

Minutes of WCGN Community Meeting
March 27, 2024

Board Members Present: Suzanne L. Ponsen, Mike Ramos, Bob Lane

Board Members Absent: Julie Stapleton Carroll, Phil Kane, Lora Lewis, Roberta Moore

At least 19 community members were in attendance.

Suzanne called the meeting to order at 7:35 PM.

1. Minutes from January 31, 2024, Community meeting were approved by a clear majority. There is a link to view them on the WCGN website.
2. Bob Lane, treasurer, reported that as of his last end of month report of 2/29/2024 there was a balance of \$11,877. WCGN has received a total of \$1,163.50 in contribution so far this fiscal year, which began July 1, 2023. He reminded those present to visit our website and continue to donate to support our organization.
3. Suzanne explained the need for the full membership, rather than the board alone, to appoint a committee to investigate the incorporation of WCGN.

Community member, Jeff Jones, made a motion to appoint President, Suzanne Ponsen, Vice-Presidents Julie Stapleton Carroll and Mike Ramos to a committee to investigate the incorporation of WCGN.

Community Member, Yvonne Haskins, seconded that motion.

During the discussion, Bob Lane asked if others could serve on that committee. When it was agreed that others could, he proposed community member, Johan DeJong who expressed his willingness to do so.

Jeff Jones then restated the motion to include Johan.

Yvonne again seconded the motion.

The motion was approved unanimously by a show of hands.

4. Suzanne announced that an additional Community meeting would be held on Thursday 4/11 at 7PM. It will be a joint Community/Board meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to introduce the revised WCGN Bylaws that the Bylaws Task force has been working on. These revised Bylaws, written with the pro bono help of Chesire Law Group, will be available for all to view and consider on our website immediately after the 4/11 meeting. These new revised bylaws will then be presented to the full community at our Annual Memorial Day Potluck Picnic on May 27, 2024. Suzanne urged all to attend both the 4/11 meeting and the 5/27 Annual Meeting/Picnic.

5. Suzanne announced WCGN's participation in the Philly Spring Clean Up on Saturday April 6 from 10AM-1PM. We will meet in the 6200 block of McCallum and work on cleaning W. Washington Lane, Germantown Avenue and the upper parts of the unit blocks of W. Tulpehocken St. and W. Walnut Ln.
6. Suzanne then turned the meeting over to Mike Ramos, the new chair of the WCGN's History & Heritage Committee. Suzanne thanked Russell Fulton, the former chair, for his continued work and his willingness to pass the reins to Mike.

Tulpehocken Station Historic District

Mike introduced himself discussed the exploration as well as the significance and challenges of local historic district designation. Mike then turned the meeting over to Paul Steinke, Executive Director, Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia, who spoke at the 2023 Memorial Day picnic.

Paul introduced himself and said a few words about the Preservation Alliance. He then talked about what is probably the main reason why a neighborhood might want to be designated as historic district and why a neighborhood might not want such a designation. He mentioned that the Philadelphia Historic Commission is only concerned with changes to the outside of buildings. Interior changes (kitchens and bathrooms for example) are of no interest to and are not regulated by the Historic Commission. In closing he said that historic districts are on the ascendancy in Philadelphia. During the last five or six years, 26 new historic districts have been designated in Philadelphia during that time, including Germantown Urban Village Historic District centered around Market Square and other nearby neighborhoods.

Mike then discussed and showed slide photos of different historic properties that have been demolished in recent years. Local historic designation could help prevent that kind of demolitions in the future. Mike emphasized the need for historic district designations to preserve the character of neighborhoods and shared the nomination and approval process for the Historical Commission. The conversation also touched on the potential impact of historic district designation on property taxes and insurance, and the boundaries of the proposed historic district were outlined. The discussion concluded with the neighborhood's potential to be designated historic and the experiences of other neighborhoods that had recently been designated.

Questions regarding the nomination and the use of materials in repairing or replacing historic homes were addressed. Paul Steinke clarified that the Historic Commission discourages using cheap materials as it can detract from the historic character of the neighborhood. There was some discussion of the expansion of the National Historic District to include other significant historical properties in the neighborhood for the local designation. Lastly, the regulations regarding changes to the exterior of historic buildings were discussed, with clarifications on the Historical Commission's approval of alternative materials that replicate the appearance of the original material.

Suzanne explained that both this presentation/discussion as well as a similar one held on 1/11/24 (for the board and History & Heritage Committee members) will be posted on

our website for all who were unable to attend tonight to view. Suzanne pointed out that the nomination and designation process was still in the early stages.

Johan deJong raised the issue of maintenance and preservation of commercial properties, specifically large apartment buildings and churches, in their neighborhood. Questions were raised about the likelihood of property owners maintaining or abandoning their buildings, and the potential impact of historical designation. Paul, Kim, and Alex offered their expertise on the matter, with Paul highlighting the role of the Historical Commission in reviewing building permits. The discussion also covered the regulation and maintenance of properties in the Spring Garden Historic district, and the possibility of changing the "Tulpehocken Station" name. Future safety concerns for the neighborhood were also raised by Carla Willard.

Suzanne invited everyone to attend the next combined Board and Community meeting on April 11th. The meeting was adjourned.

Written and submitted in Lora's absence by Suzanne Ponsen and Bob Lane