

# Cheltenham Chamber of Citizens Annual Meeting

February 5, 2023 7:00 PM Via Zoom

Attendees: Edie Cerebi, Judi Gratz, Gail Post, Emily Steinberg, Brooke Welsh, Emily Stine, Olga McHugh, Tom McHugh, Ted Cerebi, Eisenman, Sidney Kahn, Bonnie Hay, Ann Rappoport, Frank Slesinski, Dan Norris, Rhonda Isser, Tom Mullian, Beverly Milestone, William Taylor III, Gerry, Brown, Eleasa Dash, Joanne, Bill Gellhaus, Lora Lehmann, Natalie Simon, Gerry Austin, pnr24, Darlene Melton, Martha Woods, Laura Frank, Kathleen Chapman, Bill England, Myron Goldman, Mark Sanders, Brad Pransky, Barry Vincent, Martha Woods, Dan George, Irv Brockington, Joyce Werkman, Theresa Camerota, Carole Maher

## Annual Organizational Meeting

1. Welcome & Introduction of Board Members – Olga McHugh
  - a. Called to order at 7:04pm
  - b. Documents and agenda are posted online at [www.cheltenhamchamberofcitizens.com](http://www.cheltenhamchamberofcitizens.com)
  - c. Olga thanked the Commissioners present who shared information about the meeting
  - d. Introduction of current CCC board members
2. Secretary Report – Gail Post
  - a. Motion to accept 2022 minutes – Olga McHugh
  - b. Second to the motion – Emily Stine
  - c. Unanimously accepted
3. Treasurer Report – Emily Stine
  - a. Balance is \$1408.78
  - b. Motion to accept – Olga McHugh
  - c. Second to the motion - Judi Gratz
  - d. Unanimously accepted
4. Web Administrator Report – Olga McHugh
  - a. 27 emails were sent last year
  - b. All participants were encouraged to send information to Facebook page and to visit the website
  - c. Motion to accept - Emily Stine
  - d. Second to the motion – Brooke Welsh
  - e. Unanimously accepted
5. President's Report – Edie Cerebi
  - a. Edie welcomed the commissioners who were in attendance – Irv Brockington and Ann Rappoport , Brad Pransky, and Dan Norris (who joined the meeting later).
  - b. Edie mentioned that the board meets monthly via zoom and meets on the second Sunday of each month and is open to the public

- c. New officers will be elected at the Feb. 13 meeting
  - d. Next year's meeting dates are listed in the agenda for tonight's meeting
6. Civic Engagement and Informing Residents
- a. Brief presentation by Edie Cerebi about the mission of the CCC and how the board communicates with the community, along with encouragement to check the Facebook and website pages, which contain information about a range of topics. Email blasts are also sent out regularly.
  - b. The CCC is entering its 13<sup>th</sup> year as a non-profit and a 501c3 organization.
  - c. The CCC has (among other things) focused on: preservation of the Jenkintown-Wyncote station, changes to the Church Rd & Greenwood Ave intersection, storm water management, sustainability, environmentalism (including the "environmental news you can use" section of website), and traffic calming. Some specific projects this past year include:
    - 1. Support for the NWF grant for Robinson Park renovation
    - 2. Reaching out to the LaMott community to support their efforts to maintain the community center and library
    - 3. Traffic issues – including the PennDOT project
    - 4. Township facilities concerns
    - 5. An attempt to create a workshop that focuses on volunteer firefighters
    - 6. Keeping an eye on the proposed ADA upgrade to the Jenkintown-Wyncote Train Station and other developments in township
  - d. Tribute to Susanne – Gail Post and Edie Cerebi. Susanne's contribution to the CCC and the community were acknowledged, along with her sudden death in a fire this year. The CCC plans to have a tree planted along with a plaque in Ralph Morgan Park. If anyone would like to donate, they may send a check made out to the CCC to Olga McHugh, 127 Hewett Rd., Wyncote, Pa. 19095. Since the CCC is a 501-c3 organization, donations are tax deductible.
7. Presentation of 2022 Board Members
- a. Slate – Edie Cerebi
  - b. Nominations from the floor – none
8. Election of Board Members: Edie Cerebi, Olga McHugh, Emily Stine, Brooke Welsh, Gail Post, Judith Gratz, Emily Steinberg, and two new members, Myron Goldman and David Lane
- a. Unanimously accepted slate
  - b. Reminder that board members can join mid-year, so please let the CCC know if you are interested
9. Old Business - none
10. New Business & Announcements – Community member Mark Sanders brought up concerns about SEPTA's changes in bus routes in the township. In response to a previous decline in ridership, SEPTA has redesigned a "bus revolution" and are still pursuing this project. The proposals have an impact on Cheltenham Township and will limit access to transportation. The Rt. 28 bus will no longer serve wards 5 and 6. The schedules for Rt. 55 and Rt. 70 will be reduced

to 60 minute intervals. The Rt. 77 bus route will be changed so that it no longer serves Cedarbrook Mall. The only improvement is that Septa wants to establish a new Rt. 72 bus which will stop at Cheltenham Mall. Edie asked him what his goal was this evening. He indicated that he wants to obtain CCC support. Edie encouraged him to attend a CCC meeting and also contact the Board of Commissioners with his concerns. Judith Gratz suggested that he might attend a SEPTA board meeting. Lora Lehmann brought up concerns about the E. Glenside Ave. building project. She claimed that there were inappropriate actions where variance guidelines were violated. There were problems with notification of residents close to the site. She claimed that none of the variances fit the guidelines and should not have been passed. She is asking the CCC to look into this further. Edie thanked Lora and suggested that this would not be the best forum to discuss this, but encouraged her to attend a CCC meeting to express her concerns.

11. Adjournment

- a. Motion to adjourn – Emily Stine
- b. Second – Olga McHugh
- c. Unanimously adjourned.

**Presentation – The Future of Township-owned Facilities – Edie Cerebi**

Cheltenham Township is planning to make significant changes to the township facilities buildings which will shape the fabric of the township. Edie submitted a poll to participants based on questions put together by CCC board, with the first questions asking how well-informed members are and how well they feel the message was disseminated to them.

**Results of Poll #1:**

How familiar are they with proposed changes to the township buildings:

Very familiar – 27%  
Somewhat familiar – 70%  
Unfamiliar – 3%

The township’s methods of disseminating information about proposed changes have been effective:

Strongly agree – 7%  
Somewhat agree – 30%  
Disagree – 57%

Edie identified the buildings under consideration. Most residents are familiar with the community centers and libraries. Rowland and La Mott Community Centers are currently closed due to conditions inside the buildings. Other areas of concern include the Conklin and Glenside pools; the township office complex, which includes the township administration building that was previously owned by the Breyers, the annex building which was a courthouse in the past, the police administration building, and the emergency management building; the public works facility; Curtis hall, which has been renovated

through a public-private partnership with an event planner; Glenside Hall, which is closed due to conditions inside the building; the Richard Wall House, which is the most famous historic building in the township and was built in 1682; the Benjamin Rowland House which is known as the shovel shop; and the Cheltenham Art Center building, built in 1883, and previously known as the George K. Heller School building.

Seven of these buildings are on the National Register of Historic Places. These include the Richard Wall House, Curtis Arboretum, the George K. Heller School building (CAC), the Henry Breyer House, LaMott Community Center, the Benjamin Rowland House, and Glenside Memorial Hall.

## **Results of Poll #2**

How important is preserving Cheltenham's historic legacy:

Very important – 81%

Not important – 19%

The situation involving a need for change is the result of current conditions inside these buildings. Edie shared photos of some of the problems. The concerns include the need for new boilers in the community centers, structural problems, wiring problems, water damage, mold, and unsafe conditions. In 2020, the Board of Commissioners adopted a five-year financial management plan (FMP) with a recommended course of action for five years starting in 2020. Some of the recommendations have been enacted, such as the stormwater management fee. It recommended an action plan to provide updated services for all core facilities. In 2021, there were presentations about this and the facilities meeting was formed. In 2022, the township hired KCBA Architects and Re:Vision to assess the facilities. They assessed all of the buildings for structural integrity, ADA accessibility, electrical, plumbing, feasibility of adapting structures to tasks, and cost feasibility. There were a few listening sessions in 2022 for the Rowland, Glenside and LaMott communities. The listening sessions included a discussion of township vision, suitability, centralization vs. community sites, satellite sites, and costs. The most discussed concern involved questions about where township services should be – either centralized or at community sites.

## **Results of Poll #3**

The township buildings should be centralized:

All – 7%

Selected – 72%

Need more information – 14%

The libraries should be:

Centralized – 14%

Community Sites – 59%

Need more information – 24%

No opinion – 3%

Decisions from the FMP will be based on financial constraints. Suggestions for renovation costs over a 10-year period that have been floated ranged from one million dollars for fixing the boilers to hundreds of millions on all the work that needs to be completed.

**Results from Poll #4:**

Decisions should be based entirely on financial considerations:

- Strongly agree – 3%
- Somewhat agree – 47%
- Disagree – 30%
- Need more information – 20%

The FMP has suggested selling or leasing properties that are not generating revenue or that are expensive to repair. This includes the CAC, the Elkins Park and Glenside libraries, the Shovel Shop, and Glenside Hall.

**Results from Poll #5:**

Township buildings that are not generating revenue should be sold:

- Strongly agree – 4%
- Somewhat agree – 7%
- Disagree – 22%
- Case-by-case basis – 63%
- Need more information – 4%

Should the historic nature of the buildings be considered?

- Yes – 96%
- No – 4%

The option for public-private partnerships were also considered. Curtis Hall was renovated as a result of this and has flourished since the renovation.

**Results from Poll #6:**

The township should aggressively pursue public/private partnerships:

- Strongly agree – 30%
- Somewhat agree – 60%
- Disagree - 10%

A public meeting to discuss the FMP and recommendations for the township buildings was planned for 9/22 but still has not occurred. There is no indication of when it will be scheduled.

**Results from Poll #7:**

Community participation is vital in formulating any plan:

Strongly agree – 87%  
Somewhat agree – 13%  
Disagree – 0%

Discussion from community members:

A discussion followed the presentation. Gerry Brown, founder of LaMott Citizens United, indicated that they have been involved in trying to save the community center and library. The building had a sprinkler problem, but it has been resolved. The architects told them that once they complete their assessment, they will meet with the community. Gerry wants to keep fighting for renovations so that the buildings remain in use. Darlene Melton commented on the LaMott Community Center as central to their community, and has been upset about the amount of disrepair in all of the buildings. She claimed that it would be a hardship to remove a community resource and expect citizens to travel across the township for services. She implied that some degree of the disrepair was intentional. Kathleen Chapman expressed concerns about the photos of disrepair, especially in the CAC. Commissioner Dan Norris commented on the long-standing problems, that some disrepair has lasted for decades, and that there was a reluctance to raise taxes to fix buildings. The current commissioners want to address the problems, but there are many difficult decisions involved because of the many problems. Each building has different issues and there are still so many questions about what is needed. Dan George commented that he would like for some reflection about how the township got into this difficult situation so that it does not recur and suggested that they should not use past actions to guide them when deciding on future options. He mentioned an example of the partnership between Parks and Recreation Department with Salus University and suggested the need to create partnerships when possible. Bill England commented on concerns about future situations. Commissioner Brad Pransky discussed some of the concerns, indicated that the commissioners have looked at various immediate options, but any solution will take time. There are three public meetings a month – these problems have been discussed for a while, and it will cost a lot. Olga McHugh asked if the delay of the architects' presentation is a result of the unfilled township manager position. Dan Norris indicated that the meeting has not been delayed for this reason, but he also did not have information about when they will hire a township manager. Brad Pransky indicated there may be a meeting with the architects in a month, but that it could take longer.

Meeting adjourned at 9:12 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Gail Post on February 8, 2023.