

**WEST CENTRAL GERMANTOWN NEIGHBORS
BUSINESS MEETING, APRIL 11, 2018
Germantown Community Presbyterian Church
MINUTES**

The meeting was called to order at approximately 6:45pm by President Rama Assaf-Smith, twenty to twenty-five members and visitors being present..

After some discussion, minutes of the previous meeting (January 28, 2018) were approved by voice vote. The secretary announced that the evening's proceedings would be recorded and that, should anyone care to speak off the record, he/she should so signify.

Denise Alexander, Treasurer, reported that our bank balance is unchanged since the last meeting and currently stands at approximately \$3,900. Luke Smith reminded the group that WCGN still owes an attorney anywhere from \$1K to \$5K for services rendered (that is, if he decides to pursue the matter; he was offered a thousand dollars more than one year ago and hasn't been heard from since). When questioned, Denise reported that of the 250 people on the membership list, only 51 are up to date with their dues. Marjorie Russell commented that the number "250" is suspect, because the list needs purging and updating.

The group then heard from two visitors from outside WCGN's boundaries. First, Ida from the Pomona-Cherokee "community council" introduced herself and explained that the council is attempting to regroup and revitalize itself after a period of inaction and would appreciate any guidance WCGN can offer. Luke Smith pointed out that, although Pomona-Cherokee previously came under the WCGN umbrella, it now officially comes under the aegis of West Mt. Airy Neighbors (WMAN) . This does not mean that they are not welcome to follow our website online and to attend future meetings if they choose. Someone suggested that we incorporate Pomona-Cherokee into our association, but it was quickly noted that the decision is not ours to make. In any case, in matters of zoning, WCGN would have to defer to WMAN.

Next, Anthony Sydney, representing a group of residents east of Germantown Avenue near Duval and Pomona Streets, appealed for help with regard to a warehouse-type building fronting on Duval, the owner of which was trying to secure a liquor license for the premises from PLCB. The neighbors, he said, have been fighting this since 2015. Luke Russell pointed out that he had already written a letter in support of the neighbors' petition with copies to the relevant authorities (including Councilwoman Bass), but it was important for him to realize that WCGN has no jurisdiction over the area in question. In passing, Mr. Sydney mentioned that the building was, for many years, the former headquarters of the Philadelphia Toboggan Company, which manufactured carousels and roller-coaster cars. The possibility of having the structure historically certified was raised.

Marjorie Russell reported on the efforts of the Garden Committee, outlining a brief history of the garden's origins and progress and making an appeal for volunteers to help with the spring workday on May 5th. Linda Corsover spoke briefly about our successful ongoing partnership with SEPTA regarding the station and its surroundings, plus the imminent installation of water, sewer and gas lines to the station building.

A spirited discussion ensued concerning the looming prospect of a one-hundred-unit residential development on the vacant lot across from the station. The main concerns expressed were increased population density, loss of green space, and potential traffic and parking problems. The property has been acquired by Mosaic Development Partners, with whom Luke Smith, Chairman of the Zoning Committee, has had some preliminary conversations. Mosaic has promised to approach WCGN as soon as the project begins to take shape, which is not likely to be for several months at least. The issue of zoning was raised inconclusively, but it is reasonable to assume that the project could go forward "as of right" (no variance required). It was suggested that a liaison be established with the seven-building co-op on Wayne Avenue, as the project would essentially be in their back yard. [N.B., It has since been learned that the property in question is zoned RM-3, and that Mosaic plans to do core-drilling on the site in the next month or two.]

Bernard Lambert reported limited progress on previously-discussed traffic issues (Tulpehocken Street, McCallum Street, Washington Lane, Walnut Lane, Wayne Avenue). It has become clear that city traffic engineers prefer to deal with only one issue/problem at a time, as opposed to performing a wholesale traffic study of the entire area. In this regard, Mr. Lambert expressed no little frustration.

Three presentations followed, summing up the labors of committees that have been meeting periodically since October, 2017:

1. Luke Smith delivered a full report on the efforts of the Zoning Protocols Task Force and passed around copies of the protocols document that outlines procedures for the conduct of business regarding zoning variances requested by developers. He noted that the document would be posted on the WCGN website. The task force was convened in response to a perceived need to clarify how WCGN operates when functioning as a Recognized Community Organization (RCO), especially with regard to how RCO hearings are to be convened and conducted and how findings are to be reported to the Zoning Board of Adjustment. Questions or comments may be directed to him.
2. Luke Russell encapsulated a supplemental document that resulted from the work of the Task Force. The brainchild of Connie Winters, the document attempts to define for developers who are contemplating new construction or alterations to existing structures in the neighborhood the scale and character of potential projects that will be embraced by the community. Known as Guidelines for Development, it represents a "values statement" emphasizing, among other things, the longstanding commitment of the community to its historic heritage. It, too, may be found on the WCGN website.
3. Linda Corsover touched on the main points of the newly revised WCGN By-Laws governing membership in the organization, the payment of dues, procedures for electing or appointing officers, the roles and responsibilities of such officers, rules for the conduct of official business, and the like. These By-Laws, posted on the website, are a prerequisite for re-certification of the RCO by the city in June and, therefore, must have a second reading and be approved by the general membership at the Memorial Day business meeting.

Information was presented regarding the ongoing comprehensive effort of the Philadelphia City Planning Commission to enlist the help of the citizenry, neighborhood by neighborhood, in defining the future of the city. Initiated by ex-Mayor Nutter and known as "Philadelphia 2035", the plan seeks to identify ways and means to preserve what is valued--as enumerated by the residents--while adapting to growth and inevitable change. The last of 18 districts to be studied in this way, the Upper Northwest District includes all of Germantown, Mt. Airy, and Chestnut Hill. There have been two public meetings so far that have generated much comment, many suggestions, and constructive criticism. The penultimate iteration of the district plan is to be presented for public comment at a meeting on June 18th and will be held open for comment until September, when it is hoped it will be finalized. Information may be found online by googling: "PCPC Philadelphia 2035, Upper Northwest District Plan".

Marjorie Russell spoke about the possibility/desirability of a concerted membership drive in order to reach out to those who reside within WCGN's official boundaries but who, for whatever reasons, do not attend meetings or participate in community activities. This gave rise to many suggestions (including the original idea for door-to-door distribution of flyers as suggested earlier by Johan de Jong. Other ideas mentioned: setting up tables at local events and fairs, brochures placed at historic locations open to the public, &c. Rama Assaf-Smith proposed a working group to tackle the membership drive. An inconclusive discussion followed and no decision was made about establishing a working group, nor about the flyer.

Just before adjournment, Connie Winters made an announcement that the Penn-Knox Boys and Girls Club would be up for possible historic designation at the May meeting of the Philadelphia Historical Commission.

Connie also made an appeal for people to show up at a public meeting on May 1st to make their voices heard in protest of Emmanuel Freeman's apparently willful and corrupt mismanagement of forty-some derelict properties in lower Germantown.

Tabled for future discussion: Connie's suggestion that we look into annexing the blocks just on the south side of Chelton Avenue.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:15.

Respectfully submitted,
--Russell Fulton, Secretary