MINUTES
FEBRUARY 2025 MONTHLY MEETING + ANNUAL MEETING OF
THE NEIGHBORHOOD CLUB OF BALA CYNWYD
UNION FIRE ASSOCIATION & ZOOM
Zoom Account: 823 745 2538
Password: 850924
February 4, 2025

Attendance: Kay Sickles (President), Vanessa Coke Cohen (Vice-President), Jason Landau Goodman (Secretary), Marion Williams (Treasurer), David Haas (Solicitor), Anne Greenhalgh, Maxine Goldberg, Joseph Hirsch, Margaret Hunting, Bill Krebs, Brian McGuire, Roger Moog, Randy Myer, Mark Prudente, Sandy Kornhauser, Jim Remsen, Juan Rodríguez, Dan Russionello, Merle Zucker

Absent: C. Aaron Gross (Past President)

Public Officials in Attendance: Commissioner Gilda Kramer, Commissioner Jeremiah Woodring

CALL TO ORDER at 7:33pm
ANNOUNCEMENTS, Kay Sickles

POLICE REPORT: Lieutenant Edward Sarama

Lieutenant Sarama with LMPD reminded attendees that car thefts are happening and to take valuables out before leaving your vehicle, and that home burglaries have been happening in the western area of the township. He noted that Town Watch is accepting new volunteers. Lieutenant Sarama asked if anyone had recommendations on new locations for active shooter drills.

ELECTED OFFICIALS REPORT

Commissioner Kramer: Lower Merion Township and the Lower Merion School District are planning for cameras on buses to identify cars that illegally go around them when they are stopped. Tickets will eventually be issued to violators. She noted that there are plans to modify Cynwyd Road in front of the Kelly Apartments to be a one-way street to help with traffic flow. Commissioner Kramer shared that the Board of Commissioners intends to vote this month on removing the requirement for new police officers to have 60 hours of college credits. The Commissioners are identifying incentives to recruit new officers — understanding that the Lower Merion Police Department is currently 17 officers down and it has been difficult to hire officers everywhere. She noted the budget process is underway. Bill made a comment about police utilization.

Commissioner Woodring: PennDOT is planning for sections of I-76 to have flex lanes (largely where there are currently variable speed limits). These proposed sections include King of Prussia to Bala Cynwyd and I-476 to Route 202. This would involve widening the lanes and using the emergency lane for traffic during certain periods of time in specific directions. The planned timeline is to start construction in mid-2027 for the I-76 section and in 2028 for the I-476 section.

Commissioner Woodring shared that the Lower Merion Public Works Department will be having free refuse and recycling weekend events on April 5-6 and April 26-27. He also shared that the Belmont Hills Library will have a Bingo Fundraiser on May 3.

Jhonas Dunakin of State Representative Mary Jo Daley's office shared that residents are welcome to let him know of any concerns and that they will be hosting a shredding event in the spring.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION: SUTTON TERRACE VARIANCE APPLICATION

Representatives from the Sutton Terrace community presented information on their application for a variance before the Lower Merion Zoning Hearing Board to install a six foot fence instead of the maximum four foot fence as limited by local ordinance. Presenting were Property Manager John Falgie, Sutton Terrace Home Owners Association President Nanci Goldman, and resident Alan Fogel. They explained that the purpose of the request was based on safety — that incidents in their parking lot have continued and individuals who may want to break into cars may be deterred by a fence they cannot climb over, rather than no fence currently or a four foot fence around two partially open sides along the property. They noted 14 incidents in two years. They would like to install fencing where there is none currently, and replace the gate at St. Asaphs not to extend higher than six feet. The representatives noted that the rest of their preexisting fence/wall is higher than four feet and the newer ordinance limitations would not allow them to match that height. They additionally noted that approximately 78% of the property is currently enclosed. Commissioner Kramer explained the history of the newer fencing ordinance and how it has been applied consistently in the township, and suggested that part of the ordinance should be rethought. NCBC Board members asked questions of the presenters regarding their application and the experiences of others who have applied for similar variances.

JULY 4TH COMMITTEE REPORT

Jim shared what he has done so far to learn about July 4th event planning and suggested that the event Chair rotate every two years. He shared a funding update. Vanessa noted the importance of business outreach for support, including advertisements. Commissioner Kramer offered to include a call to support the event in her newsletter.

NCBC Board members discussed keeping track of past supporters and recruiting new donors not just in Bala Cynwyd, but across the township, if there is a connection with their business. Anne mentioned that NCBC has been careful not to accept donations from developers with pending project proposals in Bala Cynwyd. NCBC Board members discussed the nomination process for selecting Merchant of the Year and Citizen of the Year.

EXECUTIVE REPORTS

President's Report, Kay Sickles

Met with City Avenue District and Lower Merion Township to discuss development projects. She shared that ground expects to be broken on the 202 Bala Avenue site (Core Development Team (Bala 202 LP)) and updates on the construction process for the complex. Kay shared that the application for the project on the Karr Barth building property is ongoing and has to go back to address issues. Additionally, Kay shared that a proposed project for 19-21 Bala Avenue is still being developed and not ready to be presented to Lower Merion Township yet. Lastly, Bala One is proposing plans for a new entrance and hotel and the 111 Presidential Boulevard project is moving forward post-demolition in the construction of approximately 400 units. Kay discussed the movie night NCBC partnered with the City Avenue District last summer. Juan provided the update on the plans for NCBC to host a Family Movie Night on Saturday, February 22nd at the Union Fire Association. Juan noted that the space is donated and that his budget for food and incidentals should be no more than approximately $150.

Treasurer's Report, Marion Williams

Marion shared information on the financial status of NCBC. She noted that approximately $3,600.00 has been collected in membership dues so far by the end of January 2025, resulting in about $14,600.00 in the bank account — with ~$8,500 currently committed. Marion discussed several ideas on cutting current expenses down, including looking into new organization insurance and checking prices of other printers for the newsletters too going forward.

President's Report (Continued), Kay Sickles

Kay shared that she prepared and has begun to deliver new resident welcome packages. She asked for volunteers to help deliver additional bags — Maxine and Jim offered support. Bill commented that it was good to include "Civic Association" prominently on the new newsletter included in the package for new residents.

A public comment was shared which expressed concerns around parking around the new 400 units going up on Presidential Boulevard and requested information on the

proposed roundabout at St. Asaphs and Belmont Avenue. Kay responded, including information that the proposed roundabout discussion is currently quiet as PennDOT is taking several months to reassess its plans. Kay also highlighted there are ongoing discussions with stakeholders about connecting the Cynwyd Heritage Trail to Penncoyd Landing in 2026.Kay mentioned possibly scheduling Lower Merion Sustainability Manager Paloma Vila for March or April — Maxine recommended reaching out to the Lower Merion School District Superintendent to an NCBC meeting too, though likely something for the fall, and Brian recommended Paul McIlhenny of Public Works. Mark noted that Cynwyd Elementary still has a Pancake Breakfast, so maybe a similar NCBC event could be something we do in the fall, as could be a 5K. Vanessa mentioned that there is a high school 5K club that NCBC could potentially partner with.

Secretary, Jason Landau Goodman

Jason made a motion to adopt the January meeting minutes as presented. Seconded by Kay. Unanimously adopted.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Environmental Committee/Tree Tenders, Marion Williams

Marion shared that she has discussed partnership on activities with Bartlett Tree Experts in Bala Cynwyd. Marion proposed a community walk in the spring or fall for residents where a guide would talk about the trees along the way. She asked about NCBC tabling at events for outreach (Bala Avenue Art Walk, July 4th) and a program at the library (no availability with them until the fall). Marion also noted the possibility of collaborating with other Tree Tender groups in Lower Merion. Marion shared that she wants to use email and social media more to promote.

NEW BUSINESS

Kay began a discussion on Sutton Terrace's request for support. Dan reflected that he sees no reason for NCBC to oppose. Margarat mentioned concerns with more and more areas in the area being fenced in, how it creates a closed-off atmosphere at times. Marion reflected on fences on her street. Merle noted how the neighborhoods of yesterday are not the neighborhoods of today — and that with thousands of new residents and visitors there need to be more safety precautions including fencing. Dan made a motion to take no position on the pending variance application of Sutton Terrace before the Lower Merion Zoning Hearing Board. Seconded by Roger. Unanimously in favor, with Margaret abstaining.

Bill mentioned the 1,000+ newer apartments now and looking forward, and asked what is the approach in how developers can allow community outreach in their buildings? Kay suggested reaching out to management to get access, to display notes on community boards including our trifold.

Kay moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:29pm.