

**East Allentown Rittersville
Neighborhood Association**

MINUTES

President Dennis Pearson called the regular monthly meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. on January 16, 2017 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 nine other neighbors were present at the meeting.

Secretary Dave Schell handed out copies of the minutes of the meeting of December 19, 2016. It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes as distributed. The motion carried.

Treasurer Bob Jacoby gave his report. The account balance will be \$336.29 after we pay the \$190.74 we owe to President Pearson. It was moved and seconded to approve the report as read. The motion carried.

Secretary Schell reported on several items.

- He neglected to write to the zoning office as planned about the billboard proposal at the city line, but reported that he has kept watch of the zoning meetings on the city website and no action was scheduled at either January meeting of the Board.
- The torn flag at the hookah lounge was finally removed in late December.
- He reported that there will be a community meeting with the police on January 17th at the Allentown Public Library and on January 24th at Sacred Heart Hospital. He handed out a flyer event at the meeting.
- He also handed out fliers put out by emergency management which deal with winter weather preparedness.

A neighbor from the Oswego Street area noted that parking on Hanover Avenue at the Oswego Street intersection is causing a dangerous intersection, and has already caused several accidents. There is more parking on Hanover Avenue now due to a new business in the area. The neighbor spoke with an official from Traffic Engineering about the matter and the official said that they will not make any changes. President Pearson will probably see one of the relevant officials at the crime watch meeting this week and will bring up the matter with him. Pearson took the neighbor's contact information to facilitate communication.

President Pearson noted the continuing matter of the closed Dieruff Planetarium. Money was put in budget years ago for director to run planetarium, but no one was hired for the position. Several months back Pearson asked about the matter at a Board meeting and was told that the matter would be studied. It was recently reported in the

local newspaper that some board members were unaware that the position had not been filled. Pearson also noted that a recent article in the local paper indicated that the school district was considering building several new schools to replace some of the older ones.

A neighbor noted that while the city has been putting in curb cutaways for handicapped access at corners, some of the actual sidewalks are virtually impassable by wheelchair. It was noted that while the cutaways are financed through taxation, sidewalk repairs would be the cost responsibility of the property owners.

[At this point, School Director Charlie Thiel arrived at the meeting.]

Pearson noted that we had been discussing the planetarium matter. Thiel noted that the board had not been given information on the matter until recently. It appears that something got dropped in the transition of school superintendents. Recent reports show that the equipment has not been maintained and that the people who could possibly fix it have retired. Thiel has asked for a cost-benefit analysis with the cost of repairs against expected life of the equipment. Additionally, it has been suggested that we market the use of the planetarium to other schools and ask payment for their use of the planetarium. He noted that several positions—including this one—have not been filled and the board is awaiting reports on the matter.

It was suggested by Vice President Pandaleon that the board might contact the Lehigh Valley Amateur Astronomical Society, and gave Thiel the contact information. That group also has an aging planetarium, although a smaller one, and might have some good advice on what can be done about the one in Dieruff. Pearson noted that the Dieruff planetarium has been out of service for seven to eight years. The roof of Dieruff High School was damaged at that time by wind, although the planetarium itself escaped major damage.

A neighbor questioned why the board went outside the area in its hiring of the new superintendent, although he noted that the final candidates all appeared to be well-qualified. A discussion ensued on the hiring process, including legal requirements and the specific experience requirements for this position. Two requirements were experience in urban education and equity program experience. There were a total of 21-22 applicants, but normal procedure is that only the final group is identified publicly.

Pearson also noted some difficulties caused by the large number (10) of kindergarten sections at Ritter School. Several outside organizations help provide supplies for the classes and are running out due to the large number of classes. Additionally, he noted that the third, fourth, and fifth grade classes are moved to the outside buildings since kindergarten classes may not be located there.

Director Thiel noted that there is difficulty in predicting enrollment with a large transient population. The board is looking at different buildings, keeping in mind safety issues. There was a discussion of the operation of the city Building 21 High School. This is a much smaller operation than the other two city high schools and uses a much different method of education, which is tied to cooperative arrangements with area businesses. There is much business investment in the school, which is intended to prepare the students for participation in the 21st-Century workforce.

Director Thiel spoke of his campaign for mayor of Allentown, giving information on his background, including with a technology company and his volunteer work. His website (thielformayor.com) has information on his priorities—good government, public safety, neighborhoods, and economic development. He said that we need to rebuild trust in our city government as we are all in this together. He noted that transparency is very important, and noted that he has always thought that telling a lie is more difficult than telling the truth.

Pearson discussed our science fair awards and noted that we may be replacing Project Haas (the holiday lighting) with the project to seek donations so that area children can “purchase” gifts to give for Christmas at low cost. We had discussed this last year but circumstances prevented its adoption. Pearson also noted that he may be considering a run for a public position that would require his replacement as editor of our newsletter. He did not specify the position involved. He also reported on two upcoming events—the Northeast Kiwanis pancake breakfast in May, and the Leonard Buck (Crime Watch) banquet in April, at which the group honors a citizen of the year.

Returning to the earlier discussion on curb cutouts and sidewalks, it was noted that numerous of the cutouts need to be repaired on Union Boulevard in the area between Maxwell and Sherman Streets. As noted previously, sidewalks would be repaired at property-owner expense if reported. In this area, most of the problems are at businesses not private homes.

Finally, President Pearson noted that he will be getting married on Sunday, February 12th in a private ceremony. Congratulations and jokes ensued.

There being no further business, adjournment was moved and seconded, and the meeting adjourned at 8:22 p.m.

Respectfully,

David A. Schell, Secretary