

**East Allentown Rittersville
Neighborhood Association**

MINUTES

President Dennis Pearson called the regular monthly meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. on October 20, 2014 at St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Present: Three officers (Dennis Pearson, Bob Jacoby, and Dave Schell) and eleven other neighbors were present at the meeting. Captain Tony Alsleben of the Allentown Police Department was also present.

Secretary Dave Schell handed out copies of the minutes of the meeting of September 15, 2014. There was one correction. The indoor soccer facility on N. Sherman Street is not a new one but is an expansion of an existing facility into an additional building. It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes as corrected, and the motion carried.

Treasurer Bob Jacoby gave his report. The current balance is \$426.03. We received a donation of \$10 since the last meeting. Jacoby noted that last month's report was gave an incorrect final balance. It was moved and seconded to approve the report as read, noting the correction on last month, and the motion passed.

Dave Schell passed around a copy of Allentown's "Trash & Recycling Rejection Notice" for the information of the neighbors present. This is the form that the city hands out when there is a violation of the trash or recycling rules.

Dennis Pearson passed out copies of a fund raiser that the Allentown Presidents Council (crime watch) is sponsoring to purchase additional bicycles for the police department's mounted officers. The cost to purchase and equip the bicycles is \$1446.94 each. The flier notes that donations are tax deductible but President Pearson questioned that inasmuch as the crime watch is not a 501(c)(3) organization.

The floor was turned over to Captain Alsleben. He handed out copies of a pamphlet on Project Lifesaver of the Lehigh Valley. This involves a bracelet worn by a person with a condition such as Alzheimer's disease. It can be activated remotely if the wearer "goes missing." Triad of the Lehigh Valley sponsors this and the first four or five individuals have been fitted with these in the city.

Captain Alsleben brought a "pin map" of the Rittersville area of the city made up to indicate where crimes have occurred. Eventually this information is to be available online so that citizens can check on where violations are occurring. Among the crimes during the past month were the home invasion on Van Buren Street (which was not a random event—the perpetrators and residents knew each other), the one homicide near Hanover Avenue, various shoplifting and other thefts, theft from an automobile, theft of an automobile, and an aggravated assault at Dieruff High School by a female student using brass knuckles.

Captain Alsleben then asked if there were any questions or comments from the floor. The following were among the items raised by neighbors:

- There is a boarded up home on N. Jerome Street near the top of the hill. It now has graffiti on it, which may be the action of a new gang called the Blue Blood Gang. This will be brought to the attention of the gang task force and the neighbor should call the city so that pictures can be taken of the property.
- A property in the 600 block of E. Hamilton Street has uncut grass and there is a white paper on the door which may be an official notice. The city should be called so that an inspector can come out and cite the property.
- Calls should be made to the city's non-emergency number: (610) 437-7751.
- A neighbor noted one corner where people are parking all the way to the corner although there is not a "No Parking" sign. No sign is needed—if they are too close to the corner it is a violation and the parkers can be cited. Bob Jacoby noted that people parking in the wrong direction, particularly after 6 p.m. when the violators believe that the parking authority enforcement people are off duty. He also noted concerns for stop sign running, with particular reference to the intersection of E. Tilghman and N. Jerome Streets.
- The area around Jay Street and Hanover Avenue where the homicide took place continues to be a problem area, including a major fight in the street during the late night of October 18th to 19th. Area problems also include continuing noise at the hookah lounge, working on cars in the street, and the vandalizing of cars. The owner of the Asian market on Hanover Avenue reports problems with littering and parking on his lot.
- A neighbor from this area questioned whether we could do something on the order of a rally to "take back" the neighborhood as we can't—and shouldn't have to—hide in our homes. She would be willing to coordinate such an event if we could do something.

A neighbor who had not previously attended our meetings asked if we were a crime watch. President Pearson explained "not really," although we get some of the crime reports and report things like a crime watch would do. We are a neighborhood association and since there are no functioning crime watches in the area we cover—essentially all of the East Side except Midway Manor, which has their own functioning organization—we handle crime issues along with everything else by default.

Another neighbor who was new to the meeting spoke of problems in the area around Mosser School. There are some problems with sidewalks, and the street lights have been out in the 500 block of E. Walnut Street for over seven months. He has reported the matter to the city repeatedly over that time and been promised action, but nothing has been done and that block is pitch black after dark.

The neighbor from the Hanover Avenue and N. Jay Street area again questioned Captain Alsleben as to what we could do to say "this is our neighborhood." Captain Alsleben noted that it was not an easy question since the only neighborhood groups that are operational are ours and Midway Manor's, plus there are community meetings as Overlook Park. It is difficult to get people interested if there are no problems in their immediate neighborhood.

The new neighbor who had asked about the crime watch noted that he had been unaware of our group. Pearson noted that the city prints our fliers—5500 in the last printing—and he walked all over the East Side delivering them.

Schell wondered if we would be able to send a smaller flier via bulk non-profit mail. What would be the cost and would be able to use city assistance for this. Additionally, could we get a list of all east side addresses—not necessarily with names, but with something on the order of occupant and the various street addresses. He will investigate the matter before our next meeting.

At this point Captain Alsleben had to leave the meeting.

President Pearson noted the flurry of “naming” activities for Andre Reed—the football stadium at Kutztown University and various locations on the east side—Irving Park and that portion of E. Washington Street between the park and Dieruff High School. There is a proposal to also change the name of the football field at the ASD Stadium in the west end. Pearson noted that while Reed attended Dieruff HS he was from the South Side, did not participate in youth activities in east Allentown, and did not use the Irving Park that is now named for him.

A particular issue was that the Dieruff HS alumni association was the prime mover of the name changes on the east side, despite the fact that many of the association’s members do not live in the city and sought no input from the neighborhood in the matter.

He further noted that when we originally started doing the Christmas holiday light displays in Irving Park the intention was to work with the association and students from Dieruff on the annual display. No help has been forthcoming from the association or the high school and we may have come to the point where we will have to have help from the association or the high school students if the display is to continue.

Pearson and Schell will contact the alumni association’s president, John Hughes of Bethlehem, to consider the matter. This will have to be settled within the next month as we normally have the light displays installed by Thanksgiving.

The neighbor who has been at the forefront of reporting on the continuing mess at 404 N. Jerome Street (the peeling siding, etc.) reported that he was approached by a city inspector who told him that he did not have the appropriate permits when he had solar panels installed on his home. He replied that he believed that this was to be handled by the contractor, and thought that it was done. He raised several questions on the matter, which the inspector could not answer. The neighbor also pointed out the continuing problem at 404 and wondered if the inspector’s apparent lack of “having his act together” may have had some impact on the continuing lack of progress with that property.

It was noted that there has been no progress on the “no truck turns” sign at E. Gordon and N. Maxwell Streets, even though it was to be fixed months ago.

Pearson noted that he believes the east side will not draw the attention of the city politicians as long as we continue to have a low percentage of residents voting from this area.

Finally, Pearson noted that elections are coming up. He nominated the current officers to continue in office. Further nominations will take place at next month’s meeting, with the election to follow. We have a vacancy in the office of vice president that will have to be filled.

There being no further business, adjournment was moved and seconded, and the meeting adjourned at 8:26 p.m.

Respectfully,

David A. Schell, Secretary