

Brookline Together Community Meeting Minutes July 14, 2021

Board Officers:

President: Caitlin McNulty

Vice-President: Blake Plavchak

Secretary: Ally Bove

Treasurer: Bill Kim

Finance Co-Chair: Mark Hopkinson

Community & Business Engagement Chair: Melissa Kilmer

Community & Business Engagement Co-Chair: Sami Melhorn

Beautification Chair: Lisa Wilson

Beautification Co-Chair: Blake Plavchak

Attendance: Caitlin McNulty, Blake Plavchak, Ally Bove, Bill Kim, Melissa Kilmer, Sami Melhorn, Lisa Wilson, Sr. Barbara Boss, Gayle Malloy, Joshua Stinebaugh, Jason Tigano, Jessica Benham, Ken McNulty, Cristyn Zett, Eric Williams, Nicole Taxel, Kelli Murphy, plus 9 individuals watching on Facebook Live

Excused: Mark Hopkinson

Caitlin McNulty called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

- Approve May Minutes – available on Brookline Together webpage under “Resources”. Minutes were approved (motion: C. McNulty, second: Bill Kim, 7 board members in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions.)
- Treasurer Report – Budget Report (Bill Kim)
 - Current bank account balance \$21,884 with a few reimbursements that went out earlier today
 - Please send receipts to Bill Kim ASAP; he will be away in late July and would like to get reimbursements to you before he leaves.
 - There was an error in our tax filing due to confusion regarding which taxes were filed by our predecessor organization and which were not; Bill is working to rectify this and it should be resolved within 1-2 months.
- New Business
 - Report from Zone 6 police officers – thank you Community Resource Officer Joshua Stinebaugh, Commander Cristyn Zett, and Lieutenant Gayle Malloy for coming to speak with us!
 - Zone 6 report: 2 murders, 4 robberies, 11 burglaries, 27 thefts, and several aggravated assaults.
 - Homicide: Investigations are ongoing regarding the homicide in the 1100 block of Creedmoor Ave. Upon officer arrival, a civilian nurse was present and providing lifesaving measures, which the officers joined but were unfortunately unsuccessful.
 - 3 Burglaries: (1) copper pipes stolen, (2) attempted break-in; license plate provided to officers; (3) break-in at storage container at Brookline Memorial Park; spray paint was stolen and graffiti created (cleanup is in process)
 - 4 thefts: (1) wallet stolen from a car, (2) stolen car, which was later recovered, (3) Known actors stole drinks and tip jar from Kickstand sandwich shop, (4) Known actor damaged vehicles at a home
 - Concerns from Brookline Together: Multiple business owners have reported young people (perhaps teenaged minors) vandalizing property and stealing merchandise.

- Police would like business owners to report these incidents to the police and do everything they can to identify the individuals involved so they can pursue fines and other consequences to the individuals and/or their parents.
- Be sure to lock your cars, everyone!
- Low-level crimes can be taken over the telephone by the Telephone Reporting Unit, so it shouldn't be too time-consuming.
- All can reach Community Resource Officer Stinebaugh at joshua.stinebaugh@pittsburghpa.gov
- Brookline-specific data:
 - July Community Meeting Theme: Rising Brookline Real Estate Costs & Affordable Housing in Brookline
 - Guest speakers
 - Jason Tigano – Real estate trends & affordable housing
 - What is “affordable housing”?
 - Housing sold or rented to qualifying families/individuals
 - Based on area median income (which is a 6-county area) and family size
 - In Pittsburgh area, median income for a 4-person household is around \$88K; for a single-person household is around \$59K. (Thanks Blake Plavchak for this information)
 - Based on MEDIAN income, not poverty-level incomes
 - Not the same as “Section 8” or “housing vouchers”
 - Developers often receive government grants in exchange for offering affordable housing units
 - Grant often has a length of time (often 20-30 years) that those units must remain at the affordable rate
 - Typically these grants are for rental properties (rather than units for sale)
 - Many affordable housing resources are not available in Brookline because our neighborhood is not lacking in quality housing, so grants to developers for adding new housing are not available; therefore, other city neighborhoods are more likely to have large developments built
 - Brookline is one of the fastest-moving markets in Allegheny County. What does that mean for Brookliners?
 - Rising real estate sale prices will cause increase in rents in Brookline
 - Rising real estate values will cause increased property taxes (typically only on properties that have sold; the County does not typically reassess homes that haven't transferred ownership)
 - Rising real estate values increases home equity for homeowners, which may be great for using the equity for expenses
 - What can Brookline (as a neighborhood) and Brookline Together (as a community organization) do to ensure that our rising real estate prices do not result in longtime residents being displaced by rising prices?
 - If you are selling a home or property, please do not sell real estate to out-of-town investors who will rent the unit for as much money as possible and not properly care for the property– please sell to individuals who intend to live in the home themselves
 - Pam Grabowski from our Welcome Wagon committee has noticed this trend
- Ally Bove – presented data from realtor.com and Melissa.com on home sales, sale prices, etc. in 15226 zip code from 2019-present.
 - Average of 27 families moving into Brookline monthly per Welcome Wagon committee
 - Median list price around \$175K in June 2021
 - Median sale price has increased from \$140K to \$157K over the past 18 months
- Blake Plavchak – presenting data from the City of Pittsburgh

- Brookline is one of the highest risk neighborhoods in Pittsburgh for displacement – likely due to:
 - rising rents due to rising property values
 - most Brookliners live in single-family homes
 - 27% of households in Brookline are cost-burdened, meaning they spend more than 30% of their household income on housing expenses.
- Old Business
 - Breezefest
 - Permit approved by the city!
 - Saturday, August 14
 - Brookline Blvd will be closed from Castlegate to Glenarm
 - Over 55 vendors and 3 food trucks
 - Stage with live music
 - Car cruise, with ~100 classic cars cruising the Blvd
 - Large kids section provided by Tree of Life church, with kid’s activities inside and outside
 - Sponsorships are still available – reach out to Melissa Kilmer ASAP if you and/or your business is interested in sponsoring Breezefest
 - Jacob/Whited site construction start date and plan update
 - Awaiting site clearance – still hoping for community gardens to be available in 2022! Apologies for the delays
 - Welcome sign at Jacob/Whited
 - Love Your Block Grant received to replace the welcome sign. If you have questions about this project, please let us know! E-mail us at brooklinetogether@gmail.com
- Community Questions and Concerns
 - None
- Announcements
 - Eric Williams, Mayor's Office. Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions or concerns for the Office of Community Affairs by calling 412-255-4775 or email eric.williams@pittsburghpa.gov.
 - Mayor Peduto announces city spending plan for \$335 million in federal relief funding. Details at: <https://pittsburghpa.gov/press-releases/press-releases/5053>
 - Childcare Quality fund to support licensed childcare centers in the city in improving their facility and programs to improve their Keystone STARS ratings while incurring minimal debt: <https://pittsburghpa.gov/press-releases/press-releases/5064>
 - Community engagement website for condemned structures in the city: <https://engage.pittsburghpa.gov/pli-demolition-engagement>
 - PWSA new, interactive project web map: <https://www.pgh2o.com/projects-maintenance/search-all-projects>
 - City of Pittsburgh summer special events: <https://pittsburghpa.gov/press-releases/press-releases/5072>
 - Blake Plavchak, Chief of Staff for Councilman Anthony Coghill
 - Homestead exemption for property taxes; senior tax relief programs; assistance to new homeowners for down payment; fund to help small landlords make improvements to properties:
 - <https://www.alleghenycounty.us/real-estate/abatements-exemptions/act-50/act-50-application-process.aspx>

- <https://alleghenycountytreasurer.us/real-estate-tax/real-estate-tax-2/#:~:text=PA%20Tax%20Rebate%20Program,Social%20Security%20income%20is%20excluded.>
- <https://www.ura.org/pages/housing-opportunity-fund-programs>
- State Rep. Jessica Benham
 - shredding event in Brentwood on Aug 28
 - Health Clinic and Fair: Brashear Assoc in Mt. Oliver on Sept 25
 - Work search requirements are resuming in the state unemployment compensation system. Contact Rep. Benham's office with any issues or concerns about unemployment compensation. RepBenham@pahouse.net. 412-881-4208.
- Beautification chair, Lisa Wilson: next cleanup is Sunday, August 8th at 7:00 a.m., meet at the intersection of Brookline Blvd and Flatbush Ave – trying to get the areas along the Blvd where cars park cleaned up before cars arrive for the day! Antonio's is going to supply snacks for the volunteers. Reach out to Lisa Wilson at lisawilson7896@yahoo.com or on Facebook with any questions or for more information.

Meeting adjourned at 7:58 p.m. (motion: Blake Plavchak, 2nd: Lisa Wilson, all in favor.)

Notes for upcoming community meetings:

- September 13, 2021 Community Meeting Theme: TBD

Mission: To promote a vibrant and livable community through collaborative initiatives that unify Brookline's business and residential interests.

Goals for 2021:

1. Increase membership
2. Increase revenue
3. Improve communications