

Brookline Together

Community Meeting Minutes: March 11, 2019

7:00 pm Brookline Teen Outreach

Board Officers Present:

President:	Caitlin McNulty	Membership:	Lois McCafferty
Vice-President:	Bill Kim	Business Development:	Jason Tigano
Secretary:	Ally Bove	Community Development:	Heather Fulton
Treasurer:	(vacant)		
Newsletter:	Brock Boutwell		

Board Officers Not Present: Tony Griffith (Beautification)

Attendance:

All attendees signed in on a sign-in sheet.

Proceedings:

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

Approval of prior minutes:

n/a; the January meeting was informal and no minutes were taken.

Committee Reports:

- Newsletter (Brock Boutwell)
 - Next meeting is next Thursday, 3/21
 - New name of the newsletter is Brookline Now
 - New layout forthcoming
 - Advertising revenue is almost updated; working on generating new ad revenue
 - New issue expected in April or May
- Membership (Lois McCafferty)
 - Next meeting is Wednesday, 3/20
 - 2nd notice to businesses has been sent out

- Community memberships will be solicited via the newsletter and mailings to all addresses we have on file
- Currently at 39 business, 34 community, and 2 “friends of” paid memberships
- Business Development (Jason Tigano)
 - Working on a list of priorities for the committee – trying to collect as much information from BT members and businesses as possible
 - Will develop a fundraising strategy once priority lists are developed
 - PNC building on Brookline Blvd is being sold, and a few other businesses are being renovated
- Welcome Wagon (Pam Grabowski)
 - Sent 19 packets in March
 - Empty ad space in the Welcome Wagon packet due to 824 Consignments closing – will seek new ad revenue, but for now will advertise upcoming cleanup days in that space
 - Right now the account is in the black.
- Community Events (Heather Fulton)
 - Next meeting Wed 3/27 7:00 at Jolina’s (Secretary’s edit: this meeting was later changed to Monday 3/18 7:00 at Jolina’s)
 - Mixer/bar crawl in late May – working on details; let Heather know if you’re able to help plan the event
 - Community Yard Sale June 2nd – new banners, seeking new sponsors
 - Art on the Blvd will be in late June
 - Breezefest is in August
 - Sometime this summer will be adding a new event – Bark in the Park. This will be an afternoon event at either Moore or Memorial park, aimed at dogs and dog lovers. Will have vendors, games, etc.
 - Looking for more volunteers to help plan community events! Please reach out to Heather Fulton if interested.
- Beautification (Lisa Wilson providing report on behalf of Tony Griffith)
 - Short-term goals:
 - Obtain a community shed. Lowes is willing to donate supplies for clean-up days, and Linda Boss has offered to house the shed on her vacant property on the Blvd.
 - Institute “mini clean-up” days on the 3rd Sunday of each month
 - Adopt-A-Plot initiative for the planting beds along the business district. Will be offered to business owners in the vicinity first, then to residents
 - Improve trash can placement on the Blvd to reduce litter
 - Obtain and post “No Littering” signs along the Blvd
- Results of Community and Business surveys (Ally Bove)
 - Have received 70 community and approximately 10 business surveys to date
 - Respondents are overwhelmingly white and middle-class which may not fully represent the true demographics of Brookline. We would like to solicit responses from a greater cross-section of Brookline. We just had the survey translated into Spanish and will begin pushing that on social media.
 - Major take-home points from community survey so far:

- Flooding and snow removal were the primary problems reported at respondents' place of residence
- Residents are very interested in activities such as a farmers market, community events, a food fair, small business events, a CSA, and a dog park
- Residents are most concerned about litter on the ground, unmaintained properties, and cars speeding through the neighborhood.
- Nearly everyone reported being able to access necessary food and services in Brookline. Most travel by automobile to access services, while around 20% report walking or using public transportation
- The businesses that respondents report going to most often are CVS, Pitaland, and Las Palmas
- A large majority of residents would like to see improved facades on the Brookline Blvd businesses.
- Overwhelmingly, respondents desire more sit-down restaurants and non-smoking bars in Brookline. Many also would like a grocery store.
- Major take-home points from business survey so far:
 - Most people reported choosing Brookline for their business because of a personal connection to Brookline or reporting that the location was convenient.
 - Most businesses that responded have only 1 or 2 employees
 - Respondents are interested in assistance with business planning/development, tenant/landlord negotiation, and legal/financial planning.
 - Respondents had mixed responses regarding whether they feel supported in Brookline, but most do envision keeping their business in Brookline indefinitely.
 - Business owners would like more clean-up days and trash cans.

Questions/Discussion

- Question from Alex T: How to achieve Brookline Together's goals and market Brookline to people outside the neighborhood?
 - Ideas: use the newsletter, invite the media to cover positive events in neighborhood
- Questions from Julia M:
 - What exactly will members be voting for?
 - Elections, Brookline Together's official response to any proposed development in Brookline (per the city's RCO legislation), anything that involves budgeting that hasn't already been approved in the current year's budget
 - Do you have to be a paying member to serve on a committee?
 - Technically no. We hope that everyone will officially join if they can afford to, but if not, we certainly would not turn away volunteers.
 - When will a financial report be available?
 - At the next community meeting. We are still working on combining all bank accounts from SPDC and the Chamber of Commerce, and the Treasurer position is temporarily vacant. We will get this straightened out before the May meeting and will have a transparent financial report available for all members to review.

- Question from Paul D: Will the newsletter go to other communities to attract people to Brookline?
 - Great idea! Newsletter committee will discuss. Also, reps from the Mayor and Councilman Coghill's office would like digital newsletter copies, and they'll include relevant information in their communications to constituents
- Question from Linda B: Will Brookline Together continue things like sponsoring a Little League team, which the Chamber of Commerce has always done, and the business directory?
 - We haven't received any requests from Little League yet, but we have budgeted to continue all legacy items and events in 2019.
 - The Membership Committee will discuss the business directory at its next meeting.
- Comment from Rosemarie: Thank you to whoever is helping improve the landscaping along the business district! It looks much better.
 - This is Plantscape. They'll be doing spring and fall cleanups, plus monthly weeding and pruning. Thank you to Councilman Coghill's office for facilitating this and ensuring that the Blvd is being taken care of.
- Comment from Alex T: Concern about pedestrian safety at Brookline Blvd and Stebbins. The city's official response is that the lighting and markings are adequate, but Alex continues to experience vehicles not stopping or slowing for pedestrians crossing the Blvd to get to the bus stop.
 - Discussion – can we convince DOMI (city's Department Of Mobility and Infrastructure) to add a pedestrian crossing sign? Will DOMI provide their data to support their assertion that the intersection is safe?
 - Additional comment: cars parked along Stebbins often block views of pedestrians too.
 - Blake Plavchak from Councilman Coghill's office will reach out to DOMI to try to obtain their data and convince them to reconsider the safety of this intersection.
 - Ernest Rajakone from Mayor Peduto's office said that DOMI could plan to attend a Brookline Together community meeting to allow residents to voice any mobility and infrastructure-related concerns in the neighborhood. The group seemed to be appreciative of this suggestion. Caitlin McNulty said that we will pursue this and try to get it set up for a future community meeting.
- Question: where are the meeting minutes available?
 - On our website, www.brooklinetogether.org
- Question: Is membership still open to join? The website is a little unclear; it looks like you needed to join by March.
 - Yes! We will update the phrasing on the website to make it clear that you can join anytime.
- Announcement from Newsletter committee: The Newsletter is seeking ideas for submissions. Please e-mail Newsletter15226@gmail.com with ideas.
- Announcement from Brookline Youth Hockey: They'd like to team with local businesses to highlight Brookline, especially when they host events at Memorial Park that bring people from all over Allegheny County and sometimes other states.
 - Community Events (Heather Fulton) will help with this!
- Comment from Amy F: There are "no parking" signs at the Rec Center due to the hillside falling away. These parking spaces are needed.

- Response from Blake with Councilman Coghill's office: they are aware of the landslide at the rec center and are hoping to fix it as fast as possible. Unfortunately, there have been a large number of landslides over the last 6 months in Pittsburgh.

Meeting adjourned at 7:51 p.m. (motion by Bill Kim, seconded by Brock Boutwell, all in favor.)

The board went into a brief executive session at 8:18 p.m. to discuss the current vacancy in the position of Treasurer. A 501©3 organization is required to have a President, Treasurer, and Secretary, so this vacancy must be filled immediately. Bill Kim was suggested to fill this position; he can simultaneously serve as Treasurer and Vice-President until regularly scheduled elections at the end of 2019. Bill has a good knowledge of accounting practices and is familiar with using QuickBooks to manage organizational finances. A motion to appoint Bill to the position of Treasurer until the next election was made by Jason Tigano and seconded by Lois McCafferty. Bill accepted the nomination. Bill's appointment to the position of Treasurer was unanimously approved by all present board members. Executive session was ended at 8:22 p.m. (motion by Jason Tigano, seconded by Brock Boutwell, all in favor.)