



*To Preserve And Promote Our Historic Lifestyle*

**Federal Hill Neighborhood Association  
General Membership Meeting Minutes  
June 18, 2013**

| <b>Date</b>   | <b>Start Time</b> | <b>End Time</b> | <b>Minutes Completed By</b> |
|---|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| June 18, 2013<br>Christ Lutheran Church   | 7:08 pm           | 9:00 pm         | Ginny Gerhart               |
| <b>Attendees</b>  |                   |                 |                             |
| Approximately 25 Attendees  |                   |                 |                             |
| <b>Agenda/Main Issues Discussed</b>   |                   |                 |                             |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Call to order</li> <li>2. Letter to Liquor Board from Md. General Assembly Senator Ferguson, and Delegates Hammen, Clippinger, and McHale—Eric Costello</li> <li>3. Overview 2013 Md. State Legislative Session—Senator Bill Ferguson</li> <li>4. Grand Prix Community Impact Funds Presentations—Gayle McClure</li> <li>5. Casino Local Development Council Funding Priorities—Eric Costello</li> <li>6. Cross Bar Update—Keenan Dworak-Fisher &amp; Eric Costello</li> <li>7. Treasurer’s Report in writing—Gayle McClure</li> </ol>  |                   |                 |                             |
| <b>Letter to Liquor Board from Md. General Assembly Senator Ferguson, and Delegates Hammen, Clippinger, and McHale—Eric Costello</b>  |                   |                 |                             |
| Eric briefly discussed the letter the Senator and three Delegates sent to the Baltimore City Board of Liquor License Commissioners (BLLC) requesting that the BLLC reject any transfer or expansion of a liquor license in the Cross Street Market area unless licensee and community organization agree to specific conditions outlined in a signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).   |                   |                 |                             |
| <b>Overview 2013 Md. State Legislative Session—Senator Bill Ferguson</b>  |                   |                 |                             |
| Senator Bill Ferguson reported on a successful & productive legislative session & discussed the following six accomplishments:  |                   |                 |                             |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Passing Baltimore City’s 21st Century Schools Facilities Initiative: Baltimore has the oldest school facility stock in the state, with no new public schools having been built in 40 years. Families are the basis of neighborhoods; the key link to attracting &amp; keeping families in the city is providing a good education. The initiative enables the investment of \$60 million over 30 years to fund construction of 15 new facilities and renovation of 35 other schools during the next 5 to 7 years. Funding sources: \$20 million each from the Baltimore city government and the City Schools funds and \$20 million/year from the state lottery for 30 years.</li> </ol> |                   |                 |                             |

2. Passing a fiscally responsible budget. Md. is one of only 9 states to maintain a Triple A bond rating. Md. balances the budget every year and is known as a top state for how we manage our fiscal house.
  3. Passing the Governor's Firearm Safety Act of 2013. The vast majority of gun violence results from straw purchases; the new act requires finger printing & background checks. The act also improves licensing and recordkeeping, requires firearms training, reduces magazine capacity, & creates penalty for not reporting lost or stolen guns. Gun crimes can now be linked back to gun owners. The act covers gun purchases only in Maryland. Approved buyers can get as many guns as they want.
  4. Passing the Transportation Infrastructure Investment Act of 2013, which involved raising the tax on gasoline. Without the act, by 2016 the transportation trust fund would only be able to cover maintenance of transportation infrastructure. The fund, financed by the gasoline tax, has lost value because cars are more fuel efficient, resulting in less gas being purchased; the tax had not been raised since 1992.
  5. Passing the Campaign Finance Reform Act of 2013, requiring increased disclosure by expenditure groups, closes contribution loopholes & increases penalties on violators.
  6. Passing a liquor license revocation bill. Formerly, when the Liquor Board closed an establishment because of violations, the BLLC would let the violating bar stay open pending an appeal. Now, it's up to the appellate court to grant a stay of the decision, not the BLLC.
- Liquor reform question: why didn't the Senate go further with the issue? Senator Ferguson: Maryland's strong liquor lobby in Annapolis makes alcohol issues hard to deal with.
  - School funding question: when would school construction begin? Senator Ferguson: an MOU was being created to lay out a schedule and to decide what schools would be worked on first.
  - Campaign finance question: does the law have an effect outside of Maryland. Senator Ferguson: The new law can only regulate state elections.
  - Firearms safety question about Garrett Co. saying it's not going to obey the gun law. Senator Ferguson: the governor will likely write an executive order to give Garrett Co. 0 dollars for various appropriations needs.

**Re BLLC problems:**

- Question about BLLC ineptitude. Senator Ferguson: Read the BLLC audit. The BLLC is a state agency because of Prohibition, unlike other industries. There's a state BLLC-city enforcement conflict. The BLLC has 2 parts. The 3 commissioners are appointed by the state and work part time. The liquor inspector staff members are civil servants. On the positive side, there have been some personnel changes on the board and the governor has established a panel to review operations of the BLLC and it meets tomorrow, June 19, for the 1st time.
- Question: Will the panel's data collection be made public? Answer: I hope so. Ferguson wants to make the BLLC process & inspections transparent, so the public knows when inspections take place and where. However, Article 2B of the state constitution, which governs liquor issues, is incomprehensible.
- Question: Will there be community involvement in the review panel? Answer: I want to

get the Community Law Center involved.

- Question: Will the panel's meetings be public? Answer: The panel doesn't have a specific charge, so the open-meeting law doesn't apply.

Senator Ferguson stated that he's working with Bill Cole on the problem of oversaturation of bars in Federal Hill. An informal working-out process hasn't been effective. It's clear there's not a need for the license in question. Although the number of liquor licenses was 34 in 2003 and is still 34 in 2013, there's been a 40 % increase in patrons, which is not the intention of licensing. However, we can't make a broad line rule against establishments. The city comptroller & the BLLC need to set a plan to enforce the laws already on the books. There needs to be an umbrella organization that can speak for all the neighborhoods and negotiate with the Federal Hill Hospitality Association, a single voice to return balance between liquor consumption & the community. The bottom line should be that without a signed MOU there shouldn't be an expansion of a license.

- Remark: FHHA is voluntary, so the organization has no clout with bar owners who are not members. The community is dependent on pro bono legal help & the CrossBar group has money. Ferguson agreed FHHA was not as powerful as he had thought.
- Question: Can't we use a baseline criteria like restricting the # of bars per square mile. Answer: No it has to be done by street boundaries or election ward and precincts.
- Question from Keenan: The current system puts pressure on volunteers. The BLLC is delegating responsibility to the community to deal with the liquor issue. Isn't there a better way? Answer: Ferguson doesn't know of another way to deal with the issue.
- Question: What leverage do we have? How do we know an establishment is following an MOU? What mechanism is in place to enforce an MOU? Answer: There is no mechanism. The BLLC is 3 members. We need a long-term solution. Fells Point has reached a point of harmony. They found a way to rebalance the neighborhood. Enforcement is important.
- Question: Are we powerless against the BLLC? Who does the BLLC answer to? Answer: There've been personnel changes in the BLLC, which should help. The Circuit Court of Appeals is the only body above the BLLC.
- Question: What was the tipping point that got Fells Point to reach a state of harmony with the bars? Answer: The Fells Point Task Force, a community association umbrella group, got a law passed limiting bar occupancy to 150 patrons. The task force got owners of establishments to the table. In Fells there are still problems, however.

Senator Ferguson stated that we must go into the BLLC hearings with contingency plans in place. The BLLC might send the two opposing groups out into the hallway to negotiate. We must know what a negotiation would look like.

### **Grand Prix Community Impact Funds Presentations—Gayle McClure**

Gayle reported that there were four proposals for spending the \$5046 of available Grand Prix Community Impact funds:

1. 2 Girls and a Shovel—purchase and install 3 pet waste stations (2 in Federal Hill Park, 1 in Robert Baker Park) \$1200. Maintenance is separate.

2. Churchill St. Proposal—Contribute to the mural on E. Churchill for \$1500.
3. Covington Home Owners Association—Pay for plantings on Key Highway for \$1305.
4. Digital Harbor High School Community Garden for \$1500

The total of \$5505 was approximately \$500 more than the amount of \$5046 available.

**Presentations:**

2 Girls & a Shovel. They would install 3 dog waste containers, at \$400 a piece, in strategic locations. Pet waste runs into the harbor & the bay. Currently there are no pet waste receptacles. The proposed receptacles would be maintained 3 days a week. The dog bags provided are biodegradable. Gayle stated that FHNA will come up with another mechanism for the \$200/month maintenance. Possible sources: a fund raiser, South Harbor Renaissance, dog owners.

Churchill St. Proposal by Joe Halperin: Wants to put a mural up on the side of the Salvation Army building. It would be a scene of the sky with birds. The Salvation Army is on board with their building being painted; they just don't want to pay for it.

Covington HOA. Gayle represented them. The HOA's request is to pay for a company to do plantings along Key Highway that are resistant to harsh sunlight.

DHHS Community Garden, represented by Jessica Damen. Gayle noted that the garden location is not within FHNA boundaries, but it benefits our neighborhood. Jessica reported that on June 1 50 volunteers put in raised beds. The neighborhood will be able to reap the benefit of the garden. What is needed immediately are an extension of the water pipe now housed inside the school, a hose bib, hoses, and drip hoses. The long-term goal is having a more sustainable source of water by using rain barrels and stands. All labor is volunteer.

Gayle passed out ballots offering four options: 1. accept all proposals, 2. accept all proposals & FHNA would supply an extra \$800, 3. accept all proposals with limited funds, 4. vote against a proposal. The vote was in favor of no. 2.

**Casino Local Development Council Funding Priorities for 2015—Eric Costello**

Eric passed out a survey asking for feedback on how the Casino Local Development Council Funding should be spent. Survey information is available at <http://federalhillbaltimore.org/casino/>. The survey is available online at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/GWFPPTX>.

**Cross Bar Update—Keenan Dworak-Fisher & Eric Costello**

Keenan stated that the BLLC hearing is June 27 at 2 pm, City Hall, 100 N. Holiday St. Bring a drivers license for identification. He asked for as many people as possible to attend the hearing. Arrive at 1:30. He and the other members of the Liquor Committee have been getting petitions signed. So far they have 10 letters signed. More letters are needed & any help is appreciated. He asked everyone to write a letter of opposition stating "I oppose & here's why." He requested we drop letters off at Eric's house at 900 Harden Ct. If we can prove the 50-50 rule, we're done. He doesn't know how long the hearing will take. The Greater Cross St. Group was mentioned as a possible source of support, but Eric stated that it is an informal discussion group.

Question: What happens if the pro bono attorney is sick, is there a back-up? Answer: Yes, a senior partner, her sponsor, will be there and he can stay past 7 pm. Eric cautioned that we not be too optimistic about winning because the BLLC tends to grant requested licenses and

extensions. However, if we lose, we can appeal.

### **Treasurer's Report—Gayle McClure**

Gayle submitted a written report: To date, total income=\$14,661; total expenditures=\$8,603.  
Overall balance=\$31,556.73.

### **Upcoming Meetings and Deadlines**

- a) 06/27, Thu, 2 pm—Liquor Board Hearing for Cross Bar, City Hall Room 215
- b) 06/27, Thu, 6:30pm, LDC Mtg, Leadenhall Baptist Church
- c) 06/27, Thu, 7pm—COP Walk, Porters
- d) 07/02, Tue, 7pm—Liquor Committee Mtg, YWGC
- e) 07/03, Wed, 7pm—Parking Committee Mtg, YWGC
- f) 07/04, Thu, 10:30am—Fourth of July Parade, William Street
- g) 07/10, Wed, 7pm—FHNA Board Mtg, YWGC
- h) 07/16, Tue, 7pm—FHNA General Membership Mtg, CLC