

**East Allentown Rittersville
Neighborhood Association**

MINUTES

President Dennis Pearson called the regular monthly meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. on November 16, 2015 at St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Present: Four officers (President Dennis Pearson, Vice President Robert Pandaleon, Treasurer Bob Jacoby, and Secretary Dave Schell) and seven other neighbors were present at the meeting, as were Captain Dorney and Officer Ruff of the Allentown Police Department and Phyllis Alexander, Allentown Neighborhood Coordinator.

Secretary Dave Schell handed out copies of the minutes of the meeting of October 19, 2015. It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes as distributed. The motion carried.

Secretary Schell passed around the table the various flyers and information that he had received at the Great Allentown Summit on November 1st.

Treasurer Bob Jacoby gave his report. We received a donation of \$10 giving us a total balance of \$411.03. It was moved and seconded to approve the report as read. The motion carried.

President Pearson noted that we participated in the Dieruff HS pep rally by loaning our inflatable husky and Buffalo Bill holiday ornaments. He further noted that there was an incident at the pep rally in which a teacher was shoved down the bleachers. This was just one of several fights and incidents at and near city high schools and middle schools.

Pearson also read several other articles from the Morning Call about accidents and incidents concerning the East Side. Additionally, he noted that a park in the 600 block of Chew Street was renamed in memory of the late Ernie Atiyeh.

Secretary Schell read an email from Phyllis Alexander about our concern that there is no traffic light on Hanover Avenue. As we knew, the project was held up when toxic substances were found in the area where New England Avenue was to be constructed. The city is aware of the situation and will try to expedite the traffic signal portion of the job once the legal matters concerning the cancelation of the project are finally concluded.

A resident noted that the alley next to Wahneta Street is one way but drivers are ignoring the one way signs and driving against traffic. Additionally there are overgrown bushes that are partially blocking the street. They have had several close calls both with other traffic and with pedestrians and fear that someone will be hurt or killed. Also people leaving Ray's Pizza are turning the wrong way. The neighbor brought in pictures of the street and the vegetation. Captain Dorney will look into the matter.

It was noted that the apartments on Tacoma Street near Union Boulevard have a good bit of junk surrounding the property.

Captain Dorney spoke of recent crime statistics and what we expect in the near future. With the holidays coming, they usually see an uptick in armed robberies—both of stores and individuals. They have had multiple cases recently with a person who is either a juvenile or young adult hitting several of the dollar stores. Usually these are robbed from early evening to just before closing. Convenience stores are often hit late at night. For some reason Monday through Wednesday evenings are the big nights for store robberies. They have also seen some "opportunity robberies" where a person takes advantage of a situation such as a recent case where a cab driver that was counting his money openly was robbed of his cash. He urged people to continue to be vigilant

in their neighborhoods about people wandering around scoping out targets, who generally avoid eye contact. Over the past month they have not had (on the east side) any of the type of robberies in which people watch for FedEx or UPS deliveries and steal packages off of porches, but expect that this type of robbery may increase during the holiday delivery season. They continue to see situations where people put down their phone on the counter of convenience stores and forget them there. When they return the phones are gone.

As to recent statistics for the east side, year to date homicides are down 50%, rape is down 14%, robberies are up 22%, aggravated assault is down 28%, burglary is down 40%, auto theft is down 11%. Total crime on the east side is down 18.26% compared with 19% in the city as a whole. While there are occasional cases of innocent bystanders being shot, most of the shootings involve those committing other crimes—either gangs or people who are buying or selling drugs.

As of today (with four new officers starting) the police are at 213 officers. The budget allows for 216 and with luck they will be up to full strength by the end of the year. Dennis Pearson noted that the new police chief was invited to our meeting tonight but was unable to attend as he had a budget hearing this evening. He should be with us at our next meeting.

In response to a question, Captain Dorney noted that there are normally three cars assigned to the each of the Police Service Areas, including the east side, at any given time. There are three shifts. Depending on sick leave or vacation there are up to six additional “floater” cars available throughout the city, so sometimes we have a fourth car on the east side. He noted also that they have revised their regulations as to what they respond to and how they need to write up reports on their contacts, in order to produce less paperwork time and more direct patrolling. He also noted that they are testing again in spring for additional hires, and handed out application forms. Anyone who knows someone who would like to apply for an officer’s position is invited to call the police department and inquire.

It was noted that the American Parkway Bridge will be opening on November 24th. This, and the construction of the riverfront developments directly across from the east side may bring additional traffic (and possibly additional crime into our part of the city.

Phyllis Alexander handed out forms that people can use to thank neighbors who are doing cleanup work. She noted that she has liked working with us, but that she is retiring at the end of this week.

President Pearson expressed some concern about losing businesses from this part of the city as some move into the Neighborhood Improvement Zone (NIZ) to take advantage of the tax breaks in that area. This is producing some empty buildings on the east side. He also noted that while we have yet to see any work on the temporary skating rink that is to operate in Andre Reed (Irving) Park starting on November 28th, it has been moved from the tennis court area to the basketball court area. We have put in to work the area as a fundraiser for EARN on Friday and Saturday, December 10th and 11th, but do not yet know if our application has been successful. The flagpole decoration will be put up in the next week, and afterwards the Dieruff JROTC will be helping us with the other setup.

Election of officers: President Pearson noted that last month the current officers’ names were put into nomination and asked if there were any other nominees. There were none, so it was moved, seconded, and approved to have the secretary cast a unanimous ballot for the current officers. Pearson noted that he and Treasurer Jacoby will have served forty years as officers at the end of this coming term.

There being no further business, adjournment was moved and seconded, and the meeting adjourned at 8:04 p.m.

Respectfully,

David A. Schell, Secretary