

**East Allentown Rittersville  
Neighborhood Association**

**MINUTES**

President Dennis Pearson called the regular monthly meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. on July 21, 2014 at St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church.

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

Captain Alsleben was given the floor to speak first since he was on call and had to leave the meeting.

Several of the issues that he raised were the late night lighting at the basketball courts in Irving Park. The parks department has been informed of the issue. A lock needs to be put on the control box. We are to report any loud noise problems to the police.

The liquor license for Tony's Pizza has apparently fallen through, although he is hearing different reasons for this. Car thefts are up significantly in the Lehigh Valley. Ninety percent of the issues are cars left unlocked, keys left in ignition, or valuable stuff in car. Thieves are looking for easy targets. Auto theft did make an arrest in West Bethlehem this morning and caught a person who was responsible for many of the "trying doors" type of theft, in which a crook walks down a row of cars trying the door handles to find one that is unlocked. In another matter, it is his understanding that the Bahama Mama's nightclub is now out of business, having been evicted for lack of rent payments. Their liquor license may be at risk as well.

Captain Alsleben invited questions. One neighbor reported that people are working on cars in the street, both oil changes and more detailed work. Question: is not such work unlawful? Yes, it is. The work has been reported, but apparently the only city action is that the fire department came and put sand on the oil spot in the street. Some of the cars in the area have other violations such as cracked windshields. Of specific concern is the lot next to the former Phil's Bar on Hanover Avenue in front of the new housing projects. This includes wrecked cars, high weeds, an overflowing dumpster, and soffit coming off the building. The neighbor reported that has taken pictures and turned them over to the mayor's office.

[At this point Captain Alsleben had to leave the meeting for official business.]

Secretary Dave Schell handed out copies of the minutes of the meeting of June 16, 2014. It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes as distributed. The motion carried.

Treasurer Bob Jacoby reported that the balance is \$449.17. Over the past month we had expenses of two months' storage costing \$59.98. The treasurer's report was approved by a voice vote.

President Pearson read a letter that he had received from Barbara Stauffer, Allentown School District Foundation Director, for the two student science fair awards that we awarded. The two awardees were Ian Butz, a student at Trexler Middle School, and Josiah Stuart, a student at William Allen High School.

Neighbor and attorney Robert Pandaleon read the rough draft of a letter that he has written to legal counsel for The Source Hookah Lounge on Hanover Avenue, and invited comments. The letter notes that the neighbors are engaging in their legal right to object to the nuisance, and that their counsel's letter threatening civil and criminal prosecution is unwarranted. The neighbors have a right to quiet enjoyment of their property. The lounge's counsel had previously written other letters to other neighbors on different cases threatening similar legal action against them. The letter will be sent with minor suggested revisions.

A neighbor reported that a possible new owner/renter of Tony's Bar on Union Boulevard stopped by to speak to her and several other neighbors about the situation there, including past difficulties. He is thinking of putting in a non-alcohol-serving food establishment. The neighbor said that she told him that as long as there are no nuisance law violations he should have no problem. In another matter, Pearson reported that Pitcher's Bar, also on Union Boulevard, has had a July 8 hearing with the PLC Board concerning renewal of its license. The PLC Board has not yet announced its decision on that matter.

The situation at 404 N. Jerome Street is still a problem, and indeed is getting worse. The owner is cutting only part of the lawn—the uncut part is getting higher and higher. The siding is still off the house and nothing is being done. The weeds five foot to six foot high in some places. The vegetation in the area between the sidewalk and curb is about 18" tall. There area also dog droppings in the yard. The situation with the damaged siding will be two years old in October. Another neighbor who lives several houses down from this property reported that she got a letter from city for having hedge with some branches over the alley, despite apparent lack of action on this far more serious problem. Phyllis Alexander suggested a meeting with Tom Harper, from SWEEP and Solid Waste—who could be invited to our meeting—or a Mayor's Walk with Mayor Pawlowski, which would include Mr. Harper. A neighbor noted that there is a similar house on E. Walnut Street with exposed wood—bank finally covered up the rotting wood with siding in order to get more money at the sheriff's sale, but the purchaser will be left with a hidden rotted area in the structure.

Question: What is next step after a property owner has been given multiple fines by the district magistrate for not fixing violations? Alexander said that she was not sure, but that it is very hard to seize property under Pennsylvania law. She suggested that we get a list of all of the properties that we would like to take a look at, and suggested we name the top three in a neighborhood—not a long list. The three in this neighborhood should be 404 N. Jerome Street, 408 N. Jerome Street, and 419 N. Jasper Street. The neighbor in the E. Walnut Street area will get us a list of the worst properties in that neighborhood, near the intersection with S. Carlisle Street.

We will write a letter requesting mayor come to one of our meetings with the proper staff—with a specific request for Mr. Harper, Mr. Dave Paulus from Building Standards, and someone from the city solicitor's office plus possibly Magistrate Michael D'Amore.

As to future action, it was suggested that numerous neighbors should show up at the meeting of City Council on the first Wednesday in August (August 6<sup>th</sup>) and request to speak to Council at the “courtesy of the floor” section. If enough neighbors raise the issue, Council may put pressure on the appropriate city offices for some action. President Pearson noted that he will be present, and several neighbors agreed to be present as well. It was also noted that the Department of Community Development handles the “mayor’s walks” and perhaps they could be the office that would arrange for the mayor to come to one of our meetings.

In other matters:

- The promised sign concerning no turns for large trucks at E. Gordon and N. Maxwell Streets is still not up. Alexander had been told by the relevant city official that they had spoken with the neighbor that requested this, but the neighbor said she has not heard from the city on the matter. Alexander will check on the matter.
- Question: Have we heard anything about the possible widening of E. Allen Street near the state hospital property, specifically from Quebec to Tacoma Streets? We have not. Alexander will check that as well.
- It was reported that trucks are hitting a fire hydrant at E. Allen and N. Sherman Streets.
- We have heard that there is a funding process for up to \$750 for neighborhood projects. Would such a fund be able to finance our annual Christmas lighting? Phyllis Alexander reported that this is called the “Love Our City Mini-Grants.” The city has awarded nine grants already, and is inviting grants for round two. They must be used for a project that involves both cleaning and improving. She gave an application to President Pearson.
- A neighbor questioned why, with various city needs, the city is spending money on crosswalks that look like bricks in the downtown area.
- President Pearson noted that the traffic humps on Graham Street are in need of white lines. They can’t be seen in bad lighting—at night or in bad weather—and lines were supposed to be added last year.
- Pearson also reported that he got a call from a neighbor asking if we were going to be holding a yard sale this year. If we were to do so we would need a volunteer to run it.

There being no further business, adjournment was moved and seconded, and the meeting adjourned at 8:12 p.m.

Respectfully,

*David A. Schell, Secretary*