

**East Allentown Rittersville
Neighborhood Association**

MINUTES

President Dennis Pearson called the regular monthly meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. on April 21, 2014 at St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Present: Three officers (Dennis Pearson, Bob Jacoby, and Dave Schell) and eleven other neighbors were present at the meeting. Captain Tony Alsleben of the Allentown Police Department was also present, as was Phyllis Alexander, Allentown Neighborhood Coordinator.

Dave Schell handed out copies of the minutes of the meeting of March 17, 2014. It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes as distributed. The motion carried.

Treasurer Bob Jacoby reported that the balance is unchanged from last month at \$767.57. We needed to remove our decorations and other goods from storage. The goods have been put into a storage facility on Quebec Street. The first month will be free. Rental will be \$31 monthly thereafter. The treasurer's report was approved as read. Treasurer Jacoby asked for a vote to approve the expenditure of funds for the rental. The lease is for five months, and we are getting a discount from the storage company. It the moved and seconded to approve the expenditure, and the motion was approved by voice vote.

Captain Alsleben reported that area liquor licensees Platinum Plus, Bahama Mamas, and Pitchers all have hearings in the near future with the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board. Bahama Mamas has thirty incidents involving the police, Platinum Plus has thirty-six incidents, and Pitchers has ten. There are other PLCB incidents that did not involve the Allentown Police.

The liquor license transfer was approved for Tony's Bar by a 4-2 vote by City Council. The Council had been given the data on police incidents at that location, but Capt. Alsleben noted that he was limited in his ability to give the Council report on previous incidents. Tony Elchaar was not present at the hearing and is not supposed to be part of the new operation that has the license. The approval specifies that there are to be no bands, no D.J.s, and no rental of the premises to other groups. The location was approved despite the police report that this was not a logistically feasible place for such activity. Capt. Alsleben asked us to reach out to him if we have incidents and concerns once the business restarts.

A neighbor noted that at the city council meeting it was said that the doors will not open until the site is up to code, and asked if we can get a list of requirements in the code. We should be able to since it is public information. Specific issues raised were the amount of parking required, necessary electrical inspection, and adequate lighting. We also have been led to believe that the building and surrounding property have different owners.

Police related issues should be brought to Capt. Alsleben's attention. He can check on code violations, but that is not his direct area of enforcement. A neighbor asked about how violations can be reported without having to identify oneself. This can be done through the "checkmate

system,” but one can also call and make a report while declining to provide identity. It was noted that the captain can also be contacted by email, but that email is generally public information in that it is “discoverable” in the event of future litigation, so that is not the best way to contact him if anonymity is desired.

Secretary Schell said that he had heard that one of the attorneys involved in the case had sent a threatening letter warning a neighbor about complaining. Schell noted that while people can be sued about anything, they can’t be successfully charged if the facts that they are reporting are true.

It was noted that the PLCB still has to approve the liquor license at this location. Additionally, we have some questions as to whether the correct procedure was followed in this City Council approval since there was no testimony on the matter was at the council meeting itself, not at a hearing prior to the council’s meeting, as should have been the case. Finally, the neighbors present thanked Capt. Alsleben for his help in the matter.

The captain noted that the chief of police wanted to be with us tonight but was unable to be here due to a conflict. He will attempt to get to the next meeting. The captain briefly noted some recent crime statistics. The homicide on N. Nelson Street involving the auto purchase set up on Craigslist was solved. The biggest issue at present, not only on the East Side but also throughout the city, involves thefts from cars. The worst time for this to occur has been Monday nights. Of seventeen such reports, sixteen involved the vehicles being unlocked. In many cases the things stolen were left in plain view. The police have started a new process of putting “report cards” on vehicles. If the car that is parked on the street is locked and doesn’t have valuables in plain view a note is put on the vehicle noting that it “passed,” but if it is found unlocked a “failed” report card note is put on the vehicle advising the owner of the chance they are taking. The captain repeated an item from a previous meeting that rims and tires being stolen are also a major issue. The thieves are quite quick at the theft and the police should be called in the event of suspicious activity of this sort. Question: what about graffiti “tagging” of buildings. Answer: Call the police and they will come and take pictures and investigate further action on the matter.

In response to a question, Dennis Pearson noted that the annual Leonard Buck program honors police officers who did an excellent job over the past year and also a citizen who did likewise. Former crime watch leader Leonard Buck started this, and this year’s event will take place on Thursday (4/24) at the Fearless Fire Company Social Hall, its usual location.

It was noted that a neighbor from the Walnut Street area has been taking pictures of code violations in that area. These are reported to the appropriate city agency. Inspectors have been sent out to investigate, but nothing has been done. Phyllis Alexander will give the neighbor the person at city hall to be contacted on the matter. She noted that under Pennsylvania law the city is limited in what can be done beyond repeatedly citing and fining the owner. Dennis Pearson commented that the emphasis for inspections appears to be in the downtown area, not the east side. It was noted that some of the projects funding this work are Community Development Block Grants, which are given for a specific geographic area of the city. If the east side is beyond that geographic area the funds cannot be spent to do similar work in this part of town.

Phyllis Alexander suggested that we invite people from the appropriate city departments to our meeting. We should give them the topic that we wish to discuss, and if possible provide them in advance with some of our questions so that they can bring the necessary information with them. Some other neighborhood groups do this. This could involve Code Enforcement and other departments. We may not agree with the answers that we would get but would understand the philosophy and operation methods, and they would better understand our concerns.

There is little new to report on the situation at 404 N. Jerome Street. Additional fines have been imposed and the case is moving forward.

Question: What is the city policy on animal control concerning skunks? We will have to find out. Will animal control take action on the matter or take charge of the animals if city residents trap them. Phyllis Alexander took the neighbor's name and will get back to him with the answer.

It was noted that in some areas vehicles, particularly wide pickup trucks, are parking in part on sidewalks, as they apparently fear that their mirrors will be broken off by passing traffic. This is most likely a violation and the information will be passed along to the appropriate parties. This is particularly a problem with E. Livingston Street, which is quite narrow. Possibly this street should be changed either to make it one-way or to allow parking only on one side of the street.

Secretary Schell noted that he informed Dieruff that we would be replacing the mini-grants for two awards at the science fair this year. President Pearson said that he has been in contact with the school district about this and the awards will be given on May 29th.

They're being no further business, adjournment was moved and seconded, and the meeting adjourned at 8:16 p.m.

Respectfully,

David A. Schell, Secretary