

Washington Square West Civic Association

Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors

February 13, 2024

The meeting held via Zoom was called to order at 7:01pm Eastern Time by Tami Sortman, President of the Association.

The following Directors were present:

- Jonathan Broh
- Peter Coe
- Sukrit Goswami
- Casey Kuklick
- Andrew Ferrarelli
- Andrew Jones
- Richard Le
- Katie Low
- Drew Moyer, Secretary
- Russell Richie
- Marisa Shaaban, Vice President
- Tami Sortman, President
- Deb Sweeney

Absent:

- Robert Sher, Treasurer

Ms. Sortman welcomed members and attendees and described agenda topics including guest speakers at the meeting. She reported on a walk through the neighborhood with Councilmember Squilla and two people from the Commerce Department. The group met with restaurant and store managers and spoke to the Councilmember regarding empty storefronts (especially on Chestnut St.), trash, Big Bellies, and other issues. There was mention of a trash compactor for the neighborhood as a pilot program.

Ms. Sortman reported on the Historic District application and that revised paperwork was approved by the Philadelphia Historical Commission. The next step will be sending out letters to all property owners. A public hearing will be held in 30 days following notification of property owners by mail.

Mr. Moyer offered to provide a verbal summary of the meeting held on January 9, 2023, and it was decided to circulate the minutes of that meeting with those of this meeting for approval at the same time.

David Wagaman of Washington Square West Trust introduced himself and the organization. He noted that the Trust is a 501(c)3 non-profit. Initial funding of the Trust came from sale proceeds of land where an Acme and CVS are located, and proceeds from parking lot operations there. The Trust makes grants to the neighborhood, helps to sponsor clean up days, provided funding for the Historical District application, Seger Park, McCall School, and other neighborhood causes. Its mission is to promote safety and security in Washington Square West. There are standing grants for fruit bearing ginkgo tree removal, tree stump removal, and street façade lighting. In discussions about potential projects, Mr. Wagaman agreed to consider a grant relating to the Big Belly replacement project.

More information is available at www.washwestsquaretrust.org. They are looking for ideas for new standing grants and prefer capital projects over operating expense items such as street cleaning. Mr. Wagaman invited ideas for grants from community members.

Philly Bike Action was introduced and represented by Jessie Amadio and Caleb Hotmeyer, Board Chair. They explained that the organization is a grassroots, all volunteer non-profit organization dedicated to making streets safer for bikes. They have 500 online members. Their current issue involves parking in the bike lanes on Spruce Street and Pine Street. They requested support in advocating for loading zones and to replace No Parking areas with No Stopping. They requested that members write in support of these matters to the City's Office of Transportation Infrastructure (OTIS) and Councilmember Squilla.

Deb Sweeney, representing the community gardens, introduced Roberta Camp who

proceeded to describe an irrigation system proposal for the South Street Community Garden.

After discussion, and upon motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously approved to support the irrigation project to enable the South Street Community Garden to pursue funding for the project.

Peter Coe reported that the Committee on Trash and Cleaning held its first meeting. Its focus is on what can be done in the community from a bottom up approach instead of from the top down by the City. The Committee plans to solicit volunteers from residential blocks. He encouraged residents to identify and recruit Block Captains and explained that more information about Block Captains can be found on the City's website. The Committee also has an initiative to identify additional sources of funding.

Jonathan Broh reported on zoning matters:

1. 700 Rodman Street – A fence gate was installed inappropriately. The property owner acknowledged the mistake and will return to the Zoning Committee to correct the action. No action required at this time.
2. 800 Market Street – This is a large parking lot seeking a variance for the next two years. The Committee recommends non-opposition on the basis that a well-maintained parking lot is better than other potential uses or vacancy. The property is owned by the Goldberg Group. Councilmember Squilla indicated that this is the last time that he will support the variance for continued use. Upon motion duly made and seconded, the Board voted unanimously for non-opposition.
3. 708 Sansom Street (Jewelers Row) – There were variances requested for parking, maximum FAR, and drive aisle code issues. Mr. Broh noted that the Society Hill Civic Association will vote separately and may have parking concerns. Upon motion duly made and seconded, the Board voted to support the Committee's recommendation of non-

opposition. All Board members present voted in favor of this motion except for Mr. Kuklick who voted against it.

Katie Low reported that \$500 was raised so far for the street cleaning fund. The community knitting group will meet on Feb 20 from 6-8pm in the community room at Starbucks at 12th and Walnut Streets. Plans are underway for a community plant exchange on April 13 and 14. Russell Richie noted that new membership promotional materials are being developed.

The first meeting for Vision Zero is scheduled for Monday, Feb. 26 at 6pm. This will be a Zoom meeting. A link is included in the ePost.

Richard Le reported on public safety and announced the “Eyes and Ears” Delancey Square Town Watch training to be held from 6-7pm on February 20, 2024.

A member raised a question about the Association’s actions regarding the proposed arena. Numerous comments and questions on the proposed 76ers arena were raised by members including whether the Association will make a public statement of position. Ms. Sortman responded that a statement on the work of the Association will be issued soon. More information, including studies commissioned by the City, is also forthcoming.

There being no further business, a motion was made, seconded, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Drew A. Moyer
Secretary