

FEDERAL HILL NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION
MEMBERSHIP MEETING

March 21, 2017

CALL TO ORDER:

Beth Whitmer called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

ADOPTION OF MINUTES:

Motion made and seconded to approve the minutes of the February General Membership Meeting. Passed unanimously.

INTRO. OF SOUTHERN DISTRICT BPD COMMANDER-Major Steven Ward:

Beth Whitmer introduced Major Ward who is the newly assigned Commander for the Southern District. Major Ward thanked Beth and gave some details of his background which most recently included his assignment to the Eastern District--a challenging assignment. He said he will be responsive to our community and provided his cell number: 410-404-9199 and encouraged us to call him, text him or e-mail him. He is also using the Nextdoor site to communicate with the community.

Major Ward reported that extra police are being assigned to the 500-600 blocks of S. Charles due to a recent robbery. Question: what about our problems with incidents with kids? Major Ward explained that the juvenile justice system is not made to punish. He is aware that in January and February the area experienced two carjackings and one robbery. He urged us to let our delegates know about these problems. One example of how our system is broken is that in New York using a handgun is a felony, whereas in Maryland it is only a misdemeanor. Comment: the problem is that the kids just run rampant. Reply from Major Ward: in the last 30 days we have had hundreds of requests for service. Question: How many officers are working? Answer: 15 on a shift. There will an officer between Key and Charles assigned when the kids get out of school (Digital High) and we will work with the school police--they have an officer at Digital High and we communicate with them. Major Ward said that the MTA bus passes are an issue, because the kids pass them around. He stated that the juvenile system is aimed at rehabilitation, not incarceration. Question: Why do I see police sitting in the middle of traffic using their phones. Major Ward agreed, they do that, just like all young people do, but we should understand that, at the same time, their phones are "pocket cops" that they use to check on warrants, licenses, tags., etc. Question: are helicopters being used more for surveillance? Answer: Helicopters are used for routine patrol; where there are crowds, to look at problems with bars, e.g. Question: Are plainclothes officers gone? Answer: Yes, there are no plainclothes officers now. Major Ward stated that he wants to be a part of the planning for bar crawls and he has let DOT know that. As for this year's Irish Stroll on Saturday March 11, although it took two shifts to close from the Irish Stroll, it wasn't as bad as the night before--Friday the 10th.

Beth thanked Major Ward for coming and speaking to us.

COMPLETE STREETS UPDATE-Linda Taylor-Newton (Baltimore City DOT):

Ms. Taylor-Newton explained that anyone can request a "Complete Streets" project. There is a form you can use or you can call. The projects are funded with the portion of Casino money that is dedicated for surrounding communities. The City will ask FHNA if the Association supports a project. Ms. Taylor-Newton explained that the Complete Streets Plan has been prepared in draft and will be updated as projects gets proposed. Question: how much money is there? Ethan Cohen at the City is the contact on this, but about \$600,000 has been set aside; maybe more. There is a project in Federal Hill.

Beth Whitmer explained that it depends on the revenues--\$7.5 million is in the total pot for many, many things. There is a parking survey ongoing now under which a study of supply, demand, turnover, etc. is being finished and which will make recommendations.

Question: How does this match with what the neighborhood has already done?

Answer: The Parking Authority is doing the work. Question: Would there be a chance to

comment? Answer: the report will go to the Local Development Council (LDC) for comment. Question: Who is on LDC, how do they get chosen? Answer: Beth explained there are: 13 members--the seven neighborhoods represented by the presidents of their associations; and the business districts. And there is the South Baltimore Gateway organization, which is an entity created by the State of Maryland. Beth said we really need a meeting to explain all this. She said there was a public hearing on Feb. 26th where this was presented in a lot of detail. Ms. Newton-Taylor explained that in relation to Complete Streets, DOT is responsible for the public right-of-way. If anyone has a question about a particular piece of property we will respond.

Ms. Taylor-Newton said that DOT is going to resurface East Cross Street. and there is the possibility of putting in decorative crosswalks as part of that project is the community wants them at East Cross and Covington; Riverside; and William. Question: Did anyone request decorative crosswalks? What does a decorative crosswalk cost? Answer: \$52,000. Question to Ms. Taylor-Newton: What do you need? Answer: your OK, but understand there will be some inconvenience as the work is done. Question: what is the difference in cost between a regular crosswalk and this kind? Answer: \$12,000 each, but regular crosswalks last only 3-5 years whereas the decorative crosswalks last 7-10 years. We could reject this proposal. Ms. Taylor-Newton explained another project: at the Light & Key Highway intersection, the berm will be removed to open views; there will be traffic calming south of Key Hwy. on Light; tree pits will be opened and replanted by Forestry. Question: Was there an issue with this? Answer: Yes, there was a contract issue--no one had a contract under which the work could be done but the issue is now resolved. DOT will open the pits and Forestry will finish and plant. Question: when will this happen? Answer: we will open the pits soon and planting will be done in the Fall. Question: was there any response from surveys, especially with regard to crosswalks? DOT has normal responsibility for crosswalks and we don't want to push regular specific crosswalks onto special money from the casinos. Ms. Taylor-Newton further explained that a Complete Streets Plan had been completed and there will be a PDF available soon. Comment: the original survey done for complete streets was a disaster. Answer: this is a final plan. The contact at DOT is ethan.cohen@baltimorecity.gov. There are three parts to the plan: a general framework; a resource guide; then chapters for each neighborhood. It is a fluid plan so that changes can be made, so we can advocate for money for projects. Question: is there a website? Answer: Yes. This will be uploaded and will have an excel sheet we can see. Projects will not be approved until the community approves. The site will be at Baltimore city.gov. Give me three days. Ms. Taylor-Newton further explained that the Key Highway/Light St. project is nearly ready for advertisement and DOT will come back with final detail six weeks prior to construction. The old rails in the roadway will be removed and new signals will be put in at Battery and William and resurfacing will be done.

BIKEMORE NEIGHBORHOOD INTRODUCTION-Will Cowan:

Mr. Cowan explained that he is a traffic engineer with the State Highway Administration who was previously with the Baltimore Metropolitan Council of Governments. He is currently working

on bike lane and bike share implementation. There are currently Bikemore stations on Cross St., at Light and Ostend Sts. and on Fort Ave.

Efforts are underway to try to get people to give up their cars. One example of a recent project is on Maryland Ave., where a bike lane was installed and traffic was cut to one lane. He sends information to Beth to put "join Bikemore" on the Facebook page. There are currently 20 stations with 200 bikes with the goal to reach 50 stations with 500 bikes. One example of the advantages of more biking is that on 9th Ave. (in N.Y.?) a big increase in business was realized after bike lanes were put in. Mr. Cowan would be happy to receive comments or questions at:

william.c.cowan@gmail.com

HARBOR HILL EXPANSION BMZA HEARING-Becky Royal:

The BMZA hearing was held and the rear setback variance was approved. A group of neighbors is appealing. Others can appeal too. Ms. Royal and her husband have paid for the BMZA transcript so additional cost would be minimal. Can we help in any other way? Any help is welcome--going to zoning. Question: How long do you expect the appeal to take? Answer: 4-6 months. Question: Would the developer take the risk of starting while the appeal is underway? Answer: Probably not, but the time involved might bring them back to negotiating, but it will take a vigorous appeal.

REVISED BYLAWS COMMENTS, REVIEW AND VOTE--Beth Whitmer:

Beth reviewed the handout that compared the existing bylaws to the proposed bylaws. She explained that there were six responses from five members. The comments were considered seriously and resulted in some revisions:

Election of Officers: changed back to membership voting on all officers;

Quorum: 10% for a quorum was not changed (currently there is none) the question was raised whether should it be 20%? We rejected because we were afraid we might be tabling issues too often simply because not enough members showed up for a vote;

Term limits: originally proposed none; changed to allow 3 consecutive terms requiring a twoyear hiatus thereafter;

Terms staggered: half and half

Removal of officers changed to require a vote of two-thirds of the membership;

Committees will not be chaired by Directors

Questions: Is there a Senior discount? Answer: No we aren't following the current bylaws which say all pay. Question: Should all pay? Answer: We can discuss that before Dec. when the new fiscal year will begin. Question: The voting waiting period is abolished?. Answer: There was much discussion about this! We concluded that the 30-day rule is a detractor. What is the benefit? The Community Law Center Attorney advised it was odd to have such a waiting period.

Question: What about notice for a vote? Answer: While there is notice for meetings, at a meeting, anyone could make a motion, so things could arise. Question: What about proxy voting? Answer: We rejected because that is very hard to administer.

Question: Shouldn't policies for running meetings be approved by membership?

Answer: The Board is elected to be responsible for running the organization and needs to be able to tweak procedures. Question: Doesn't the membership have a vested interest in this?

Discussion: There is always the opportunity to change the procedures. The bylaws should specify that the members have a say. There is Maryland law that applies here. Also the CLC attorney brought it to our attention that it is more the common practice to have procedures spelled out but not in the bylaws so the organization doesn't get mired down with detail.

Motion made and seconded that meeting procedures will be approved by the members.

Vote: 11 in favor; 12 opposed; 3 abstain. The motion fails.

Comment: in view of the close vote, Ted Millspaugh offers to contact an expert in the State that specializes in this sort of thing and Ted will report back on what he says. Beth will also go back to the CLC. There is general agreement that more research is needed on the procedures issue after which we can revisit it.

Motion made and seconded to adopt the amended by-laws: officer election by members; officer removal only with 2/3rds vote of members; term limits of 3 2-yr. terms, then 2-yr. hiatus; 10% quorum for a vote; and remove directors as chairs of committees.

Vote: 27 in favor; 1 opposed; 1 abstain. The motion passes.

NEW BUSINESS:

St. Paddy's Day "Stroll". Members reported on problems with the "Stroll". Poultney St. was a problem because the traffic wasn't changed to take account of the closure of Cross, but as

far as noise, Poultney was worse on Friday night; during the "Stroll" there were loud and obnoxious drunks in Maria D's; vomiting on the street; 311 had no idea how to direct a complaint to the Liquor Board; someone was going to the bathroom in the alleyway leading to the West St. garage; the crowd was largest on the Charles Street side around Mother's and Banditos; a drunk girl falling in the street (friends got her up and out of the street); Cross St. Market was deserted; one Charles St. business owner said "I always close early when there is a crawl". DigiBall--Jessica Damen reminded everyone of the upcoming DigiBall to raise scholarship money for Digital High students who have already been accepted to college.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 8:41 p.m.

Submitted by:

Betsy Homer

Secretary