

Passyunk Square Civic Association
General Membership Meeting
Tuesday, February 6, 2018

The General Membership Meeting of the Passyunk Square Civic Association (PSCA) was called to order by President Sarah Anton at 6:34 PM in the South Philadelphia Older Adult Center. Board members in attendance included Sarah Anton, Andrew Stober, Suzanne Tavani, Kristi Buchholz and Jeff Brown. Absent were: Andrew Emma, Henry Sullivan, Monica Montiel and Ilene Wilder.

Sarah introduced Viki Reilly from the Department of Revenue who reported on City tax programs and had forms for residents to complete for applicable programs. The Real Estate Tax Relief Homestead Exemption is for homeowners regardless of income. It reduces real estate taxes by around \$400 per year. There are no age or income guidelines, however, you must own your home. The Low Income Senior Citizen Real Estate Tax Freeze Program is for residents 65 years or older and it does have income guidelines. A single person can make a maximum of \$23,500 a year while a married couple has a \$31,500 maximum. The amount of real estate tax that you pay when you enter the program will continue from year to year unless the property is re-assessed downward. The Real Estate Tax Deferred Program is available to pay back taxes for owner occupants who are 65 years of age or older but it does not have any income guidelines. The Real Estate Payment Agreement Program works out a monthly installment plan to pay back taxes on a property that may be inherited and allows three years to get the property into the person's name.

Viki made two points. First, she emphasized that residents should not ignore City notices about back taxes. She urged people to contact the City as soon as they get this notice. Real Estate taxes are due March 31 and Viki explained that as of April 1 the City can charge additions. After one year penalties and interest are added. This program can waive some of the interest and penalties.

Viki differentiated between the Philadelphia Water Department, which handles water service and the Water Revenue Bureau, which collects the money due. The second point Viki made had two parts: 1. Residents should open their water bill immediately. Check to see if there is a significant increase in the amount of the bill. If there is but you are not using much more water call and have the meter checked. The longer you wait the harder it is to prove that there was a mistake. 2. Check to see if the bill says that it is an estimate. If so, the City is not reading your water meter. When they finally do read the meter you could have a large amount to pay. Viki also mentioned a Hardship Assistance Program, which helps residents pay their water bills and, if you are in this program, penalties and interest are stopped.

If you have a catastrophic loss to your house, the City can discount your real estate taxes, Viki explained. She also said that the Department of Revenue has extended hours at the present time; until 7:00 PM on Mondays through Thursdays.

Sarah indicated that the 3rd Police District has a monthly meeting at 6:00 PM on the first Tuesday of each month immediately before the PSCA membership meeting and invited neighbors to attend. She pointed out the papers on each table which list the PSCA committees and said that we are always looking for help. Sarah also asked that people sign in.

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Sarah referred residents to the monthly Newsletter which just went out. She pointed out that the Eagles parade will take place on Thursday, February 8 up Broad Street and that trash pick-up will be delayed.

Suzanne reported that the next Zoning Committee is Tuesday, February 13 and seven cases will be heard. The large number of cases is indicative of the vibrancy of our neighborhood. The Zoning Committee has been very busy and meets every second Tuesday of the month at 7:00 PM in St. Maron's Church.

Sarah mentioned PSCA coordinates with Garces in a Language Exchange where we coordinate. Residents can attend the meeting every month at a different Mexican restaurant to chat in Spanish and English.

The Art Auction, Sarah explained, is a big PSCA fundraiser. Artists from the neighborhood are invited to participate. This year's Art Auction is scheduled for Friday, April 27 at St. Maron's. There is a call for artists to participate and the deadline is March 9.

Sarah next introduced two speakers. The first was Charlotte Castle of Vision Zero. Charlotte works for the City's Office of Transportation and Infrastructure. She wanted the neighbors to know two numbers: 100 – the approximate number of people killed in Philadelphia every year in traffic crashes; and 4 – the number of children hurt in traffic accidents daily. Charlotte explained that Vision Zero was started in Sweden with the assumption that traffic deaths are unacceptable and preventable. It prioritizes human life over dependability. Charlotte explained that speed is a fundamental predictor of crash survival: the faster a vehicle is going when it gets into a crash, the more likely that an injured person will die. Vision Zero wants: to have a data informed effort, to educate, and to have appropriate enforcement. It looks at re-designing the street system to protect the most vulnerable (children and the elderly). That will create a safer network for everyone.

Charlotte mentioned that Philadelphia is the 26th city in the U.S. to adopt Vision Zero. She indicated that there are over 10,000 vehicular crashes on city streets annually. Roosevelt Blvd. is the most dangerous street in the city. In South Philadelphia, Broad Street, Washington Avenue, a section of 9th Street and Christian Street are also dangerous. Traffic deaths in Philadelphia are higher than New York City, Los Angeles and Boston. Vision Zero's goal is to have no traffic deaths by 2030. So we have a lot of work to do. Vision Zero wants productive investment in neighborhoods with high levels of accidents, usually low income neighborhoods. They identify corridors with the highest rates of fatalities and severe injuries per mile. Fifty percent of severe injuries and fatalities occur on just twelve percent of the city streets. If people want to get involved they should contact www.VisionZeroPHL.com and see resources for neighbors.

In response to a question, Charlotte said that the City has been working on raised intersections on S. Broad Street. It will elevate the cross walk so that drivers can see people better and slow down. She suggested that residents contact their Councilman about street safety. Charlotte explained that Vision Zero has received funding for the safe route to school program.

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Next Sarah introduced representatives of the Network of Neighbors Responding to Violence, which is another City program. They included Yolanda Hughes, Kaitlin Kennedy and Camela Johnson. Yolanda began by explaining that this program does not prevent violence but responds to trauma where violence has occurred. That could include situations from a neighbor on the block dying to someone being shot. They provide intervention to support people after an incident. The Network is for groups not individuals and only goes where they are invited. It has been busy in South Philly supporting school communities. Yolanda mentioned one shooting incident where they were invited to do three different interventions for three different communities. Usually after something happens in a neighborhood, neighbors are the first to help. Network culturally responds to each neighborhood. They conduct training for Violence Trauma Responders and currently have 186 of them city-wide. Anyone can attend the 22 week training program. It is free to residents. Once a neighbor is trained, they accompany the staff until they have become proficient. When staff feels the person is proficient, they are sent out by themselves.

Sarah introduced Officer Ace Delgado of the 3rd Police District who provided information on the Eagles parade. It begins at Broad and Pattison at 11:00 on Thursday, February 8 and he felt it should have moved beyond our neighborhood by about 12:15. He mentioned the Coffee with a Cop program on February 22.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:43 PM.

Submitted by Jeff Brown.