

## **Minutes of the WCGN Community Meeting January 31, 2024, via Zoom**

Board Members Present: Suzanne Ponsen, Julie Stapleton Carroll, Mike Ramos, Bob Lane, Phil Kane, Russell Fulton

Absent: Lora Lewis, Roberta Moore

There were approximately 20 attendees.

**Call to Order 7:35 PM**

**Suzanne Ponsen, President**

**Minutes** from the October 25, 2023, WCGN Community Meeting were submitted by Suzanne Ponsen in secretary Lora Lewis' absence. They were unanimously approved.

**Treasurer's Report**

**Bob Lane, Treasurer**

Bob Lane, as WCGN Treasurer, reported a (PNC) checking account balance of \$12,165.29 as of 12/31/2023. Since July 1, 2023, the beginning of our fiscal year, we have received \$791.65 in donations from a total of 15 individuals/households. Because we did not hold a Yard Sale we are relying entirely on your donations. He suggested that neighbors make a modest monthly Pay Pal donation (preferred) or an annual donation.

**SEPTA & Save the Train Coalition**

**Suzanne Ponsen**

Suzanne reported on the fact that the Chestnut Hill West line will almost surely be shut down if SEPTA doesn't get the money it needs from the state, and rail and bus services will be reduced all over the city and region. The PA budget will be voted on sometime in March when the State House and Senate reconvene.

This concern led her to meet with Anne Dicker, the new WMAN president, and push for the creation of a coalition of RCOs, CDCs, and BIDs up and down the R8 Corridor from Chestnut Hill to North Philadelphia. Within a very few days the Save the Train coalition was formed.

The Coalition's first Northwest Philadelphia-wide Zoom meeting was held on 1/23. Over 1000 people registered, and it was a huge success.

The first Rally and Ride event happened at the Richard Allen's Lane Station on 1/28 and 200 - 300 people rallied with all our local political representatives. Then they rode the train to

Chestnut Hill. It was well reported via TV (Channel 6), WHYI, The Philadelphia Inquirer, and The Chestnut Hill Local, etc. The next event will be held in Chestnut Hill on Feb 10.

She stressed that there was still a lot of work to do to publicize and lobby.

In particular, WCGN is hosting a Valentine's Day (Noon Wed, 2/14) event at the Tulpehocken Station. She encouraged everyone to make WCGN proud and join us then.

For detailed information she advised all to go directly to [savethetrain.org](http://savethetrain.org) for the history of the crisis as well as simple ways to help the cause by making a donation, volunteering for a committee, sharing specific skills, etc.

Suzanne also mentioned that she sees this coalition as a way to open up more opportunities to work with other RCOs in the Northwest, and she hopes to get some help including ones on the east side of Germantown Avenue.

### **Revision of WCGN Bylaws and decision to incorporate**

**Suzanne**

Suzanne reported that at a recent meeting of the board it was decided that WCGN should become incorporated. The advice of our pro bono attorneys, The Cheshire Law Group at 5275 Germantown Avenue, is that incorporation makes sense for many reasons, including: added protection for board members, more opportunities to apply for and receive grants, and much more established case law for nonprofit corporations. In polling the members of Crosstown Coalition (a group of which WCGN is a member that consists of many RCOs across the City), nearly all those who responded stated that they are incorporated.

The Bylaws Task Force, chaired by Mike Ramos, is working on revisions that will be suitable for a non-profit corporation and will firm up some currently vague language.

The board will present the revised bylaws at the next Community Meeting on March 27. Then on May 27 at our Memorial Day Meeting the community will be able to vote on it.

### **Quiet Clean**

**Seth Leiberman**

A presentation was made by Seth Leiberman, Mt. Airy neighbor and founder of [quietclean.org](http://quietclean.org), which proposes legislation to gradually ban gas powered leaf blowers from being used in Philadelphia. He discussed dangers both to health of lawn care workers and community (extremely high noise level, negative impact on lungs causing asthma and cancer), and to the environment (two stroke engines emitting enormous amounts of unburned gas and oil particulates, contributing to climate change). He added that they are recommending a two-year phase-in as well as incentives for people to make the transition. And he liked a suggestion made by Lois Bruckner that they push for suppliers to offer a discount to people who purchase a battery-powered device.

His request was that we agree to support him by adding our logo to his web site's wall of supporting organizations, since community support is what legislators say they are waiting for. A motion was made by Marjorie Russell and seconded by Julie that WCGN give Quiet Clean that support. The motion passed with no objections.

### **Germantown Education Equity Forum**

**Kyra Atterbury**

Our neighbor in the 500 block of Harvey St., Kyra Atterbury, ED of Need in Deed, offered insight to the focus of Need in Deed -- a 30-year-old program offering high school students the chance to plan and carry out service-learning projects. She then announced a forum the following Monday to educate neighbors about inequality in the education system both locally and statewide, and to discuss ways to effect change.

Need in Deed's office is located nearby at 441 E. High St.

### **YWCA of Germantown Update**

**Julie Stapleton Carroll 1<sup>st</sup> VP**

Given the failure of the City to find a developer able to move ahead on repurposing the Germantown Y, Ken Weinstein is trying to take advantage of PA Act 135, which allows a person "with standing" to take control over a property in trouble. To that end he must take his petition against the Y and the PRI before a judge. If he is granted that "conservatorship," he will stabilize the building and then find a developer that will repurpose it to provide low-income housing plus some commercial use on the first floor. The developer he has in mind is Mission First Housing.

There was a preliminary hearing in December where the judge heard only the principals, but there will be another in March in which many organizations -- including WCGN -- will have spokespersons speaking in support of Ken. Individuals are encouraged to attend as well, to demonstrate wide community backing.

### **Help Wanted!**

**Suzanne**

Suzanne begged attendees to think of a volunteer who can coordinate communications, including getting out the newsletter and updating the website.

She also is looking for someone to coordinate volunteers and/or expand the volunteer list.

### **Parting Thoughts**

**Suzanne**

Two committees are beginning to take shape: one concerned with pedestrian & traffic safety under the direction of Carla Willard, and (possibly) another reaching out to the public schools in our neighborhood. The safety committee is actively seeking volunteers.

Suzanne also asked whether anyone might ease the way for her to meet the head of school at The Waldorf School, who hasn't been responding to her phone messages or attempts to visit.

The next Community Meeting is March 27, 2024.

**Adjournment** 9:15 PM