

Minutes from 4-3-12 PSCA General Meeting @ SPOAC

Meeting began at 6:40 pm. Attendance: Approximately 65 people. Board members: Knapp, Zenzola, D'Ippolito, Morris, Emma, Pohlig, Anton. Absent: Wilder, DeCapua.

1. Announcements

- a. **Zoning:** The zoning committee will hear three cases next Tues April 10:
 - i. 1033-35 Tasker St—Subdivision of 1 lot into 2 lots. One lot to be used as single family dwelling, the other to continue use as a previously approved 3 family dwelling. Both parcels refused for open area, lot size, and rear yard depth in R10-A.
 - ii. 617 Dickinson St—legalization of a 4 family dwelling in R10-A.
 - iii. 1131 S Broad (Boot & Saddle)— proposed use as a nightclub requires a certificate in C-2
 - iv. Note: A special meeting will be held on April 4 regarding plans for a sit-down restaurant at 1537 S. 11th Street. Meeting is at 7pm at that location.
- b. **Events:** Volunteers are needed for all of our events, which are:
 - i. April 14—Philly Spring Clean-Up—meet in Acme parking lot, or join other group at 10th Street Laundromat
 - ii. April 21—Tree planting and pruning; meet at Capitolo
 - iii. May 5—PSCA Annual Plant sale at Urban Jungle
- c. **Board Elections:** Elections are coming up, and anyone is free to nominate themself to the board or someone else.
- d. **Food Sponsors:** Thanks to Belle Cakery and Plenty for donating food for the meeting.

2. Education Forum

- a. **General Overview:** Speakers included Lisa Kaplan, Principal at Jackson Elementary; Mike Wang, Managing Director of the Philadelphia School Partnership; Stephanie Feaster, PSCA Education Committee; Ian Moran from Education Voters of Pennsylvania; with Tamar Oded, PhillyCORE Leaders, as moderator. The principal of Kirkbride School was invited but was unable to attend due to school vacation. Also in attendance and recognized were Emmanuel Caulk, Assistant Superintendent, and Zac Steel and Adriana from Juntos.
 - i. Stephanie Feaster detailed the work that the PSCA Education Committee has done at Jackson Elementary for the past three years, noting that the majority of their work occurred before the re-formation of the Jackson Home and School Association (a group similar to a PTA). They would like to re-energize this committee with specific tasks that make sense, working with or with the understanding of the Home and School Association.
 - ii. Ian Moran from Education Voters of Pennsylvania described his group's work in advocating for school funding and offered to train parents and residents on policy and funding issues, as there is less education funding under Governor Corbett, and programs will need to be cut without this funding. Parents and neighborhood folks can appeal to the Governor to restore these cuts. A Rally for Public Education (aka "Philly Mock Bake

- Sale”) will be held on April 12th at 4pm at City Hall, to fight the \$900 million in education budget cuts.
- iii. Mike Wang, Managing Director of the Philadelphia School Partnership, stated that the partnership’s mission is to create more great schools of all types (public, charter, etc) through: 1) convening policymakers; 2) creating and implementing the Great Schools Compact; and 3) empowering parents. He encouraged everyone to sign up for email updates at www.philaschoolpartnership.org.
 - iv. Lisa Kaplan, Principal at Jackson Elementary, discussed her work thus far as Principal for the past year and a half. She spoke about the great importance of community partnerships, and said Jackson’s two main partners are PSCA and Juntos. She stressed that the school is only as good as the community. Jackson has 400 kids (up from 330 last year), with a capacity for 500. These 400 kids represent 29 cultures and 14 languages, which presents a large challenge yet a wonderful opportunity to turn this into an international school. Recent accomplishments include: a collaboration with Ballet X; a visit by Sandra Day O’Connor (promoting the www.icivics.org initiative); a green roof grant; a mural by COSACOSA; a highly motivated music teacher that has solicited many instrument donations; and after-school language classes for adults and kids.

b. Questions and Answers

- i. Regarding the role of parents and the Home and School Associations, Jackson’s is evolving, however their budget is small, around \$100. Other schools, like Meredith and McCall, have Home and School Associations whose budgets are in the thousands. Some HSAs, like Greenfield, have a 501c3 tax status and can do their own fundraising. Ms. Kaplan has had monthly coffee meetings with interested parents and the HSA in the past, and can resume these.
- ii. Jackson is part of the Coalition of Center City Schools, made up of 12 schools, designed to give the schools more autonomy from the School District.
- iii. A representative from the HSA at Nebinger School (6th and Carpenter) stood up and discussed the great strides made at Nebinger in the last few years.
- iv. One of the biggest challenges at Jackson is language translation services, which highlights the need to lobby against state budget cuts, as this will cut back on the limited translation services available.
- v. Another commenter stressed that the Latino parents at Jackson are very involved with the school and the HSA, and though not in attendance at this meeting, regularly attend many meetings (often facilitated by Juntos). The Latino parents also prefer texting as a medium for receiving messages about the school and meetings, rather than email, which is the preferred medium of PSCA. This may represent a major opportunity to bridge the gap between these groups, both of which have the same interest in improving education at our neighborhood schools. A Jackson parent spoke

about her initial trepidation at sending her child to Jackson last year, but she has been very pleased with the experience.

- vi. A teacher from Christopher Columbus Charter School remarked that they are not moving and will be keeping both buildings, and encouraged residents to also get involved at Columbus.
- vii. Annunciation BVM, our local Catholic School, will be combining with St. Nick's, using St. Nick's facilities.

c. Action Items

- i. A discussion was had about what PSCA can do to assist the schools in our neighborhood in concrete ways, including:
 - 1. Put volunteer opportunities at our schools in the PSCA email blast newsletter. For instance, at Jackson, volunteers are needed for many different things, depending on one's interest, skills, and availability. Ms. Kaplan is open to anyone volunteering at the school, though one must pass a clearance process. Particular skills needed include those with music and/or technology skills. Other volunteers could be reading buddies (current program through the Unitarian Church), library aides, or playground supervisors. Ms. Kaplan is willing to speak with anyone about how they might volunteer.
 - 2. Add more info on our website about the school catchment areas, specific school happenings, and market our neighborhood as one with good educational opportunities.
 - 3. Host advocacy training around the school funding issue.
 - 4. Disseminate information on the importance of the Actual Value Initiative to the health of our schools (role of property taxes in funding public schools).
 - 5. Re-group the PSCA Education Committee and determine if the HSA wants to meet with them, and what roles each group might take.
- ii. Volunteers identified include:
 - 1. Deborah Block volunteered to take notes at the monthly coffee with the Jackson principal meeting and email them to the PSCA board each month.
 - 2. Dan Symons volunteered to be the education conduit to help facilitate a possible meeting between PSCA and the HSA.
 - 3. Katie Lavelle volunteered to call all the local schools and get their open house information transmitted to PSCA for one of our future email blast newsletters.
 - 4. Anittah Patrick volunteered to do a one-pager on our neighborhood schools to add to our Welcome Wagon packet we send out to new residents in the neighborhood, so they are better informed about their school choices.