**Minutes of Penn Knox Neighborhood Association Meeting**

**December 3, 2019 , 7 p.m., 143 W. Coulter Street**

**Present:** Grace Flisser, Brandi Levine, Joe McCarthy, Joseph Galgon, Meredith Myers, Adam Kaufman, Sue Gilfill, Mark Davies, Sue Patterson, Russ Kleinbach, Irving Vaughn, Liuda Sudaris, Lynne Collins, Susan McLaugh, Martha Savery, Terese Vekteris

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

**2. Zoning:**

Sue P will send us links to zoning documents and drafts so that the neighborhood membership can peruse them and give feedback. Brandi L said that the best way to provide feedback is to write her an email with responses. Brandi L thanked the committee, calling them “a real brain trust.” Sue will send us a map that details the zoning in our area once zoning legislation is actually voted on by the city.

It would be great to have Ian Taggerty, a Northwest Rep of the City Planning Commission to speak to us about zoning in the PKNA are at a meeting . [Note: this is now scheduled for our February meeting.] We could invite other neighborhood RCOs, such as Baynton Hill, to the meeting so that we could all ask questions.

Joe Mc reminded us that Historic Germantown, our local historical society, has restarted a new committee on preservation in the neighborhood.

**3. PKNA Spring Event:**

We’re organizing a Spring event/party that we are still defining. Mark D, from the Juvenile Justice Center at 110 W. Coulter Street stated that his group creates their own Back-to-School event, but that they want to support our Spring event, likely by hosting a table providing JJC information. We could have other tables at the Spring event as well. And PKNA could host a table at the JJC Back-to-School event, working in partnership to support each other and to multiply the benefit to families of such networking. The JJC building is an old Medical Arts Building that would be worth seeing for its original fixtures and such.

We need to obtain a permit from the city for our event. Brandi L suggested having the event in Howell Park; if we held it there, we could also apply through Friends of Howell Park for city monies to support our party/event. It would be great to bring kids to this park which has a champion white oak tree, and has two acres. We would need to get a port o’potty from the city.

**4.** **Howell Park:**

The park is next to the Post Office if one turns into the driveway on Greene Street at twin pillars. Sue P has seen spotted lantern flies in trees with crevice-like bark in Howell Park, where the Friends recently did a great clean-up, planted a maple tree and lots of bulbs. There are leftover supplies that we could use for a street clean-up. The Friends of Howell Park would like ideas for improvements; they could obtain split logs to use as benches, for example. We discussed the invisibility of the park and people’s lack of awareness of it; there is no signage, so it’s unused, almost “private,” and the community could benefit from having greater access to it.

It was added that there’s another little used park near the Germantown Dollar store on Germantown Ave, which is called Gilbert Stuart Park.

**5. Boys and Girls Club:**

Sue P reported that the developer is ready to request their building permit, having already received their demolition permit. We at PKNA will get a copy of the building permit once it’s submitted so that we can review it and make sure that it reflects what the community has asked for. We should let Brandi L know if we see anything regarding the Boys and Girls Club that needs to be shared or questioned. We don’t know what will occur in the inside of the building, which is not part of the PKNA agreement with the developer. The outside work will require scaffolding, and will include pointing, maintaining the main skylight, brick repair.

**6. By-laws:**

Adam K said that the by-laws committee has our January meeting as a target date for bringing a new draft of our by-laws. As our RCO is renewed in the spring, we need to have the by-laws ready by then. Sue and others will give the committee feedback before they bring the by-laws to the meeting. The committee is mostly focused on the document’s structure and language, not on changing its content per se. They are aiming for greater clarity and to pin down details as much as possible; also, they hope to include an accurate verbal delineation of the boundaries of the PKNA district.

This led to a discussion of the PKNA district boundary and our responsibilities to the entire area within it. In answer to the question of where the PKNA western boundary is, Sue P answered that it extends to the southern side of Chelten Avenue and includes the library, and that we have a responsibility to that area. We have a stake in the commercial district, and it’s important to demonstrate that we want to help with decisions made about it. In fact, the City Planning Institute or other bodies might be able to help with such decisions.

Maplewood Mall is also within our boundaries, and its many complexities, such as parking, have all been resolved and the Mall’s reconstruction includes new plans to cover the many concerns associated with its location and design. Irving V reported that the Philadelphia Parking Authority is in chaos due to its computer failures. Sue P made the connection between parking and zoning issues; if these issues on Germantown Avenue improved, the commercial experience on the corridor would benefit.

**7. GSSD vs. BID**

Parking discussion provided a gateway to discuss the fact that the Germantown Special Services District (GSSD) is being audited, as they’ve collected monies from local businesses for the purposes of maintaining the commercial area but have not paid their contractors nor have they cleaned the commercial corridor. Because GSSD is a body whose mandate is from the city, as a neighborhood we have no input into how they operate. Germantown might benefit from a Business Improvement District (BID) funded by local businesses, but our councilperson does not support that, perhaps because such a body would be out of her control. The appointees on GSSD, on the other hand, are selected by her. More community-based people might be more effective. For example, Ken Weinstein, who has trained people for creating businesses, might be a good person to have on a BID.

Irving V suggested that local businesses could form a local corporate group and that perhaps BID. organizers could come to a PKNA meeting to talk to us at a future meeting.

**8. Open mike:**

**a.** Joe M stated that the historically-certified Waring House on 48 E. Penn Street is up for sale again. It keeps flipping. It’s more or less a shell inside, but intact on the outside. There are difficulties with the property boundaries; its historic garage seems to be located on #38’s property, and on its other side, all the air-space beyond the building’s outside wall belongs to #62, the next property-owner.

Sue P noted that the city is working on a system for creating a fund to help owners rehabilitate historic properties, or for giving them tax rebates. The hope is to turn historic properties into functional buildings. This would likely include the city easing parking for rehabilitated properties.

**b**. Irving V said that he needs a chainsaw to finish taking down a very dangerous tree at Hansberry and Knox which had fallen and could have hit cars, as it reached six feet into the street. The city never came to finish the job; Sue P said that he could keep bugging the city about it, but Irving V is tired of waiting and doing nothing.

**9. Cookie consumption and holiday wishes**

*Submitted by Grace Flisser*