MINUTES OF
REGULAR MEETING OF
THE NEIGHBORHOOD CLUB OF BALA CYNWYD ("NCBC")

April 14, 2026

Attendees: Kay Sickles, Juan Rodriguez, Vanessa Coke Cohen, Bryan Capone, Jillian Dierks, Aaron Gross, David Haas, Joe Hirsch, Margaret Hunting, Sandy Kornhauser, Bill Krebs, Brian McGuire, Roger Moog, Randy Myer, Mark Prudente, Dan Russoniello, Merle Zucker

Absent: Maxine Goldberg, Jason Landau Goodman, Marion Williams

Elected Officials Present:
Commissioners Gilda Kramer, Louis Rossman and Jeremiah Woodring

Kay Sickles, President, called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm.

POLICE REPORT

Officer Keenan reiterated that residents should lock their cars and homes. As the weather warms, we can expect an uptick in crime, so all residents should be aware of their surroundings. Officer Keenan stated that the Neighborhood Watch is up and running and that residents are invited to participate and get involved. Meeting attendees raised concerns about traffic patrols as the number of apartments in Bala Cynwyd increase.

ELECTED OFFICIALS REPORT

Commissioner Gilda Kramer reported that the Township held a presentation on its finances. Although the end result was better than the last projection, the Township still ran a deficit (but less than $1M). Commissioner Kramer noted that construction at Ardmore House II (affordable housing) is almost done and that residents should apply as soon as possible if they are interested because the units will go fast.

Commissioner Jeremiah Woodring reported that the Township will have to increase its sewer rates because the City of Philadelphia recently tested the Township's water and found a much higher concentration of material coming from our Township (which the Township independently confirmed). The results prompted the City of Philadelphia, which processes Township water, to charge the Township an additional $1M. The Township will try to ease the pain of the rate increase (which should range from $40-$80 for a family of four). Commissioner Woodring noted that that the Township engineer suggested that one way to combat the increased waste problem is to compost instead of using garbage disposals. Kay Sickles suggested considering a rebate incentive to those who compost to offset sewer usage.

Commissioner Louis Rossman reported that he met with the Bala Ave developers and he believes they will be good partners and create a nice space for Bala Ave (see Cricket Flats in Ardmore). He also made a call for residents to support the Township police pension. Lastly, Commissioner Rossman stated that PennDot is expected to make in announcement regarding its decision about the St Asaph's/Belmont Ave intersection and it is expected that PennDot is leaning towards new traffic signals. He noted that the Commissioners and State Rep Mary Jo Daley really represented the residents' position. He also

lamented the fact that of all the potential residents affected by the traffic concerns in the Township, only 92 people responded to the Township's survey regarding the same.

PRESENTATION: Bala Zoning Amendment from Chris Leswing, LM Township Director of Building and Planning

Re: *Introduction of religious uses to Bala Ave and adjustment of ground floor use, removing retail requirement*

Chris Leswing reported that two proposed amendments to a zoning ordinance for Bala Villlage were introduced at the Township's Planning Commission ("LMPC"). He noted that the conversation about the proposed amendment is just starting and that many new members of the LMPC have to familiarize themselves with Bala Village.

The two proposed amendments are to:

1) allow religious uses from Cynwyd Ave and City Avenue; and
2) remove the requirement for ground floor commercial uses.

By way of background, the existing ordinance for Bala Village was passed to create a corridor that is the center of Bala Cynwyd. When it was approved in 2020, the ordinance did not allow religious uses. Other similarly zoned villages in the Township do allow religious uses (although not all of those villages actually *have* religious uses due to other exceptions). The Township is concerned that since Bala Village is the only village in the Township that does not allow religious uses, legal challenges may ensue.

With respect to the ground floor commercial use amendment, Mr. Leswing noted that architecture at the top end of Bala Avenue (between Union Avenue and City Avenue) is unique with one side of the street being residential and the other side commercial (and set far back from the street). Mr. Leswing suggested that just because the requirement for ground floor commercial may be removed, developers may still opt to utilize ground floor commercial since there will be density incentives available to them if they keep ground floor commercial uses in their projects.

Mr. Leswing also stated that the proposed amendment includes a definition change for the term "places for assembly".

Questions for the LMPC and residents to consider as discussions move forward regarding the proposed amendment:

- Should we keep the requirement for commercial uses on the first floor of new development?
- Should we allow religious uses in Bala Village?
- If yes to either of the above, where should the boundary be? Union Ave to City or Cynwyd Rd to City Ave?
- Should there be a separation requirement?

Mr. Leswing entertained questions from meeting attendees. Dan Russoniello inquired as to why so many of the shops in the core of Bala Ave are vacant and if it could be because the current stores have low ceiling heights, limited parking and a small footprint. He suggested that any commercial ground floor requirements should have specifications that would encourage shop owners to lease the space. Aaron Gross agreed that the size and form of the commercial properties along Bala Avenue are

problematic (see Slices and Rolls). He stated that greening standards should be increased, but the commercial requirement for the corridor should remain.

David Haas raised the concern that if the amendment is accepted, half of the Bala Ave corridor may not have any commercial spaces. Juan Rodriguez stated that the proposed amendment could rezone up to 60% of the Bala Ave corridor and that the LMPC should be making decisions keeping the future development in mind as opposed to the historical issues for the corridor. He noted that if the Township takes away the commercial requirement or limits commercial space, it may not be able to recoup that lost opportunity going forward. He also suggested that fear of legal action should not be the basis of the LMPC's decision since all zoning could be subject to legal challenge, but zoning exists nonetheless.

A Bala Cynwyd resident raised the point that religious uses restrict what can be next to religious uses. He mentioned that there may be a liquor license state regulation (300ft?) and LMPC should ensure that the commercial development of Bala Ave should not be restricted due to new religious uses.

Jillian Dierks noted that the City Ave Special Services District completed a retail market study which showed that demand for retail spaces exist on Bala Ave, but not in its current form.

Kay Sickles and Jillian Dierks suggested that Union Avenue feels more like an acceptable separation of the Bala Avenue corridor (if it has to happen) than Cynwyd Road.

The LMPC expects to discuss the proposed amendment in the first Monday in May. Mr. Leswing suggested that it could be helpful if the writes a letter to the LMPC which states generally its position, presents some suggestions and makes a request for more information/studies. Mr. Leswing said he would talk internally with the LMPC and develop a plan for continued conversations with various stakeholders.

NCBC will plan to have attendees at the next LMPC meeting where the proposed amendment is on the agenda and ask LMPC to review results of the CASSD retail market study and look into liquor license restrictions (and look into existing liquor licenses adjacent to the portion of the corridor proposed to be affected by the amendment).

PRESENTATION: Hanover Properties Concerning Signage, Appeal No 4653-111 Presidential Blvd from Gina Gerber and Client Representative, Jake Denney

Gina Gerber, attorney for Hanover Properties, presented the proposal for a sign variance for the new development at 111 Presidential Blvd. The sign would be on the western façade of building, above the top window, placed 55.85 feet from ground level. The sign (3'2"H) would be internally lit, with an illumination of less than 1 single watt lightbulb. The existing sign ordinance allows for signage to be placed up to 20ft from ground level, but it can be placed above that threshold if the building is over 100ft. Here, the building is not over 100ft, so the developers need the variance to place the signage in the proposed location. Ms. Gerber noted that ground floor commercial tenants will need adequate signage at lower half of the building ("canopy level"), so the building's signage for needs to be higher for safe traffic navigation. Building sign itself is fully compliant from illumination. Only asking for variance for where on the building it would go.

Kay Sickles will email Ms. Gerber to confirm that the sign as proposed will only be used in that one spot on the building as it was presented to NCBC (top right corner of west building - facing Presidential Blvd). Assuming Gina confirms the placement of the logo as presented to the NCBC, Kay Sickles made the motion that the NCBC write a letter to the LM zoning board stating that it does not oppose the variance requested by Hanover Properties, provided the location of the logo does not deviate from the presentation submitted to the NCBC. Juan Rodriguez seconded. All in favor. No objections. No abstentions. Motion passed.

29 Bryn Mawr Ave

The owners of this corner lot property installed a 6ft fence without seeking a variance and filed an appeal once the Township rejected the fence. The owners did not come to NCBC, the Township or its neighbors to make its case for this very nonconforming fence.

Kay Sickles made a motion to send a letter to the Lower Merion zoning hearing board stating NCBC's opposition to the requested variance at 29 Bryn Mawr Ave, Bala Cynwyd. Juan Rodriguez seconded. All in favor. No objections. No abstentions. Motion passed.

EXECUTIVE REPORTS

President's Report: None.

Treasurer's Report: None.

Secretary's Report: Kay Sickles made a motion to approve the draft of the March 2026 meeting minutes previously distributed to the directors. Randy Myer seconded, all approved. Motion passed. Aaron Gross and David Haas abstained.

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE; ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE; **JULY 4th COMMITTEE**

Due to the extensive nature of the presentations and discussions at the meeting tonight, there were no reports given for these committees.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Movie night is scheduled for Saturday, May 2.

NEW BUSINESS

No new business to report.

The next Regular Meeting is scheduled for May 5, 2026 at 7:30 pm at the Union Fire House and via Zoom. The meeting was adjourned at 9:02pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Vanessa E. Coke Cohen, Secretary