

**Brookline Together
Community Meeting Minutes
November 8, 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: 14 individuals on Zoom: Caitlin McNulty, Blake Plavchak, Ally Bove, Melissa Kilmer, Lisa Wilson, Sami Melhorn, Mark Hopkinson, Don Mudrick, John Tokarski (Public Safety), Ken McNulty, Noah Hellum, Pastor Lance Rhoades, Rep. Jessica Benham, Nora Davidson, plus approximately 8 individuals watching live via the Facebook Live.

Excused: Bill Kim

Caitlin McNulty called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

- Approve October Minutes – available on Brookline Together webpage under “Resources”. Minutes were approved (motion: Melissa Kilmer, second: Lisa Wilson, all in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions.)
- Treasurer Report – Budget Report (Bill Kim)
 - Bill is ill today and unable to join the meeting. If you have questions about this month’s budget numbers, please e-mail us at brooklinetogether@gmail.com and we’ll get those to you.
 - Budgets for 2022 have been reviewed by the Finance committee. The committee has approved the budgets and has presented a motion to approve. 2nd: Blake Plavchak, all in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions.
- New Business: Summary of messages from guest speakers
 - Noah Hellum, CORO Fellow in Councilman Coghill’s office: presentation on the Brookline housing market
 - 93 houses sold in Brookline from 6/16/21-9/16/21. In the same period, 33 sold in Carrick and 34 in Beechview.
 - Median sales price was \$190,000. (Beechview: \$159K, Carrick: \$142K) Highest: \$345,000, lowest: \$18,500.
 - Median time of ownership before being sold was 6.5 years.
 - Prices increased 13.11% on average from 2020 to 2021
 - High levels of homeownership in Brookline and low levels of vacancies are great.
 - Community leaders are optimistic about the investment in Brookline, but worry about leaving renters and older adults behind.
 - New buyers want neighborhoods with vibrant main streets, like Brookline.
 - Potential issues cited by Brookline residents:
 - Mobility problems can be a challenge in a hilly neighborhood with multi-story houses, especially for older adults
 - Repair backlogs, due to the median age of homes in Brookline being 81 years

- Rising rents and utilities
- Opportunities cited by Brookline residents:
 - New construction of houses for seniors, especially single-family (not large buildings)
 - BT board members asked for an example floor plan of how a single-story single-family home for a senior may fit into typical Brookline lots
 - Housing assistance for older adults available from City of Pittsburgh and Urban Redevelopment Authority, but they may need help applying for it
 - Renter education initiatives would help renters navigate existing rental assistance funds and new American Rescue Plan programs. Community leaders could help drive these education campaigns.
- Please reach out to Noah at nhellum.fellow@coropittsburgh.org with further questions or volunteer opportunities.
- Community Resources
 - Pastor Lance Rhoades – Tree of Life Open Bible Church
 - Brookline Christian Food Pantry
 - Brookline Christian Food Pantry is housed at Tree of Life, and is one of the most longstanding food pantries in connection with the Greater Pittsburgh Food Bank.
 - They serve in excess of 150 families each month who live in Brookline and the immediate surrounding neighborhoods.
 - Food is available for all who self-identify as having a need and who meet income requirements (which are self-reported by the individual)
 - 2nd Saturday of the month. Currently doing curbside pickup due to COVID-19. It includes approximately 2 weeks of groceries, including both high-quality proteins and shelf-stable items.
 - Please share this information with any community member you know who may benefit.
 - Additional Thanksgiving food distribution
 - Tuesday, November 16, 2021 beginning at 10am
 - More than 200 family-sized meals are available
 - In collaboration with Walmart and Allegheny County Sheriff's Office
 - Must pre-register for this event; contact the church at the number below to register.
 - Backpack program at Brookline Elementary to help provide food to students and their families for the weekends
 - Holiday season toy projects – contact the Church to ask for help from these projects, or to let them know that you'd like to contribute. These are done anonymously.
 - Free clothing store – contact the Church to donate or to seek assistance.
 - State-licensed after school program
 - New program: youth-focused program to help children who are dealing with a substance use disorder themselves or have a family member who has a substance use disorder.
 - Annual Festival of Trees – December 2-5 at the church. Any person, family, or organization can volunteer to decorate a tree and to visit the Festival to look at all of the beautiful trees.

- Contact Tree of Life by phone anytime with questions (412) 531-0590.
- Blake Plavchak – Councilman Coghill’s Office
 - The city’s Healthy Active Living Centers (HALCs) will be used as warming centers this winter when necessary.
 - The Snow Angels program begins on November 15th.
 - Thanksgiving dinner delivery from the City of Pittsburgh Police – contact Office Robert Steel (412) 937-3051 by November 19
 - Toys for Tots announcements will be forthcoming later in November, and some special efforts are in place to make it extra special this year.
 - Housing
 - Urban Redevelopment Authority Housing Opportunity Fund <https://www.ura.org/pages/housing-opportunity-fund-programs>
 - County’s Rental Assistance Program: <https://covidrentrelief.alleghenycounty.us/>
 - Action Housing has assistance for weatherization of your home for city residents who meet income requirements. This will include an analysis by a professional, with recommendations and resources to help winterize your home. <https://actionhousing.org/our-services/weatherization/>
 - LIHEAP assistance for utilities is available for individuals who meet income requirements; provides a \$500-1500 grant.
 - <https://www.dhs.pa.gov/Services/Assistance/Pages/LIHEAP.aspx>
 - Duquesne Light also has a variety of payment assistance programs, including the Dollar Energy Fund and Customer Assistance Program.
 - <https://www.duquesnelight.com/account-billing/payment-assistance>
 - PWSA has a moratorium on winter service shutoff; the customer will need to contact them to arrange this this. They have an outreach team that will help connect you to their services including hardship grants, bill discounts, and payment plans.
 - Programs: <https://www.pgh2o.com/residential-commercial-customers/customer-assistance-programs>
 - Outreach team: <https://www.pgh2o.com/residential-commercial-customers/customer-assistance-programs/pgh2o-cares>
 - Penn American Water also has grants up to \$500, discounted service fees, and payment plans available for individuals who qualify.
 - <https://www.amwater.com/paaw/customer-service-billing/customer-assistance-programs/>
 - Allegheny County’s rent relief program is available for individuals who qualify (based upon income, employment status, and/or risk for homelessness).
 - You can reach out to Councilman Coghill’s office anytime, and the staff will help you to connect you to any of these programs. Call them at (412) 255-2131 or e-mail blake.plavchak@pittsburghpa.gov.
- 2022 Elections – Review
 - 3 positions are up for election: President, Secretary, & Beautification Chair
 - All current individuals in those positions will be considered, but we welcome calls for additional nominees! To date, we have not received any additional nominations. Nominees must be a BT member in good standing and have served on a BT committee
 - Approve current candidate ballot:

- President: Caitlin McNulty
 - Secretary: Ally Bove
 - Beautification Chair: Lisa Wilson
- Slate will be communicated to the full Brookline Together membership in December
- Voting will occur at the January 2022 meeting – members must be present at the meeting to vote. We'll do elections at the beginning of the meeting.
- Reminders
 - Brookline Lights Up: Saturday, November 27th from 3-6pm.
 - Volunteers needed for decorating: Saturday, November 20th starting at 8am. Please contact Lisa Wilson or e-mail us at brooklinetogether@gmail.com to volunteer.
 - If you or your business would like to participate in Lights Up, please reach out to Melissa Kilmer at melissakilmer@brooklinetogether.org
 - Brookline Together is not hosting a holiday party this year due to the ongoing pandemic, but members should be on the lookout for something special to be delivered to you between now and mid-December.
 - Membership information for 2022 coming in December – please join us! New members can apply at <https://www.brooklinetogether.org/membership>
 - Jacob/Whited update
 - Site work beginning shortly
 - On track for the community garden to open in spring 2022 – we are planning to begin with a small pilot program with a small number of spots. If you're interested in having a plot, please contact us at brooklinetogether@gmail.com
- Other Announcements
 - Brookline Teen Outreach has a great Penguins raffle basket valued at just under \$1,000 including game tickets and a signed jersey. Information is on Brookline Teen Outreach's social media pages. The money raised goes toward programming at Brookline Teen Outreach.

Meeting adjourned at 7:58 p.m. (motion: Caitlin McNulty, 2nd: Melissa Kilmer, all in favor.)

Notes for upcoming community meetings:

- January 10, 2022 Community Meeting Theme: Brookline Together officer elections and bylaw amendment votes

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