

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE MERION CIVIC ASSOCIATION
NOVEMBER 26, 2010

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the Merion Civic Association was held on Tuesday, November 26, 2010, beginning at 7:30 p.m. at the Merion Tribute House with President Kevin Murphy presiding.

Directors present were Bagley, Browne, Eisenberg, Feuer, Flaks, Gordon, Greenberg, Hill, Lam, Lapes, Lavoritano, Marmon, Murphy, Potok, Quinn, Seiden and Wylonis.

Directors absent and excused were Blakeney, Ettelson, Fratis, Kalner, Mudrick, and Stevenson.

Other attendees included Merion residents Audrey Whitman and Paul Newman, Francis Ferdinand, David Schlossberg, and Karla Moras.

The Meeting was called to order by President Murphy at 7:45 p.m. and the October minutes were unanimously approved with corrections.

Treasurer Bob Marmon presented and distributed the October 2010 Treasurer's Report.

President's Report – President Murphy began his report with a reference to the many Township activities, events, hearings and meetings that Merion Civic Association Directors attend throughout the year. President Murphy plans to contact them all before the January meeting to learn about their specific community interests as well as their interest in working on the various Civic committees including and filling the chair position of the School Board and Zoning Committees.

President Murphy moved on to announce the agenda for the evening: crime around Merion; the Township's vision for the future in its issue report and the comprehensive plan. Officer Cullin of the Lower Merion Police is the guest speaker, invited to address the recent house break-ins, the armed robbery, and the confrontations around the Botanical Park, as well as to summarize the Lower Merion Police efforts to identify the criminals, to patrol the neighborhood and to answer questions from the audience.

President Murphy reported that Chris Leswing, Assistant Director of Building and Planning wants to visit all the civic associations to discuss the township comprehensive plan. Does the MCA want to invite Mr. Leswing to one of its Directors meetings or join other Civic Associations in a joint meeting.

President Murphy introduced the guest speaker of the evening, Officer Cullin of the Lower Merion Police Department, who described the recent armed robbery on Bala Avenue in Bala Cynwyd; the 15 robberies that may be attributed to the young white male from Philadelphia. Officer Cullin suggested a general course of action in maintaining a safe neighborhood is to contact the police department if any unusual, odd activity is noted; residents should lock their windows and doors, car doors, garages. A good security system and a pet dog that likes to bark are also deterrents to crime. The Crime Prevention Unit at the police department recommends keeping shrubbery around the house trimmed, using motion sensors to turn on outside lights. In short, residents should make their houses unattractive to burglars by making the effort to break in too much trouble.

Officer Cullin reported that the crime wave that had hit Merion seemed to be moving south into neighboring Penn Wynne and into Delaware County and that communities north of Philadelphia, such as Abington and Cheltenham had also seen a significant rise in home break-ins similar to Lower Merion.

Office Cullin encouraged community participation in the Community Watch program as a way for residents to become familiar with their neighborhood -- what is normal or not normal and to report anything unusual to the police department.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Arts and Education — Frances Quinn reported that the Neighbor-to-Neighbor event was successful. Frances suggested to the Directors that a refreshment committee should be formed which would plan for refreshments for all of the Civic Association events throughout the year. Suggestions are welcome for a speaker/topic for the next Neighbor-to-Neighbor event.

Botanical — Judith Flaks reported there is no news about the park except for the upcoming planting of some new trees to replace those removed by Amtrak.

Commissioner — Commissioner Brian Gordon began his report with an announcement that the Kohelet School has opened and that the renovations are quite nice. The curriculum is rigorous; the student body is smaller than that of the former school, Akiba.

Commissioner Gordon touched on numerous topics during his report: the proposed 12.7% property tax increase (the average home value of \$357,000 translates to a year's increase of \$172.00) to compensate for lower real estate assessments, the millions being spent on renovating the Ludington Library in Bryn Mawr, rising health care costs of township employees. There is protest in the Lower Merion community at the increase, but it is expected that the increase will be approved. Commissioner Gordon mentioned ideas being proposed to cut library expenses such as one day/week closings at the smaller libraries while keeping Ludington and Bala Cynwyd open. He is not in favor of renovations or the enlargement of the Bala Cynwyd library any time soon.

Community Action – No report.

Federation of Civic Associations — President Murphy reported on the November 8 meeting of the Federation. Chris Leswing was the invited speaker on the subject of the comprehensive plan. The other topic was the proposed resolution regarding the creation of a Human Relations Commission, which Commissioner Gordon explained would promote the rights of and protect the sexual diversity of Township residents against discrimination in the areas of employment, in public places and in housing. The system would be designed to function without the use of lawyers.

President Murphy asked for a show of hands to approve the Association's support of such a resolution at the Federation for a Human Relations Commissioned. The approval was unanimous.

Finance – No report.

History — No report

Newsletter — No report.

Nominating – No report.

Post Office — Michael Seiden had no report.

School Board – No report.

Social -- No report.

Station and Grounds — Scott Feuer reported that the graffiti in the tunnel at the train station had been painted over by neighbor Devin Grosh and that the debris from the fall clean-up has yet to be picked up.

Streets, Lights and Traffic — Renee Hill reported that a street light was replaced on Sycamore Avenue. Renee mentioned that she received a call from a Merion resident suggesting that the stop sign at Bowman and Merion Avenues be moved to prevent the problem of too many cars parked along Merion right up to Bowman Avenue, causing a dangerous situation for drivers turning onto and off Merion. The visibility becomes very poor and the chances of a collision are high. Renee suggested trimming trees around street lights to increase

street lighting and make for safer streets. She will call the Township to discuss. President Murphy described the very bureaucratic process for requesting and getting additional lighting. Karla Moras added that the lighting guidelines and standards are sub-par and suggested that the guidelines need to be revised and upgraded. Renee ended the report by requesting that everyone take a close look at our streets lights and trees and identify specific places that need attention and pass the details along to her.

Website -- Michael Seiden reported that he continues to update the Civic Association website. Renee Hill asked if the meeting minutes could be posted to the website. Michael will consult the Association By-laws for guidance.

Zoning — Lauren Wylonis reported that she attended the Zoning Hearing Board meeting on November 18. She summarized the meeting, which focused on the Maguire fields at St. Joe's University: the special exception application was approved with limitations as to the use of the public address system; limitations on the intensity of use of the fields; no rental properties are to be allowed; limitations on intramural and tournament play, however, varsity play is unlimited.

Lauren believes that the Merion Community Coalition effort to limit St. Joe's use of the fields was well worth the effort, and the Zoning Board did heed Merion residents' appeals and acted accordingly. It was pointed out, however, that Berwick Road residents did not fare well in the final decision, as the baseball fields were not restricted as to noise level and proximity to the houses across the street.

Les Greenberg pointed out that residents must remain vigilant to assure that the Zoning Board and Commissioners carry out the promises that have been made.

As an addendum to quality of life issues in Merion, President Murphy announced a public hearing on the City Avenue redevelopment project is scheduled for November 30 at 6 p.m. at the Township Building.

Barnes – Scott Feuer reminded the Directors of the community day being planned for May 7, 2011, and he has formed a committee to plan the activities. Scott asked the Directors if they would like a guided tour of the Barnes before it closes on July 7, 2011, perhaps on a Sunday in March. There was general enthusiasm for such a tour. Scott reported that he has formed a small committee which will meet quarterly to discuss the future of the Barnes campus in Merion. No funds have been set aside by Barnes for the care and maintenance of the campus. Commissioner Gordon spoke on various ideas for reuse of the building, such as for art classes, rotating art collections, including, perhaps, items from the Barnes collection itself. He proposed allowing more visitors to come before the closing and suggested that Adena Potok and Scott Feuer could work together on ideas.

Community Watch — President Murphy announced that he will be the Civic Association liaison to the Community Watch and asked for volunteers to join him and enroll in the training program on January 12, 2011.

Merion Community Coalition – Karla Moras had no report. Renee Hill took the opportunity to praise and congratulate Karla for the countless hours she has given of her time to the Coalition. Karla Moras acknowledged Renee's remarks and added that the next issue the neighborhood must face is the Comprehensive Plan as it will affect Merion. The plan being proposed by the Township is important in defining and maintaining the character of Merion and is the "constitution of zoning" for the Township. Businesses, residents and institutions have a vested interest in future community development.

Lauren Wylonis pointed out that if there had been an updated comprehensive plan for the Township, St. Joe's would not have been the issue that it was and would not have gotten so much of what it wanted.

Karla Moras distributed a reading list which she had compiled and encouraged the Directors to read the materials in preparation for the January meeting discussion of the comprehensive plan.

Narberth Fire Company -- President Murphy reported 15 calls were received at the Fire Company in November.

St. Joe's – No report.

Old Business -- None.

New Business – President Murphy suggested that Scott Feuer and Michael Seiden form an ad hoc By-laws Committee. The question was asked whether the 5 classes of membership had been created by a motion made and approved under the leadership of Margot Flaks.

There being no more new business, the meeting, on motion made and seconded, was unanimously adjourned at 10:00 p.m. The next meeting of the Board of Directors will be held at the Merion Tribute House on Tuesday, January 25, 2011 at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Helen Guy, Secretary