

Penn Knox Neighborhood Association Monthly Meeting

March 2, 2021, 7 p.m. via Zoom

Present: Irving Vaughn, Adam Kaufman, Angela Steele, Maggie Manzer, Terese Vekteris, James Burns, Nadia Malik, Paige Phillips, Birdie Busch, Zarah Adams, Pat Albright, Allison Weiss, Lawanda Horton Sauter, Kevin Zuber, Aaron Bahney, Mike Simone, Cory Budden, Aneesha Shabazz, Andrea Barefield, Deneene Brockington, Georgette Bartell, Irwin Trauss, Elizabeth Green

I. Mural Arts Presentation

James Burns (artist), Nadia Malik (Mural Arts Porch Light program director), and Paige Phillips (project manager) of Mural Arts' Porch Light Program made a presentation regarding a project planned for two walls at the corner of Greene and Queen. The Porch Light program is funded by Philadelphia's Department of Behavioral Health and focuses on achieving health and wellness through art, especially among those dealing with mental health issues or trauma.

James explained that the mural process entails months of community engagement, vetting of the design with the community and the Mural Arts design team, and then community engagement to paint. Murals are generally placed in proximity to where the engagement activities occurred. For this project, he spent two years working with residents at Einstein's LTSR (long-term structured residence) to develop the imagery during weekly workshops.

The first mural in the program was installed on the LTSR building. The next two, which are representations of the people in the LTSR program, are a product of 20 paint days that happened before the pandemic halted the process last year. The murals are planned for walls near the corner of Greene St. and Queen La., one on a building owned by Ken Weinstein and another on a private residence.

Porch Light is now seeking community involvement that includes feedback and public comment, and Penn Knox resident participation in preparation for spring installation. Nadia explained that in addition to the few meetings they had with individual RCOs, that they are planning a March 22 feedback meeting for all Germantown groups together, as well as taking feedback via survey and email. They plan to advertise the meeting through the various Germantown Facebook groups.

Deneene advised that they seek participation especially from residents of the area between Queen and Hansberry from Green to Wayne. She also advised flyering, as many people are not on Facebook. Nadia agreed.

Angela wanted to know what kind of participation opportunities would be available. Nadia said that while actual installation of the panels needed to be done by professionals for liability reasons, that there could be activities prior to installation like paint days and other activities for residents and area organizations, or even restoring the garden at the private residence where one of the murals is going. Birdie suggested Howell Park and the PAL Center as possible venues. Maggie offered her driveway and garage if other locations did not work out. Birdie also mentioned that the 5200 block of Marion Street used to shut down as a "play block" and might be a good place to involve a lot of kids. She will send Nadia the block captain's name.

Feedback or questions may be sent to Nadia (nadia.malik@muralarts.org), James (james.burns@muralarts.org), or Paige (paige.phillips@muralarts.org).

II. Quality of Living Committee

Committee chair Angela explained that the Quality of Life Committee brings neighbors together to advocate for improvements such as crime prevention, public safety, traffic mitigation, litter reduction, and street improvements. She asked those present for ideas that the committee could pursue.

Deneene volunteered to be part of the committee. Angela said she would also invite membership in the next PKNA print newsletter.

Kevin mentioned the issue of trash – after the Day of Service, things looked great, but the next windy day brought the trash back. He asked how we could petition the city for solar compactors to help with the situation. He also suggested advocating for greater awareness of public schools because there is so much focus on the private schools in the neighborhood. He also volunteered for the committee.

III. Neighborhood Development and Conservation Committee

156 W. School House Lane

Maggie recapped the history of the property's nomination for historic designation and reported the unanimous decision for recommending it for designation by the Philadelphia Historical Commission's Designation Review Committee in January.

After that meeting, PKNA and PSD met to discuss the neighborhood's concerns. Despite seeming initially receptive to seeking alternatives to demolition, PSD rebuffed offers for a structural engineer assessment or protective measures to prevent further deterioration in a letter that Maggie read, saying that, "Unfortunately, after consulting with the board, PSD is not letting any consultants on the property other than consultants hired by PSD. I believe that we mentioned PSD has not argued that the building is so structurally compromised that it cannot be fixed. The board has just said that given PSD's larger public interest mission, spending money to fix up this building is not helping us to accomplish our school needs."

Maggie asked that anyone who has not yet written a letter in support of historic designation do so now, prior to the Historical Commission meeting on March 12. At that meeting, PSD's lawyer will be allowed unlimited time to make their case while public comment will be limited. Georgette asked if neighbors could write directly to the PSD board – yes, they can. Support letters may be sent to Meredith Keller at meredith.keller@phila.gov.

Adam confirmed that the historic nomination was filed before PSD purchased the property, and they were aware of it. Maggie reiterated that PKNA is supportive of PSD building what they need (they presented a plan for a 12,000 SF space) on the back portion of the lot (a 44,000 SF area) while sparing or selling off the house.

Georgette asked if PKNA has a strategy for the March 12 meeting. PKNA has not decided if it will hire a lawyer, but the PKNA board will meet to decide on actions that need to be taken.

Birdie asked if PSD was aware of the outcome of the Boys and Girls Club on Penn Street, which was denied permission to demolish a historic structure and instead found adaptive reuse for it.

Irwin suggested that nonprofits like PSD are beholden to the community, as they benefit from those in the community who pay taxes that allow them to operate. He also said that when PSD moved into Germantown, they said they would respect the historic nature of the community.

15 W. Rittenhouse

Developer is proposing a 32-unit development with 11 parking spaces and roof deck on a property currently zoned for a single-family dwelling. The space is an empty lot at present.

West Central Germantown Neighbors (WCGN) will host an RCO/Zoning Meeting March 3 at 6 p.m. via Zoom. The community will discuss and there will be two votes taken on the requested variances. The first vote will be of near neighbors – those within 250 feet of the lot line; this vote will count more. The second vote will be of everyone else in attendance. The results of the votes will be submitted to the Zoning Board of Adjustment.

Maggie suggested that as many people as can attend do so as a show of solidarity. Our show of support will help when we are in need of support from others.

Maggie also reported that two adjacent historic buildings – **5904 and 5906 Germantown Avenue** – are owned by the same developer, who has posted demolition notices on them.

6134 Rear Wayne Avenue

WCGN and Mosaic Development Partners have been in discussion regarding proposed development on the sloping, wooded lot between the apartment condos on Wayne Avenue and the parking lot at Tulpehocken Station. Mosaic initially proposed 130 apartments, which was met with opposition. They came back with a plan for a smaller amount of townhomes, which was acceptable to WCGN. However, they more recently presented a third plan, for a mix of 101 residences without enough parking. This latest proposal (see it at <https://www.mosaicdp.com/tulpehocken-place>) must go through civic design review in April, as it contains more than 100 units, and it's expected they will again meet with opposition. We can help WCGN by showing up and supporting their ask for a better proposal.

5329 Wayne Avenue

SoLo held a meeting to consider a variance for a business license for the offices of a care facility in the first floor of this residence. The vote was to support a three-year business zoning variance, subject to renewal at the end of that period. The vote was submitted to the ZBA, which will decide whether or not to accept it.

5521 Wayne Avenue

This one-story garage-like structure between Coulter and W. School House Lane has been put up for sale for \$725,000. Maggie said that at that price point, it most likely will be developed, so we need to keep it on our radar. Any activity will fall under our RCO, as we handled the last variance request. Birdie remembered that the dentist who purchased it wanted to turn it into a preschool with some other uses, and PKNA did not support the variances requested (see October 2016 minutes at <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/56d0d6f59f7266bfd0f7834b/t/58181d77e6f2e10d0e6a3017/1477975415312/PKNA+Minutes+Oct+2016.pdf>). Kevin, a near neighbor, reported that the property is the subject of a lot of discussion among his neighbors.

Corner of Greene and Maplewood

Kevin reported that an Ethiopian café will open there soon.

IV. Treasurer's Report

Maggie reported that the PKNA bank account held \$1862 at the beginning of February. After a \$101 debit for the annual hosting fee for the pennknox.com website, the account currently has \$1761 left.

V. Open Mike

Maggie reported that the **Chestnut Hill West** Line will reopen on Monday, March 8, with weekday service only.

Angela reported a proposal for two apartments in a former single-family home at **5120 Marion** (at Ashmead). The developer brought tenants of other buildings to the meeting in support of the project, while actual neighbors are not in favor of it. This is the developer who did what the neighbors consider an "eyesore job" previously on Ashmead. The ZBA meeting to decide on the variance will be held April 14, 2021, at 9:30 a.m. Those interested may join by following the instructions at <https://www.phila.gov/zba/appeals-calendar/#/2021/04>.

Kevin asked if meeting information will be available later, and Terese reported that minutes will be on the website and a link to them will be included in the next email newsletter.

Zarah reported that Germantown Friends School (GFS) will be partnering with the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) and the city of Philadelphia to vaccinate educators and school workers. GFS will become a COVID vaccine site every Friday and Saturday for the next six to eight weeks beginning March 5. A thousand educators (500 per day) are expected to receive vaccinations this weekend. Signup was through a link sent directly to the educators.

Respectfully submitted,
Terese Vekteris
Communications Secretary