

MINUTES
WCGN BUSINESS MEETING
Sunday, October 7, 2018
258 West Tulpehocken Street

The meeting was called to order by President Rama Assaf-Smith at 5:30pm.

Minutes of the previous meeting (Memorial Day) were approved by voice vote.

Treasurer Denise Alexander reported that the organization has approximately \$4,200 in its coffers.

The slate of officers to be elected to a one-year term was also approved enthusiastically by voice vote. They are:

Rama Assaf-Smith, President
Julie Stapleton-Carroll, Vice President
A. Luke Smith, Vice President
Russell Fulton, Secretary
Denise Alexander, Treasurer

COMMITTEE ON BYLAWS:

Representing the Bylaws Committee, Linda Corsover presented a proposal to amend WCGN's Bylaws in order to eliminate annual dues as a condition of membership. An animated discussion of pros and cons followed.

Linda pointed out that for the first thirty-five years of its existence WCGN did not collect dues. When the Bylaws were revised, the Board and Bylaws Committee at the time felt that we should institute dues as a prerequisite for voting on zoning issues--a practice now forbidden by the City of Philadelphia.

The Membership Committee and the Board suggest that voluntary donations may be just as effective—or more—in raising funds to meet typical annual expenses. Concern was raised that the association should maintain a substantial contingency reserve, lest WCGN find itself "behind the 8 ball" should extraordinary expenses—such as legal fees for a zoning battle—arise in future. The Board feels that fund-raising campaigns will suffice to meet such extraordinary expenses.

The amended language will be posted on the website. Members are encouraged to read and comment, and to be prepared for a final discussion and vote at the January business meeting.

ZONING COMMITTEE:

Luke Smith, Chair, delivered a brief update on the Mosaic Development project adjacent to Tulpehocken Station. In essence, there has been no change since the Memorial Day report, other than an exchange of letters between himself and one of the partners. As far as actual zoning is concerned, the project may proceed "by-right" (meaning the developer does not need a variance to construct the proposed 100-unit, multi-family building). Research has shown, however, that two important environmental issues may provide the community some leverage in negotiating concessions from the developer. One is the presence on the site of a large number of "heritage" trees that would, of necessity, be demolished to make way for construction (the city has strict regulations on how these are to be mitigated). The second is the significant degree of "slope" on the site, which is within the protected Wissahickon watershed, and is subject to intense scrutiny from groups such as Friends of the Wissahickon (a fellow RCO). Luke will provide further updates as appropriate.

Jeff Smith reported on the status of Tulpehocken Station improvements. SEPTA has completed the task of bringing utilities to the site (water, sewer, and gas), but the building is still essentially a shell with two plywood floors and a dry basement. Replacement windows will cost in the neighborhood of \$100K. SEPTA seems not to be in favor of a commercial activity (e.g., coffee shop) in the structure owing to the paucity of on-site parking. In the near future: 1) the existing SEPTA lot will become a kiosk facility, and parking will cost a dollar per day; and 2) the Walnut Lane ingress/egress road will be closed temporarily in order to address severe erosion of the steep bank along the tracks.

Luke reported that the new coffee house at Wayne & Rittenhouse (our own Walter King, developer) should be open for business by year's end [cheers and applause].

GARDEN COMMITTEE:

Marjorie Russell, Chair, offered thanks to all who worked so hard on garden upkeep and improvement during four spring and summer workdays, observing that the garden looks better every year. Weeding, edging, mulching (wood chips), and the connection of several beds were some of the accomplishments. Marjorie promised to keep nagging SEPTA to mow the entire plot on a regular basis so stalwart Luke doesn't have to do it every week [applause for Luke] and announced the final, "put-the-garden-to-bed" workday of the year: Saturday, November 3rd, from 10:00am to 1:00pm.

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE:

Marjorie introduced Roberta Moore, who is new to the neighborhood this year and who has wasted no time in getting involved with WCGN. Roberta reported on our newly formed Membership Committee.

Over the course of the past year the Board has become increasingly convinced of the need to reach out to areas within its purview that have previously been neglected, and--more generally--to rethink WCGN's approach to membership. In response to that and to an offer by Johan de Jong to help organize a leafletting blitz, the association has established a Membership Committee with Roberta at the helm.

Relying heavily on Roberta's skills and contacts, the committee designed a handsome, tri-fold flier that was recently delivered to nearly 1,000 addresses within our borders. The document attempted to define "who we are", "what we do", and "how people may get involved". Its impact, Roberta acknowledged, has yet to be assessed, but we look forward to next steps.

She encouraged neighbors to think in terms of "engagement" rather than "membership", which is in keeping with the idea of eliminating dues. Updates to follow.

OTHER BUSINESS:

An update on Phila2035 was provided by Russell Fulton. The Draft Plan for the Upper Northwest District (Germantown, Mt. Airy, and Chestnut Hill)--more than a year in the making and completed on September 21st--includes myriad recommendations made by the various communities. Upon approval by the Philadelphia City Planning Commission, the implementation phase, expected to take anywhere from three to five years, will commence. Neighbors will have ample opportunity to influence decisions concerning historic preservation, commercial corridors, improved pedestrian experience, access to green space, and a host of other quality of life issues. The entire plan, including maps, graphs, and diagrams may be found on the website: www.phila2035.org.

Jennifer Miller of Wayne Avenue made an impassioned plea for support in her efforts to have more traffic-calming measures implemented on the busy thoroughfare, especially in the 6100 block, citing the recent tragic death of an elderly resident of Tulpehocken Co-op after being struck by a car. (Others chimed in that such measures are needed from Rittenhouse Street all the way to Washington Lane.) Jennifer has been able to secure the support of Councilwoman Bass and has worked diligently with city traffic engineers discussing additional safety measures. Neighbors are urged to attend a meeting with Deputy Commissioner of Transportation, Richard Montanez, at the Waldorf School, 6000 Wayne Avenue on November 14th at 6:00pm.

Lastly, the group heard from Regina Robinson, proud owner of the historic "Queen's Cottage" at #9 Tulpehocken Street. It is well known that the house was built as a refuge for Queen Christina of Spain in case of a conspiracy against her. (It was never needed.) What is less well known is the rich history of the Ruth L. Bennett House in nearby Chester, Pennsylvania--likewise a refuge, but in this case, for African-American women escaping oppression in the south. Regina

profusely thanked Jeff Smith and Luke Russell for their tireless efforts in acquiring several sections of Victorian wrought-iron fencing from the Bennett house to be installed--rather fittingly--in her front yard. She promises a dedication party once the fence is in place.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 6:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,
--Russell Fulton, Secretary