

**Penn Knox Neighborhood Association/PKNA
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**December 7, 2021, 7 p.m.
Community Zoom meeting minutes**

Attending: Amanda Bates, Gerorgette Bartell, Angela Steele, Grace Flisser, Adam Kaufman, Maggie Manzer, Terese Vekteris, Darisha Parker, Joy Wells, Sharon Harvey, Zarah Adams, Gabriel Harrison, Rob Mandeville, Oliver Lopresti, Ronald Harper, Keith Brooks, Alison Weiss, Diane Pieri, Phileasa Patrick, Deneene Brockington, Jacqueline Jackson, Kevin Zuber, Else Zuber, Pam _____?

1. Adam welcomed everyone and invited them to introduce themselves, and many did so, including the five PKNA officers.

2. New Business:

Maggie, Chair of the Neighborhood Development and Conservation Committee, explained that an RCO vote would be taken at the meeting with regard to a variance that the owners of 147 W. School House Lane, Meghan Kelly and Gabriel Harrison, requested. Two votes would be taken, one by near neighbors within 250 feet of the property, and one from the remainder of those at the meeting (who lived within the PKNA boundaries).

Sharon Harvey, the owners' attorney from 140 W. Maplewood Mall, (Harper and Paul Attorneys,) explained that the property has two houses on it, and the owners live in the "cottage house," the two-story, two-bedroom house in back, while the variance is requested for the three-story semi-detached main house in front. The property as a whole is zoned as RSA-2, for single-families. The owners want to change the main single-residence house into two two-bedroom apartments; one on the first-and-second floors will have a rear entry, while the other apartment on the third floor will have an entrance in front.

There is a long driveway with room for one or two cars in back, near the cottage house, and there's street parking on the south-east side of School House Lane. The Pennsylvania School for the Deaf (PSD) administration building is on one side of the house and has its own parking. Nearby Maplewood Manor has its own parking lot. The owners will install light on their property for greater security.

Questions:

Angela asked why the owners are dividing the house up rather than renting the whole house. Gabriel responded that it wasn't financially feasible to do that. Since it would cost so much to renovate the 5,000 square feet of the whole house, they decided that they should split the front/main house into apartments since the income from two renters would enable them to remunerate themselves for the expense of renovation. The owners had rented the house at first and then bought it when they had the option.

Maggie clarified that since the cottage house has a 1935 variance to become a two-story dwelling and not remain a garage, (such that there are presently two housing units on the property,) there will be a total of three housing units on the property if the current request for a variance is granted, rather than two. Sharon agreed; the main house would become multi-family for rental purposes.

Angela asked what the rents on the apartments would be, and whether they'd be affordable. Gabriel answered that they will be consistent and comparable with rents for apartments in the neighborhood.

Alison asked where trash will be stored and whether it could be enclosed, given our "wildlife" problem; and asked where the mail will be received - asking whether it could go into the main house. Sharon answered that trash bins are in the rear of the property. Mail will go into the mail slot for one apartment, and into a mail box in the back for the second apartment since there must be a mail box there already.

Gabriel said that there are covered bins under the rear porch, where there's a cement floor and covered entry way, for trash from the cottage house; and there are mail boxes under the front porch. He won't let mail stack up since he's on the porch all the time and he will "manage" the property.

Alison replied that the next owner may not be as attentive as Gabriel.

At this point, since there were no further questions, Maggie asked Gabriel and Sharon to leave the zoom meeting so that we could vote on granting the variance. A short discussion followed. Maggie said that she likes the idea of dividing big houses since doing so gives more people housing and the benefit of living on the properties and in the neighborhood. There are not many home-owners who rent out local properties living in the neighborhood themselves, sadly; having landlords living right where they rent is beneficial.

Alison said the owners seemed to have given no thought to the future of the neighborhood; zoning follows properties in perpetuity, implying that the neighborhood will be living indefinitely with the consequences of the variance the owners are requesting.

Adam said that the owners were renters first and are committed to the neighborhood; a developer working with their property might have wreaked total havoc, implying that the owners have a stake in the community.

A vote followed. The possibilities for a vote were "support," "do not oppose," and "opposed".

- Only one near neighbor was present; she voted in support of the variance.
- Eleven voted "support" for granting the variance request; five voted "not opposed."

The request from the neighborhood for a variance will be granted. Maggie will take this vote forward to the next steps. She will keep us informed about following hearings and meetings regarding 147 W. School House Lane.

3. Old Business

a. As Chair of the Quality of Life Committee, Angela said that we're still trying to schedule a safety walk-around PKNA with PPD Commissioner Outlaw, following up on our 10/5/21 meeting with her.

b. At our next meeting on January 4, we will have elections for PKNA officers and Committee Chairs.

Open positions are Board Chair and three Committee Co-Chairs (Neighbor to Neighbor, Quality of Life, Neighborhood Conservation and Development).

Angela nominated Kevin and Else Zuber as Quality of Life Co-Chairs; Grace seconded the nomination.

Deneene Brockington volunteered to run for PKNA Chair; Grace seconded the nomination.

Else Eaton nominated Colleen Cacace (cecacace@yahoo.com) via email for Co-Chair of the Neighbor to Neighbor committee.

Grace said that she would contact Shawn Megill-Legendre, a City Planner and PKNA resident, to see if he'd serve as Co-Chair for the Neighborhood Conservation and Development Committee.

c. Angela, speaking for the Quality of Life Committee, reminded us that the last 2021 litter clean-up events in our Litter Initiative is this coming Saturday, December 11, meeting at 11:00 am at the usual corners, Maplewood and Greene Streets and Knox and Hansberry Streets. We will restart these clean-ups in April, 2022.

Angela reminded us to download a letter to the Chief Traffic Engineer at the City Streets Department regarding our requests for greater street safety in PKNA, and to send it to her soon!

d. Maggie, as Chair of the Development and Conservation Committee, announced a December 14, 6:00 pm RCO meeting for a variance request for 20 W. Queen Lane – PKNA itself will not host this. There is a request to legalize having four living units in an existing three-story structure at that address.

e. Maggie, as Treasurer, announced that PKNA has \$1,785.36 in our bank account. We are urged to pay dues, either online at www.pennknox.com or by dropping a check at Maggie's house at 150 W. Queen Lane. We suggest \$10/year per person or \$25/year for a household.

4. Open Mike:

Grace asked for volunteers to deliver our late December newsletter.

Maggie announced that 5521 Wayne Avenue, currently a one-story commercial building next door to the Fairfax Apartments, has been purchased, and can be “developed by right” through its CMX-2.5 zoning as a commercial property. The developers, BKP Development Group, are planning to put up 50 apartments to a height of 62 feet; they have been given the right to build an extra-high building since they have earned “green credits,” and will be offering “mixed-income housing.”

We will meet again on January 4, 2022.

The meeting ended with farewells all around.

Submitted by Grace Flisser, Recording Secretary