

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 Neighbors,



This spring has moved quickly with a busy club agenda. We are fast approaching the annual Neighborhood Club of Bala Cynwyd Independence Day Celebration (please see the related article in this newsletter issue for details). We hope to see many of you on July 4.

In the meantime, the club held a candidates' forum in April during which Bala Cynwyd's three incumbent commissioners, along with two challengers for township commissioner, provided their various positions on numerous topics. Not surprisingly, the most cited issue continues to be the effects of the increased development projects currently in progress or being planned in Bala Cynwyd.

If you travel around the neighborhood and west during rush hour, or even during mid-day, you have most likely encountered intense traffic and construction-related delays. Within the next few years, at least 1,600 new apartment units will be built in Bala Cynwyd alone. Couple that with business expansion along City and Bala avenues, institutional and business expansion on Montgomery Avenue and other projects not yet formally presented to the club board, and it is easy to see that this situation will worsen in the near future.

Your club board reviews all neighborhood development projects before township approval and works with developers to minimize negative impacts. However, all

(continued on pg. 2)

Independence Day Celebration Rain or Shine, Our Neighborhood Will Sparkle on the 4th

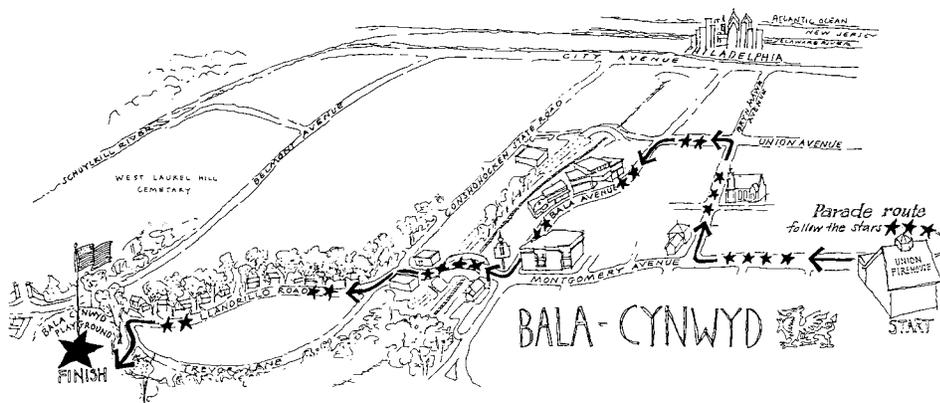
The Neighborhood Club of Bala Cynwyd will sponsor the annual Independence Day celebration on Saturday, July 4. Registration for the annual parade will begin at 8:45 a.m. at the Union Fire Association on Montgomery Avenue. The parade will follow the same route as in previous years, starting at 9:30 a.m. at the firehouse and ending at the Bala Cynwyd Playground.

The parade will feature neighborhood children riding decorated bicycles, costumed marchers, juggling clowns, stilt walkers, imaginative floats, as well as public officials marching and driving fire trucks and other vehicles. Afterward, bring your blankets and beach chairs to the playground to enjoy a program including inspirational and patriotic speakers, music by Elaine Watts and The Summer Sounds Pop Band and awards for Citizen of the Year and Merchant of the Year.

Carnival games, foot races and the ever-popular egg toss will follow the ceremony. Prizes will be awarded to parade participants, as well as to the winners of the races. The neighborhood club will also award a prize to the house along the parade route that displays the best patriotic decorations. The Union Fire Association will serve hot dogs and sodas. In addition, children will enjoy pony rides, a petting zoo, exotic animals, a moon bounce, a trackless train, a bungee run, an extreme rock wall and a carousel.

Bracelets will cost \$15.00 each or two for \$25.00, allowing the wearer to enjoy all of the games and rides as many times as desired for the flat price. Ticket sets will also be available in smaller denominations.

Come join us and celebrate the 4th!



Commissioner's Corner

Lower Merion's New Comprehensive Plan Is Critical to Bala Cynwyd's Future



As long as potholes are filled, trash is picked up, parks are mowed and taxes don't rise too much, most residents understandably do not concern themselves too much with the day-to-day workings of municipal government. That can, of course, change on a dime when a proposal for any sort of nearby commercial or residential development surfaces. Even those of us who live in completely residential, single-family home areas can be faced with a teardown and/or infill situation where questions such as, "How big is the home?" and "Will it fit in with the others on the block?" are raised.

The challenge is that our current zoning laws do not go far enough to protect established residential neighborhoods from inappropriate development. They do limit the type of use, lot size, building height, amount of impervious surface and setbacks from the street and adjoining properties. However, conventional zoning laws such as ours do not adequately discourage infill construction that does not fit in with the character of the surrounding neighborhood.

Lower Merion's comprehensive planning process is our opportunity to establish a meaningful blueprint for the future of our neighborhoods. It will not only set community development objectives relating to important issues such as traffic flow, sidewalks, bike paths and storm water management, but it will also guide efforts to create new and more effective zoning laws for neighborhoods across the township. The draft plan — which has been the subject of dozens of public meetings and five citizens' advisory committees over the last two years — is now being finalized by the township planning commission as a recommendation to the board of commissioners. In the coming months, public participation will be critical as we work to shape the final plan.

The comprehensive planning process presents a particularly important opportunity for built-out areas like Bala Cynwyd in terms of mitigating traffic and improving our ability to safely bike and walk around our community. More importantly, however, is the chance it offers to better protect the fundamental character of our unique and beautiful community.

This is where the relatively new and innovative concept of form-based zoning comes into play, providing the basis for a more complete set of parameters for future development in our residential neighborhoods. Besides establishing the appropriate limits set by traditional zoning, a form-based approach considers the scale and mass of new construction, design parameters such as the angle of roofs, the size of porches and the location of construction within the lot. All such standards would be based on the existing homes in the immediate area, so any new construction would fit into the character of the surrounding neighborhood.

In the draft comprehensive plan, there are proposals for form-based zoning that would encompass most of Bala Cynwyd's

residential areas. Traditional neighborhood development zones, along with proposals to consider additional historical districts, would ensure that in 25 or 75 years our residential neighborhoods would have much of the same look and feel that they have today.

I would urge everyone to review the comprehensive plan information on the township's web site (www.lowermerion.org), particularly the land use element, which includes the background information, maps and concepts I have tried to outline here. Please also consider attending some of the upcoming planning commission or commissioners' meetings where we will be asking the public to weigh in on this very important undertaking.

Sincerely,

C. Brian McGuire, Commissioner, Ward 13
484-270-8505 • cbrianmcguire@comcast.net

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

the projects reviewed this year propose expansions that are within current zoning limits, so only minor adjustments are possible. It is critical that roadway capacity and "traffic calming" investments are made now, and continuously through the future, in order to avoid disruptive traffic in our neighborhood.

Our board is working closely with our commissioners to highlight and emphasize the need for funding to be allocated immediately for roadway improvements, as more and more development projects are completed. Despite these joint efforts, however, township officials have not made significant progress in this crucial arena. Realistically, projects of this magnitude (over \$22 million in roadway enhancements and capacity expansion is estimated for City Avenue in Lower Merion alone) require federal and state funds, for which other municipalities in the region also intensely compete. Even if we submit applications for these public funds, we cannot expect to receive money in a timely manner, if at all.

At present, several projects are imminent: at least four major residential projects waiting to start and two already in construction—and no significant resources are in place to address even today's traffic congestion. This delay in action between development and congestion relief will result in even more traffic snarls.

Although increased development may lead to more township revenue, employment opportunities and recreational and cultural benefits in the long run, without better management of negative impacts, our communities — especially Bala Cynwyd — will suffer.

The neighborhood club will continue to encourage our commissioners and other Lower Merion officials to address transportation issues and realistically match upcoming development with attainable enhanced transportation facilities and services. Please send your observations, questions or comments to the club at www.balacynwyd.org, or call me directly at 215-450-9272.

Sincerely,

Roger Moog

Farmers' Market Re-Opens on the Cynwyd Heritage Trail

The Bala Cynwyd Farmers' Market re-opened late last month at its new location on the Cynwyd Heritage Trail at Barmouth Trailhead, at the end of East Levering Mill Road.

The market will continue every Thursday from 2:30 to 6:30 p.m. through November. You can ride your bike, walk or drive. If you drive, park in the lot at the bottom of East Levering Mill Road at Barmouth Trailhead. You can also park on East Levering Mill Road across from the now-closed Comcast building.

More than 10 local vendors are offering a wide range of goods including fruits and veggies, breads and cookies, meats, eggs and cheeses — and even honey and pickles.

Contact the farmers' market at balafarmersmarket@gmail.com to receive weekly market email blasts and to stay updated on market news.



New Streetscape Banners Installed

New streetscape banners have been installed throughout the Merion-Cynwyd business district. The Neighborhood Club of Bala Cynwyd donated \$1,000 toward the project. SALT Design Studio, a local firm, designed the banners pro-bono.



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

City Ave District Advances Transportation Projects

The City Ave District has been working on multiple projects to ease congestion and create greater pedestrian and multi-modal accessibility in our area. As part of this effort, the installation of the five traffic adaptive signals and the construction of other improvements along St. Asaphs Road are now complete. Due to a PennDOT technical issue, the new signals are not yet live but should be soon.

These types of signals have proven successful in reducing traffic delays and allowing for safer pedestrian crossings. In another section of Philadelphia where they are already in use, traffic delays have been reduced by an average of 27 percent.

Work on the City Avenue project will start in late 2015. Phase I of this project will include the installation of traffic adaptive signal equipment, new pedestrian signal heads with countdown timers, new pedestrian push buttons and signage, ADA ramp construction and other intersection improvements. The City Ave District received an \$800,000 Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement grant for this project, which it then leveraged into a \$3.6 million project that is mostly funded by PennDOT.

In addition, the City Ave District is working on a project to re-design Presidential Boulevard, including the addition of a mid-block crosswalk with signalization. The project is currently moving forward with engineering and permitting. The next step is to finalize Lower Merion Township approvals. PennDOT approvals have already been received.

These projects address needs identified in the Act 209 Study and are part of the mission to make City Avenue a great place to live, work, play and learn.

Stay informed by visiting www.cityave.org.

Beautification Committee Seeks New Members and Garden Nominations

The Neighborhood Club's Beautification Committee — which tends to Bala Cynwyd's public gardens, including those at the post office, library, Academy Building and war memorial — is seeking new members.

No prior gardening experience is necessary, and the time commitment is flexible. If you are interested in volunteering, please email Eileen Conry at econry@comcast.net.

In addition to maintaining our neighborhood's public gardens, the beautification committee also organizes a perennial plant exchange each spring, during which gardeners trade their extra plants and share advice with other growers.

The beautification committee also sponsors the popular sidewalk garden recognition event for residential and business properties in Bala Cynwyd. Nominate yourself, a neighbor or a local business by emailing Eileen Conry (econry@comcast.net). Please remember to include your name, the address of the garden you are nominating, and a means of contacting you.

Nominations will be accepted through July 4. The committee will evaluate gardens from July 5-31.

We hope you will join us in keeping Bala Cynwyd beautiful!



Bala Theater article to come

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
TheNeighborhoodClub@BalaCynwyd.org



SUPPORT

THE 2015 INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATION

SPONSORED BY

THE NEIGHBORHOOD CLUB OF BALA CYNWYD

Neighbor Sponsor

For \$500, enjoy:

- ✓ **Prominent signage at one of our attractions, including Pony Ride, Moon Bounce, Trackless Train, Rat Race, Extreme Rock Wall, Carousel, Bungee Run, Tubs of Fun**
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- ✓ **1/2 Page Advertisement in the Event Program**
- ✓ **Acknowledgment on NCBC website**



Individual Sponsor

Purchase the ad size of your choice:

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- ✓ **Half Page \$175**
- ✓ **Quarter Page \$125**

Make checks payable to:

The Neighborhood Club of Bala Cynwyd, P.O. Box 717, Bala Cynwyd, PA 19004

Questions?

Contact: Anne Greenhalgh, Celebration Chair • greenhaa@wharton.upenn.edu
or

Amara Briggs, Past President • amara.briggs@comcast.net



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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*:

Amara Briggs
Eileen Conroy
Terrence Foley
Anne Greenhalgh
C. Brian McGuire
Roger Moog
David Rosenbaum
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

Name _____

Address _____

Email Address _____

Phone No. _____