

SHCA Board Meeting, February 12, 2013

The meeting began at 7:41 pm. Minutes taken by Monica Ferguson

Board Members/Officers present: Andy Lochrie, Mark Wagenveld, Judy Powers, Pauline Borkon, Monica Calkins, Andrew Cole, Monica Ferguson, Barry Grossbach, Ed Halligan, Lee Huang, Susan MacQueen, Eric Santoro, Jackie Waiters, Matthew Wolfe (56%)

Absent: Bob Behr, Bret Feldman, Anne Froehling, Lee Gayle, Rich Guffanti, Marie McCullough, Justin McDaniel, Elaine Nelson, Judy Powers, Michael Shashaty, Pamala Williams, Mark Young. (44%)

Guests: Ryan Spak (UCD); Stacey Livingston (Penn Police); Mary Goldman (Education Committee)

Project Rehab

Ryan Spak from UCD provided an update on Project Rehab. The program started about 2 years ago. The purpose is to help property owners transform distressed properties into usable space. They have become particularly skilled at identifying owners of vacant space. So far 99 properties have been identified, 15 have been changed and 7 completed

No public money is used, the revenue has been generated from back property taxes, etc.

If you are aware of a vacant property that may be a candidate for rehabilitation contact Ryan Speck at ryan@universitycity.org

Upcoming Meetings

1. The Lea School requested our assistance in publicizing their Open House on March 5th. If interested in volunteering contact Andy Lochrie

2. We have been asked along with several other community neighborhood associations, to co-host a town hall meeting on March 13th at University of the Sciences on the proposed AVI (Actual Value Initiative) or property tax adjustment effort. Confirmed guests so far include a representative from the Office of Property Assessment, an economist from Penn, and a reporter.

The minutes from the January board meeting were approved.

Zoning

Five proposals are under consideration, all with a pending status.

Barry Grossbach provided an overview of the Vision Workshop results compiled by Jennifer Hurley. There was a surprising amount of agreement regarding what people like and don't like in Spruce Hill and in particular in the areas of density and parking.

Most of the city's re-zoning plan will not affect Spruce Hill. Our continued input will be vital as a number of major decisions will be made in the near future. The next planning meeting will be

February 27th at the University of the Sciences. This will be a 3 hour small group working session to facilitate development of the actual Spruce Hill Neighborhood Plan.

Jennifery Hurley has remained in contact with the city planners throughout this process.

On a related note, Philadelphia2035, which is a project of the Philadelphia City Planning Commission, is developing 18 district plans across the city and is currently working on the University Southwest plan. The Philadelphia2035 game was very informative and interactive. Check out the website at phila2035.org for more information.

Education

Monica Calkins provided an update on where things stand with the Penn Alexander School. On January 18th, after a line for kindergarten registration had already formed, the School District decided that registration would take place via a lottery instead of on a first-come first served basis. The education committee sent a letter to Superintendent Hite shortly thereafter and has continued meeting with stakeholders including the school district and parents of children in the community, Penn, Penn Alexander staff, and parents from the school. Factors that have contributed to the current situation include the capacity of the building, the limit on financial support the University of Penn contracted to provide, caps on class sizes that are now being enforced (18 for each of the 4 kindergarten classes, 24 for the 3 classes in each of grades 1-8), and the fact that the school district is no longer guaranteeing admission for students in grades 1-8.

The bottom line from the school district is that the lottery will proceed, with no sibling preference, as soon as possible after registration (which closed February 11th).

The building is at capacity. There are no plans for an expansion.

There has not been a firm decision on whether the classroom caps will be strictly enforced.

The school plans to give closer scrutiny to residency requirements.

Both Penn and the school district have also been promoting strategies to improve Lea, such as flexibility in choosing the teachers and curriculum the way Penn Alexander does.

The education committee is now working to refine Spruce Hill Community Association's position and what we would like to see happen going forward as well as better ways to engage stakeholders. Their plan is to generate potential long range solutions for the board to vote on that will then be presented to the stakeholders.

Communications Report: Rich Guffanti: Submitted but not read at the meeting.

Website

We are using Google Checkout to receive funds from members of the Spruce Hill Community Association. Twelve members have made donations and had their credit cards charged! We received gmail notifications but no deposits into our debit account! We are working to resolve the issues.

Email

The email list has 374 contacts [my personal list (30%) and automated list (70%):
61% Members and 39% Nonmembers.

12 People a month have joined the two lists since 04/23/12. The major source is a form on the website.

Membership:

72 Added since April 2011: Total Members = 271

The 2011 expired memberships were dropped since January. Another drop will occur in June when the 2012 expirations are dropped.

Previously memberships expired at the end of the year. The annual reminders came in the form of email, snail mail, and phone calls. The database has been restructured to associate the expiration with the monthly bank deposit date. This allows us to have small monthly mailings, instead of multiple reminders, a massive mailing and a phonation once a year. Reminder notices have been mailed to all members whose membership expires in February 2013 or earlier.

Facebook: SHCA has 165 Facebook Likes: Up 4 from January