

**Federal Hill Neighborhood Association**  
**General Membership Meeting**  
**Tuesday, September 15, 2020**  
**(via Zoom)**

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Beth Whitmer called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

There were 100 participants on the Zoom call. Many people could not join because of the 100 participant maximum via Zoom.

**ITEMS OF DISCUSSION:**

The general membership meeting was focused on the violent crime in the neighborhood including the fatal shooting that occurred in Federal Hill Park on Sunday night, September 13th.

Numerous members of city and state government and the Baltimore Police Department were invited to the meeting to share the plans to curb the violent crime in the neighborhood and to answer questions from neighbors. Representatives included:

- Councilman Brandon Scott
- Councilman Eric Costello
- Senator Bill Ferguson
- Delegate Luke Clippinger
- Delegate Brooke Lierman
- Delegate Robyn Lewis
- Linzy Jackson, Recreation and Parks
- Earl Johnson, Recreation and Parks
- Major Conaway BPD

Eric Costello began the discussion with a list of action items to be considered to reduce the crime in the neighborhood which he had already discussed with city leaders. These included:

- Installation of brighter LED lights in Federal Hill Park
- Installation of cameras in Federal Hill Park
- Changing the Federal Hill Park closing time to dusk
- Adding additional signage at Federal Hill Park entrances and exits posting new closing time
- Residential parking permit area 9 prioritized parking enforcement
- Changing the meter times on Key Highway to 24 hour operation
- Baltimore Police Department clearing out Federal Hill Park at closing time
- Baltimore Police Department dirt bike task force enforcement

- Adding speed bumps on Warren Ave. and Battery Ave.

Other ideas that were considered but were determined not to be feasible were:

- Removing park benches from Federal Hill Park
- Locking the Under Armour basketball court
- Department of Transportation and Department of Public Works blocking Warren Ave. and Battery Ave. with trucks/equipment

Eric reinforced that Federal Hill Park is an open space for neighbors to utilize but the rules of use of the park need to be enforced.

A neighbor was concerned that changing the meter times to 24 hours on Key Highway will take away needed parking from the neighborhood. He asked if Area 9 parking permits or visitor passes could be an exception to metered parking. Eric stated that he would explore making exceptions for parking permits.

Another neighbor asked how the new hours of Federal Hill Park were going to be enforced if the current closing time is not being enforced. Major Conaway shared that the 11 p.m. closing time was difficult for the Baltimore Police Department because of the 11 p.m. shift change of the police officers. In addition, 11 p.m. is a much busier time for the police because of an uptick in crime during that period. By closing the park earlier, it will be easier for the police to enforce the closing time.

A neighbor asked how these suggestions were determined and if anyone has reached out to other cities to assess what initiatives were effective in reducing crime. Eric shared that several of the ideas had come directly from the Baltimore Police Department and many of these suggested changes have been discussed for several months over the summer.

Major Conaway addressed the Sunday night shooting specifically. He said that the shooting was most likely gambling related and was a targeted attack.

Brandon Scott shared his thoughts on the violent crime in the city. He stated that the city has never had a deep strategy to deal with gun violence. It is not just a resource issue but is an issue that needs to be addressed by the Mayor's office. The City needs leadership to focus on near-term and long-term solutions. Most incidents of violence are the same people – violent repeat offenders – and those are the people that should be focused on every day. The Baltimore Police Department should be focused on a group violence reduction strategy. He also said that there are over 300 police officers performing tasks that could be performed by civilians. We need to put the police officers on the streets focusing on violent crime and have civilians perform other tasks. In addition, there are a lot of calls for service that police officers should not be involved in. The City should also be focused on where the guns are coming from. Seventy-one percent of weapons come from outside the city of Baltimore. The City needs to invest in neighborhoods,

education, substance abuse issues, behavioral and mental health issues, and on the most violent offenders. We need to allow the police commissioner the resources and focus to be successful.

Delegate Brooke Lierman shared that the level of violence all over the city is unacceptable and that the pandemic has had an impact and exacerbated the crime problem. There needs to be a coordinated effort between city, state and federal resources to address the problem. The State Senate passed several priority bills to address the crime issue which were vetoed by the House. The State Senate will continue to push for these bills to be passed.

Senator Bill Ferguson shared that the couple who attempted to help the shooting victim on Sunday night tried to call 911 for assistance but could not get through. That is unacceptable. Commissioner Harrison came from New Orleans where he had the fastest dropping homicide rate in the nation and he was able to reduce record crime. Bill Ferguson reinforced that city, state and federal partners need to work together to address the problem. He stated that he met with Governor Hogan who was about to withdraw funds that could help with the issue. After the meeting, Governor Hogan agreed to maintain the funding. Before the pandemic, probation and parole officers were stationed within the jurisdiction they were responsible for. After the pandemic, these probation and parole officers were working remotely which was not effective. Governor Hogan committed to having these officers stationed within the jurisdictions once again.

Faith Millspaugh is Vice President of FHNA and President of Federal Hill Park residences. Faith has been working closely with Eric Costello, Major Conaway and Beth Whitmer to address the issues in the Park over the summer. Faith shared that she thought things had improved recently and the Park was calmer at night. She stated that we cannot police our way out of the problem in the Park. She and other neighbors of the Federal Hill Park residences had gotten together a list of things that they thought would help address the situation.

- Adding lighting
- Adding cameras
- Closing the Park at dusk
- Enforce the closing time and have police drive by every hour to ensure compliance
- Stop free parking on Key Highway and Covington Street (permits only)
- Address dirt bikes (annoying and dangerous)
- Take control over the Park

One neighbor shared, although things may have improved in Federal Hill Park, there was no improvement on Montgomery Street. A neighbor thought that all of the ideas that have been suggested are good ideas but they have been discussed many times in the past. When will these changes happen? Eric Costello said that he has already received a commitment that officers will patrol the park hourly immediately (except if there are violent crimes occurring in other

locations). In addition, the Mayor has committed to adding lighting and cameras as soon as possible.

Linzy Jackson of Recreation and Parks shared that he is already working on changing the closing time. It will take approximately 2 weeks to obtain updated signage. Earl Johnson is the new community liaison to Recreation and Parks and neighbors can feel free to reach out to him for information.

Delegate Luke Clippinger shared that he lives in the South Baltimore peninsula and is concerned about the crime. He and several others went to Federal Hill Park last night at 11 p.m. to observe. He and other leaders are trying to provide legislative tools for federal, state and city resources to share intelligence and partner in reducing crime. He will continue to work with the delegation to coordinate efforts.

Ross McNutt shared that he runs the air program. He stated that this program has had a tremendous impact by doubling the case closure rate for homicides. He shared that currently they are not contracted to fly at night but they could double the number of cases that they could help solve if they flew at night.

Some neighbors thought that the Park should close at 8 p.m. instead of dusk. Linzy of Recreation and Parks said that he would get input from others and let Beth know what closing time is decided.

A neighbor asked what members of the neighborhood could do to assist with crime prevention. Eric shared the following:

- Encourage neighbors to turn on their porch lights
- Don't leave valuables in your car
- Don't talk on the cell phone at night while walking

A neighbor asked what is being done to address the issue of not being able to get through to 911. Eric shared that the Baltimore Police Department is doing a review to determine the issue with the dispatch process and will get back to the neighborhood with findings.

Other neighbors shared that all of these suggestions have been discussed many times in the past. She wanted a definitive list of what will be done, when it will be done and by whom. Eric Costello agreed to put a list together and provide regular status updates. At the current time, this is the list with very tentative completion times:

- |                            |           |                 |
|----------------------------|-----------|-----------------|
| • Install LED lights       | DOT/BCRP  | 1 ½ to 2 months |
| • Install cameras          | BPD/BC IT | 4 months        |
| • Change park closing time | BCRP      | 1 month         |
| • Additional signage       | BCRP      | 2 weeks         |

- RPP parking enforcement      DOT      1 week
- Change hours of meters      Parking Authority/DOT      1 to 2 weeks
- BPD clear out park      BPD      Immediately
- Dirt bike task force      BPD      Immediately
- Speed bumps      DOT      November or early spring
- 911 issue review      BPD      End of week

Beth Whitmer agreed that a follow up meeting would be held in 2 weeks to review progress on these issues.

ADJOURNMENT: Meeting was adjourned at approximately 8 p.m.