THE NEIGHBORHOOD CLUB OF
BALA CYNWYD
EST. 1906
P.O. Box 717 • Bala Cynwyd, PA 19004

June 17, 2026

The Board of Commissioners
Lower Merion Township

Re: Amended Ordinance: Place of Assembly and Permitting Religious as a Regulated Use in the CAD-BV District

Dear Commissioners,

We are writing regarding the proposed Bala Village zoning amendments.

We appreciate the effort that the Township's planning staff, the Planning Commission, and residents have put into refining this proposal. The revised ordinance addresses many of the concerns raised by the community and represents a substantial improvement over the original proposal.

In particular, the revisions related to the Special Exception process and separation requirements demonstrate that community feedback was heard and incorporated into the ordinance. We appreciate the willingness of staff to consider those concerns.

The remaining issue is the location of the transition point for the commercial corridor.

Township planning department staff, Neighborhood Club of Bala Cynwyd, and City Avenue District recommended extending commercial requirements to Union Avenue rather than ending it at Cynwyd Road. That recommendation was based on the existing development pattern, the character of the corridor, and the findings of the City Avenue Retail Study. Union Avenue is the more logical transition point, with Bala Gym and Bala Avenue Park providing a natural break between the commercial corridor and the residential character of lower Bala Avenue.

This distinction matters because the area between Cynwyd and Union remains one of the few opportunities for future mixed-use and commercial redevelopment along Bala Avenue. Maintaining the commercial requirement through Union Avenue preserves flexibility for the restaurants, retail, and neighborhood-serving businesses that residents have consistently said they would like to see in the district.

The revitalization of Bala Avenue has been the focus of years of planning, investment, and community effort. Township initiatives, City Avenue District improvements, Main Street

designation, state funding, trail enhancements, and recent private redevelopment have all been directed toward strengthening Bala Avenue as a vibrant commercial corridor. The zoning should reinforce those investments and preserve opportunities for future commercial growth, not impede them.

We also remain concerned about the potential impact of institutional uses on future restaurant recruitment and liquor license approvals within the commercial district. Restaurants and food-and-beverage establishments have consistently been identified as important to the long-term success of Bala Avenue, and any ordinance changes should carefully consider their ability to locate and thrive within the corridor.

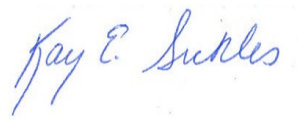
While we understand the desire to create a pathway for a use that is not currently permitted, zoning decisions should be guided by the long-term vision for the district rather than the circumstances of a particular property owner. The uses permitted within Bala Village were established through years of planning, public engagement, and discussion about how best to support the commercial corridor. Any changes should be evaluated against those same objectives.

For these reasons, we encourage the Board to retain the commercial requirement through Union Avenue and preserve a transition point that is consistent with both the planning analysis and the broader vision for Bala Village.

Given the outcome of the Planning Commission's review, the NCBC has been in conversation with the property owner regarding its willingness to discuss a recorded agreement that would run with the land and address some measure of the concern about impact on Restaurants and food-and-beverage establishments. The NCBC respectfully requests that if the BOC is inclined to advertise the Amended Ordinance based on Cynwyd Rd. as the transition point, it also include Union as an alternative transition point to allow the NCBC time to commit this proposed agreement to paper.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



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