

Penn Knox Neighborhood Associatio (PKNA) Community zoom meeting
Germantown, Philadelphia 19144
March 7, 2023 7:00 pm

Meeting Minutes

Attending: Deneene Brockington, Kevin Zuber, Adam Kaufman, Maggie Manzer, Terese Vekteris, Grace Flisser, Irving Vaughn, Georgette Bartell, Sue Gilfillan, Jonathan Long, Andrea Providence, Irwin Trauss, Alvena Melton, Else Eaton, Diane Pieri, Birdie Busch, Meghan Kelly, “CJ”, Molly Ray, Shana Savage (Urban Technology Project (UTP) Director), Shanayah Wyche (UTP coordinator), Captain Joseph Busa (39th District PPD), 215-356-6205, Joseph.busa@phila.gov, Officer Sharon Ings (39th PPD District), Crime Prevention Officer Raymond Sutton (PPD 39th District), Raymond.sutton@phila.gov, 215-356-6204

Adam welcomed everyone, reviewed meeting etiquette, said that we would skip neighbor introductions as we had a packed agenda.

1. UTP:

Shana Savage of UTP introduced the project as a pathway to career in technologies and as offering apprentices in IT for graduates of Philadelphia high schools and underemployed adults with a high school degree, including veterans, returning moms, in order to serve as an on-ramp to IT employment especially for underserved people. Three career pathways exist: a. a full-time apprenticeship that includes instruction, mentoring, job experience, paid-for certification, and a salary; b. IT tech support proficiency, a pathway that requires one year of experience, loosely interpreted; c. software development proficiency.

We can help by hiring or mentoring an apprentice, helping with resume review, mock interviews, or as a panelist, or by recruiting the graduated apprentices. UTP is taking applications now, which are found on the website www.utp-philly.org. The program runs from August to June and takes either one or two years. Its certification as a “PA Journeyperson worker” offers the equivalent of an AA degree and is a great springboard to employment. Companies that work with UTP should be in Philly if possible in order to provide apprentices with the an in-person work environment. Email dsf@utp-philly.org or css@utp-philly.org with questions.

2. Police/crime updateL

Captain Busa noted that after an uptick in crime in the previous year, homicides and shootings are down in the 39th district, and robbery rates are also down once the PPD worked together with community groups and other parties who assisted in lowering the crime rate. Denise said she hears fewer gunshots. The police recommend using a club to help prevent the huge rise in car thefts of KIAs and Hondais carried out mostly by youth who are influenced by Tik-Tok and such. (Captain Busa urged us to know the make model, and license tag of our cars and to put photos of their registration and insurance on our phones in order to provide that information immediately to the police in case our car is stolen).

The Queen Lane homicide this past weekend seems to have been targeted against an individual by a gang in the 14th district, and is still under investigation. Captain Busa has been talking to leaders of various block and neighborhood associations to identify apartment buildings where

there is drug trade and is also working with the Narcotics Dept. He urged us to call 215-686-TIPS anonymously if we see anything that should be reported since we are the PPD's "eyes and ears"; or we can email him (see above) since that also can be done anonymously. This system worked in Nicetown where an individual helped the police to close down speak-easies by reporting on them in real time.

Irwin, who owns Fairfax Apartments, used to allow the police access to search anyone in the building who was not a legitimate tenant, and eventually the offenders left the building. Captain Busa said that such searches are mostly not possible any more since warrants and probable cause are required in order to do a search. Also, an individual who calls in police can perhaps run the risk of retaliation against him/her/them.

3. PKNA Survey:

Terese urged us to fill out the survey in order to communicate our needs and concerns to PKNA so that we can attempt to address them. The link to the survey was put into the chat. The sooner we fill it out, the better. It is found at bit.ly/PKNA-survey-2023

4. Quiet, Clean Philly:

Georgette informed us about the above West Mt. Airy-based movement headed by WMAN (West Mt. Airy Neighbors) dedicated to eliminating gas leaf-blowers (globe's) from our neighborhoods since the environmental hazards that they cause are enormous including harmful noise levels and poisonous dust, fertilizer, and particulates from fossil fuels such as carbon monoxide, benzene, and formaldehyde that are associated with severe lung disease. They also use an enormous amount of gas, which contributes to climate change and affect immigrants and other landscape workers who have no choice about their tasks. We are urged either to leave the leaves (pun unintended) so that they can enrich the soil, or rake them, or to use electric leaf blowers which are less expensive, less damaging to the environment and to us as well as to other wildlife. Glb's are banned in California and D.C, and institutions in our area are already adopting electric leaf blowers. We are asked not to use glb's, to educate other, to ask institutions not to use them, and to sign the petition at quietcleanphilly.org that aims to ban their use. Email Georgette at geobartell@gmail.com with any questions.

5. Love Your Park Day, May 13

Kevin and Grace noted that they have joined the Friends of Howell Park group and recommend that we hold a PKNA event on May 13 at Howell Park. They met on March 5 to take stock of what the park offers and what it needs, and will try to work towards improving it (over time) so that it's more inviting to families and neighbors. The Neighbor to Neighbor Committee should be involved in the Love Your Park Day, which is only two months away.

After the zoom meeting, it was determined that Howell Park Friends will have a volunteer work day on **April 1 from 1:00-3:00 pm.**

6. Mechanical Street Cleaning:

Kevin, Terese, and others noted that there will be a pilot program of street cleaning from April through November that will require us to move our cars (or have them towed) on particular days that will be posted on each of our blocks, from Berkley to Chelton and Pulaski to Wakefield Avenues. Check the URL to find when this will start on your block: www.phila.gov/programs/mechanical-street-cleaning/phase-2-pilot/

Denise urged that we be in touch with our contact at the Streets Department with our questions and feedback. Irwin said that we can act as a community to do something about this system if it's not going well. However, Deneene and Grace urged that cleaning the streets is a good thing to do and we can make suggestions for improvement to the system once we see how it's working. The Quality of Life Committee has a lot on its plate but might have a role here. Kevin, Chair of the Quality of Life Committee, will look into what happens to towed cars.

7. Treasurer's Report:

Maggie said that we have \$1,632.09 in our balance after a few transactions over the last month; a few more are pending. Do pay dues! - you can go to pennknox.com/dues-or-donate or make out a check to PKNA and drop it off at Maggie's house, 150 W. Queen Lane.

Irwin noted that our expenses for trying to prevent the demolition of the Boxwood property at 156 W. School House Lane are running to \$30k in attorney's fees; we are also paying Janis Woodcock to come up with an alternative plan to PSD's current plan to widen the driveway such that the building's porte-cochere will be damaged. To help defray costs, you can make a tax-deductible donation to the Preservation Alliance (a 501-C-3 institution), marking the check as "to benefit PKNA" since they are fiscally responsible for paying the attorneys (although they are not actually funding this effort).

8. Flyer distribution;

Adam noted that we distribute paper flyers every other month - which should happen in a few weeks, at the end of March, to our neighborhood, and we still need people to help deliver to all the households on every block. Some people have way too many blocks to cover and need help. To volunteer, contact Adam at adamrk03@gmail.com.

9. Open mic:

Our next PKNA community meeting, to be held in person, will be on April 4 at 7:00 at the Germantown Friends Library at 54__ Germantown Avenue.

First Saturday clean-ups will start up again on April 1, from 9:00-11:00. Meet at either Greene Street and Maplewood Avenue or at Hansberry and Knox Streets. Equipment will be provided!

Irwin said that PKNA had written to PSD asking to meet again concerning PSD's wish to demolish historically-designated Boxwood (see #7 above), mentioning that State Representative Stephen Kinsey would like to be involved, but there was only a cursory, noncommittal reply from their lawyer. It seems that PSD might not continue negotiating with PKNA but might go straight back to the Historic Commission to ask for a "hardship" designation that would enable them to demolish Boxwood. Or they might do nothing. Irwin urged us not to let the property deteriorate and not to let the school allow it to. L & I had forced PSD to take a few steps to maintain the building. The current administration hasn't been responsive to the neighborhood, but a new administrator is coming in.

We need partnerships in the neighborhood with other groups interested in preserving that property.

The PKNA committee addressing the possible demolition needs to be very active and requires more people on it as Sue Gilfillan will be leaving it and Irwin will likely be out of commission for a month, healing from a health care procedure.

Sue had concerns about two addresses on Wayne Avenue, 5327 and 5331; the two houses seem to be in danger of unstable ownership and possible degradation or destruction of property. Maggie will meet with Sue to explore the problems and possible action PKNA might take.

Birdie was concerned about a dog that is not ownerless but is often wandering the streets in our neighborhood on its own, which might endanger people c. She was advised to call the ASPCA and see what they have to say about this problem:

www.acctphilly.org/programs/animal-ordinance-complaints/report-a-violation.

There will a 2023 Mayoral and City Council Candidates Meet and Greet in Germantown, Thursday, March 9 at 6:30 at Attic Brewing Company, 137 Berkley Street, 19144 sponsored by 5th Square in anticipation of May 6 primary election.

https://www.5thsq.org/March_2023_attic?utm_campaign=newsletter_2207utm-medicum=email7&utm_source=5thsq

Submitted by Grace Flisser.