

**East Allentown Rittersville
Neighborhood Association**

MINUTES

President Dennis Pearson called the regular monthly meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. on August 20, 2018, 2018 at St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Present: Four officers (President Dennis Pearson, Vice President Robert Pandaleon Secretary Dave Schell, and Treasurer Robert Jacoby) and nine other neighbors were present at the meeting, as was City Councilman Courtney Robinson. Secretary Schell noted that Captain Keiser said that he will not be able to attend this evening due to another meeting commitment, but that Schell should forward any comments or problems to him for resolution.

Secretary Dave Schell handed out copies of the minutes of the meetings of June 18, 2018. It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes as distributed. The motion carried.

Treasurer Robert Jacoby reported that our balance is \$533.03. There are outstanding bills of \$224.15 for rental of storage space. It was moved and seconded to accept the treasurer's report as read. The motion carried.

Secretary Schell handed out a flyer for the Allentown School District 6th Annual Back to School fundraiser.

President Pearson noted that the city's Director of Parks and Recreation was terminated. A discussion ensued on the use of the city's pools and maintenance requests for the city parks. There are plans to repair the parking lot at Keck Park. Some of the benches at Keck Park's ballfield may need to be repositioned since the spectators' benches are right behind the dugouts.

Pearson noted that he had feared that more trees would be removed when the new gymnasium was added to the charter school on Union Boulevard at the east end of the Lehigh River bridge. Councilman Robinson noted that saving more of the trees was cited by the planning commission as a requirement, along with the building fitting the character of the neighborhood.

Robinson noted that several students from Dieruff who have been admitted to Princeton University were honored by Council last week. There have been several other Dieruff students also admitted to Princeton over the past two years, which is unprecedented. Pearson noted that the success of Dieruff athletics changed over time as the attendance boundaries of the school district changed, with more of center city going to Allen HS.

The Irving pool house will not be used over the winter so we can keep our holiday decorations there if we wish. We may also transfer some to the West Park Association or sell some of them. It is unclear whether we will decorate this season without donations from interested residents. We did maintain insurance for the current season in case we do want to decorate. We will want to get rid of the decorations by April when we must clear out the pool house storage.

A neighbor raised several issues:

- The stairs at the east end of City Hall between the building and the parking garage is moldy and disgusting with dirt and dead birds. They need to be cleaned.
- The neighbor reported several spotted lantern flies to the authorities and got no return response. The situation is being exacerbated by a property near the corner of E. Congress and N. Nelson, on E. Congress. The neighbor who owns the property is not cutting the grass for cultural reasons, resulting in animal life, including mice, skunks, and rabbits.

It was noted that Council passed an ordinance forbidding late-night fireworks, but this is continuing. Robinson said that the Council passed the ordinance in Wednesday. Once it is signed by the mayor it will not go into effect for ten days. The state bill legalizing sale of fireworks was part of a budget bill, so our local representatives had the choice of voting in favor of legalizing and getting more money for the city school district or voting against and not getting the help for the schools.

He also noted that they are not supposed to be set off within 150 feet of a building, so most areas are not legal in any event. The local ordinance also shortened the time that they can be used. This will not solve the problem due to police resources, but gives them another tool. He would also like a change to raise the fines for increased violations and allow the Sweeps enforcement to handle this matter so that it would result in a Disruptive Conduct Report (DCR) that would count towards the expulsion from rental properties. The new laws and ordinance only apply to the new larger fireworks that were legalized by the recent state law—not those which were legal before the law was passed.

President Pearson noted that we have had some success in keeping businesses that produce noise and disruption out of the area or getting them closed. The sign on the property at Club Avenue and Hanover Avenue has been much less problematic than was feared. Pearson also noted some of the other items that have been in the local paper since our last meeting that concern the East Side.

Councilman Robinson reported on several issues.

- The city is suing the Lehigh County Authority (LCA) for the change to monthly billing and the rate increase. The reason for that rate provision was that the LCA would have to hire additional personnel to read meters. Almost all the city's

meters are now smart meters, however, that will not require additional personnel, therefore the rate increase reason is not applicable.

- The airport authority is suing the city over the rainwater fee, claiming that it is a tax, not a fee. The city contends that it is a fee since services are being rendered. He noted that the fee is considerably less for homeowners (\$60) than it would have been if it had been a property tax.
- The LCA insists that the average income in the city is between \$50,000 and \$60,000. Census data suggests that the actual amount is about \$34,000. If the LCA can do what they want, city water bills would be “considered unaffordable” as a percentage of income.
- These litigation issues and others are why city legal expenses are up, and additional money will probably have to be moved to the legal fund before the end of the fiscal year.
- City property taxes will have to go up, given that expenses have risen and the former mayor did not make any changes for twelve years, which is essentially unprecedented for a municipality. We have far less money in our reserve accounts than are recommended by accounting standards. Putting money into this account will also improve our bond issue, lowering our interest costs (or, in any event, keeping them from rising).
- SWEEPS can handle some items like noise complaints that are now being handled overnight by the police. If SWEEPS goes to 24 hours that would free up some police for other issues and allow things like noise complaints to be handled more quickly.

President Pearson noted that the Association gave out several awards recently to students in this part of town. The names and descriptions of the awards, the winners, and the topic of their presentations follow.

The one award is called the Pete Conrad Space Faring Civilization Award and because of the nature of the award is awarded to the best of the show in our preferred category regardless of whether the entry comes from the middle of high School division. Pete Conrad was a Pennsylvania native who flew to the Moon on Apollo 12. Each award has a \$100 monetary award associated with the award.

Frederick Greenleaf Jr. in 1955 was an Allentown High School student whom had the distinction of being the first Allentown School District student to win 1st prize in the national science Fair.

Kirk Shinsky in 1970 was a Dieruff High School student whom also had the distinction of being a national science fair winner. His project dealt with creating a proton collider.

Allentown School District Foundation Science Fair EARN Project Academia Award Winner

Kirk Shinsky Award ----

Alondra Rosario Dieruff High School --- Levels of Bisphenol A

Frederick Greenleaf Jr Award ---

Vanessa Ferriolo - Harrison-Morton Middle School - Rusting Out

Pete Conrad Award

Arianna Watkins --- William Allen High School --- The Invisible Aircraft (Aerospace Engineering/ Astronomy Project

Additionally, the East Allentown Rittersville Neighborhood Association offers Awards to Ritter Elementary Students in their 5th Grade Science fair and to the Mosser Elementary in their combined 4th grade-5th grade Science Fairs ... The Awards are in the honor of Gary Becker Award in honor of the former Dieruff High School Planetarium.

Ritter Science Fair --- Gary Becker Award winners

1st Place -- Synthia Layouts --- It is Everywhere - Microwaves

2nd Place --- Mason Marcks --- Under Pressure - Basketball Pressure

3rd Place --- Andre Mamori ---- Coin Battery

Mosser Science Fair --- Gary Becker Award Winners

1st Place – Kiara Perez – “Shapes, Area and Friction”

2nd Place – Michael Negron – “Slime”

3rd Place – Mayrali Melendez and D’Anjulie Rodriguez – “Which Water is Least Acidic?”

Honorary Mention – David Santiago “Popcorn”

There being no further business, adjournment was moved and seconded, and the meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully,

David A. Schell, Secretary