

**East Allentown Rittersville
Neighborhood Association**

MINUTES

President Dennis Pearson called the regular monthly meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. on March 17, 2014 at St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Present: Two officers (Dennis Pearson and David Schell) and four other neighbors were present at the meeting. Allentown Neighborhood Coordinator Phyllis Alexander was present as were Captain Tony Alsleben and Sgt. Rob Holler of the Allentown Police Department and Mark Lang, Co-Director of the L.Venture Charter School

David Schell handed out copies of the minutes of the meeting of January 20, 2014. It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes as distribute. The motion carried.

A neighbor who lives near E. Hickory Street in the area running from Carlisle to Brook Streets noted that the icy street had not been cleared. She had called the streets department and was told that they will not clear it since it is a third class street. Additionally, there is a truck that is parked long term on S. Carlisle Street. The police should be called in such a situation. They will tag the vehicle and it can be towed if not moved in 72 hours. She was concerned that she will have to give her name and it will become known who complained, but was assured that she doesn't have to give her identification.

We still have no information on 7 S. Jerome Street concerning the overgrowth, trash, and vehicle parked in the yard. Phyllis Alexander will contact the appropriate authorities about the matter.

The group discussed the trash and recycling collection during the recent snowstorms. It was noted that the city puts out a press release about the matter and posts a notice on the city website at allentown.gov about whether they will collect/

Dave Schell read correspondence between Phyllis Alexander and Patrick Roels, Housing Inspector with Building Standards and safety concerning 404 N. Jerome Street. Former domestic partners own the home, only one of whom lives at the location. There was a hearing before Magistrate D'Amore on February 5th. The resident did not show for the hearing. The magistrate awarded the maximum fine. The other owner, who may not be aware of the situation, will be informed, and the bank (mortgage holder) will be informed of the situation.

Dave Schell also read a communication from Officer Beidelman of the Allentown police Department concerning several issues. First, the police have received numerous complaints about noise, suspicious activity, and parking at the Source Hookah Lounge off Hanover Avenue. The police are monitoring the situation. Additionally, the police continue to monitor the speeding situation on Jerome Street as schedules permit. As to the speeding and accidents on the E. Hamilton Street hill, Officer Beidelman suggested contacting the Traffic Division or Captain Alsleben. As noted, Captain Alsleben was present at the meeting when this report was read.

Finally, Schell also read an item from the Morning Call's "Retail Watch" column concerning the changes at Bahama Mama's Nightclub, which opened on November 29th at the site of the

former Club Horizon on Airport Road. The club's hours are 9 p.m. to 2 a.m. on Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

Captain Alsleben noted that the liquor licenses for Bahama Mama's, Pitchers and Platinum Plus are up for review in April. These are three of six licenses coming up in Allentown that month. In regards to the application for a license at the former Tony's Bar on Union Boulevard, if the license to be transferred is another location within the city there will not have to be a hearing. If it is being transferred from outside city limits, but within the county there will have to be a hearing. The solicitor's office is looking into the situation and they will get back to us on the matter.

The police will continue to monitor the truck traffic situation concerning N. Maxwell and E. Gordon streets. The affected neighbors were not present at this meeting.

Captain Alsleben provided the group with current traffic statistics on crime year-to-date on the east side. Robbery is down 75%, aggravated assault down 25%, and total crime down 25% on the east side. Auto theft year to date is up. The captain noted that 90% of vehicle theft or theft from vehicles is from cars that are unlocked or left running. In cold weather some owners are running their cars to warm them up and going back into the house, are which times thieves strike. The public is strongly urged to keep their vehicles locked and not leave unattended cars running. Also, do not leave valuables visible in cars. As to auto makes, Hondas are particularly hot for thieves at present

The auto theft task force will show up for a subsequent meeting to make a presentation. We will attempt to announce the date of this presentation in advance. The police would also like to do another VIN etching with our group and the Midway Manor Association as a theft-recovery method. Another problem in the city of late has been the theft of tires and rims. If any neighbors see vans double-parked that often indicates that thieves are in the process of stealing tires or rims, and the police should be notified immediately. at 9-1-1.

Capt. Alsleben also provided information concerning homeless assistance, particularly in reference to homeless veterans. The city is continuing to urge the homeless to come in from the cold on particularly cold nights through Operation Blue Light. Additionally, Eladio Gonzales of the Lehigh Valley Center for Independent Living recently made a presentation to the Health bureau about services available for homeless or "near homeless" veterans. Mr. Gonzales is Director of the Veterans' Services Programs for four counties, including Lehigh. He can be contacted for further information concerning available services at (610) 770-9781, Ext. 118.

The Lehigh County Citizens Police Academy will be starting a program on March 18th. This program, for any interested citizens, will run every Tuesday from then until June 3rd, from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. Tuition is \$50. Applications should be returned March 7th. Further information can be obtained from Officer Timothy Yanders of the Allentown P.D. at (610) 437-7719. Among the topics covered will be fingerprinting, firearms safety, court procedures, arrest procedures, and crime scene processing.

The Allentown P.D is hiring. They are looking for 120 certified individuals. The window will be open for this process until March. They will also be hiring non

certified individuals 000 that process will open in March or April, and will be announced at the time.

Dennis Pearson has heard that the dedication of the east Side Fire Station will take place Tuesday, February 18th at 11 a.m. although we have heard nothing official. (The dedication took place on Thursday, February 20th).

Mark Lang of the proposed L. Venture Charter School spoke to the group about the school and the state of education today. While he has great respect for educators, he is concerned that we are doing things the same way that we have done for years --- feed information, via textbooks and other materials. Another method is to give students problems to solve that they can see direct application and value. The students are given projects to work on and student-directed learning. This involves retraining the teachers from being providers of information and answers.

The Charter School is proposed for center city Allentown. He asked to speak with us and asked what our views on the matter are. Some present raised concerns about the impact that the charter schools have on the budget of the public schools --impacting Allentown greatly. Charter Schools are public schools --- publicly funded -- and thus cannot charge tuition. Charter Schools were originally designed (Mr. Lang Said) to become innovators. Many today, however, have become alternative schools --- stressing certain areas such as music or art, but still doing things the same way as traditional schools.

Dennis Pearson observed that we need to have more emphasis on libraries at the east side schools such as Ritter and Mosser, since we no longer have an east branch of the public library. Pearson noted that Ritter is the only city elementary school consistently meeting the math standards.

Mr. Lang said that the directors are focusing on grades 6-12 for the Charter School. The proposal has been brought before the Allentown School Board and will probably be voted on within the month. If approved it would start in fall. If not, they intend to appeal the decision.

Dennis Pearson reported that the Christmas Light displays has been turned off. Things have been removed from the pool area but due to the weather we still have not been able to take the lights off the pole.

Phyllis Alexander gave the group copies of a city-supplied brochure on contacts for various city services---"City Contacts for Citizen Services."

They're being no further business, adjournment was moved and seconded, and the meeting adjourned at *;15 P.m.

**Respectfully
David A. Schell, Secretary**