

# **WCGN General Membership Meeting Minutes October 25, 2023, Via Zoom**

## **Call to Order:**

Suzanne Ponsen, President, called the meeting to order at 7:38 PM

Board Members Present: Suzanne Ponsen, Mike Ramos, Johan DeJong, Roberta Moore, Russell Fulton, Phil Kane, Bob Lane, and Massoud Mohadjeri

Board Member Absent: Luke Smith and Connie Winters

## **Minutes:**

Connie Winters, secretary, has not submitted the minutes for either the 3/29/23 or the 5/29/23 General Membership Meetings.

## **Election of Officers:**

Suzanne announced the slate of officers:

President	Suzanne Ponsen
1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> V P	Mike Ramos, Julie Stapleton-Carroll, and Carla Willard
Treasurer	Fred Capp and Bob Lane
Secretary	Lora Lewis

On behalf of the Board and WCGN Membership, Suzanne thanked the Nominating Committee Members: Susan Wright, Luke Smith, and Julie Stapleton-Carroll for their work.

## **Statements were made by each candidate:**

\*Suzanne reported that Lora Lewis, who couldn't be here tonight, looks forward to serving as our secretary.

\*Julie Stapleton-Carroll stressed her commitment over many years serving in leadership roles first in WCGN and then in GUCDC (Germantown Community Development Corporation), which she helped found.

\*Carla Willard discussed her interest in initiatives relating to safety, low income housing, and info hubs covering those and other topics.

\*Mike Ramos mentioned his interest in historic preservation and zoning.

\*Bob Lane stressed his work these past 2 years as one of the Zoning Chairs, his implementation of Zoom RCO meetings and anonymous ballots. He voiced his continued commitment to Germantown and his WCGN neighbors.

\*Though running unopposed, Suzanne Ponsen took the opportunity to remind people that, while individual Board members have a right to their own opinions and feelings. It is the mandate of the Board to demonstrate cooperation and to carry on dialogue in a respectful way.

### **Questions from the attendees:**

1. Ann Ricksecker's question concerned WCGN's involvement with Anna Linglebach School – just beyond our boundaries and the formation of a Schools Committee within WCGN. Suzanne, Carla, Julie, and Bob agreed that such a committee was a good idea.
2. Yvonne Haskins asked about, and then suggested that our website explain in more detail our working committees and offer opportunities for neighbors to participate in them. Suzanne responded that our communications systems: website, newsletters, MailChimp, social media, etc. need to be updated and better coordinated. She has called (in recent Newsletters) for any neighbors with expertise in these areas to come forward and help get that improved.
3. Geri Corcoran's question concerned the different approaches each candidate may bring to the office they are running for and if their approach is different from the other candidate and why they think their approach may be better. Carla, Julie, Bob, Fred, and Mike explained that they feel the more people offering their time and services offers the community more options.

### **Election Voting Instructions** (see below)

Roberta Moore

Suzanne thanked Geri Corcoran and Ben Nitkin who agreed to act as Tellers for the election.

### **WCGN By-Law Amendment**

Suzanne introduced the proposed By-Law addition which would allow all meetings to be held either in person or virtually as determined by the President or Committee Chair. This Amendment will be put to a yes or no vote before the attendees at January 2024's general membership meeting.

### **Committee Reports**

#### Treasury

Johan DeJong

Johan reported maintaining a healthy balance of approximately \$12,000 with another plea for either annual or monthly recurring donations to cover our annual expenses.

#### Zoning & Land Use

Bob Lane & Massoud Mohadjeri

1. Bob reported on the most recent RCO Meeting for 5900 Germantown Avenue which was held August 2. The votes reported were: 8 in support, 3 opposed, and 1 not opposed with a list of provisos which include:

- a. parking in their 5-car lot be on a first come first served basis (no additional monthly charge to tenants) to encourage less street parking.
- b. adequate trash collection.
- c. planting of native trees/shrubs where they can.

At their ZBA hearing on 10/18, the ZBA approved the variance without the provisos.

2. The next RCO Meeting is scheduled for 241 & 247 W. Pastorius St. Wednesday 11/1 at 7 PM. The variance request is to allow a fence height of higher than 4 ft. and more than 50% opaque for the 2 properties.

The ZBA Hearing for this property will be held 12/6/23 at 9:30 AM.

### History & Heritage

Russell Fulton

1. 224 W. Washington Ln. (Gardener's Cottage of the Lewis & Martha Taws Estate) WCGN's nomination of this property was successfully designated historic by the Philadelphia Historical Commission.
2. 5920 Greene St. (The Thomas Potter House) another WCGN nomination was approved and designated (although the owner is appealing to the Court of Common Pleas to have that designation rescinded). The chances of his overturning this are slim, if not impossible.
3. 150 W. Washington Ln. ("Cranford" - the Residence of Charles Francis Jenkins & Maria Cope Jenkins) nominated by Oscar Beisert of The Keeping Society and supported by WCGN was also approved for designation by the Commission.
4. Germantown Avenue Historic District - WCGN's \$5,000 fundraising is being used to hire Oscar Beisert to prepare the necessary historic nominating documentation for our blocks - from Cheltenham Ave. to Washington Ln. Oscar informed the board of his intention to include much more of Germantown Avenue (from Windrim Avenue north all the way to Mermaid Lane). He has already completed 90% of the work with hopes of the nomination coming before the Historical Commission by the early months of 2024.
5. Tulpehocken Station Development - SEPTA is in the process of issuing an RFP (Request for proposal) for the development of 5 locally designated historic rail stations: Tulpehocken, Upsal, Carpenter, Mt. Airy, and Gravers Ln. WCGN is working closely with WMAN, EMAN, and the Southwest Mt. Airy Development Cooperative to provide input and guidance to any proposals that are received.
6. Tulpehocken Station Historic District - The Preservation Alliance of Greater Philadelphia has offered to help us elevate this district to the Philadelphia registry. It is currently listed only on the national registry. Further presentations by the Alliance and meetings with the neighbors will follow soon.

### Green Space

Phil Kane

1. 6100 Germantown Ave., a city owned property currently paved with concrete and used as an unofficial parking lot, is being considered by the Green Space Committee (with the cooperation of WYCK) as a possible green space.
2. Tulpehocken Station Garden tending on Sat. Nov. 4 from 1-4 pm
  - a. First 15 or so minutes dedicated to encouraging volunteers to sign up for the specific Green Space initiatives that they are interested in helping with such as:
    - Street tree planting, yard tree replacement, collection of leaves for composting, restoring current green space, and developing new green spaces.
  - b. Assembling large bins to collect leaves at the Station for composting leaves which can be used in the garden and on the berm to feed the plants and trees and support butterflies and bees.
  - c. Putting woodchips around the trees and shrubs as well as creating an edging of logs to prevent SEPTA maintenance from mowing or encroaching the planted area.

## Community Engagement

Roberta Moore

Roberta described the ongoing need for volunteers to come forward to support the many social events that WCGN hosts. Our next general membership meeting/potluck will be sometime in January 2024. Hopefully it will be in person and indoors in a facility large enough for comfortable spacing.

## **Germantown High and Fulton Schools, YWCA, Town Hall**

1. In conflict with this meeting POWER, an interfaith multiracial people's movement, hosted a meeting concerning the development of Germantown High School and Fulton School. Although originally agreeing to present, neither Cindy Bass nor the developer attended. Debbie Lipshutz and Julie Stapleton-Carroll recapped the meeting by saying that Cindy Bass has called her own meeting for November 16 at 6PM at Center in the Park which apparently the developer Jack Azran has agreed to attend. We are all encouraged to attend.
2. Our focus in the development of the YWCA should be to support the Center in the Park, a vital asset to Germantown and beyond in their outreach and services to seniors. Center in the Park absolutely needs access to the driveway and parking in the rear part of the Y's property. Although KBK, the developer has promised to work with CIP, nothing has been agreed upon to date.
3. There has been no further news about Town Hall and West Powelton Development since the February 6 meeting that Cindy hosted.

## **Closing Remarks**

Suzanne thanked all in attendance and the meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:05 PM.

## **Election Instructions**

1. All those who registered for tonight's meeting and are eligible to vote will receive a ballot within **24 to 48 hours** of the end of this meeting.
2. You are eligible to vote if you reside or own a business or property within our boundaries.
3. You will receive an email from "**HELIOS Voting Bot**" (check your **Spam** folder if it does not appear in your **In Box**), which will contain your unique **Voter ID and Password**. Save that email so you have your Voter ID and Password; you will need them later.

4. You will also receive a separate email from Suzanne Ponsen alerting you that your ballot is available.
5. The email from Helios will have a link that will take you to your ballot.
6. Complete the ballot following all the steps indicated including the final one which will ask you to **Cast your ballot**.
7. You will have **48 hours** to cast your vote once the election opens.
8. If you have any questions, please contact:  
Suzanne Ponsen at 215-720-0809

These minutes were prepared in Secretary Connie Winters' absence, by Suzanne Ponsen. They were approved by the WCGN Board on 11/9/2023.