Summer 2022

THE NEIGHBORHOOD CLUB OF
BALA CYNWYD
EST. 1906

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 • https://balacynwyd.org

info@BalaCynwyd.org

C. Aaron Gross, *president*

President's Letter

C. Aaron Gross

Dear Neighbors,

Once again, we are thrilled to provide Bala Cynwyd neighbors with our biannual newsletter! It's been a couple of years; volunteers' available time was severely limited by COVID, but we have restarted our efforts in many areas.

A little about me since I may be new to you. I grew up in Brookline/Brighton (MA) and then Miami Beach (FL), both quite a bit different than Bala Cynwyd in many ways, but both also "professional class" suburbs of major cities. I arrived in Bala Cynwyd in 2015 with one goal in mind, to get though law school. Today, seven years later and now a practicing attorney, I am proud to say that I have chosen to stay because of the warm and friendly community that I have been so fortunate to be welcomed into here in Bala Cynwyd.

The world that we call Bala Cynwyd is a different place than it was 30, 20, 10 and 2 (very long) years ago. Volunteering, community service, and advocacy are all subject to new norms. The digital age often makes us feel as if we live in a more global world, but nothing changes the fact that we choose where to live not because of the digital access it provides, but rather the amenities and lifestyle we want for ourselves and our families.

I urge you to choose to get involved with us, and without any agenda or goal in mind. Civic engagement is the strongest guarantee you can give yourself that the neighborhood you have *chosen* to live in remains the

(continued on page 6)

Get Ready for Neighborhood Club's Festive Independence Day Celebration

Rain or Shine — Sparkles on the 4th

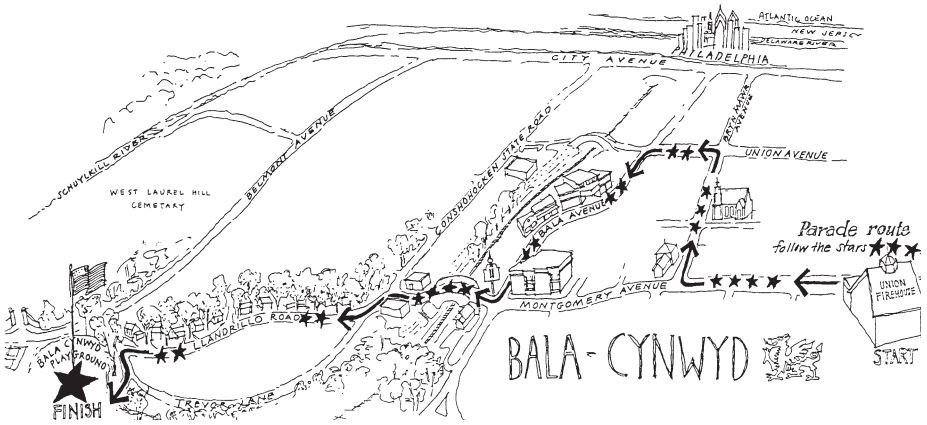
The Neighborhood Club will sponsor the annual Independence Day celebration on Monday, July 4, 2022. Registration for the annual parade will begin at 8:45 a.m. at the Union Fire House on Montgomery Avenue. The parade will begin by 9:30 a.m. at the Fire House and end at the Bala Cynwyd Playground.

The parade will feature a marching band, neighborhood children riding decorated bicycles, clowns, floats, fire trucks, the bicycle patrol, public officials, and guests of honor. Bring your beach chairs to the Playground and enjoy a patriotic program, honorary awards, and music provided by The Summer Sounds Pop Band.

Carnival rides, foot races, and the ever-popular egg toss will follow the patriotic ceremony. T-shirts featuring the winner of the Cynwyd Elementary School dragon contest will be awarded to winners of the races. The Union Fire Association will sell hot dogs and sodas to raise funds for the Fire House. Come see our neighborhood children enjoy the pony rides, petting zoo, exotic animals, trackless train, extreme rock wall, and carousel.

You can purchase bracelets for $15 each, or two for $25. Each bracelet will allow the wearer to enjoy the rides as many times as desired. You can also purchase sets of tickets in small denominations as well.

Come join us and celebrate the 4th!



Commissioner's Corner

Seeking input on American Rescue Plan funds, and on sustainability

Gilda Kramer

After the last two hard years, we now have tremendous opportunities to rethink the kind of community we want in terms of sustainability, equity, and long-term improvements. Lower Merion Township soon will receive the second half of approximately $25.4 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARP) funds from the federal government, and is applying for grants from the $161 million that Montgomery County received. The funds can be used for four general purposes: To respond to the public-health emergency or its negative economic impacts; provide premium pay to eligible workers; replace lost public-sector revenue; or make necessary investments in water, sewer and broadband infrastructure.

The Township's Board of Commissioners allocated $11.9 million of the ARP funding mostly to major capital projects that will benefit residents for years to come. Those projects include rebuilding the Ardmore Avenue Community Center, renovating Ashbridge House to be used by the non-profit New Horizons, which has programming for seniors, and partially renovating the Bryn Mawr Community Center to improve the operations of ElderNet, which serves many of the Township's low-income seniors. Substantial funds were also allocated to bike and pedestrian improvements on East Levering Mill Road, storm-water improvements, a bonus for vaccinated employees of the Township, high-quality masks to the families of students on subsidized meal plans in partnership with the School District, and reimbursement to the Lower Merion Affordable Housing Corporation for losses due to the pandemic.

About $13.5 million of our ARP funds remain to be allocated. To better understand and assess the Township's needs, including the human needs exacerbated by the pandemic, the Township is contracting with Triad Associates to perform a needs assessment and help the Board of Commissioners do outreach to the community to solicit ideas on how best to spend these one-time funds. If you have ideas or proposals for projects, please contact me. The Board hopes to complete the allocation of the funds by the end of July 2022.

In addition to serving on the Board's ARP Engagement Committee, I also am on the Sustainability Committee. The Township is actively developing a Sustainability Plan to guide us toward dramatically reducing our community's greenhouse-gas emissions to combat climate change and creating a more sustainable, resilient and equitable community. The Sustainability Committee is working with our Sustainability Manager, Paloma Vila, and our Environmental Advisory Council to convene a Sustainability Stakeholder Group and develop the plan.

Elements of the plan will address converting Township buildings, businesses and residences to electric or geothermal rather than gas or oil utilities, making buildings more energy efficient, converting the Township fleet to electric vehicles, and creating electric-vehicle infrastructure in the community. Other elements of the planning process will look at storm-water management, reducing waste, including by increasing composting and reducing single-use plastics in the Township, increasing our tree canopy, regulating gasoline-powered leaf blowers and other heavily-polluting equipment, and educating the community so that we are all fully engaged in this transformative process. We hope to complete the plan in early 2023.

Anyone interested in joining the Stakeholder Committee can email Paloma Vila at Sustain.Plan@lowermerion.org. There will be opportunities for public input, and anyone wishing to stay updated can subscribe to Calendar (select "Cmte-Sustainability") and News alerts (select "Sustainability") here: www.lowermerion.org/i-want-to/sign-up-for/e-subscription

If you have any questions or ideas, please contact me at gkramer@lowermerion.org.

Sincerely, Gilda Kramer

Join NCBC and Build Community

By joining the Neighborhood Club of Bala Cynwyd and participating on its Membership Committee, you will be helping your civic association build community among Bala Cynwyd residents. We seek volunteers to help us plan and organize social activities such as outdoor movie nights, trail walks, recipe exchanges, community service and book clubs. All ideas are welcome!

On another front, the Club also needs helpers for our ongoing tree planting and tree tending efforts.

If you want to get involved, send an email to balacynwydorg@gmail.com.

Bala Cynwyd Farmers Market Reopening on June 4

Coming in June, Bala Cynwyd will again be hosting a farmers market on Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., back at its original location, the 1 Belmont Avenue parking lot. Vendors, including regional farmers and food artisans, will offer fresh produce and prepared foods such as bread, pastries, and ready meats.

When Nielufar Varjavand joined the Neighborhood Club, her goal was to secure a farmers market for the community. She recruited the original farmers market team of Bob Pierson-Farm to City, Laura Brennan, Hedy Cerwinka, and Sara Schuh. They and Neighborhood Club board member Vanessa Coke Cohen planned together for a year to bring about this revival.

The original market was open from 2012-2017. Its last location at the Barmouth Trailhead of the Cynwyd Trail did not do as well as anticipated, and it gradually withered away.

The City Avenue Special Services District played a pivotal role in securing a zoning permit for the location.

With a new start, the organizers hope to reignite the love for the market. To kick off the grand reopening, the market will feature strawberries, ensuring many more goods to come.

(This article was written by our newsletter student intern, Aaliyah Oiknine of Kohelet Yeshiva High School.)

Garden Recognition, and a Request

Sidewalk Garden Recognition time is here! Once again our Beautification Committee will honor some of the lovely residential and commercial gardens in Bala Cynwyd. Nominate yourself, your neighbor, a garden you pass by, or a commercial property. Email Eileen Conry at econry@comcast.net with your name, the address of the garden, and the owner's contact information if available. Nominations will be accepted up to June 14. Gardens will be evaluated June 15-20.

The Beautification Committee is seeking new members. Its volunteers tend the gardens at the library, the post office and the Bala war memorial, and assist with other public gardens in Bala Cynwyd. Email Eileen Conry if you are interested in joining this friendly and knowledgeable crew.

Please follow
The Neighborhood Club
on FACEBOOK at
www.facebook.com/balacynwyd civicassociation

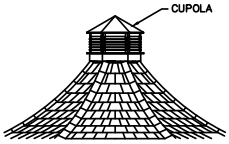
Playground Pavilion Is Coming

The Neighborhood Club of Bala Cynwyd, in collaboration with Lower Merion Township, will construct a traditional pavilion on the grounds of Bala Cynwyd Playground. The covered structure will serve as the platform for the patriotic ceremony during the Independence Day Celebration and other community events.

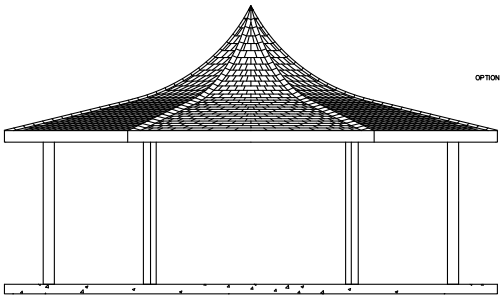
The pavilion is made possible by

- generous donations from West Laurel Hill Cemetery ($8,000), the Cynwyd Club ($2,500), the Friends of the Cynwyd Trail, and BMW of the Main Line ($1,000 each)
- hearty contributions from individual neighbors — Jonathan Spergel and Anne Greenhalgh & Fred Fischer, in particular
- a matching grant from the township.

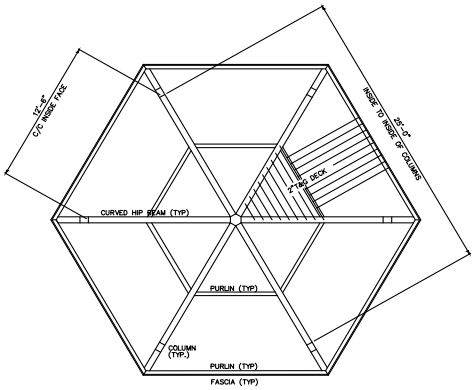
Construction is planned for this summer.



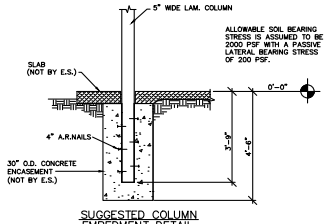
ROOF WITH CUPOLA OPTION



PROFILE ELEVATION



ROOF FRAMING PLAN NO SCALE



SUGGESTED COLUMN EMBEDMENT DETAIL (NOT BY E.S.)

30' CAROLNE MODEL

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SHEET 1 OF 1

Overview of Development Projects in Bala Cynwyd

Whether you've lived in Bala Cynwyd a few months or several decades, you've no doubt noticed that apartment buildings have gone up, retail outlets have been added, and roads, trails and amenities have been updated. Some of the projects are welcomed by residents while others cause worry. To help you understand what is in the pipeline, we offer the following brief overview.

All of the projects, both public and private, require an opportunity for dialogue with local residents. Even developments that are "by right" (i.e. they don't require special approval if they meet zoning requirements) go through an extensive process where conditions of approval are negotiated between the township, residents and developers. This is where you and the Neighborhood Club have an opportunity to shape the future of Bala Cynwyd. Attend meetings of the Club. Reach out to your township commissioner.

Learn more about the projects, including links and updates, at the Club's website, balacynwyd.org.

1 BELMONT AVENUE WIDENING

Multi-year project designed to add one northbound lane to Belmont between Rock Hill Road and I-76, replace rail overpass, and widen both Belmont-Rock Hill and Route 23-Rock Hill intersections. $40 million cost would be borne primarily by federal government. Preliminary engineering nearly complete. Construction dependent on allocation of funds.

2 211 BELMONT AVENUE

Construction nearly complete on continuing-care center known as The Residence at Bala Cynwyd, operated by LCB Senior Living. Six-story building has 84 units, 96 beds, and 68 parking spaces.

3 21 – 25 ROCK HILL ROAD

Parcel near Wawa store is to house five-story apartment building with 55 units, ground-floor office, structured parking with 64 spaces, and 27 surface parking spaces. Developer RHR Investment received township approval in August and awaits building permit.

4 BARMOUTH TRAILHEAD

Township plans to create central gathering place on Cynwyd Heritage Trail with benches, shade trees, and raised platform for occasional events. Construction documents under review. No construction timeline set.

5 BALA CYNWYD PLAYGROUND PAVILION

See article on Page 3.

6 111 PRESIDENTIAL BOULEVARD

Five-story mixed-use building on current Bala Pointe site would have 425 apartments, ground-floor commercial space, 676 structured parking spaces. Developer Hanover would add streetscape improvements and half-acre of public gathering space. Has tentative sketch approval, needs preliminary plan approval.

7 1, 2 & 3 BALA PLAZA

Developer Tishman Speyer seeks phased redevelopment of two sites over 30 years. 231 & 251 St. Asaph's Road site would get 13 new buildings: five mixed-use buildings containing 497 apartments, first-floor retail, and structured parking; three office buildings above structured parking and first floor retail; two commercial retail buildings; single-use residential building with 70 units; hotel building; and structured parking deck. At 333 E. City Ave., two mixed-use buildings containing 190 apartments would be built atop existing parking structure. Township reviewing preliminary plan.

8 BELMONT-ST. ASAPH'S ROUNDABOUT

PennDot considering establishing traffic roundabout at busy intersection of Belmont Avenue and St. Asaph's Road as safety measure. Public meetings have begun. Construction anticipated for 2025 if project advances.

9 1 BELMONT AVENUE

Mixed-use project on surface lot in front of Karr Barth (formerly GSB) Building. Building A, at seven stories, would have 160 apartments, ground-floor retail, 33 internal parking spaces. Building B, at five stories, would have 118 apartments, ground-floor retail, 608-space parking structure. Keystone Property Group also envisions sizable public gathering space. Tentative sketch approval pending, with May 11 decision possible.

10 BALA CYNWYD SHOPPING CENTER

Federal Realty launching $30 million redevelopment over next year to add outdoor dining and common seating, revamp façade and streetscape, improve traffic flow.

11 LORD & TAYLOR

Federal Realty to replace vacant store with six-story building housing 220 apartments, retail space below, and 240-unit parking structure. Also, crosswalk and light at St. Asaph's and Clwyd Road to be installed pending PennDot approval. Township approved project in October.

12 BALA THEATER

Litigation has kept historic movie palace closed since 2014. Owner's suit in county court sought unpaid rent from leasee, who countersued for lost profits. Case remains in deposition stage. Building needs substantial renovations. Efforts to find new movie operator have failed.

13 206 – 216 BALA AVENUE

Empty lot cleared by Cross Properties upon approval in 2018 to build five-story apartment and retail building called The Mayer. Cross halted work and has sent mixed signals about intent to proceed. NCBC raising concerns about blight and safety at site.

14 FRENCH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

See article on Page 6.

15 27 W. CITY AVENUE

Former KFC outlet being replaced by new AutoZone store with 23 parking spaces. Construction under way.

New Head of City Ave District

The City Avenue Special Services District has a new President and CEO, Bryan Fenstermaker. He succeeds Terrance Foley, who stepped down in January after 15 years in the role. Bryan had been Executive Director of the Passyunk Avenue Revitalization Corporation and The Enterprise Center. He says he is bringing a fresh perspective to the City Avenue district's planning and development projects, and cites his expertise in placemaking, a multifaceted approach to creating and running public spaces. Bryan has graduate degrees in city and regional planning and public administration. He also is a longtime Lower Merion Township resident with three children in the LM schools.

The Neighborhood Club took part in the Philadelphia Horticultural Society's recent biannual tree plantings.

Shown here is one of the young trees that NCBC planted for a local resident. Ricky Guerra, our past president, is seeking volunteers to join our next tree-planting event in November.

French International School Expanding

After months of construction work, the French International School of Philadelphia is expected to open its enlarged and enhanced Upper School campus at Bala and City Avenues in June. Having seen enrollment increase by 50 percent since 2007, the school launched a several million dollar expansion campaign to meet its growing needs.

The Upper School will now feature three new "mission-matched" spaces: the Air Liquide Center for Science and Innovation; a Student Arts Center complete with atrium and multipurpose space (pictured in the architects' drawing here); and outdoor green space with play areas and a new garden.

In addition, a one-way driveway through the campus has been added to make the traffic for morning drop-off and afternoon pick-up safer and more efficient.

President's Letter *(continued from page 1)*

neighborhood you *want* to live in. Our organization is a great place to start. From here, as a general community organization, you can discover many facets of the community where you might have the greatest impact.

In recent months several major changes have been proposed to the landscape here in Bala Cynwyd. This has been an ongoing story for much of the past decade. In this edition we provide an overview of the developments that are in different stages of the building process. You will also find some updates concerning different events and stakeholders in the neighborhood.

One last thing. You will meet Bryan Fenstermaker, the new CEO of the City Avenue Special Services District, inside this newsletter. Bryan's predecessor, Terry Foley, recently retired after 15 years as the founding CEO. I want to personally thank Terry for the assistance he has provided me with over the past few years.

It is my hope that as many of you as possible can find the time to introduce yourselves to me (at balacynwydorg@gmail.com), invite me to meet you, perhaps invite me to your homes, your businesses, and your institutions. I am honored to have been chosen as the President of your Neighborhood Club and hope that together we can accomplish much over the next couple of years.

Meet the Class of 2020 Board Members

Anita Pepper is a geneticist and vice president of institutional advancement at the Wistar Institute in Philadelphia. She earned a doctorate in developmental genetics from New York University, was a postdoctoral fellow in genetics at the University of Pennsylvania, and went on to serve as director of the Pew Biomedical Programs at the Pew Charitable Trusts. She and her family live in Bala Cynwyd, where she is an avid gardener.

Brian McGuire and his family have lived on West Princeton Road for 15 years. Brian served on the Lower Merion Township Board of Commissioners from 2011 through 2019, including two years as Vice President. During that time, he worked closely with the Neighborhood Club and other local organizations on a broad range of municipal matters. Recently retired from his professional career in government relations, Brian has had time to pursue his passions for fishing and camping while remaining involved in local issues.

Nielufar Varjavand is an internist and Professor of Medicine at Drexel University. She has many deep interests including community, education — especially for teenagers and young adults — and the environment. Dr. Varjavand directs Drexel's Global Health Education program as well as a Physician Refresher/Reentry program. As such, she is on the board of the Coalition for Physician Enhancement. She is honored to join the Neighborhood Club board to work with others to make our communities a better place.

CYNWYD
1913

The Cynwyd Club is a

proud supporter of

The Neighborhood Club of Bala Cynwyd

Working on Sustainability

The Neighborhood Club's Environmental Committee has been allocated a seat on the Lower Merion Stakeholder Committee that is helping the township develop a Sustainability Plan under the supervision of Paloma Vila, its Sustainability Manager. Working groups will be established to work on specific issues such as plastic bag bans and community composting. Residents may serve, particularly if they have relevant expertise. (See the Commissioner's Corner on Page 2 for more.)

Also, the Environmental Committee is directing attention to MainlineSHIFT.com for its many resources on recycling organizations in many categories. SHIFT is a women-owned, Narberth-based business that sells a range of sustainable household cleaning and personal care supplies.

If you'd like to join the Environmental Committee, email Linda Tasker at lindamultitasker@gmail.com

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Please Visit Our Website!

balacynwyd.org ***is a resource for:***

- Community calendar
- The monthly agenda
- Minutes of previous meetings
- Past copies of *The Gateway*
- Contact information for board members

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

Aaliyah Oiknine
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Linda Tasker
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Corinne A. Leballeur
C. Aaron Gross
Gilda Kramer
Mike McKeon
Harriet Katz
Jim Remsen, *editor*

The Neighborhood Club of Bala Cynwyd Membership Form

Your 2022 dues help to:

- represent neighborhood interests during public meetings on new zoning code and other issues
- sponsor community events like the annual 4th of July parade and carnival
- promote appropriate commercial and residential development
- preserve the residential character of Bala Cynwyd
- provide information on critical issues and meetings affecting Bala Cynwyd

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

Household: ☐ Benefactor $100* ☐ Premium $50* ☐ Basic $35

*Contribute at the benefactor and premium levels and be recognized on our website.

Business: ☐ Platinum $350 ☐ Gold $200 ☐ Silver $100

Name _____

Address _____

Email Address _____

Phone No. _____

☐ Check here if you do not want to be listed as a member in the website directories.