

PKNA community zoom meeting, May 4, 2021. 7:00pm

Attending: Cory Budden, Sue Patterson, Irving Vaughn, Angela Steele, Grace Flisser, Maggie Manzer, Terese Vekteris, Christe Lee, Corrie Tice, Georgette Bartell, Irwin Trauss, Elizabeth Green, Patrick Jones, Andrea Providence, Kevin Zuber, Marjorie Williams, Pat Albright, Else Eaton, Kaitlin Pomerantz, Keith Brooks, Andreana Barefield, Rob Listenbee, G. Lamar Stewart, Andrew Jenemann

1. Irving announced a food give-away at Canaan-Baptist Church this coming Saturday, May 8, from 10:00-1:00.

2. Angela announced that the Quality of Life Committee will hold its next clean-up on Saturday, May 8, meeting at Hansberry and Knox Streets at 9:00 am as part of our Litter-Free Blocks initiative. Angela will have equipment for the clean-up. We're trying to get our litter index below 1.5, concentrating in Phase 1 in 2021 on Hansberry, Maplewood, and Knox Streets, and moving to 5200-5500 blocks of Wayne Avenue for 2022. As we gain momentum, the committee will make recommendations, such as applying for Big Belly trash units or for working with property managers. Email Angela if you're interested in joining the committee at juststeele@gmail.com. The next zoom meeting is scheduled for May 26, 7:00-8:00.

3. Maggie's update for the Neighborhood Development and Conservation Committee:

a. Review of the designation of 156 W. Schoolhouse Lane, which was approved by the Historical Commission for historic designation. The property's owner, the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf (PSD), has appealed the decision of the Historical Commission' to the Court of Common Pleas. Maggie hopes that we can meet with the PSD Board to work with them. Irwin said that we should find out if we can participate in the Court's hearing of the appeal and brought up the possibility of getting the property into conservatorship. The school has sealed the property and continues to let the deterioration of the exterior and the interior continue (from roof leaks).

b. 5139 Wayne Avenue, the Joseph Pearson House, c. 1857, just beyond PKNA boundaries, was approved for historic designation but may still be demolished, and if it is, the designation will be removed from the public record. The developer had already obtained a building permit, which their lawyer argued, implied that the property had been approved for demolition. Maggie will speak with the developer on May 5th and report back at the next meeting if they had changed their minds about demolition after the designation. The community sent in 67 pages of letters of support for the preservation of the building through historic designation. We hope that the developer will use other land on the property to build on, and keep the building intact. Sue suggested that we should independently talk to the Department of L&I about the property.

c. Sheriff Rochelle Bilal and the Court of Common Pleas ruled that Sheriff's sales will be halted until September. Irwin added and clarified that this is likely due to the fact the fact that we can expect money coming to Pennsylvania for a Homeowners assistance

fund from President Biden's infrastructure plan, as soon as this summer. People can apply to this fund for assistance in paying their mortgages to prevent foreclosure.

3. Treasurer's report: Maggie announced that we have \$1,807.62 in our PKNA account. We encourage people to pay yearly dues of \$10/person or \$25/household.

4. Irving announced that we had four guests on our call, who would make a presentation to us about their efforts in discouraging and fighting gun violence in PKNA and would respond to questions. The four guests were:

- Bob Listenbee, 1st Assistant District Attorney (BL) Robert.Listenbee@phila.gov;
- Andreana Barefield , Community Liaison for D.A (AB) Andreana.Barefield@phila.gov, 215-206-7913;
- G. Lamar Stewart, Community Engagement Unit Chief for D.A (LS) GLAmar.Stewart@phila.gov;
- Andrew Jenemann , Supervisor of Public Nuisance Task Force for D.A (AJ) Andrew.Jenemann@phila.gov.

Other helpful contacts not on the call:

Seth Myers, Special Assistant to the Chief of the Community Engagement Unit: seth.myers@phila.gov;

Anthony Murphy, Executive Director, Town Watch Integrated Services: Anthony.Murphy@phila.gov;

Dawn Thomas, Dawn.Thomas@phila.gov NETS Supervisor of the 39th District
Sharon Ings Community Relations Officer 39th District, Sharon Ings
<Sharon.Ings@phila.gov>

Dennis Smith Community Relations Officer 14th District, Dennis Smith
<Dennis.Smith@phila.gov>

Angela facilitated the discussion, stressing that this discussion is not elections nor campaign oriented, but instead is meant to address gun violence in PKNA. She posed our pre-submitted questions to the guests.

Pre-submitted Questions:

Primary Community Concerns:

1. Gun Violence and Drug Trafficking
2. Police Misconduct
3. Support for Victims of Crime

Community Questions:

1. **My question is what is a community supposed to do about such brazen dealing and violence when they (*the DAO*) took our strategies but didn't replace them?** We must right the injustices but give us strategies to manage living next to the criminals since nobody seems to be able to get them off the street.

- 2. Why doesn't the DAO use the Public Nuisance Task Force to investigate the reported drug houses and illegal gambling businesses in the neighborhood?**
- 3. What more can you do to reduce drug trafficking in this neighborhood?**
- 4. How can the DA make sure that people who are not held on bail are not out here involved in drugs and shootings?**
- 5. How is the DAO connecting formerly incarcerated people to services during COVID so they do not re-offend?**
- 6. How can/will you balance police reform with the urgent need to protect citizens from violent crime?**
- 7. What support is the DAO providing for the families and communities impacted by gun violence?**

BL: There are many prosecutions underway against violent behavior, especially involving guns and many prosecutors involved, and many trials ongoing, including those for juveniles. The DA's office created a virtual court so that people could testify regarding gang and gun violence since courts were not open for months due to the pandemic. His office is willing to send people to neighborhoods to pre-empt such activity and is open to exploring ideas to stop it.

LS: There was a June 2020 event addressing gun crimes prevention strategies. The DA's office partners with police districts, going for fair and firm prosecutions in NW Philadelphia. Assistant prosecutors are assigned to our police districts to be in close contact with cases as they arise; they can argue at a community level for fair bail when appropriate. "Gun court" preliminary hearings began in March 2021, and had a 92% success rate in having people held. The DA's office has a "One-Stop Job and Resource Hub", an example was one held at 5120 Chestnut Street, which connected with schools, churches, and other institutions that help to lower poverty rates since poverty drives crime. People connected with this resource could walk around Happy Hollow Playground in Germantown, for example, to try to talk to "drivers" of violent groups - trying to partner with them.

AJ: When a residential house or property is identified with drug trafficking, we can no longer easily "close the property down", so police or the DA's office works with L&I or the Drug and Liquor Control Enforcement to prosecute those involved although it's difficult when the trafficking is entrenched. And the police can work with other law enforcement to close down commercial properties; they can also evaluate a site to see if it can be closed down. Contact him at andrew.jenemann@phila.gov with questions; they will pass along the question to the city narcotics unit.

He strongly recommends: a. that PKNA representatives go to police district community meetings and get to know the police liaisons and bring very specific problems and details since the units need evidence. b. that we look into Neighborhood Townwatch. He's aware that there is witness intimidation, but says that we will have safer neighborhoods if we all work together.

LS: Anthony Ginaldi of the 39th district and Captain Smith of the 14th head the Narcotics Enforcement Team (NETS) and we should relay pertinent information to them. Another helpful email address is to dawn.thomas@phila.gov, as she is an involved 39th district community liaison. Townwatch Integrated services can be contacted at anthony.murphy@phila.gov. Andreana Barefield can give us access to seeing cases, prosecutions, and such in the PKNA neighborhood. [NOTE: since the meeting, the PKNA Board has been provided with that information.]

BL: The DA's office believes in setting high bail at a standard of \$999,999 for those involved in shootings and in illegal firearms ownership by felons who have violated the firearms act, since these may be dangerous people, and they will get into huge trouble if they violate such a bail agreement. Others who aren't dangerous don't need to have bail set. However, the judge has to decide on bail. There is a huge backlog of cases, though, due to the pandemic, but they expect things to improve. During the pandemic, probation officers were not visiting those under their supervision. We can follow up on trial/court supervisors with him personally: robertlistenbee@phila.gov.

LS: The DA's office wants Philadelphia to follow the D.C. model for cash bail: if you're dangerous, you should be held without bail or with very high bail; if you're not dangerous, you should be released without monetary conditions until judgement. Lack of money shouldn't be a determining factor. The One-Stop Job and Resource Hub can send "credible messengers," now-productive people who have spent time incarcerated and who are now working for grass-roots organizations, to speak with potential offenders to intervene if possible. AB can help us be in touch with them; she can be reached at 215-206-7913. These organizations include Nicetown's "Grown," led by Donnell and Ike, "Man-Up," "Men of Courage," "Men Who Care" of Germantown, led by Joe Budd Jr.

To provide possible offenders with opportunities for employment and to try to intervene before a crime occurs, each Saturday from 2pm - 5pm, DA representatives meet with communities, go to the homes of violent crimes offenders and the homes of people in danger of being shot. Potential offenders have told these messengers that in order to stop engaging in illegal behaviors, they need employment paying "\$15-17 per hour." This includes high school students, 13-16 years old who feel they have the difficult choice of going to school or going to make money. Jobs would help prevent crime by providing opportunities.

BL: The DA's office has sent intelligence to areas where drug trafficking and violent crimes occur in order to gain information that enables police to identify them, using evidence so that an arrest can stand the test of due process.

By the same token, to make a safer city, we need opportunities for young people up to age 26, and also effective law enforcement.

Irwin asked that the DA's office help us right now. BL said that we have the "One-Stop Resource," but there are no immediate fixes. We need a balance of intervention, prevention, and prosecution. The DA's office now knows about the problem blocks, and they can start to get crime interrupter community groups and credible messengers in order to head off problems with the police. The community hopes that violence interrupters such as Men Who Care or George Mosee of PAAN (Philadelphia Anti-drug, Anti-Violence Network) can be sent out this very week to Hansberry Street.

Irving said he is willing to be the contact for PAAN. BL said that perhaps we could work together to arrange an event at Happy Hollow Playground to get programs and resources in place this summer. We can contact Jarreau.thomas@phila.gov - he is the Commanding Officer of the NW Police Division of the 39th District.

We thanked our speakers gratefully and appreciatively.

Open Mike:

Our next PKNA meeting is June 1, 2021.

There is a Paint Day (primarily for kids but adults are welcome too) on Saturday, May 22 at Howell Park on Greene Street. This is sponsored by Mural Arts/Porch Light to invite participation in and support for the mural to go up at the east and west corners of Queen and Greene Streets by the Sunoco gas station.

Susan Christian, the business manager of Germantown Soccer Club for the last fifteen years, asked for our help in trying to get in touch with the right people at the Boys and Girls Club at Germantown Ave and Penn St so that she can work with them on having kids play soccer in the field on Penn Street when the renovation is completed. They had had a partnership for many years, but since construction started at the property, she's lost touch with them. 85 kids have been registered with the GSC for spring 2021; they've been at Vernon Park since the construction began. Sue Patterson said that since demolition is happening, things are held up and there's a lag. PKNA advised Susan to contact Lizbeth Marziello of BGC and Zarah Adams the community liaison for GFS since they also have used the field in the past. We provided their contact info.