

**East Allentown Rittersville
Neighborhood Association**

MINUTES

President Dennis Pearson called the regular monthly meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. on September 21, 2015 at St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Present: Three officers (President Dennis Pearson, Treasurer Bob Jacoby, and Secretary Dave Schell) and nine other neighbors were present at the meeting, as were Captain Glen Dorney of the Allentown Police Department, Christy Alvord, Allentown Recreation & Events Coordinator, and Ce-Ce Gerlach, Allentown School District Director.

Secretary Dave Schell handed out copies of the minutes of the meeting of August 17, 2015. It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes as distributed. The motion carried.

Treasurer Bob Jacoby gave his report. The current account balance is \$551.03, but the treasurer is owed \$150 for the payment he made for our storage area, which will leave us with \$401.03. Our holiday materials have been moved out of paid storage and are currently stored in the bathhouse at the Irving Pool. It was moved and seconded to approve the report as read. The motion carried.

Christy Alvord, the city's Recreation and Events Coordinator, reported on what will be done this year with light displays around the Christmas holiday. Due to the collapse of a wall in Lehigh Parkway in the area that the "Lights in the Parkway" are normally displayed, this display will not be set up this year. Instead, the city will have "Allentown Lights," which will set up some of the displays at Cedar Beach, the Arts Park, Andre Reed (Irving) Park, and other areas of the city, depending on how many lights are available. In the case of Irving Park, we expect to put our lights around the pool as usual and the city lights will be added in the area around the tennis courts and the corner of the park near the Andre Reed Park sign [the NW corner of the park].

In addition, a 40-foot by 80-foot skating rink will be set up in the tennis court area. The skating will be free if one brings one's own skates. The area will be staffed for some hours with skates available for a \$2 rental per pair. Various community organizations, including EARN and the Midway Manor group, will be offered the chance to staff the rental area and keep the rental fees along with pre-packaged food items if they wish to sell those as well. The food must be approved by the health department and will be limited to pre-packaged items—that is, no preparation of food such as hot dogs, etc. will be allowed. The times have not been set for staffing, but would possibly run Thursday through Sunday evenings. Alvord asked if we were interested in participating and we replied that we were and would have to see if we could round up sufficient volunteers to staff such an arrangement. We would need to determine this before the end of October, and the setup would run from about the end of November through the end of the year, possibly extending it slightly if popular.

President Pearson noted that years ago the Association used to run "Sugar Plum Village," which involved donated items to sell to children at low cost, allowing them to purchase gifts for others. EARN has been doing its light displays since 1994.

In addition, there is the possibility of a playground and pavilion for Irving Park, pending funding. Pearson noted that we are also concerned about plans for the East Side Reservoir since the tables had been removed, although they have been restored. There have also been some issues with garbage at that park.

Captain Dorney then spoke about crime trends in the city generally and the East Side particularly. There continues to be an issue with the theft of wallets and cell phones where people put these items down when checking out of stores and then forget them. Part I crimes (major crimes such as homicide, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault, among others) have been declining. They are down in all four of the city's Police Service Areas, with the greatest decline (23%) on the East Side and 21% in the city as a whole.

One type of crime that is rising is thefts of delivered packages off of porches. Criminals have been driving around following UPS or FedEx trucks, watching the deliveries, and if nobody picks up the package within a few minutes the package is grabbed off the porch. In Midway Manor, some neighbors are pulling the packages off of porches and informing the absent neighbor by email that they are holding a package for them. People can help fight this sort of crime by watching for cars following delivery trucks around and noting the make, model, and, if possible license number, and also by making themselves visible to people acting suspiciously after a delivery so that the potential thief knows that he or she has been seen.

Another crime that is rising is tire and rim thefts. This is particularly active on cold and rainy nights when the thieves expect fewer people to be about, particularly between 2 a.m. and 5 a.m. Tires and rims are taken from all models and the tires can be "stretched" to meet a demand for this type of tire, which is mounted at up to a 45-degree angle on cars. Given the angle that the tire is mounted it will wear out fast, providing a ready market, particularly through dishonest garages that obtain and sell the stolen goods. The crews that steal the tires and rims have the process "efficient" enough that the target vehicle can be jacked up, put on blocks, and stripped of the wheels within five minutes. In some cases, small cars such as the Smart Car or Honda Fit do not even require jacks for the operation, but are light enough that the thieves can lift the vehicle to steal the wheels.

Dorney noted that five new officers have just joined the force and will be trained sufficiently to be "on their own" in between ten and twenty weeks. The force is now within ten officers of full staffing.

Pearson noted that we have a Crime Watch sign that we would like to have installed at the Reservoir Park. We are currently working on permission for the installation. Captain Dorney noted that the police had caught someone doing damage there recently by "doing donuts" with their vehicle.

Other issues raised by President Pearson follow:

- Dieruff football players are selling discount cards for \$10, which are good at various area food retailers and well worth the cost.
- Mosser Village continues to be in need of funds, and should be supported. Among other things they provide a tutoring program after school hours.

- Some neighbors have asked about street closings for yard sales. How can that be accomplished? They need to purchase a permit at a cost of \$50, and show proof of liability coverage.
- He is considering holding additional meetings at various locations around the East Side to see if neighbors in those areas would come out with local issues. These would be in addition to our monthly meetings at St. Peter’s Church.
- He asked if there were any other issues that need to be brought up about neighborhood problems—new or continuing.
 - The overgrowth and downed tree continue to be a problem on N. Nelson Street. This has been reported before.
 - The traffic island with the trees on it in the middle of Hanover Avenue in front of Our Lady Help of Christians Church continues to be neglected.
- Please let Pearson know if any properties in your area are “tagged” by the city. The tags will either be on white or orange paper, depending on their nature.

School Director Ce-Ce Gerlach noted that she had seen the item in our last monthly minutes about the planetarium at Dieruff High School. Several board members would like to open it up to use as the planetarium is “ready to go,” but this is a staffing issue. They would like to get it opened not only for Dieruff students but for students throughout the district, and possibly the public as well. The board is committed to opening it, possibly in 2016.

She was asked about the issue reported in the media about the school crossing guards. The board recently passed a resolution that the school district will not pay for them—they are currently paid by the city—and negotiations with the city are continuing. Pearson noted that repairs have been made to the wall and several sets of stairs at the Andre Reed Park.

A neighbor asked about street cleaning. The street sweeper comes around periodically, but for several decades the streets have not been posted on certain days for non-parking as they are in other parts of the city, so the sweeper just sweeps around cars that are parked on days that they are sweeping.

As an historical interest, Pearson read a list of the officers and board members of EARN from approximately the early 1980s. At that time we had a much bigger number of officers and much greater attendance than we have had in recent years.

President Pearson noted that the next meeting will take place on Monday, October 19th. There being no further business, adjournment was moved and seconded, and the meeting adjourned at 8:14 p.m.

Respectfully,

David A. Schell, Secretary