

Passyunk Square Civic Association
General Membership Meeting
Tuesday, April 2, 2019

President Sarah Anton began the General Membership Meeting of the Passyunk Square Civic Association (PSCA) at 6:32 PM in the South Philadelphia Older Adult Center. Board members in attendance included Sarah Anton, Suzanne Tavani, Monica Montiel, Theresa Rose, Bill Gross, Alysea McDonald and Jeff Brown. Absent were: Kristi Buchholz, Henry Sullivan, Christine Knapp and Andrew Stober.

Vicky Riley from the Department of Revenue made a presentation first since she had to go to another meeting. She explained that the Department of Revenue is responsible for collecting all monies due to the City of Philadelphia. Vicky asked what percentage of money owed the City is collected. After people guessed the percent she said that the City collected 96.1% of all money owed. The City has stepped up enforcement to collect money owed. Vicky informed the meeting of City programs available to help people who need them. The first was the Philadelphia Homestead Exemption. That had no income or age requirements and saves a typical homeowner about \$550 on their Real Estate tax every year. The only requirements are that the person must own the property and have lived there for ten years. The only exceptions to receiving the Homestead Exemption is if a person has the LOOP or the ten year tax abatement. If homeowners hadn't applied they should do so by September 13. Once a homeowner applies and are in the program they don't have to apply again. Next was the Low Income Senior Citizen Real Estate Tax Freeze Program. In order to qualify a person must be 65 years or older with a total annual household income of \$27,500 or less for a single person and \$35,500 or less for a married couple. Vicky explained that homeowners can have both of the aforementioned programs.

The third program mentioned was the Owner-Occupied Real Estate Payment Agreement Program. If there is a problem paying real estate taxes the owner occupant can make monthly payments on back taxes. People have to provide proof of residency, proof of income and agree to remain in the home. Next Vicky indicated that there are two water entities in the City: the Philadelphia Water Department, which is responsible for water/sewer, meters and pipes; and the Water Revenue Bureau, which collects money for water service. The City has a program for people struggling to pay their water bill, which will provide a discount based on income. Vicky mentioned three things to look for in your water bill. One, did the bill amount significantly increase? If so, don't ignore it because you will get a shut off notice. And it may be a problem such as water pipe leak or a malfunctioning meter. Two, is it an estimated bill? If you get that the City didn't read the meter and you should call to ask them to get the meter read. Three, check the usage and storm water charges on your bill. Vicky indicated that there were additional resources for homeowners including the Homeowners Emergency Loan Program (HELP) and a no interest loan.

Vicky mentioned the American Water Resources water and sewer line protection program, which insures water and sewer lines for which homeowners are responsible. It costs around \$95.00 a year and she felt it was worth it. Vicky also indicated that between February 1 and April 15 the Department of Revenue has extended hours until 7:00 PM on weekdays and a few hours on Saturday. She suggested that people call after 5:00 PM.

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A question was asked about how much of the property tax goes to the schools. Vicky wasn't sure but said to check the City's web site. Another person said that her real estate taxes increased by \$1,000 and mentioned it was based on the sale value. Vicky explained that the Department of Revenue doesn't establish values but uses OPA's assessments.

Next on the agenda Lieutenant John Landis gave the PSA 3 report. He mentioned that there should be a police meeting one half hour prior to the monthly PSCA meeting. Lt. Landis reported that violent crime in down this past month in PSA 3. However, there have been an increase in burglaries and package thefts. He told residents to make sure their windows and doors are locked.

Sarah gave an April Overview. On April 6 the City is having the Great Philly Clean Up. Monica indicated that PSCA has supplies at Passyunk Garden if anyone wants some. She mentioned that some blocks are doing their own clean-up including Percy Street and 11th Street. Theresa indicated that they will be cleaning Percy Street between 9:00 and 11:00 AM and then doing experimental painting on the surface of the street from 12:00 until 2:30 PM. Theresa invited anyone who wanted to join them to come.

Sarah indicated that the Planning Committee takes a long term view of development in the neighborhood. Karen Thompson, the committee co-chair, said the next committee meeting will be on April 15 at 7:00 PM in Capitolo Playground. They will be updating the mission of the Planning Committee. The committee meets the third Monday of every other month.

Sarah mentioned that there is a sheet with all PSCA committees listed on it and people should get involved if they are interested. She also stated that many development projects are occurring in our neighborhood. Among them are the repaving and reconfiguring of 11th Street between Reed and Christian Streets. The western most side will become a bike lane, next angle parking, then the traffic lanes. There will be a combined meeting with Bella Vista and Hawthorne to discuss this on April 16 at Palumbo Playground. Work on 11th Street is supposed to start in the summer and be completed by the fall. PSCA has a monthly language exchange with the Garces Foundation where residents get to speak and improve their English and Spanish, Sarah said. The language exchange meets on the third Thursday of each month in a different Mexican restaurant. She also indicated that there will be a tree planting on April 27. Eleven trees will be planted. People will meet at Capitolo Playground at 9:00 AM if anyone wants to join. They will also be taking applications for new trees and there is a deadline of May 2 to get them in. A question was raised about dead trees. Sarah indicated that the City will eventually remove the tree stump but if it is a small tree you may be able to rock it to remove the stump. Kay is the new Stoop of the Month Chair. The latest winner is 1425 S. Clarion Street. Houses are judged by curbside appeal.

Suzanne reported that currently four cases are listed for the April 9 Zoning Committee meeting. 600 Washington Avenue, which is for a take-out restaurant with inside seating. 713 Dickinson Street, accessory parking. 1222 Peters Street, a parking garage and 1324-26 E. Passyunk Avenue, four family living units on the second floor.

Sarah mentioned that other major developments include the Municipal Complex at 11th and Wharton Streets, which the City has up for sale. There will be questioning of the proposed

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developers on the project and Karen, Suzanne, Andrew and Sarah will be on the committee to ask questions. Another community meeting will occur in May. Today Civic Design Review Committee heard community concerns about the Midwood development at 9th and Washington.

Love Your Park will occur on May 11, Sarah said. Parks on Tap will take place in Columbus Playground from May 8 until May 12. Sarah stated that there will be a Spanish language meeting about PSCA sometime in May as well. A question was asked about the proposed hotel plan for 13th and Reed Streets but that was rejected by the ZBA.

Sarah indicated that elections for half the PSCA Board occur every year. Nick Ventrola chair of the election committee was introduced. He stated every year one half the board is re-elected. Current Board Members running for re-election are Jeff Brown, Monica Montel, Suzanne Tavani and Sarah Anton. In addition, Patrick Pasquariello and Elizabeth Moselle are also running. The election will be on Tuesday, May 7 between 6:30 and 7:30 in SPOAC. Sarah indicated that the newly elected Board will elect the leadership.

Sarah stated that she contacted the Water Department regarding their construction in the neighborhood. They told her that 10th Street between Dickinson and Tasker is finished, they are just completing the paving and corner ramps. They should start construction on 9th Street between Dickinson and Tasker Streets in the next few weeks.

A question was asked about the Civic Design Review (CDR) and the Midwood development at 9th and Washington, which occurred today. Sarah replied that CDR continued it. PSCA's concern is with parking access and egress on 9th Street instead of Washington Avenue. It appears as if the City Planning Commission (CPC) had recommended that the driveway be on 9th Street. She thought that the issue is more with the City than the developer. Suzanne felt that PSCA should feel good about today's continuance. We pushed back and the CDR Chair heard our concerns, particularly the fact that a precedent will be established for having curb cuts along 9th Street south of Washington. The City has not given any reason why they are insisting on the driveway on 9th Street as opposed to Washington Avenue, Suzanne said, other than it would interfere with the bike network along Washington. The continuance is for 30 days during which we can meet with the CPC and other City agencies to continue to express our concerns. In the meanwhile, neighbors who oppose the driveway on 9th Street can sign a petition against it.

Monica reminded neighbors that PSCA has a street cleaning contract on the numbered streets every other Friday. She urged neighbors to take pictures to show the work and sent them to PSCA.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:28 PM.

Submitted by Jeff Brown