Minutes for the Annual Board Meeting
of
The Neighborhood Club of Bala Cynwyd ("NCBC")

November 12, 2024

Attendees: Vanessa Coke Cohen, Aaron Gross, Roger Moog, Jim Remsen, Sandy Kornhauser, Maxine Goldberg, Brian McGuire, Merle Zucker, Dan Russoniello, Bill Krebs, Randy Myer, Marion Williams, Jason Landau, Joe Hirsch

Excused: Kay Sickles, David I. Haas, Anne Greenhalgh

Nominees Present: Juan Rodriguez**,** Mark Prudente, Margaret Hunting

The meeting was called to order at 7:31pm.

POLICE REPORT

Lieutenant Edward Sarama delivered the monthly police report. Lt. Sarama discussed the fatal hit and run that took place in early in the morning on November 11, 2024 in Bala Cynwyd near the intersection of City Avenue and Conshohocken State Road. The female victim was unhoused and known to the LMPD as they have tried to assist her with services in the past. Lt. Sarama said that the LMPD has reached out to the public for leads on the driver of the vehicle. Lt. Sarama also reported that the LMPD has authorized overtime details for speed enforcement and school bus violations.

ELECTED OFFICIALS REPORT

Commissioner Louis Rossman reported that the Cynwyd Heritage Trail expansion should be completed by September 2025. He noted that there has been some pushback on the expansion designs from Septa, Norfolk Railroad and Driscoll – particularly with respect to the new on-ramp to Rt.76. Commissioner Rossman also reported that the Township has received $274,000 to evaluate traffic on Montgomery Ave from Bala Cynwyd to Villanova. Commissioner Rossman reported that the Township is currently working on its budget and that there may be a need to raise real estate taxes slightly in the coming years.

Commissioner Jeremiah Woodring reported that the funding allocated for Belmont Avenue improvements has increased. He reiterated Commissioner Rossman's assessment of the delays in design approval for the overpass, citing the railway company's concerns about the new design that would need to include an additional opening for vehicles to pass under for the proposed on-ramp to Rt.76. Commissioner Woodring said that the project will hopefully get underway during 2026-27.

Commissioner Gilda Kramer reported that the Barmouth Trailhead project has been finalized, the Montgomery Avenue/Old Lancaster intersection improvements are complete, and the Levering Mill Rd sidewalk should be done by end of the year. She also stated that there are 3 open Township committee positions: one on each of the Environmental Advisory Council, the Human Relations Commission and the Uniform Construction Code Appeal Board. Commissioner Kramer reported that changes were coming to Lower Merion's recycling program and mailers were sent to residents about the improved recycling guidelines. Commissioner Kramer also noted that she considering supporting an increase in the Township's cash reserve policy (from 12-15% to 20-25%). Lastly, she reported that the Township's Capital Improvement Plan allows for one Township playground to be replaced per year (instead of every other year), with General Wayne's upgrades slated for 2025 and Bala Cynwyd's upgrades slated for 2026. She encouraged the NCBC and Bala Cynwyd residents to start thinking about a "wish list" for the improvements.

Jhonas Dunakin, Constituent Services Advisor to State Representative Mary Jo Daley, introduced himself and made himself available as a resource who can flag state legislative questions/issues on behalf of the residents. Mr. Dunakin reported that after the recent elections, the Senate is held by the Republicans and the House is held by the Democrats (by one seat).

EXECUTIVE REPORTS

President's Report

In Kay Sickles' absence, Vanessa Coke Cohen gave the President's report. Vanessa reminded that Board that Anne Greenhalgh will no longer run the July 4th Celebration and reiterated the need for someone else to volunteer to take the lead in planning the event. Vanessa stated that we need NCBC directors or members to volunteer to take on the task at the December meeting.

Vanessa reported on Kay's recent interactions with the American Legion (on Manayunk Road) and the Rotary Club. She noted that the American Legion will make a presentation to the NCBC at the January 2025 meeting in order to seek NCBC's support in its effort to name a trail that runs through Gully Run Park "The Bill Swyer Trail" – in memory of a Bala Cynwyd resident (NCBC's Citizen of the Year 2008 recipient) who was a member of the American Legion and a Boy Scoutmaster. Vanessa also stated that the American Legion invited NCBC directors and members to attend their annual Holiday Wreath Making event on November 24 and asked us to consider co-sponsoring its Veterans' Day pancake breakfast in 2025. With respect to the Rotary Club, Vanessa reported that Kay attended their monthly lunch and discussed ways to partner with each other and expand our memberships. Vanessa made a point to thank Kay for her efforts in making these connections with our community members and local organizations.

Lastly, Vanessa reported that: 1) neighbor and member Heddy Cerwinka has volunteered to join the NCBC beautification committee and 2) the NCBC website has been renewed for 10 years.

Solicitor's Report

None.

Past President's Report

None.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Marion Williams reported that we will discuss the 2025 Budget at the next meeting due to Kay Sickle's absence. She also reported that NCBC received an invoice for $2600 from the Township for the setup and breakdown of the July 4th Celebration. Marion queried why the charge was so much higher this year than in years past ($1400), so she may dispute the charge or ask the Township to decrease its rate. With respect to July 4th, Marion noted that as of now, we are $1200 over budget for the event, however she mentioned that some of the pledges are still uncollected.

Marion also reported on NCBC's financial condition as we approach the end of its fiscal year. She noted that we will finish the year with a shortfall of approximately $3900 (total revenues for the year being approximately $13,000 while expenses were approximately $16,900). She stated that while NCBC's available cash is currently approximately $10,000, NCBC must find ways to boost revenue (or lower expenses) to be fiscally sustainable. Marion noted the cost of printing our newsletters and mailings as a substantial line-item expense and that NCBC should consider ways to promote membership electronically. She also reiterated the need NCBC to develop a plan to encourage business memberships.

Secretary's Report

In Jason Landau Goodman's absence, Vanessa Coke Cohen made a motion to approve the October 2024 Minutes (as amended to include reflect her attendance at the October 2024 meeting) that the Board had an opportunity to review prior to this meeting. Roger Moog seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

PRESENTATION BY SHOT-TEC OWNER, GRANT SCHMIDT

Grant Schmidt, Owner and Lead Instructor of Shot-Tec (located at 230 Rock Hill Rd) gave a presentation about his business. Mr. Schmidt said that Shot-Tec provides training on defense with firearms and use of force and that he is applying to become a Federal Firearms Licensee ("FLL"). Once Shot-Tec becomes an FFL, it can lawfully transfer guns to individuals, hold guns for persons temporarily, and receive guns for surrender and destruction. Mr. Schmidt stated that his business does not have racks or cases of guns for sale onsite, but rather they are purchased online by the client and delivered to the store for the transfer to the client upon the completion

of required paperwork and background checks. Mr. Schmidt described his business as a "concierge" by appointment service to maintain discretion for its clients. Mr. Schmidt said that he could not discuss anything related to Shot-Tec's operational security or its lawsuit with the Township. Mr. Schmidt said that Shot-Tec had a conditional use hearing schedule for Tuesday, November 19 where the public was welcome to attend. Mr. Schmidt took questions from residents about his business.

PRESENTATION BY LOWER MERION TOWNSHIP DIRECTOR OF BUILDING AND PLANNING, CHRIS LESWING

Chris Leswing made a presentation to to NCBC about the plans for interconnectivity in Bala Cynwyd. Mr. Leswing noted developments to the Cynwyd Trail (with proposed connections through Levering Mill Rd, Rock Hill Road and West Laurel Hill) as well as wide multi-purpose paths being funded and installed by developers (either on their properties or elsewhere in Bala Cynwyd). Mr. Leswing also described the Township's sidewalk expansion program that will improve pedestrian safety along St. Asaph's Road, Belmont Avenue and Righter's Ferry Road.

Roger Moog expressed appreciation for the connectivity plans for Bala Cynwyd but asked Mr. Leswing to focus his presentation on the proposed roundabout for Belmont Ave and St. Asaph's Road. Mr. Leswing noted that the intersection needs to be improved for safety and PennDOT believes a multi-lane roundabout will achieve that goal. He mentioned that PennDOT has been a challenging communicator throughout the process and that has agitated the Township and residents alike. Mr. Leswing expressed interest at installing a light and crosswalk at Clwyd Road and St. Asaph's Road because it is the Township's plan to have a road every 600 feet in Bala Cynwyd to improve circulation. He said that PennDOT must approve the installation of the light since St. Asaph's is a PennDOT road. The funding for the light has already been provided by Federal Realty. Mr. Leswing suggested that PennDot's approval of the installation of the light may be contingent on the abatement of resistance to the roundabout.

After the presentation, Roger Moog made a motion that NCBC oppose the construction of the roundabout proposed for the intersection of Belmont Avenue and St. Asaph's Road. Dan Russoniello seconded the motion. A robust discussion ensued about whether the vote about such an important community matter should be held at a meeting where the President and Solicitor were absent. Noting that time was not of the essence (since the project is still in the planning stages), many Directors believed that we should postpone the vote until at least the December meeting. Roger and Dan withdrew their motion with the recommendation that the vote is placed on the December agenda.

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS

Membership

Vanessa Coke Cohen reported that Kay Sickles was working with NCBC member Linda Weinberg to distribute NCBC information packets (with an encouraging note to join) to new Bala Cynwyd

residents. Additionally, the annual membership letter is slated for mailing at the end of the year. Vanessa praised the efforts of the City Ave Special Services District to build community by providing neighborhood events for residents and said NCBC should continue to promote these events to our membership as much as possible. Vanessa also reiterated Marion's suggestion that NCBC reach out to Bala Cynwyd business to boost their membership numbers.

Pedestrian Safety

Brian McGuire reported that the sidewalk on Levering Mill Road is almost complete.

Ad Hoc City Ave. District

Bill Krebs reported that the City Avenue Special Services District was hosting a Bala Open House on December 10, from 4:30 – 6:30pm, at The Kelly.

Zoning/Public Service and Improvement Committee

Brian McGuire provided the NCBC with updates about two proposed projects in Bala Cynwyd: improvements to the Karr Barth Building property and the redevelopment of the 19-21 Bala Ave property.

Brian reported that he, Vanessa Coke Cohen and Aaron Gross met with the developers of the Karr Barth property to discuss the scaled back development of the property. Instead of the initially proposed residential development, the developers plan to build 3 "pads" fronting City Avenue that will be occupied by "high end fast food" as well as a freestanding bank on the corner of City Avenue and Belmont Ave (no drive through). There is also a diner proposed for placement along Belmont Ave, which will be adjacent to a public space for programming (a la Suburban Square).

Brian also reported that the proposed developments to 19-21 Bala Avenue include a plan for 34 residential units with 5000sqft of retail space. Parking would be under the building and screened from the street. However, Brian noted that the plan has many flaws and will likely not advance through the process as designed.

Environmental Committee/Tree Tenders

Marion Williams reported that Tree Tenders planned to plant 15 trees this weekend (Nov 16/17) and that 4 more trees need homes, so if anyone knows of any interested residents to please reach out to her. She restated the need for volunteers who would be willing to plant and water the new trees. Lastly, Marion requested that NCBC pay for three trees that were planted at the Bala Cynwyd Post Office ($75 each), to which the Board approved.

Lower Merion and Narberth Federation of Civics

Sandy Kornhauser did not attend the October 2024 Federation meeting and did not present a report.

At 9: 26pm, Brian McGuire made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Merle Zucker seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned.

NCBC's next meeting will be its Annual Meeting on December 10, 2024, at 7:30pm at the Union Fire Association (and on Zoom).

Respectfully Submitted,

Vanessa Coke Cohen
Vice President