Fall 2016

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

info@balacynwyd.org

Jerry Skillings, *president* • Courtenay Harris Bond, *editor*

President's Letter

Dear Neighbors,

During last month's meeting, a community member asked when and how The Neighborhood Club evaluates proposals for new residential and commercial building projects. The question is timely and important, particularly given the recent pace of development in Bala Cynwyd. With this in mind, I thought I'd walk you through The Neighborhood Club's process of learning about new projects, and where applicable, deciding whether to "oppose" or "not oppose" zoning requests.

Projects We Review

In line with our mission — to preserve the neighborhood's residential character, protect open space and keep our commercial areas vibrant — The Neighborhood Club reviews all proposed projects that involve large-scale property development or requests for zoning relief.

We ask property owners and developers to discuss their projects with The Neighborhood Club before they make a formal presentation to the Lower Merion Zoning Hearing Board or Board of Commissioners. This step is vital because it provides the community with the chance to provide input early on. The township values community feedback and looks for it when they review projects.

Making a Presentation

The Neighborhood Club asks property owners and developers to address key aspects of their projects during presentations:

(continued on pg. 4)

Neighbors Encouraged to Attend The Neighborhood Club Annual Meeting

The Neighborhood Club of Bala Cynwyd's Annual Meeting
Tuesday, November 15, 2016
7:00 p.m., refreshments • 7:30 p.m., start of business meeting

LOWER MERION ACADEMY
(adjacent to Bala Cynwyd Middle School on Bryn Mawr Avenue)

Please join us for refreshments prior to the meeting followed by elections of directors and officers. After our elections we will conduct a full slate of business including presentations and discussion about current neighborhood issues. All neighbors are welcome.

Candidate Slate for The Neighborhood Club Annual Elections

Following are the candidate slates for The Neighborhood Club of Bala Cynwyd elections. Candidates were interviewed by The Neighborhood Club's nominating committee. Per our bylaws, all members with dues paid for 2016 are eligible to vote.

The Neighborhood Club of Bala Cynwyd Officers
President: Jerry Skillings
Vice President: Dan Russoniello
Treasurer: Eric Godfrey
Secretary: Anne Greenhalgh
Past President: Roger Moog
Solicitor: David Haas

Directors for the term ending Dec. 31, 2017:
Russell Dayvault, Maxine Goldberg, Glenn Manko, Francie McComb, Randy Myer, David Rosenbaum, Shifra Vega.

Directors for the term ending Dec. 31, 2018:
Courtenay Harris Bond, Vanessa Coke Cohen, Ricky Guerra, Michael McKeon, Alison Munoz, Joseph Oxman, Merle Zucker.

Any neighborhood club member wishing to nominate a candidate for officer or director other than those selected by our nominating committee should consult The Neighborhood Club's bylaws at **www.balacynwyd.org** for details.

Commissioner's Corner

Greetings Neighbors,

It's that time again. The summer has ended, the schools are full of children, and the Lower Merion Township Board of Commissioners turns to two of its most important tasks: establishing the budget for 2017 and the capital improvement plan for 2017-2022. I want to address three topics in that regard: Lower Merion Township's debt service related to its capital improvement plan, the sanitary sewer fee and the township's tax.

This year's first budget workshop was held in early June. One area of focus was that of reducing the township's current level of debt service. This was a goal that I assigned to the township staff and to an ad-hoc committee made up of several commissioners under the leadership of Commissioner Brian McGuire.

I am very pleased to inform the residents that, due to the ad-hoc committee's hard work and suggested policy changes, this will be the first year that the township will have a reduction in its debt service. As a result of these changes the township should see a decreased need in its overall borrowing need for its capital improvement plan. Borrowing for capital improvements is an important mechanism, however, particularly when interest rates are low and long-term infrastructure costs can thereby be reduced. The township is mindful of those opportunities as well as being vigilant in refinancing existing debt to take advantage of lower interest rates.

In addition, analysis of the sanitary sewer fee also indicates that, while it is not absolutely necessary to have a free increase at present, by next year it may be so, and in order to avoid a significant increase at that time, we may want to phase in a more measured increase now. The board awaits additional information from township staff to help aid in its decision as to whether to do such an incremental rate increase at this time.

Most importantly, I am pleased to announce that from all indications it appears that this year will be the sixth consecutive year in a row that there will be no township tax increase necessary. This is due to the hard work of our commissioners, the township manager and all the township staff in keeping our operations as efficient as possible. It's important to remember that there are other taxing authorities separate from the township, Lower Merion School District and Montgomery County; they have their own fiscal needs and taxing authority.

All that having been said, we are mindful that it's also important that township services be maintained at an appropriate level for our residents. It is the continuing mission of the commissioners to strike a balance in that regard. I hope you will appreciate that, in instances where we do have to come forward with tax increases, it is only after careful analysis, consideration and public participation. Happily, this is an instance where we come to you with better news.

Sincerely,
Paul McElhaney
Lower Merion Township
Board of Commissioners Vice President, Ward 3

City Ave District Project Updates

The City Ave District is excited to announce that PennDOT started construction in August on the first phase of long-term improvements along the City Ave corridor, between Interstate 76 and Route 30 (Lancaster Avenue), with expected completion by November 2017.

The District initially obtained a Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) grant for acquisition and installation of new traffic-adaptive signal equipment to more efficiently accommodate traffic flow and pedestrians; however, this project now includes a number of additional safety enhancements. Through PennDOT's leadership, the original project scope to upgrade the 17 signalized intersections along City Avenue now includes a new wireless communication system and the installation of new pedestrian push buttons, pedestrian signal heads with countdown displays, several new mast arms with new overhead traffic signal heads, new pavement markings, new overhead street signs and 74 new ADA compliant curb ramps.

The City Ave District then leveraged the initial $800,000 CMAQ grant into the current $3.4 million project funded primarily by PennDOT. Additional funding was provided by the City Ave District, a Legislative Action Grant and Lower Merion Township.

Looking beyond the Phase I improvements, the District is also proud to report that it was awarded a Department of Community and Economic Development Multi-modal Fund Grant by the Commonwealth Financing Authority for $2.05 million for Phase II of the City Avenue project for work between 50th Street / Bala Avenue and 63rd Street / Wynnewood Road. Phase II improvements will include mountable beveled grass medians, new drainage installation and upgrades, along with various intersection improvements.

In addition, the City Ave District hosted three happy hours at the newly renovated outdoor plaza, The Commons at Two Bala Plaza, a new open-air space for leisure and special events right here in the District.

Stay up-to-date on these projects and other initiatives of the City Ave District at **www.cityave.org** or by following us on Twitter (@City_Ave) or Facebook.

Please follow The Neighborhood Club on Facebook at www.facebook.com/balacynwydcivicassociation

The Beautification Committee Recognizes Outstanding Sidewalk Gardens

The 16th year of our sidewalk garden recognition once again introduced us to many beautiful gardens right here in Bala Cynwyd.

Our residential winner this year is Pat Carr who has created a wonderful garden combining food crops and ornamental flowers right in his front yard. His creative use of space is not only practical and beautiful to look at, but truly embraces the farm-to-table trend, an outstanding effort.

Our commercial winner is the The Fairmont building. This very large property is always a joy to observe with many multi-seasonal plantings, beautiful trees, shrubs and meticulously maintained lawns all accented with seasonal flowers. The views on the front as well as the side are equally attractive.

We congratulate our winners and thank everyone for nominating gardens. It always amazes and inspires us to see how many beautiful gardens there are in our neighborhood. We encourage you to explore Bala Cynwyd and discover these wonderful gardens. We also thank everyone for their efforts in planting and maintaining a garden.

Keep at it. Yours many be next year's winner!

If you are interested in volunteering with the Beautification Committee email Eileen Conry, econry@comcast.net.

Our Commercial Winner, The Fairmont

Our Residential Winner, Pat Carr

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

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

- *Presentation aims*: Is the purpose to inform the community about a project, seek input and/or prepare for a zoning request or development application to the township?
- *Current status of the property:* Who owns the property now? What are the property's major characteristics? How is it used? What changes are proposed?
- *Current zoning*: How is the property zoned now? Is the owner's proposed use of or change to the property covered under existing zoning and therefore "by right"?
- *Zoning relief requests*: Does the owner seek exemptions, waivers, special exceptions or variances from the Lower Merion Zoning Hearing Board or Board of Commissioners? If so, why? Have there been previous zoning requests or violations?
- *Illustrations*: Plans, renderings, photos and/or sketches are helpful to show planned changes.
- *Historical considerations*: Does the property have historical significance?
- *Neighbor input*: Has the owner met with neighbors and how did they react to the plan?
- *Anticipated impacts*: What impact might the project have on the community? Will it have a positive or negative effect on historical buildings, environmental impact, noise or traffic? How will the owner minimize the impact of any construction activities on the surrounding neighborhood?
- *Green space*: Will the project protect green space and promote environmental conservation?
- *Future meetings and construction schedule:* Are meetings planned with the township, board of commissioners, zoning hearing board or historical commission? What is the construction schedule?

Discussion and Review

During presentations, board members and neighbors typically review handouts and ask questions to clarify their understanding about the project. Also, they hold a general discussion about the proposed plan, its merits, or its adverse impact. Often, board members and neighbors make recommendations to improve the project, especially if there are likely to be negative effects on the surrounding community. While The Neighborhood Club considers many of the same factors that our local government boards and commissions use in their review, our board — in line with our mission — focuses on how proposed changes will affect our community.

In the case of zoning requests, The Neighborhood Club board votes whether to "oppose" or "not oppose" a project application. We base the decision on the facts that have been presented, as well as the board's judgment in relation to the mission of The Neighborhood Club. Typically, the board would vote to oppose if: 1) the neighbors were not informed about the project or given an opportunity to provide input or 2) the project was likely to have a significant negative impact on the neighbors or community. As a final step, the board informs the zoning hearing board and board of commissioners about the vote and the reasons for it.

For developers and property owners alike, engaging the community and seeking their input is an early and important step towards public acceptance of any new project. It is a prerequisite for any zoning or other relief that may be sought from the Lower Merion Zoning Hearing Board and Board of Commissioners. We welcome your input! If you would like to present a project, or if you have questions about the review process, please contact me at jskillings@comcast.net.

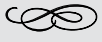
All are welcome to attend our next meeting, Nov. 15 at 7:00 p.m. at the Academy Building adjacent to Bala Cynwyd Middle School.

Jerry Skillings
President
The Neighborhood Club of Bala Cynwyd

Volunteers Needed

The Neighborhood Club is always looking for new members and volunteers! Please contact us if you are interested in:

- ***Becoming a member***
- ***Volunteering for the Fourth of July Celebrations***
- ***Helping out with our email communications and newsletter***



The Neighborhood Club of Bala Cynwyd
P.O. Box 717 | Bala Cynwyd PA 19004
info@balacynwyd.org

Upcoming Meetings

NCBC Board meetings are held the second Tuesday of each month, September through June, 7:30 p.m. at the Lower Merion Academy (next to Bala Cynwyd Middle School) on Bryn Mawr Ave. Please join us for our upcoming meetings.

Nov. 15: annual membership meeting
Dec. 13: regular board meeting
Jan. 10: regular board meeting
Feb. 14: regular board meeting
March 14: regular board meeting
April 11: regular board meeting

To be included on our email list, notify us by emailing info@balacynwyd.org.

The Neighborhood Club of Bala Cynwyd thanks the following individuals and organizations whose contributions helped make our Centennial Fourth of July Celebration a success:

Samuel Adenbaum and family
Al Dar Bistro
Aquatic & Fitness Center
Bala Cynwyd School for Young Children
Bala Eye Care
Bala House Montessori School
Bala Library
BHHS Fox & Roach
Courtenay Harris Bond
Deb and Dan Bosin
Ken and Leslie Brier
Amara, Jason, Gavin & Jenna Briggs
Patrick Broderick, in memory of Fenton Fitzpatrick
Maxine Goldberg
Francie McComb
Commissioner Brian McGuire
Kohelet Foundation
Mindful Music, LLC
Roger and Carol Moog
Murrays Delicatessan
NoelSy Art in Beauty
O'Neill Properties Group
Pack 581 Cub Scouts
Rays Custom Shirts
Bruce Reed
RE/MAX-Evie Cohen
David Rosenbaum
Saffron Indian Kitchen
Sidds Auto Repair
Jerry Skillings and family
St. Joseph's University
The Beth Samberg Team, Keller Williams Main Line Realty
The Cynwyd Club
The Dairy Café
The Fairmont
The Federation of Lower Merion Civic Associations
The Friends of the Cynwyd Heritage Trail
The Hearth at Drexel
The Lower Merion Historical Society
The New Tavern Restaurant and Bar
The Woman's Club of Bala Cynwyd
Trails End Café
Valley Press Inc.
West Laurel Hill Cemetery
Herbert Yentis & Company Realtors
Karen and Mark Zucker
Merle Zucker

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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*:

Eileen Conry
Terrence Foley
Anne Greenhalgh
Paul McElhaney
Roger Moog
Jerry Skillings

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

*Contribute at the benefactor level and be recognized in our fall newsletter and on our website.

Business: ☐ Gold $250* ☐ Silver $100

*Businesses that contribute at the gold level receive an ad in the July 4 program, as well as a listing in our fall newsletter and on our website.

Name _____

Address _____

Email Address _____

Phone No. _____