

SPRUCE HILL COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION (SHCA) ANNUAL MEETING

January 11, 2022 - 7:30 pm

Board Attendance via Zoom and Teleconference

Present: Richard Moore; Evan Johnstone; Julie Bush; Al Suh; Rebecca Geller-Puchalsky; Monica Calkins; Libby Rosof; Chris Bole; Eric Santoro; Alexa Bosse; Laura Line; Jon Potter; Richard Guffanti; Andrew Richman; Vicki Lewis-McGarvey; Barry Grossbach; Craig Santoro; Sylvia Hamerman-Brown; Abigail Su; Emily Dowdell; Jenine Sanzari; Surgirtha Stathis; Theresa Mond; Anne Thomforde Thomas

Absent: Monica Calkins; Veronica Alvarez; Jon Potter

Guests: Frank Chance, Nicole McCoy, Fran Byers

January 2022 Annual Meeting Minutes

• November Meeting Minutes Approved

Guest Speaker, Richard M. Gordon, IV, Principal, Paul Robeson High School for Human Services

- Robeson High School is located at 42nd & Ludlow
- Principal Gordon has served as the principal since 2013, the same year Robeson was slated for permanent closure. Gordon is credited with bringing the school back near closure. Gordon has been recognized as 2020 PA State Principal of the Year, and 2020-2021 National Principal of the Year.
- Smaller high schools like Robeson were created to counteract the migration away from public high schools to charter schools
- Robeson has 100% minority population (95% African American), 100% poverty rate, and a 90% graduation rate (compared to the city graduation rate of 70%)
- The school currently faces challenges with their building, exacerbated by the surrounding construction, but have not had an opportunity to appeal for capital improvement funds
- Mr. Gordon has been in dialogue with Becca Geller-Puchalsky about how SHCA can help one of our neighborhood schools in areas like street/traffic safety and connecting with neighborhood resources
- Principal Gordon takes issues with the city addressing things like air exchange in restaurants, but not in schools like Robeson
- Gordon also notes that Robeson does not have a diversification problem

Q&A

Q: Is there an HSA or SAC at Robeson?

A: Yes, there is an HSA but the committed group of parents has been challenged by Covid

Q: Is there any interaction between Robeson and Council member Gauthier?

A: Yes, Principal Gordon has met with her recently

Q: Has Robeson considered a letter-writing campaign from neighbors and neighborhood community groups?

A: The school and parents are planning to flood inboxes of city officials and the school board. Principal Gordon will share their petition with SHCA for distribution and signature gathering

Captain Nicole McCoy, Commanding Officer of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, University of Pennsylvania Police Department

- Maureen Rush retired in December 2021 as VP of Public Safety at the University of Pennsylvania
- Captain McCoy reminds us that carjackings are on the rise in West Philadelphia and in the neighborhood, and notes that there are certain precautions we can take like not lingering in parked cars, parking in well-lit areas if possible, not stopping for stranded motorists or minor accidents but instead call 911 to report

Committee Presentations

Executive Committee (Richard Moore)

- Richard Moore serves as a member of the consultative committee for selecting the new VP of Safety at Penn. SHCA board members should share any ideas they may have on qualifications and experience to look for in the candidates
- The Preservation Alliance has approached Richard Moore about the Spruce Hill neighborhood becoming a designated Historic District. So far there have been two meetings with Councilperson Gauthier.
- The first meeting included Jamie Gauthier representative Max Weiss, a rep from the Historical Society, and the Philadelphia Historic Commission
- The footprint of Spruce Hill may be too large for staff capacity at the Preservation Alliance which is keen on moving forward with the 2002 plan
- Spruce Hill holds the record for waiting for nomination consideration by the Historic Commission. Developers oppose the historic designation, and have had influence with the past councilperson.
- If the councilperson's office is willing to push/support the nomination then the nomination will go through
- Gauthier is concerned about how the designation could increase the burden on homeowners.
- SHCA may give funds to homeowners to help them keep in line with new requirements
- It would also help if SHCA could provide a resource for people with questions on how to maintain homes in an historic district
- The SHCA Trust has a few thousand dollars for porch renovations in Spruce Hill

Committee Reports

Education Committee (Rebecca Geller-Puchalsky)

- On the horizon is a virtual meeting committee goals
- Becca attended the recent PAS SAC meeting
- Kindergarten enrollment update is coming soon. The school is awaiting translations of the announcements/flyers and the go-ahead from Principal Overton
- The committee recently did a safety walk around PAS with Max Weiss from Gauthier's office

Operations (Chris Bole)

- Nothing new to report. Chris and Andrew will meet for an update on the building

Community Engagement (Alexa Bosse)

- Nothing to report, but they plan to hold a meeting soon.

Beautification Committee (Laura Line)

- First meeting is scheduled for January 25 @ 7:30 pm
- Al Suh to reach out to group to encourage cleanup for MLK Day, and will also reestablish contact with Alan Garry regarding garbage cans. The cleanup group to look at more sustainable solutions, and will also plan to target takeout businesses who generate so much trash. Rich Guffanti has contacted Supremo and Alan Garry has helped with outreach to that business about keeping their sidewalks and parking lot clean

Safe Streets

- Evan Johnstone and Eric Santoro have talked about setting up a meeting
- 4200 Pine has been organizing to get traffic calming tools at 42nd & Pine intersection
- The traffic calming project on Woodland Avenue between Baltimore and where Woodland and Chester split. Short and long-term solutions has been proposed. The Design team will begin with outreach, particularly to Safe Streets Committee chair. Julie Bush will organize a call with SHCA.

May Fair (Evan Johnstone)

- At this point, an in-person event is planned
- Leslie Medley requested the May Fair be added to the FOCP Large Events calendar for May 7, 2022
- Some food trucks have gone out of business, so we may need to re-imagine food
- Other changes suggested to accommodate Covid precautions will include eliminating the bounce house and petting zoo
- Evan and Monica to meet to begin planning, and afterward will request permits

Crosstown Coalition (Barry Grossbach)

- Recent meeting's discussion was on the Zoning Board of Adjustment. None of the points discussed by Crosstown Coalition were included in Darrell Clark's proposal to create a council-led Zoning Code Review Commission. Clark's proposal increases the size and professionalizes the Board. The Mayor appoints the Board and the Clark proposal would have the city council approve appointments.

Zoning (Barry Grossbach)

- The recent meeting was canceled because the applicant was not ready.
- 44th Street demolition plans: Zoning was changed to residential, and the owner plan to go to Zoning for a variance. Barry is guardedly optimistic that the buildings will remain.

Spruce Hill Trust Report

- In January, the Trust must submit a slate for the coming year.
- An objective is to talk to about development on major commercial corridors and come up with a coherent plan
- Motion to approve the Trust slate (listed below) is passed:

President—Barry Grossbach

Ex. Veep—Leslie Medley (bylaws provision)

Secretary—Stephen McCoubrey

Treasurer—Michelle Robinson

Current Members: Gregory Montanaro, Justin McDaniel

Suggested Additions

David Forde— Community Outreach—USciences and member FOCP board

Justin Kaplan—resident—43rd & Chestnut and member SHCA zoning

Monica Calkins— resident S. Melville—Locust to Walnut—SHCA secretary

- The IRS has pulled the Trust's 501 (c)(3) claiming the Trust has not filed the returns for the past 5 years, though the Trust has in fact filed every year. The Trust has hired a law firm to manage the case. Those same attorney's have advised the Trust Board to adopt a Conflict of Interest statement.

Other (Andrew Richman)

- Update on the slip and fall in Clark Park lawsuit in which SHCA was named: SHCA has been dismissed from the suit
- The SHCA Board insurance has been renewed
- Andrew to check whether conflicts of interest are addressed in our bylaws.