

**East Allentown Rittersville  
Neighborhood Association**

**MINUTES**

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

Present: Three officers (President Dennis Pearson, Secretary Dave Schell, and Treasurer Robert Jacoby) and nine other neighbors were present at the meeting, as was Capt. James Keiser of the Allentown Police Department and City Council Member-elect Courtney Robinson.

President Dennis Pearson handed out a copy of the EARN meeting schedule for 2018.

Secretary Dave Schell handed out copies of the minutes of the meetings of November 20, 2017. It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes as distributed. The motion carried.

Schell also handed out a few copies of the November police report for Police Service Area 1.

Treasurer Robert Jacoby reported that our balance remains at \$577.03. It was moved and seconded to accept the treasurer's report as read. The motion carried.

President Pearson noted that the election was going on tonight for the officers of the Presidents' Council and someone might be delivering a ballot to us this evening during our meeting. The balloting so far indicates that Ruthann Phillips, who has been treasurer for many years will continue in that position, and that Richard Wilburn of the Midway Manor Association will be vice president. Pearson also noted that the Leonard Buck banquet will be on April 19, 2018 at the Palace (former Ice Palace). Awards for police officer of the year for citizen of the year will be given at that time.

Pearson noted that at the last EARN meeting we discussed a steering committee for the Irving Park plans. The meeting will take place at 3:30 p.m. this coming Wednesday, December 20, at Bucky Boyle Park. We had offered five members but have been limited to two votes on the committee.

President Pearson also noted that there was a discussion on Facebook, which included Mayor Ed Pawlowski, about how the city had applied for a grant to eliminate the swimming pool at Irving and replace it with a spray park with a 3' wading area. Lindsay Taylor, head of Parks and Recreation, had told Council that the work order plan could be changed after they approved the amount requested in the grant. Council is now being told that the plan cannot be changed. We will attempt to have the plan changed

to add an adult swimming area. This will not necessarily involve a very deep end since there will be no diving area.

It was also noted that some people are still complaining about the basketball court area. Supposedly the person putting the locks on the hoops at the end of each day is having kids tossing basketballs at him. Pearson asked Captain Keiser if he knew of any complaints about that matter, and Captain Keiser replied that he had not. Pearson also noted that Mayor Pawlowski also wants to put a rain garden in the area where the basketball courts are—this would have rocks, wildflowers, and high grass. This would prevent that area from being an active park. Courtney Robinson noted that the purpose of this is wanting to reduce the amount that recreation would have to pay for the rainwater fee. On the other hand, he noted, we need to have a proper plan to design this properly.

Robinson said that we should look at all options. He wants to see the plan's details first. We need to show what the reason is for the various plans. The city needs to visit the neighborhood associations to explain their plans or have public meetings that are announced in advance. He also noted that the cost overruns at Cedar Beach are scaring people away from replacing the pool at Irving, thinking that it may be more of a problem than Cedar, given that Irving is an older pool. He insisted that we need input and he would not support a radical change without public input. President Pearson noted that if the Irving Pool is closed as a pool, there will be no city pools in the area serviced by Dieruff High School, as the boundary between the two schools' areas has moved several times and is now Fourth Street in the downtown area.

In another matter, Robinson noted that as a long-term issue he would like to propose that the four council seats that are elected the same year as the mayor go to a district election with the others being city-wide. This would insure that each area of the city would be guaranteed at least one member of Council from that area. Secretary Schell asked if this is how the City of Bethlehem elects their Council. They do not—all of their seats are also elected at large.

A question was raised, and discussion ensued on the storm water fee. The reason behind it is that the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) were prepared to cite the city for massive discharges of two types. If we go several weeks without rain, the oil buildup in the streets that results is being discharged downstream. Additionally, storm cells overwhelm the water discharge system. Some of the storm sewers have not been fixed since they were put in—sometimes over 100 years ago. The failure of the system is also sometimes causing sinkholes. The identified initial projects that need to be dealt with will run \$70 million. If we were not seen to be doing something to alleviate these two problems, the EPA might have mandated a major overhaul of the system, which would have cost considerably more than \$70 million. If the system were to be built from scratch it would cost \$450 million.

The choices to pay for this would have been the storm water fee, a property tax increase, or a bond issue. The property tax increase would have been 20% for the first five years, a more afterwards. This would have been paid entirely by property owners, while the fee is paid by everybody, not just taxable properties. The fund supported by the fee will have its own bond rating. The funding will go only to water fee matters. Council would have to approve any transfer of funds, which they are not about to do since it might cause the EPA to say we violated the agreement and void it, replacing it with a more severe requirement. We will get a good rate for the bond interest since it will be a separate bond, regardless of what the city's bond rating will do. Robinson noted that Dieruff High School will pay the second-most expensive storm water fee (approximately \$30,000). The most expensive is the fairgrounds, at approximately \$50,000. Allen High School's fee is slightly less than Dieruff's.

Schell asked what the downside would have been of a bond issue (the third option that Robinson mentioned). Answer: the bond would have had to be paid back by the general fund, leading to an eventual property tax increase. Additionally, starting in 2019 there will be ways to mitigate the cost for homeowners and other locations— such as installing rain barrels, etc.

President Pearson asked how many of those present were aware of Pat Browne's activity with developer in Doylestown about the Allentown State Hospital property. He noted that we want residents of that area to be involved when a determination is made what is to be done with the former state hospital property. Robinson noted that the legislation backed by Browne and others is about the use of the property, not the cost of it. In the sale of most state property the state must take the highest price offered. This case the offering can set basic parameters on its future use. Again, there should be numerous public meetings to gain input on what the property should be used for. A deed restriction on the property will be part of the negotiating process. Finally, it was noted that the school district has not indicated preference for a location of a new middle school to replace Harrison-Morton. One neighbor suggested that the Dieruff property should be made the new middle school and the district should build a new high school.

There was a brief discussion about plans for a third runway for ABE airport north of Race Street, and that the area where FedEx is going was bought by the airport authority in 1982.

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

Respectfully,

*David A. Schell, Secretary*