

Brookline Together

Community Meeting Minutes: May 11, 2020

7:00 pm Meeting held via Zoom and Facebook Live

Board Officers Present:

President:	Caitlin McNulty	Membership:	Lois McCafferty / Samantha Melhorn
Vice-President:	Blake Plavchak	Business Development:	Jason Tigano
Secretary:	Ally Bove	Beautification:	Tony Griffith / Lisa Wilson
Treasurer:	Bill Kim	Community Events:	Melissa Kilmer
		Newsletter:	Brock Boutwell

Board Officers Not Present: n/a; all present

Attendance:

11 board member/committee co-chair attendees on Zoom, 20 attendees streaming on Facebook Live

Proceedings:

Meeting called to order at 7:02 pm by Board President Caitlin McNulty.

Correspondence:

- No notable correspondence

Treasurer Report

- Around \$25,000 in main account; between \$1,000 and \$2,000 in newsletter accounts
- Anyone awaiting reimbursement will receive it this week; Bill Kim just mailed checks
- 2019 taxes have been filed

- New: Quarterly reports for each committee will be created so each committee can keep a better handle on where they are relative to their annual budget

Committee Reports:

- Finance (Bill Kim)
 - No meetings have been held recently due to COVID
 - As soon as a meeting is scheduled, the time/date/location will be made public
- Newsletter (Brock Boutwell)
 - Committee has been creating COVID-19 resource guides, being released on social media
 - Likely will create another one once Allegheny County is officially in “yellow” phase late this week
 - Will incorporate info re: Blvd business initiatives (discussed below)
 - Looking for new editor of newsletter
 - Blake will follow up with a friend who has expressed interest
 - New committee member – Katie Murphy
- Membership (Lois McCafferty)
 - 2020-21 business directory content is finalized and sent to printers
 - Distribution will begin on August 8th at Breezefest
 - Membership Cultivation Event has been delayed until fall; more details will follow
- Business Development (Jason Tigano)
 - 2 initiatives:
 - Cash Mob: Seed donation received from a BT business member. Will support businesses that are currently open
 - Loyalty Bond: Similar to a gift card program, in partnership with Urban Redevelopment Authority (who matched the donation) and Honeycomb Financial. Will be run through a web page linked from brooklinetogether.org.
 - If you are a business owner and want to take part in either of these, please contact Jason Tigano (Business Development chair)
- Welcome Wagon (Pam Grabowski)
 - 13 new resident packets in April
 - Notable transfer: 1112 Chelton Ave, purchased \$78,000 in mid-2018, sold February 2020 \$258,000
- Community Events (Melissa Kilmer)
 - Yard sale and Memorial Day Parade are both cancelled due to COVID-19
 - Breezefest is planned and ready to be put into action if permission granted by the City. If the event is allowed to occur, it will occur.
 - Halloween Parade and Brookline Lights Up are scheduled to continue as planned pending any additional challenges posed by COVID-19.
- Beautification (Tony Griffith)
 - Have not met recently due to COVID-19; now that Allegheny County is in yellow phase, they’ll plan to meet later in May.

- Still working on obtaining a shed that Lowes has offered to donate; they have not returned recent contacts but they are of course very busy right now
- Lisa Wilson has samples of replacement bulbs to fix holiday wreaths that are burnt out. The wreaths are stored @ Community Bank, so as soon as the bank is back open, Lisa will go and try the samples and see if one type will work.
- Brookline Together has received a \$1,500 Love Your Block grant from the City to put toward work at the Jacob/Whited site. The grants are on hold right now due to COVID-19 but hopefully will be back in action soon.
- Tree Pittsburgh donated and planted a flowering serviceberry tree for us at the Jacob/Whited site a few days ago.
- Cigarette receptacles are being used! Lisa recently checked and emptied them. Please share the word and encourage people to use them.
 - Will add this info to the next Newsletter and on our social media
- DogiPot bags have been recently refilled.
- More Jacob/Whited updates:
 - Survey of the property is complete.
 - Spoke with civil engineers re: assistance with planning for the property
 - Plan to use 2019 URA NIF grant to create a master plan for the site, including proper stormwater management and understanding environmental impacts of site development
 - Plan to apply for another URA NIF grant (which is the type of grant we received in 2019) and a grant from PA American Water, to help put utilities in and begin site development
 - This does extend the timeline a bit, but will enable us to incorporate a lot of elements into the site that community members have been asking for

Old Business

- Census Grant
 - New plans are in the works to spend our census grant money to promote participation in the 2020 Census

New Business

- Councilman Coghill – Urban Farm, “Overbrook Farms”
 - Goal is to create an urban farm that grows food to be donated to the local food banks
 - Note: This is different from Brookline Together’s project at the Jacob/Whited site. Our project will involve an apiary and a community garden where people can lease plots to grow food or other plants for personal use (not for food bank donation)
 - Brookline Together has had conversations with Councilman Coghill about the two projects can complement each other without creating redundancy. We will continue to have these conversations.

- Councilwomen Kail-Smith and Strassburger have introduced a bill to support using city-owned property for agricultural purposes, particularly to reduce food insecurity in the city
- Councilman's proposed location in District 4: in Brookline Memorial Park, in vacant land behind the lower field. (Note: this particular plot of land is technically in Overbrook, even though it's part of Brookline Park.)
- Scope of Work Proposal has been released to several organizations who have a history of working with the City of Pittsburgh on projects like these
- Initial soil test results were excellent re: lead in the soil. Additional soil testing is forthcoming, to ensure lack of pollutants and gauge what nutrients are naturally available in the soil
- Once an organization is chosen to lead the project, they'll work on site design and will engage all relevant stakeholders (including Brookline Together)
- Funding: Initially, funding could be used that is remaining from capital projects that are completed. Money must be used on city-owned or city-maintained property that provides direct benefit to city residents – this agricultural project would qualify as a proper use for the money.
- Hoping that all city council districts will create similar programs, so that every district contributes food and every district gets the reward.
- City's Dept of Public Works can perform some of the labor required
- Brookline Together was invited and attended a meeting at the site on May 4, 2020.

Announcements:

- The city's paving list has been announced, and paving season is underway. \$15.7 million is being spent. District 4 has approximately 1/8 of the money (and there are 9 City Council districts). Details are here: <https://pittsburghpa.gov/domi/street-resurfacing>. Brookline roads include Shire Pl, Seaton St, Trelona Way, Lugi Way, Midland St.
- The former St. Vincent de Paul Society at Castlegate and Dorchester will begin demolition work in the upper half of that site in the next few weeks. Councilman Coghill's office is communicating with the developer and Mt. Lebanon about it, to ensure residents in the area are protected. An important note: the subcontractor who performed the demolition of the bottom half of the site a few years ago is NOT involved this time. The new subcontractor has been coordinating with residents in the immediate vicinity, and they are receiving all relevant contact information to share any concerns. All residents in that area should be receiving flyers before demolition begins, and a few residents have volunteered to serve as liaisons between the community and the developer and contractors.
- Per the URA, business tenants and landlords are encouraged to be proactive regarding concerns about inability to pay rent during the COVID-19 crisis. Please reach out to URA or other agencies for assistance. Landlords, please do everything you can to retain your tenants and work out agreements with them that enable them to stay in business. Consider contacting your lending institution if your tenants are having difficulty paying rent; your lending institution may be flexible with your payments. More info here: <https://www.ura.org/pages/covid-19>

Additional Questions, Comments, Concerns

- Kona Ice Truck would like to come to the neighborhood! Caitlin will follow up with Heather (owner) about this off-line.

Community meeting adjourned at 8:03 p.m. (motion by Bill Kim seconded by Tony Griffith, all in favor.)

Next meeting:

- Next community meeting Monday, July 13th, 7:00pm, Brookline Teen Outreach