

**East Allentown Rittersville  
Neighborhood Association**

**MINUTES**

President Dennis Pearson called the regular monthly meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. on January 20, 2014 at St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Present: Four officers (Dennis Pearson, Denton Kriebel, Robert Jacoby, and Dave Schell) and ten other neighbors were present at the meeting. State Representative Mike Schlossberg was also present.

Dave Schell handed out copies of the minutes of the meeting of December 16, 2013. It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes as distributed. The motion carried.

Treasurer Bob Jacoby reported that we \$767.57 in our account. The amount was unchanged from last month. It was moved and seconded to approve the report. The motion carried.

Mike Schlossberg, Representative in the General Assembly, spoke to the group. The district that he represents (132<sup>nd</sup>) will have the East Side except for one district of the 14<sup>th</sup> Ward after the new redistricting goes into effect.

Some of the issues that will be coming up in the next year will be the possible privatization of the state liquor system and reform to the state pension system. The annual budget will have to be settled. The current state budget is about \$28 billion and it appears that we have a \$1.5 million hole in it at present.

Education is one of his major concerns. Every time the state cuts the education budget we need to raise the local school taxes. As to roads and bridges, 25% of our bridges in PA are ruled as structurally deficient. We are better at building infrastructure than we are at maintaining it.

President Pearson noted that the Allentown State Hospital is under the control of the state General Services Administration and that is an issue of interest to the east side. Rep. Schlossberg said property is for sale, but intentionally will not go automatically to the highest bidder. GSA will work with the city to determine "best use." Inasmuch as it is not in his current district he is not directly in the loop with current progress on the matter.

Best use would not involve packing the area with townhouses since the city schools' finances would be hurt by a large influx of students. Currently the Allentown School District has 17,000 students, 2,000 of whom are in charter schools.

Secretary Schell noted that his PhD dissertation was on the politics that went into setting up the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board at the end of National Prohibition in 1933. He offered to send an electronic copy of the work to anyone who was interested in the matter.

President Pearson noted that that was an appropriate lead into the next topic we needed to discuss—the former Tony’s Bar and Grill on Union Boulevard. He noted that he had spoken to owner Tony Elchaar while delivering the EARN newsletter to the area. At the moment the establishment is operating as a non-liquor fast food restaurant. The permit notice in the establishment’s window, however lists the applicant as the Greater Slavonia Society of America, and the license as being from the Ukrainian Club of America. The establishment is supposed to be for a “catering cafeteria.”

Secretary Schell read to the meeting the letter that he had written to Mayor Pawlowski on January 4<sup>th</sup> about the situation at Tony’s Bar. The letter had been written at the instruction of the December meeting of EARN and expressed our concern that some of the problems that had occurred when Tony’s was operating as a bar with live and recorded music might return if another liquor license was granted.

We noted that we had met with Tony Elchaar about this in the past and that we supported the operation of any legitimate business, including his, as long as it did not become a nuisance, which had been the case with the earlier bar.

Schell noted that he received a call from Assistant Chief George Medero within 48 hours after mailing the letter. Officer Medero thanked Schell for the letter and noted that he had spoken with Captain Schwartz, our previous contact on the matter, about it. The city is aware of the past problems and will be monitoring the situation closely. He expressed appreciation to the group that we were not calling for the closing of the business, merely that it does not become a public problem, and also thanked the group for its involvement. He noted that as previous head of the city’s Vice Squad, he was always glad when neighborhood groups took an active interest in improving their areas.

Secretary Schell read the correspondence he had had with Neighborhood Coordinator Phyllis Alexander over the matter of 404 N. Jerome Street and our question as to whether there was an ordinance in the city to require a homeowner to carry homeowner’s insurance. On the latter matter, City Clerk Michael P. Hanlon reported that there is no city ordinance requiring homeowner’s insurance, although banks, of course, require it as long as one has a mortgage.

As to the matter of the home at 404 N. Jerome Street with the siding coming off, she wrote to Patrick Roels, Housing Inspector in the Building Standards and Safety Department, since she had been informed that he had been assigned this matter. Roels replied that he had been present at a hearing on the matter before District Magistrate Michael D’Amore on December 9<sup>th</sup>. One of the half-owners attended and assured the court that a contract had been signed for the repairs and they were to be completed within two to three weeks. The result of the hearing was that if repairs were not completed within thirty days the co-owners would be heavily fined and if they did not show at the hearing warrants would be issued.

It appears that no work has been accomplished on the property, and inasmuch as over forty days have passed since the hearing, Secretary Schell will inquire of Alexander as to the progress of the legal proceedings.

President Pearson noted that he had been informed several weeks ago the Bahama Mama's—the new name of the former Club Horizon—was to be closed within the next two weeks. Several of the Horizon management have supposedly gone to work for the Stratus nightclub in the same shopping center. Pearson noted that if the club does close and someone else wants to operate at that location they would have to go through the usual application process. As part of this process, neighbors within 500 feet are to be consulted on the matter.

Pearson also noted that the legal proceedings concerning the alleged prostitution at Platinum Plus are still working their way through the legal system.

A neighbor raised the question of what specifically we had protested when Platinum Plus was being developed. Answer: the club was increasing in size and was switching from a BYOB club to a licensed liquor establishment. As a liquor licensee they were also allowed to have later closing hours, and that was another issue that we objected to. It was noted that the Redner's Market in the same shopping center is one of only two in the chain that is not open 24 hours—in this case supposedly due to problems with patrons of one of the nightclubs coming into the store after the club closed. We have gotten differing stories as to whether the patrons causing the difficulty were from Club Horizon or Platinum Plus.

Pearson read several articles of East Side news concerning the shooting on Westminster Street, the slowness in filling some vacancies on city boards, and other assorted matters.

A neighbor from the 1200 block of E. Tremont Street reported on various break-ins and thefts in the neighborhood. He asked if we have a neighborhood watch. We do not have a crime watch as such but we do have a number that can be called anonymously. Vice President Kriebel gave him the information on that process.

A neighbor reported that there have been many hit and runs in the hilly area of the 400 and 500 blocks of E. Hamilton Street. These have generally occurred late at night and have involved property damage—vehicles being hit by cars heading up and down the Hamilton Street hill at a high rate of speed. All occurrences of damages have been reported to the police in a timely manner. The neighbor questioned whether a petition to the city was the appropriate next step for them to take.

The group was advised to call the city's traffic department and inform them of the situation. This could possibly result in a study of traffic counts and/or speeding in the area. The neighbor noted that in addition the area does not have the best street lighting and that more light could be used in the area.

Question: What is going on with the old Mosser School? All we know is that the building needs to be fixed before it can be inhabited again. The fire in the laundry room blocked the entrances to the building and the fire department had to come in from the roof to rescue the residents who were still there. It has an insect and rodent infestation. Beyond that we have no recent information.

Pearson noted that over 4,000 newsletters were delivered this month and that through his part in the delivery he has become aware that there are many more substandard housing units on the East Side than he had previously realized.

Question: Have we heard anything further in response to the speed check on N. Jerome Street?

Answer: We have not.

A neighbor noted a snowplowing problem with N. Jadd Street, a small short thoroughfare that runs between N. Jerome and N. Jasper Streets. At its northern end it intersects with N. Jasper Street on an angle that some from the city have claimed is actually a private parking area. It is not—it is a named city street, and the neighbor usually has to call to get it plowed after a snow. Representative Schlossberg said that he will call the city about it tomorrow.

It was noted that some thieves have been scamming people for money outside various businesses in the area, including Bull and Bear Restaurant and an area laundromat. Patrons are being approached and asked for money needed for various “hard luck” problems, which vary depending on the person doing the scamming.

Treasurer Jacoby noted that he had received several compliments on our lights in Irving Park this year. He also noted that there was some damage to the displays, but that these took place after the holiday when the lights were turned off.

President Pearson noted that the East Side Fire Station is almost complete. He wanted to express the thanks of the group to Fire Chief Scheirer for his efforts to push the project along to completion.

There being no further business, adjournment was moved and seconded, and the meeting adjourned at 8:23 p.m.

Respectfully,

*David A. Schell, Secretary*