

**East Allentown Rittersville  
Neighborhood Association**

**MINUTES**

President Dennis Pearson called the regular monthly meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. on April 20, 2015 at St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Present: Four officers (President Dennis Pearson, Vice President Bob Pandaleon, Treasurer Bob Jacoby, and Secretary Dave Schell) and eleven other neighbors were present at the meeting as well as School Director candidate Ce-Ce Gerlach and City Council candidate Roger MacLean.

Secretary Dave Schell handed out copies of the minutes of the meeting of March 16, 2015. It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes as distributed, and the motion carried.

President Pearson distributed certificates from the President's Council of the Allentown Crime Watch, Senator Pat Browne and Representative Mike Schlossberg to Chris Belles and his coworker David Busser (who was unable to be present at the meeting) for their continuing assistance in helping the neighborhood each year with putting up the lights for Project Haas, our annual holiday light display. Both gentlemen were recognized in absentia at the Annual Allentown Crime Watch Leonard Buck Dinner

Treasurer Bob Jacoby gave his report. The current balance is \$446.03, the same as last month. We will be paying \$30/month for the storage area for our Christmas lights. This is half the going rate. We also have to pay for \$1 million in insurance. President Pearson has been paying that for the past few years. It was moved and seconded to approve the report as read and the motion passed.

President Pearson described a fund-raising project that a group calling the K-9 project is doing to raise \$12,500 to support a K-9 officer for the Allentown Police Department. The project is being backed by the Neighborhood Crime Watch organization.

President Pearson noted that on May 5<sup>th</sup> the Ritter School will be having a science fair. We will be present helping with effort. On May 29<sup>th</sup> the middle school and high school divisions of the science fair. EARN gives \$100 to each winner.

Secretary Schell handed out information on programs (mostly free of charge) at the Allentown Public Library, and information on how to prepare for and arrange a "Mayor's Walk," in which the mayor and members of his administration walk through neighborhoods of the city with members of the area neighborhood association pointing out problems that need attention and area successes. Schell also handed out a Phyllis Alexander prepared citywide newsletter that he had received via a E-mail forward from Midway Manor association, which listed and described the various neighborhood organizations. He also read a note that we had received from a neighbor indicating that he wanted access to the State Hospital for a photography project, but had been unable to secure access..

At the request of President Pearson, Schell detailed updates to the public art situation since the previous meeting. Schell had written to Zoning Officer James Toth several weeks back, asking for some assistance in researching how the zoning ordinance applied to the issue of public art,

but had not yet received a response. Schell also related subsequent contacts from WFMZ-TV and the Morning Call and noted that President Pearson had appeared on WFMZ about the matter. Schell distributed several articles from the Morning Call, including a front-page item dealing with the situation. He also noted that the art on the side of East Side Tattoo has recently been changed.

President Pearson read a communication asking what was going on at the East Side Reservoir. The picnic tables and grilles have been removed and we are concerned that the pavilion may be torn down as well. Pearson noted that we have three dedicated picnic areas on the East Side—at the reservoir, Canal Park, and Keck Park. Occasionally people cook out at other parks in this part of town such as Irving Park, but technically they are not supposed to do so. It was agreed that Secretary Schell will write a letter within the next week asking for information on the matter.

Pearson read from several items that have appeared in the paper on news from this part of the city over the past month, particularly the suit by exotic dancers at Platinum Plus who are trying to get more compensation than just tips, the lockdown at Dieruff High School following a report of shots fired in the neighborhood, and the fatal hit-and-run on Airport Road.

In answer to a question, Schell noted that he had had a communication from Captain Alsleben regretting that he could not be present at tonight's meeting, but asking us to pass along any situations that he should know about or deal with.

Several neighbors were present to bring the group's attention to problems concerning Seibert's Towing at 1190 E. Tilghman Street. Trucks are using E. Tilghman, N. Lacrosse, N. Kearney, and N. Kiowa Streets to access or leave the facility. It was noted that several of the streets in this area are not built to handle that amount of weight and there have already been two water main breaks due to the weight and the street surfaces are being broken up. There is also a problem with the trucks idling for a considerable period of time.

Additionally, the 1100 block of E Tilghman Street is exceptionally narrow with parking on both sides of the street. At least two vehicles have already had side mirrors broken off—one of them being a postal vehicle. A zoning officer known to the neighbor only as "Fred" came out and viewed the situation and said that nothing could be done. The question was raised as to whether this portion of E. Tilghman Street should either have parking restricted to one side or should be made one-way. If this would be done it would be preferable that the parking be allowed on the south side of Tilghman since there are row homes in that block on the south side whereas the north side of the street has single homes, which have parking in the rear. If the street was made one way it would probably be best to make it eastbound only.

In other matters:

- Now that the weather has improved there is a need to paint the road speed humps on N. Graham Street between Hanover Avenue and Union Boulevard. This had been mentioned at an earlier meeting.
- Some of the city crews patching holes are not tamping the patching material down sufficiently, resulting in a mound where the pothole had existed.
- Pearson noted that the new parking regulations including longer hours for meters and neighborhood permit parking (both to 10 p.m.) are going into effect in four days. The

prices are also doubling on the meters in the affected areas. There are no metered or permit areas on the east side.

Pearson introduced incumbent School Director Ce-Ce Gerlach, who is running for reelection. She spoke of her accomplishments and her plans for the next term. She noted that the Allentown School District has the second-highest dropout rate in Pennsylvania (after the Philadelphia SD) and noted that she had pushed a “dropout initiative” to deal with this, along with a “reengagement center” at which students who had dropped out could return to finish their studies and graduate. Additionally, the Communities in Schools program has put three outreach workers in each of the two public high schools to engage and keep track of students needing support to continue their education. The primary election is May 19<sup>th</sup>—she has cross-filed and is on both the Democratic and Republican ballots and would appreciate our support.

Pearson then introduced retired city Police Chief Roger MacLean, who is running for one of three positions to be elected on City Council (there are eight candidates, including MacLean, on the Democratic ballot and one candidate running on the Republican ballot). He retired in 2013 and is now working for the Lehigh County District Attorney’s office. He spoke of work that he has done with the “Invest in Kids” program that puts funds in early childhood (Pre-K) education, on the evidence that such funding results in a child that is more likely to succeed and less likely to end up in trouble with the law. He noted that he is running independently, whereas three of the other candidates were running as a slate endorsed by the mayor, and asked for our support.

In other matters:

- Pearson noted that he did interview for the Lehigh County Authority position mentioned at the last meeting but the appointments had not yet been announced.
- Pearson also noted that as of July, any volunteer organizations that use school-age workers need to have officers and those who come in contact with the juveniles go through the various child abuse checks. Vice President Pandaleon noted that this can be done online and runs about \$8 to \$10.
- A neighbor noted that work is going on at the old Mosser School. The site has no electricity but apparently the contractor has permission to run a generator at the site.
- We received a question as to whether bow-hunting had been approved for the state hospital property. We have heard nothing of the matter, but with the improved weather there are deer all over the adjacent neighborhoods.
- A neighbor noted that graffiti on the east side has been increasing dramatically. Two specific areas mentioned were the side of the building housing the Great Wall of China restaurant at 1126 Union Boulevard and the south side of the 1100 block of Hanover Avenue, across from the former 7-11 that is now a market.
- A neighbor also noted that the number of rental properties in this part of town seems to be increasing exponentially. The question was raised as to whether the property owner needs a permit to have a rental unit.

There being no further business, adjournment was moved and seconded, and the meeting adjourned at 8:14 p.m.

Respectfully,

*David A. Schell, Secretary*