



Penn Knox Neighborhood Association  
Germantown Philadelphia

Monthly Meeting September 3, 2019  
Pennsylvania School for the Deaf  
143 W. Coulter, 7-9PM

Chair: Sue Patterson, Vice Chair: Brandi Levine, Secretary: Georgette Bartell, Treasurer: Russ Kleinbach.

Present:

**In attendance:**

Leola Bryant  
Glondora Byrd  
Terese Vekteris  
Brandi Levine  
Grace Flisser  
Matt Cadwallader  
Kristin Cassidy  
Jacob Deutsch  
Sue Gilfillen  
Liuda Sudaris  
Georgette Bartell  
Adam Kaufman  
Emily Erb  
Maggie Manzer  
Greg Paulmier  
Stephen Paulmier  
Russell Kleinbach  
Kathleen Paulmier  
Joe McCarthy  
Martha Savery  
Tina LeCoff  
Ruth Greenberg  
Corrie and PJ  
Yvette Starkes  
Aaron Bahney  
Sue Patterson

1. Introductions were made of those attending, including name and residence.

2. Jacob Deutsch of the **Public Health Management Corporation (PHMC)**, a non-profit case-management organization, made a presentation concerning a relatively new Philadelphia Neighborhood Home Preservation Loan Program which is funded by the city and called “Restore, Repair, Renew.” It falls under the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority and helps to provide access to low-interest (3%) loans to qualifying homeowners for deferred maintenance of owner-occupied properties. . Some of the qualifications to receive such loans include not having liens on the house and a maximum for household income. Mr. Deutsch’s group, PHMC, can help homeowners move towards qualification by helping them with debt, their credit score, financial counseling and clarification, getting assistance for determining needed repairs, estimates from licensed contractors for such repairs, and so on. While the homeowner can determine how to use the loan, which could range from \$2,500.00 to \$24,000.00, the emphasis of the city program is on promoting public health through improving housing conditions, including sanitation issues in kitchen, bathrooms, and safety of roofs, walls, and basements. During the time period that the loan is still unpaid, there is a lien on the property. We received more information about how this program is funded, who’s been applying, the length of time between applying for the loan and receiving it, and so on. The best way to apply is to call, during which time the caller can be pre-screened for the loan and set up an appointment for the 30 minute intake call required.

Sue Patterson said we will have PKNA volunteers bring “Restore, Repair, Renew” flyers door to door in the PKNA area when we distribute the annual meeting agenda before the October meeting.

To apply, email [RestoreRepairRenew@phmc.org](mailto:RestoreRepairRenew@phmc.org), call 877-515-0575, or go to [RestoreRepairRenew.org](http://RestoreRepairRenew.org).

3. Brandi Levine thanked the members of the **zoning committee** for their consistent work. The committee is preparing two documents: a. a PKNA position on development in our neighborhood, and b. PKNA zoning guidelines that we stand behind. They welcome new members and will be bringing these drafts to PKNA in the near future so that people can weigh in both through attending a meeting and/or through email. Sue clarified that these statements are needed because, thus, when a property in the neighborhood goes on the market, a developer is provided some level of guidance for what the community would prefer before spending money planning a project that has little chance for support. There are currently no existing guidelines from the neighborhood. (see next item) We can make these documents public, and put them on the PKNA website. If you’re interested in getting involved, email Brandi and [brandiflevine@gmail.com](mailto:brandiflevine@gmail.com).

4. Sue updated us on the **status of the 156 W. School House Lane property**. It has been bought by the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf, PSD, despite its run-down condition; it had been used by Teen Challenge organization that had been closed and closed down due to not meeting the compliance requirements mandated by the office of Licenses and Inspection. Neighbors are urged to attend a Wednesday, September 18th meeting at 1515 Arch Street, Room 18-029 at 9:30 a.m. when the Committee on Historic Nomination will discuss this property’s nomination for historic certification since it’s a good opportunity not only to be educated about the property and the issues, but to show that the neighbors are aware and concerned about this matter as a community. The discussion at the meeting promises to be interesting as the focus will be on

what architectural and structural features to save or not. The PSD hopes to build an auditorium in the area where back buildings are located.

As a side note, Sue noted that 60% of the buildings in our neighborhood are on either the local or national historic register. We can find a list of designated nominees on the PKNA website under "Penn Knox/Wister historic nomination."

5. Architects working on renovating the **Boys and Girls Club on the unit block of Penn Street** met with PKNA representatives, who report that the plans for renovation look great. The field will be kept since our area needs green space for health and quality of life. The energy footprint of the building will remain largely the same. The Boys and Girls Club have been asked by the Department of Licenses and Inspections to consolidate all of the lots into one property with only one zoning designation. In this process, the zoning that all lots are subsequently assigned is the most restrictive, which in this case will be residential, RSA-2.

The staging for the renovation will occur in the existing parking area behind the building and will have some impact on near neighbors, but we will confirm in an upcoming meeting and let everyone know.

6. The neighbors near the **Mifflin Cope/Waring house, 48-62 East Penn Street**, would like help and support for their efforts to negotiate a zoning variance that has been applied for by new owners of this property. It is currently zoned as RSA-2, single family, and depending on what the ZBA rules in the Oct meeting, it could remain single or they could be granted the variance. This RCO meeting for the zoning variance will be on Wednesday, September 4 at 5501 Germantown Avenue, the Germantown Historical Society building. Joe McCarthy said that the developer will profit no matter what since they bought the property as a shell for merely \$200,000. The developers, an LLC wants to add greater density to the property, adding housing units to it. As a compromise with the developer, the neighbors may ask that at least some of the units, even if they're studios, be developed to sell as condos, not rentals, to increase home ownership. This would stabilize the neighborhood. Joe pointed out that a model for this is the Blue Mansard building on the same block of East Penn Street. We need to present a lot of support for this idea. We can weigh in since as neighbors, we are familiar with the housing issues and we should also emphasize the need to retain some green space.

Pertinent, related side notes:

a. Sue said that the building at 5138 Wayne Avenue was being rehabilitated after 26 years of abandonment; we would hope that it becomes perhaps three units that are each owned by their occupants, and should include parking. The SoLo RCO vote was that they did not support a multiunit renovation but instead preferred that it be rehabbed as a single unit property.

b. 234 East Penn Street was saved from becoming a many-unit property as requested by the developer; it will be rehabbed as a single-family dwelling designated a one-unit property. The council person had sent a representative to support the community at the hearing. Sue urged us to call 311 if we see squatting or many families or people going in and out of properties.

7. There is an important September 16 meeting open to the public at Janes Memorial United Methodist Church ([janeschurch.webs.com](http://janeschurch.webs.com), 844-9564), 47 East Haines Street **regarding the development of the former Germantown High School property**. There is ongoing discussion

of such issues as public use of the former auditorium and gymnasium. The architect is excellent and the design will be good, but the final plans remain unknown.

8. Matt Cadwallader, speaking for **Friends of Howell Park**, said that they'd welcome help for upkeep of the park since they will host a stop on the Park Friends Network bus tour on Saturday Sep. 21. There will be a work day at a coming date TBD for in cutting vines and so on. The group would love new members and to have volunteers there to meet and greet the bus tour attendees. There are three champion trees in that park, including a white oak and sassafras ([http://pabigtrees.com/view\\_tree.aspx](http://pabigtrees.com/view_tree.aspx)) There will likely be a sign-up for a Love Your Park clean-up day. Anyone can sign up an email notification list to be sent around in order to sign up to help on Sep. 21. We can join the Friends Group on Facebook at [facebook.com/groups/FriendsofHowellPark](https://facebook.com/groups/FriendsofHowellPark).

9. Russell Kleinbach reported that our **PKNA Treasury** currently as \$889.00 but we owe \$1,300.00 to our lawyer for the Boys and Girls Club negotiations, which we are paying over time. We pay for things like having a PSD sign language interpreter at some of our meetings for \$120/hour, for maintaining a website domain name, for purchasing block party permits, for printing, for mailing, for refreshments for clean up days, and so on. We made \$204.00 for taking down illegal signs! Please pay \$25.00/year dues to help support our organization. Pay dues through our website, [www.pennknox.com/dues-or-donate](http://www.pennknox.com/dues-or-donate) or mail or drop off a check to Russ Kleinbach, 159 W. Coulter Street, Phila PA 19144. There's no added deduction for internet service if you mail or drop off a check.

Note: We applauded the Penn Knox leadership for their generosity with time, work, and devotion in service of PKNA!!

10. **We need people to step up to support PKNA.** We need people to replace the work done by Georgette, who will leave as secretary in December. Grace will be the minute-taker, but we need a person to manage our website, a substitute minute-taker, and someone to keep the Excel sheet on attendance. Sue, of course is irreplaceable and will stay forever [-*minute-taker*]. We also need a new treasurer, as Russ has done this for two terms. Please look at our by-laws for leadership qualifications and volunteer; [www.pennknox.com.bylaws](http://www.pennknox.com.bylaws). We would like new members.

We will review some changes in our by-laws and there will be a vote perhaps in October on ratifying changes.

One attendee said that we should devote more time to figuring out how to include more people and to reach out to neighbors to join us. We acknowledged that we should although it's hard to find resources or time. Perhaps there should be a committee to help with this, such as organizing new neighbors' coffee gatherings and such things. This was tabled to a later meeting but noted to be important.

#### 11. **Other statements:**

- We have new neighbors moving in, such as one at 143 W. School House Lane, from Kansas City. We welcomed this new neighbor to our meeting.

- 113 W. Coulter seems to be abandoned. The owner didn't pay sewage bill and turned off the water.

- 55 W. School House Lane had been broken into and pipes stolen - so Greene Street Friends School tried to put into city conservatorship. The owner fixed up the exterior but not the interior, and it still appears unoccupied. The lawyer involved did not agree to conservatorship and it's totally in limbo with no water or mailbox. We will send them a Restore, Repair Renew flyer.
- There was a big theft at GFS on August 6, with \$30,000.00 in equipment taken; entry seems to have been through the cemetery. GFS has two guards roaming 24/7 and the thieves were likely watching the guards' routes. We should know that blue call lights around the GFS campus, such as near Gaffneys, can be used by community either to a. call 911! or b. to call for GFS information.
- There are squatters in 144 W. Queen Lane, where there's no water.
- Car thieves seem to be able sometimes to use the signal on automatic car keys to hack into your car. Police and community posts on social media recommend keeping the key away from the front door of one's house and inside a metal container to prevent the signal from being stolen.
- Take-away: our community is not too bad in terms of violent crime, but we need to get to know each other and to go to police meetings to be heard.

Minutes submitted by Grace Flisser, September 9, 2019