**SCHENLEY FARMS CIVIC ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING 2019**

**Date: May 1, 2019**

**Location: Oaklander Hotel, 10th Floor, William Rom**

This is spring annual meeting during the 99th year of SFCA. The meeting was called to order by Board President Janet Squires at 7:03. She started with a brief reminder that next year would be the 100th year. She then showed photos of last year’s meeting where Mayor Bill Peduto appeared in order to honor Norm Cleary after 6 years of SFCA presidency, for Norm’s many contributions to the City and the Community. May 2 of last year was “Norm Cleary Day” in Pgh, which was an amazing honor. Janet mentioned however that there were problems with last year’s meeting, including overrunning time schedule, tension noted by attendees, and acts of rudeness to the guest speakers. She reported that the Board has been working on Policies and Procedures intended to facilitate improved meeting experiences, including adherence to schedules and keeping the business meeting open only to members. Also she appealed for strict enforcement of ‘rules of civility’.

***7:00 – 8:00 Initial part of meeting includes a roster of invited guest speakers.***

Invited Guest speakers:

**University of Pittsburgh**

**Paul Supowitz Vice-Chancellor of Community and Government Relations**

Mr. Supowitz explained how Pitt had recently completed a very comprehensive Institutional Master Plan (IMP) which they hoped could set the stage for the next 10, then 25, years. They are currently holding a series of five Community meetings. The first three have been attended by SFCA representatives and other neighbors. The 4th evening meeting will be on May 2 and focus on “neighborhood enhancement strategies”, which is the new name for neighborhood preservation. A link to the internet for the plan was available but not accessed, and neighbors were strongly encouraged to review on their own and informed of the links. Mr. Supowitz mentioned the intent to have the IMP ready for consideration by Pgh City Council in late summer or fall of 2019. He stressed repeatedly that the IMP is the high-up vision of potential buildings and traffic patterns and improvements for students, but actual details of specific projects will need to go through a development design process, which will include opportunity for considerable communication with neighborhood groups. He explained that he and other Pitt leaders were very aware that SF neighborhood has a major interest in the design of the building for One Bigelow, which will be a major undertaking as it is the last large undeveloped area near the campus. He talked a little about transportation issues, and stressed that Pitt was committed to maintaining parking space availability at the current level, with the intent of controlling automobile congestion on the streets. He mentioned plans to help students and staff use public transportation and shuttles. Ending comments were about the soon-to-start changes on Bigelow between the Cathedral of Learning and the Student Union. Some of the changes include building a center median, limiting traffic to single lane each way but having turning lanes, changing the pedestrian crossing to the middle, improved landscaping, change shuttle stop sites. He mentioned that Pitt has committed to having a live crossing guard to help with traffic flow, especially at class change times.

**City of Pittsburgh**

**Grant Gittlin Assistant Chief of Staff, Mayor’s Office**

During introductions, it was noted that current Councilwoman Erika Strassburger is on maternity leave. Mr Gittlin kindly appeared as a substitute to give an update of City activities. A major focus has been introduction of legislation intended to control violence from firearms (referencing the horrific shooting of October 2018 which targeted the synagogue Tree of Life and ended in the death of 12 innocent worshippers). He mentioned the upcoming court battle anticipated, as firearm groups have vowed to challenge the city’s authority for such legislation. Another topic was the current problem of lead in old water pipes, and he mentioned the use organophosphates to help seal lines, and well as on ongoing plan to replace old pipes include those between street and individual homes. When asked, this lead pipe replacement has not yet in the Oakland neighborhoods. He mentioned other current challenges, including retention of skilled public staff in a strong job market, progress made in streamlining city operations such as permit licensing, ongoing efforts to modernize technology, and recent laws to improve the safety and amenities of pregnant women.

**Moira Eglin Chief of Staff, Councilwoman Strassburger’s Office**

One of the attendees mentioned ongoing problems with high water levels on Center Avenue, stating city employees were responsive and trying to help but the problem has not resolved. At this point, Moira Eglin introduced herself, and talked about water issues in general in Oakland. She mentioned current concerns that some leakage may be coming from the Veteran’s Hospital atop the hill, and stressed there was ongoing efforts to find causes and solutions.

**Felipe Paloma from the Department of City Planning**

Mr. Paloma gave a brief overview of the newest plans for organizing sections of the city to enhance participation in the process of city design and project planning. He explained that there would be neighborhood advisory committees and suggested SFCA might wish to seek a seat. Oakland is in the section headed by city staffer Derek Dauphin. Mr. Paloma mentioned the commitment to solicit grassroot input on deciding priorities for projects.

**Officers Griffin and Shifren**

Two Zone 4 police officers were in attendance, and were introduced and asked to say a few words. Officer Griffin mentioned that Oakland had some unique challenges compared to other neighborhoods but that statistics did not show major problems. Officer David Shifren is the Community Liaison, and mentioned that anyone can sign up for ‘Weekly Snapshot’, a free weekly crime update for all of zone 4. Both mentioned the importance of neighbors watching out for neighbors and calling police with concerns.

**UPMC**

**Doug Spies AIA MHA Director of Planning and Design, UPMC**

Mr. Spies mentioned that there had previously been detailed plans to build a new facility at DeSoto/Fifth, on the site of the now demolished Children’s Hospital. The original plan had been distributed widely, and the timetable was to start in 2016 and be completed by 2020. However, everything is now on hold, as UPMC is building two other facilities outside of the Oakland area. Mr. Spies mentioned that the plan is to re-consider the entire project in 2022, and that it would again start with a new design plan. Several members of the audience asked about construction issues, and specifically the heliport. There was some discussion of different options. Mr. Spies mentioned that there would likely be a temporary flight change due to construction cranes, likely for about one year, and then progress to the final plan. None of this has been decided. Mr. Spies acknowledged that SF residents were extremely interested in this, because a prior change of heliport sites without prior community input or notification had created a major noise problem. He verbalized several times that SFCA representatives would be aware of and involved in the heliport issues when they arose during construction.

**Oakland Planning and Development Corporation**

**Wanda Wilson Executive Director**

Ms. Wilson explained her organization as a non-profit Community Advocacy effort, representing neighborhoods and businesses of Oakland, ongoing since 1980. She explained their role in organizing and advocacy, as the base for development review (they are a newly designated RCO, registered community organization), community outreach and involvement. They head up monthly meetings including COR (Coalition of Oakland Residents) and Oakwatch (Oakland code enforcement project). Further, they are focused on housing, including affordable rental housing, responsible landlordship and involvement with the Oakland Community Land Trust which has refurbished some properties to attract committed neighbors. She mentioned their Jobs program and financial coaching, as well as numerous Youth career focused educational and mentoring efforts. Ms. Wilson mentioned the availability of trash receptacles being made available at cost for all residents. She promoted their upcoming fundraiser June 7, which is an evening of story telling events called the ‘Stories of Oakland’.

***Second hour of meeting focused on business of Civic Association, started at 8:08***

Janet Squires gave a brief history of the SFCA organization, reflecting on the efforts of the amazing visionary F F Nicola. After the initial neighborhood development, which began 1906, the SF Overseeing Company ended in 1920 and residents began their own civic organization. Janet reviewed briefly the current structure, whereby 9 volunteer neighbors serve on the board for three year terms, and who generally act as representatives of the neighborhood.

The first agenda item was to acknowledge the three board members who were finishing terms: Jean Francois Richard, Michael Vanyukov, Shirley Cassing. They were acknowledged and thanked and given small token gifts …. winter hats with a cow motif.

Elections to the SFCA Board were then held. Long-time resident Andy McSwigen presented the slate of three candidates identified by the Nominating Committee.

This included:

Shirley Cassing (221 Lytton; long-serving treasurer),

Liz Frame (4360 Centre)

Laura Waxman (4154 Bigelow)

These three were elected by acclimation.

Janet mentioned the prior minutes had been sent by email two weeks earlier. Shirley Cassing gave treasurer report, saying account had approximately $19,000. She mentioned dues were $50/annually and mentioned the major expenditures which included money for a revised website and support for two meetings last year. Both reports accepted by acclaim.

Janet described the current description of Board duties: (1) Organization, (2) Government and Institutional Relations, (3) Oakland Issues, (4) Historic Neighborhood Compliance, (5) Zoning compliance, (6) Safety and Parking, (7) Communication/ Website

Reports from Board Members:

1. Government and Institutional Relations (Norm Cleary): Norm started with comments about new stoplight currently being installed at confusing intersection of Centre and Bigelow, a project supported by SFCA since 2016. He referenced the UPMC construction plans, which are currently on hold. The new Oaklander Hotel had two issues which required negotiations and input: (1) a problem with high intensity lighting around the top floor, which has been addressed and is now lessened, (2) plans T-Mobile developed to place antennae atop this hotel. In this case, the HRC referred the T-Mobile reps to solicit input from SFCA, and Norm’s tremendous expertise was highly sought and valued. Norm showed photos of the proposed current plan, which puts these antenna near the projecting penthouse structure, a plan which greatly diminished their visibility from the original idea of four corner towers. There were no objections from the attendees. Janet later commented how this was a excellent example of how the SFCA works to protect neighborhood interests, and also the respect SFCA gets from HRC. Norm ended with emphasis on the ongoing process of the UPitt IMP. He encouraged anyone interested to attend a May 2 community meeting, where the topic was Neighborhood Enhancement Strategies.
2. Oakland Issues (Lynn Sisto): Lynn reported that she represents SFCA at monthly COR meetings, along with neighbor Blithe Runsdorf. Lynn has learned a lot about the challenges and priorities for other neighborhoods of Oakland. She is aware of and will be following the City Planning effort for grassroot input. There was brief reference to a Walnut Capital Development currently proposed for Forbes and Halket, which has generated controversy due to its size and limited number of parking spaces.
3. Parking and Safety (Mary Cooper): Mary mentioned the status of Residential Parking Permit program. She was unable to learn how many patrols are made, but reports there are an average of 39 citations given out monthly and they vary greatly from month to month. Re Safety, Mary has talked with Zone 4 police. In general, they report quite low crime rates, especially for violent crimes. One area of markedly increased concern is the safety of prayer activities, following the horrid Tree of Life synagogue event of 10/18. It appears that some Houses of Prayer, especially the Islam Center and Rodof Shalom, are increasing some security measures liked cameras and locked doors and considering need for armed guards.
4. Website/Communication (David Rogers): David has volunteered to serve as Editor of website, and has been very involved in the revamped design. The website was opened on the screen, and he succinctly showed and discussed the organization: section 1 for General Information, especially useful for newcomers and potential buyers; section 2 as a blog for communication; section 3 as a repository for history data; section 4 as a password-protected site for communication between neighbors which are less applicable to any general viewer. David expressed his enthusiasm especially for the History Section, and hope to involve others in this effort. He encouraged anyone to write him as editor@schenleyfarms.org.
5. President Report (Janet Squires): Janet thanked the current Board members and expressed gratitude that so many were accepting and fulfilling various tasks, creating a real team effort. She emphasized how continued efforts are needed for these ‘routine’ activities. New issues to be addressed over the next year include the following:
* Efforts to continue developing the website, especially in this 100th year of SFCA. Foci will be the History Preservation section, improved communication, development of the neighbors-only section
* Plans to apply for RCO status (residential community organization). This is a Pgh City idea; once certified, any developer in the nearby geographic area needs to assure input from and collaboration with the RCO
* Continue an October educational/social event, focused on ‘historical roots’
* Explore the idea of enhanced inclusion of neighbors on Centre and SF Terrace. Consideration to be given to need for change of Bylaws.
* Staying focused on involvement with plans for One Bigelow site, with U Pitt

New neighbors were welcomed. These include:

Ann Cudd and Neal Becker 219 Lytton

Liza Dwyre and Ian Watson 218 Tennyson

Melanie and Lance White 203 Tennyson

Liza and Ian were in attendance and said a few words of introduction.

Voices from the Neighborhood

1. Bllithe Runsdorf gave a brief report about her long-standing duties as election judge. She introduced other members of the election board. She mentioned the upcoming May 21 primary, and offered to help with any issues. Blithe also gave some updated information about street trash pick-up issues.
2. Laura Waxman was newly appointed to the Board, and reported she has a special interest in developing a fun and useful History section on the website. Laura is particularly interested in completing ‘oral histories’ with some neighbors who are long-term residents and may have unique and valuable memories. She encouraged participation and is anxious to include others who are interested. Her contact is lswaxman@gmail.com.
3. Caddy Harper, Kimo Jung and Lynn Sisto mentioned their plans to continue to spearhead a “front porch evening” social event, which was tried in 2018 and was very well attended. The idea is for neighbors to visit and enjoy each other with/without food, mainly by strolling and interacting. The date is Thursday August 8.

The meeting ended at 9:05.

Respectfully submitted:

Janet Squires

Addendum:

Board Members for 2018/19 are:

Janet Squires (President), Shirley Cassing (Treasurer), Norm Cleary, Carroll Quinn, Lynn Sisto, Mary Cooper, David Rogers, Liz Frame, Laura Waxman.

 

