

**East Allentown Rittersville
Neighborhood Association**

MINUTES

President Dennis Pearson called the regular monthly meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. on September 18, 2017 at St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Present: Three officers (President Dennis Pearson, Vice President Robert Pandaleon, and Secretary Dave Schell) and thirteen other neighbors were present at the meeting, as were Capt. James Keiser of the Allentown Police Department and Courtney Robinson, candidate for city council

Secretary Dave Schell handed out copies of the minutes of the meeting of August 21, 2017. It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes as distributed. The motion carried.

Schell also handed out a few copies of the August police report for Police Service Area 1, a flyer on a hazardous waste event at Coca Cola Park on October 28th, a flyer on a meeting for the proposed Jordan Park Skatepark on October 11th, and a notice that Representative Mike Schlossberg has been chosen Legislator of the Year for Pennsylvania by the National Association of Social Workers.

There was no treasurer's report since Treasurer Jacoby is preparing for a trip and was not able to be present.

President Pearson read a letter about how October will be Fire Prevention Month. We are invited to a kickoff event on October 9th at 10 a.m. at the Scottish Rite Cathedral.

Captain Keiser noted, in conjunction with fire prevention, that one should change the batteries in their smoke detectors when they reset their clocks due to the time change.

As to the crime report, he noted that 90% of crime reported is theft and 80% of those are from vehicles. Generally the vehicles have been left unlocked. Leaving valuables in plain sight also results in many thefts. Perpetrators are often groups of kids on bicycles who go around testing car doors to see if they are locked. If the police get photos or video from the public cameras they try facial recognition software or take the photos to the area schools to see if anyone recognizes the perpetrators.

There are zoning issues in the Quebec Street area with the fixing of cars in rented garages. By ordinance, one can only fix a car owned by the property owner in a private residence's garage, not as a business. Captain Keiser suggested that people who see this should call the police when activity is going on, not a few days later. The police don't usually handle zoning issues but can deal with this if it a nuisance issue. Neighbors noted that the area around N. Jasper and E. Sycamore Streets has fewer problems due to garage "business" in a private garage being closed down. There has been more police presence in the area—thanks!

Captain Keiser noted, in response to a question, that at one time the nexus of problems was Airport Road. Much of this has quieted down. The management of the Super 8 has tried to crack down on problems there and a nuisance nightclub was closed, although there are still theft issues in the Congress Apartment area. A neighbor noted that tow trucks flying through area at N. Nelson Street and American Parkway, and warned that someone is going to die there if this is not curbed. It was noted that kids are popping wheelies on Plymouth Street, and the question was raised about whether

a person who hit kid if they couldn't stop in time would have been charged. No, but this would still be a nuisance on insurance and lawsuits. Secretary Schell noted that kids are doing the same thing popping wheelies on E. Tilghman Street as well next to the park.

A neighbor reported that they have a dangerous tree in a neighboring property in the 900 block of E. Sycamore Street. It is hanging over wires and their fear is that it will bring the wires down and cause a fire. The neighbor called the city was told to talk to the landlord. PPL was also contacted and won't do anything about it. It was questioned whether it makes any difference if it is a HUD-supported property.

President Pearson read several recent articles related to the East Side, including a rabid skunk in the 800 block of N Kearney Street, a stabbing, and some drug arrests. A neighbor noted they may have gotten one of those calls trying to get a person to say "yes" so as to use the recording for identity theft mischief. The caller ID showed a Nazareth number.

President Pearson discussed the Allentown property tax system. The city has a system which encourages development by having improvements (buildings) taxed at a lower rate than the land. The city is now working on a storm water fee to pay for the problem of excess flow into the wastewater system during heavy use of the storm sewers in rain. In contrast to the land use tax, this would set a higher rate for impervious property (that is, property such as paved areas that cause runoff rather than the rain soaking into the property). The tax would be based on the size of the lot, and it is estimated that this tax would cost the average homeowner \$60/year. Large properties such as Dieruff HS would pay far more.

Courtney Robinson noted that this discussion we just had is emblematic of everything that has been going wrong in the city. This wastewater treatment plant was a known problem a decade ago, but city officials kicked the can down the road. It was known that we had to upgrade both the water supply plant and the waste water plant, which is another reason that the transfer of both properties to the Lehigh County Authority was attractive to the city. Now we need to make a decision on the matter.

He repeated his promise to be accessible and attend at least two meetings of each neighborhood association and crime watch annually. He said that city officials need to be more communicative. The city has done one-time patches and tricks, and that if taxes need to go up the city needs to provide additional services. Such measures would not have any support unless city officials speak to the neighborhood groups and explain the measures.

President Pearson spoke about being at a meeting and hearing the new Superintendent of the Allentown schools speak of fixing the Dieruff planetarium. The district is looking to raise money for a cost of \$200,000 to fix the planetarium. The superintendent has been visiting neighborhood groups meetings and it was suggested that we extend an invitation to him.

There being no further business, adjournment was moved and seconded, and the meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully,

David A. Schell, Secretary