controllers and determine optimal timing for each intersection approach on a real-time basis, instead of relying on pre-programmed schedules, explained City Avenue Special Services District President Terrence Foley.

The new system will work by giving green lights based on the number of vehicles and the amount of time they have been waiting.

“Due to this others may get a green light twice, causing you to believe you’ve been skipped,” Foley said. “Be assured the system knows you are there and for how long.”

The new method will increase safety and significantly decrease the need to stop at intersections, which will ease traffic and shorten travel time.

Farmer’s Market Seeks New Site

The Bala Cynwyd Farmer’s Market — which has run for the past five years from mid May through the week of Thanksgiving in the GSB parking lot — is seeking a new site for its 2015 season.

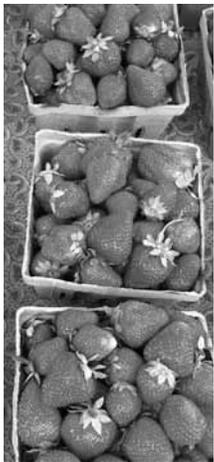


Photo by Sarah Pevaroff Schuh

“We are trying to keep the market on Thursday afternoons so we can keep our great lineup of farmers and vendors that you have come to know and love,” said Sara Pevaroff Schuh, principal at SALT Design Studio and one of the community partners who founded the farmer’s market.

Schuh and her partners, Laura Muzzi Brennan and Hedy Cerwinka, have already considered several new locations, including the St. Asaph’s Church parking lot, the Bala Gym parking lot and the Cynwyd Train Station parking lot — all of which, for a variety of reasons, have not worked out.

For the farmer’s market to run it needs an approximately 6,000-square-foot lot zoned for commercial use and available from 1 to 7 p.m. Thursdays, a minimum of 20 parking spaces for customers, and good visibility from the street.

“Does your office building have unused parking?” Schuh asked. “Do you own a property that will be unused for the 2015 season?”

“Other markets want our farmers, and if we can’t secure a site soon, we’ll lose them,” said Brennan, a food writer who frequently talks to local growers for her work.

Please email the farmer’s market organizers with your ideas and suggestions: balafarmersmarket@gmail.com.

By reducing the possibility of a running a red light, studies have shown that adaptive signals lower the chance of crashes by up to 30 percent. In one Philadelphia neighborhood where these types of signals are already in use, traffic delays have been reduced by an average of 27 percent, Foley said.

As part of the upgrades, pedestrian crossing buttons, some with countdown timers, will also be installed. These devices will allow more time for pedestrians to cross safely. Some intersections will also provide audio instructions.

The first phase, already underway, involves the five signals along St. Asaph’s Road and is expected to take three months. The second phase, from Lancaster Avenue to the Schuylkill Expressway, is slated to begin in late spring and will include the installation of the new signal technology, as well as ADA ramps and other improvements, Foley said.

Stay informed by visiting the newly updated website: www.cityave.org.

News from the Cynwyd Heritage Trail

Maintenance, improvement and fundraising efforts are continuing on the Cynwyd Heritage Trail.

The Natural Lands Trust recently drafted a report about the second phase of these improvements and submitted it to Lower Merion Township officials. Residents will be able to review and discuss this draft at a second public meeting this spring, after which the Natural Lands Trust will issue a final document to the township commissioners for approval.

At a public meeting last fall, township officials and residents examined a draft of the plan for the Cynwyd Spur, connecting the Cynwyd Heritage Trail to the Schuylkill River Trail via the existing Pencoyd Bridge. Township commissioners are expected to approve the final document for these improvements this spring.

In addition, the annual Trail Trot and Family Walk, a 5K race to support work on the Cynwyd Heritage Trail, is scheduled for April 18. And the Manayunk Bridge Extension ribbon cutting ceremony is tentatively set for the weekend of Oct. 3 with a full schedule of events being planned.

In the meantime, trail workdays continue, weather permitting, the third Saturday of every month. Friends of the Cynwyd Heritage Trail hold their board meetings the second Monday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at West Laurel Hill Cemetery.

Interested in Becoming a Neighborhood Club Director?

Please send a resumé or letter of interest to:

The NCBC | Attn: Nominations
P.O. Box 717 | Bala Cynwyd PA 19004



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P.O. Box 717, Bala Cynwyd, Pennsylvania 19004
www.balacynwyd.org

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Please Visit Our Website!

The NCBC website is a resource for:

- ✓ The monthly agenda
- ✓ Minutes of previous meetings
- ✓ Past copies of *The Gateway*!
- ✓ Contact information for board members
- ✓ Community links
- ✓ PAYPAL — to pay dues electronically!

Please visit www.balacynwyd.org.

Thanks to the following
neighbors and friends
who contributed to
this issue of *The Gateway*:

Amanda Baldwin
Barrett Dunigan
Terrence Foley
George Manos
Roger Moog
Sara Pevaroff Schuh



The Neighborhood Club of Bala Cynwyd Membership Form

Your dues help to:

- alert you to neighborhood discussions about critical topics
- preserve the residential character of Bala Cynwyd
- support appropriate commercial development
- monitor zoning, traffic and safety on our streets
- provide community events like the 4th of July Celebration

Please send your annual dues to: The NCBC
P.O. Box 717, Bala Cynwyd, PA 19004

Household: Benefactor \$100 Patron \$50 Friend \$35

Business: Gold \$250 Silver \$100

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