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

Attendance: Kay Sickles (President), Jason Landau Goodman (Secretary), Marion Williams (Treasurer), C. Aaron Gross (Past President), David Haas (Solicitor), Anne Greenhalgh, Maxine Goldberg, Margaret Hunting, Bill Krebs, Brian McGuire, Roger Moog, Randy Myer, Mark Prudente, Jim Remsen, Juan Rodríguez, Dan Russionello, Merle Zucker

Absent: Vanessa Coke Cohen (Vice-President), Joseph Hirsch, Sandy Kornhauser

Public Officials in Attendance: Representative Mary Jo Daley, Commissioner Gilda Kramer, Commissioner Jeremiah Woodring

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

ELECTED OFFICIALS REPORT

Commissioner Kramer: The Lower Merion Township Board of Commissioners is having a Priorities Workshop on March 5th to discuss suggestions for major projects the Board can focus on in the upcoming budget. Commissioner Kramer invites the community to watch the workshop and provide feedback. Some concepts include a public indoor pool, and a street plan for Bala Avenue with a development proposal for the Bala Gym site. There is interest in identifying potential uses of the Bala Gym site to spark recreational and economic development — while providing improved facilities for the recreation center and parking. For the Board of Commissioners Sustainability Committee, Commissioner Kramer shared proposed focuses including expanding the electrical vehicles in the township's fleet and advancing a gas-powered leaf blower ban. Commissioner Kramer noted the grant funding and public support for the renovations to the Union Fire Association building, including providing apartments and longer bays to accommodate larger vehicles. Commissioner Kramer raised concerns about public pool access in the summer, given that the Ardmore Avenue pool will be closed for renovations. She noted that the Board of Commissioners is reviewing proposals to prevent overcrowding at the Belmont Hills Pool. Commissioner Kramer shared a reminder that local taxes are due on March 31st to receive the discount, which can be done online to save personal time and makes the process more efficient.

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Commissioner Woodring: Commissioner Woodring again 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 noted that Lower Merion Township will soon issue a job posting for a Sustainability Coordinator, to assist the Lower Merion Township Sustainability Manager. Maxine asked about Indego Bikes on the Cynwyd Heritage Trail, if there has been discussion on bringing them into Lower Merion and if they can be used to raise some funding. A member of the public responded that they are currently only on the Philadelphia side, that they can only be on private property or in right of way for transportation, and that while advertisements with the bikes help offset the costs of the bikes — it's a subsidized service and not a money maker. Commissioner Woodring shared the priorities for the Board of Commissioners Human Resources Committee, including parental leave for Township staff and a compensation study. Commissioner Woodring also shared as a priority for him on the Board of Commissioners is working on LEED designations and expanding the policies for more tools the Traffic Safety Unit of the Lower Merion Police Department can use for traffic calming and pedestrian safety. Commissioner Woodring shared ongoing discussions about a remaster plan for Rock Hill Road, to improve conditions and make it more walkable and approachable — extending the character of the Cynwyd Heritage Trail. Marion inquired about updates on the Green Lane Bridge renovation project and bike access. Commissioner Woodring responded with the current plans consideration of bike lanes. A member of the public commented on the importance of making the Rock Hill Road corridor more accessible.

Representative Daley: Rep. Daley is hosting a Veteran's Tribute Lunch at the Spring Mill Ballroom on March 12th. Rep. Daley is hosting a shredding event in April, date TBD, but location will be in Penn Valley. She shared that there are ongoing PennDOT projects in the area: the Cynwyd Bridge, Green Lane Bridge, and the proposed roundabout. Rep. Daley shared that the America 250 commission awarded a grant to an organization in Bala Cynwyd, the Jack Miller Center, and she attended the check presentation. Finally, Rep. Daley mentioned that her constituent services staff member has transitioned from the role and that her office would be hiring for the position soon.

EXECUTIVE REPORTS

President's Report, Kay Sickles
Kay shared information communicated to her from Lower Merion Township on upcoming development plans in Bala Cynwyd, including a planned new hotel and that developments at the Karr Barth parking lot are currently paused in order to coordinate driveway access concerns. Kay shared on behalf of Vanessa that NCBC membership is currently at 104 members, which is about the same as last year. She also shared that Vanessa reports that the Bala Cynwyd Farmers Market is going to continue with a new operator and will open in May.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

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Membership Events, Juan Rodriguez

Juan provided a report on the NCBC Family Movie night that took place two weeks prior. He shared the RSVPs, the actual attendance, and the number of businesses that displayed the posters for the event. Juan commented that as a first event, this was very helpful to establish relationships with the Cynwyd School and local businesses in how to help coordinate getting the word out for future programs. Juan proposed a possible event around an Egg Hunt in April and a future movie night. Marion discussed platforms for payments for events that have a registration fee.

BOARD MEMBER MOTION — PROPOSED ROUNDABOUT IN BALA CYNWYD

Roger shared his perspectives on the proposed roundabout, including noting this issue has received more attention from local residents than almost any other project he has seen in about 40 years of being involved with NCBC. He highlighted the presentations, communications, and letters received regarding the project, including the perspectives expressed by many residents of the condominiums near the proposed project and those who live across the community. Roger noted that he believes it is time for NCBC to take a formal position on the project, to both inform the decision makers of where NCBC stands, but also that he believes NCBC owes it to the civic's constituents to have this discussion. He then shared a list of major priorities and concerns regarding the project.

Roger made a motion: "That the NCBC Board opposes any roundabout development at the intersection of St. Asaphs Road and Belmont Avenue, while not excluding any other type of intersection improvements such as signals, lanes, configurations, etc." Dan seconded the motion.

Kay requested clarification on the execution of the motion, if it would involve sending letters to various government officials. Aaron responded that yes, that is the typical course of action following this type of motion.
David suggested that language be added to the statement indicating that NCBC has been engaged in the dialogue on this proposed project with neighbors, recognizes that PennDOT is now investigating alternatives, and that NCBC understands the intersection has concerns that should be addressed. He wanted to make sure the letter notes that NCBC has been participating in this discussion for a long period of time and is not just issuing a statement of opposition to be against it, though not as detailed as he was remarking. Roger agreed generally.

Aaron inquired if the NCBC Board votes on the exact language or just the intent. David responded that the NCBC Board can vote on a position, and then ask the Executive Committee to consider the information in drafting a letter to then be brought back to the full board at the meeting next month. Kay reiterated that at this meeting the final language is not necessary, just the position.

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Anne expressed support for David's comments about anchoring the position in that NCBC has been engaged in this proposed project and is committed to supporting efforts to address issues at the intersection. Aaron further agreed with Anne about handing it over to a committee with those perspectives.

David suggested a motion include several parameters to communicate NCBC's position, that would be in the form of several 'Whereas' statements to be drafted. Roger agreed. David further commented personal opposition to the proposed roundabout.

Randy asked if the Executive Committee could be the ones to approve the final letter. David responded that they can. Kay suggested two motions: one for the position, and another on how it will be drafted and communicated.

Brian shared his perspectives on the project. He reflected that he would be concerned too if he was living in Sutton Terrace. He reminded the board that this proposal has come out from serious traffic concerns and that a roundabout here was presented based on an evidence-based analysis. Brian shared statistics on the safety improvements that come from roundabouts, including two-lane roundabouts.

Margaret commented on the safety margin being reduced between one and two lanes.

Aaron shared that he agreed with Roger and Brian. He further noted his belief that a significant portion of the Bala Cynwyd community is seriously opposed to this proposed project. He expressed that he would hope if a project was on his street, that his neighbors across the neighborhood would take his perspectives into account, but that also there are significant safety issues that need to be added at this intersection. He reflected that the place of NCBC is to support our neighbors, not necessarily be an agency that entirely solves each problem that arises.

Nanci Goldman of Sutton Terrace and the Balay Cynwyd Neighborhood Coalition shared her perspectives on the issues of pedestrian and vehicular safety at the intersection, and that yet a roundabout is not appropriate according to their traffic expert. She reflected on the many meetings she and others from the immediate area around the intersection have attended on this proposal. Nanci shared that more residents of the condominiums would likely join NCBC if they felt their voices were being heard and supported. She expressed that she understood that NCBC does not often take positions like this, but that it was warranted at this time and would be appreciated.

Dan commented that the proposed roundabout is out of scale for Bala Cynwyd, particularly with the continuous flow of traffic being challenging for pedestrian crossings. He noted that with the coming developments, these intersection corners should be people places and not car thruways. He shared that he believes a

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roundabout would not make the area more connected, and that making other roads easier to travel would be better than a roundabout like this on a central road.

Bill noted that over one thousand new apartment units are going up within a mile of this intersection.

Jim shared his perspectives on opposing the proposed roundabout.

Merle commented that there are condominium residents around the entire corridor, including the Fairmount, who are concerned with the proposed roundabout. She commented that there would be negative impacts on the various properties along St. Asaphs Road, and that overall this project should be opposed.

A summary was presented by several board members of the parameters of an NCBC statement and accepted by Roger as a friendly amendment: NCBC appreciates PennDOT's work improving our roadway system, and that NCBC opposes any single or double lane roundabout development at the intersection of St. Asaphs Road and Belmont Avenue.

David made a motion for the board to authorize the NCBC Board Executive Committee to draft the formal statement with the discussed parameters as presented. Seconded by Kay.

> In Favor: Kay Sickles, Jason Landau Goodman, Marion Williams, C. Aaron Gross, David Haas, Maxine Goldberg, Margaret Hunting, Bill Krebs, Brian McGuire, Roger Moog, Randy Myer, Mark Prudente, Jim Remsen, Juan Rodríguez, Dan Russionello, Merle Zucker
> Opposed: Brian McGuire
> Abstained: Anne Greenhalgh

The motion was passed.

Dan made a motion to authorize NCBC Board Executive Committee to put together the qualifying text and approve it for mailing in partnership with the Ad Hoc City Avenue Committee. Seconded by Anne.

The motion was passed unanimously.

JULY 4TH COMMITTEE REPORT

Jim shared that invoices are coming in now, and that the committee is getting ready for the important fundraising stage. He noted that he will discuss individually with board members personal contributions as able, and asks that all board members consider supporting the July 4th Fundraising Committee. Maxine requested that if anyone has a

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contact that may support July 4th, to first run it through Jim to make sure NCBC is not double or triple contacting someone. Jim mentioned that nominations for the annual honors for a merchant and a citizen are due to be made soon.

EXECUTIVE REPORTS

Treasurer's Report, Marion Williams
Marion presented a report on the invoices related to July 4th, current expenses including insurance, and the current status of NCBC funds.

COMMITEE REPORTS

Environmental Committee/Tree Tenders, Marion Williams

Marion shared ideas for future educational programing and collaborations with Bartlett and the Bala Cynwyd Library.

EXECUTIVE REPORTS

Secretary's Report, Jason Landau Goodman
Jason made a motion to approve the minutes as presented at the meeting. Randy seconded. Unanimously approved with Aaron abstaining.

Jason provided an update on improving efficiency of note taking during meetings and the need for a second device while his computer runs the Zoom, and thanked Marion for sharing a tablet.

NEW BUSINESS

Marion mentioned that there are now several vacant shops on Montgomery Avenue. The discussion would be continued at a future meeting.

David moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:12pm.

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