

# Darley Civic Association

Highland Woods, Indian Field, Darley Rd

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## Darley Civic Association Meeting

Wednesday May 21, 2025

Trinity Presbyterian Church

1120 Darley Rd

In attendance:

President (HW) - Dan Schmick, Treasurer (HW) Mark LaVere, Secretary (HW) - Ken Velasquez  
Councilman John Cartier, Rep Melanie Ross-Levin

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**President (Dan Schmick) calls the meeting to order.**

**Secretary (Ken Velasquez ) reads the minutes from last meeting.**

Minutes accepted.

### **Representative Melanie Ross Levin**

- Replaces Sean Matthews (November), works closely with Councilman Cartier.
- Happy to reach out to Deldot and do follow-up for road repairs.
- Handed out cards on basics of her office and what she can do.
  - Deldot, state agencies, setting up business.
- Spoke on renewing passport - if planning to travel do it now, process is slow.
- Social security is also a slow process currently, wait times are long.
- Other duties include community celebration, ex: local constituent became an eagle scout, and they came for the event. Happy to attend ceremonies and make a splash. Can also bring a moment of silence on house floor for those who passed in the community.
- Home reassessments fall under Councilman Cartier.
- Have small budget of \$350k for speed bumps, flashing speed signs, paving. There is a process to acquire those, have to go through Deldot for a study. Takes time and effort to do and some have cost. Her office may be able to fund, but is dependent on budget.
- There are federal cuts currently, and is unsure of where we (Delaware) will land. Spoke on the financial challenges and about potentially moving spending around. We are in a good place financially in Delaware but there is still a concern; Medicaid is a big concern.
- Rep Levin has monthly coffees, Councilman Cartier there as well. Tries to have a speaker: AG office recently attended and spoke on scams. Speakers talk about hot topics: traffic, crime, etc. Rep has a newsletter and individuals can sign up. They have community announcements, information on parks, sometimes county news, school board elections, etc. She also tries to post on social media as well.

- Happy to see our civic association is meeting in person, and that we're having a block party.

### **Councilman John Cartier**

Councilman notes that the County government is deeply appreciate of those who volunteer. He and they are here to help. (President Dan Schmick notes we are going to have elections for positions tonight.)

- Councilman handed out a phone number pamphlet, which has his contact information.
- Councilman has a monthly email newsletter, not to worry contact information is not sold to anyone.
- New Castle county has budget talks this year. Highlights on property taxes:
  - making adjustments to property taxes from reassessment.
  - It is a revenue neutral reassessment.
  - Property value has gone up since last assessment - some taxes will go up, some down.
  - If assessed in the 500-600% range, taxes will go up.
  - New taxes net out same revenue at a 1% growth rate
- Current budget proposal:
  - no property tax increase
  - only change is fees for sewer (proposed)
  - water meter from \$25 to \$50
- About .65 of every dollar goes to public safety - police, 911, fire department, etc.
- Libraries are second largest expense for the county.
- Property vacancy is still a problem. New revised ordinance has new code sanctions. Contact county complaints to ensure they know property is/are still vacant. Owners of those properties will be paying accelerated fees. It is still a focus in our district, and will keep up on this to make sure we can fix.
- Happy to keep working for us and collaborating on community business.

### **Question:**

Is there anyway to see new taxes before the bill?

### **Answer:**

The assessment is done, and home owners can have property assessed yearly - email the councilman for questions. 80% of taxes goes to the school district, while remaining 20% is county tax. School district is going revenue neutral - a referendum passed last year. IA parcel search on NC county site has the new assessment, some are still updating. New tax takes effect July 1 with new budget.

### **One other question on park near the river (train center)**

- There are 7 parcels of land marked as industrial zoning. There is a rezoning coming soon for mixed development planning for a riverfront park, and are in negotiations with the owner. This is a policy goal to get this done with a possible marina included. These are on long timetables. There is about 309 acres that will need to be rezoned first, then developed.
- There is talk about Septa ending the Wilmington line due to budget cuts. The Governor (PA) just put out a statement. (Representative Levin) notes she is not on the committee, but is happy to share updates.

- Delaware has a process of predicting budget, and the numbers are positive, but nothing has been decided yet. Councilman notes that Septa remains challenged and that ridership is down. Claymont had over 300,000 riders each year, but currently is only half of that. It is low hanging fruit and could be cut due to budget shortfalls. This will all play out in Harrisburg (PA). (Rep Levin) noted people are already being laid off by Septa.

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### **President (Dan Schmick) takes meeting back**

Quick notes:

- plowing contract has been taken care of
- still working on bank issues with Mark
- We got our 'smiley' sign on Chestnut in hopes it may have some traffic calming effect

### **Mark LaVere, Secretary - Treasurers report**

- Handed out a few sheets on budgets
- Currently have \$11,352.59 in funds
- There were three snow events this year, though none qualify for repayment
- Working on bank issues, trying to get Dan approved for co-signing
- Online bill pay for dues works, can get to from our website, no issues reported
- Question about percentage of people paying dues.
  - Not good - in 2024 about 50%, 2023 about 63%.
  - Haven't gotten around to sending out any notifications
  - Is there a way to check on website if you have or haven't paid? We used to have, didn't work well and wasn't accurate. Contact mark if you want to know.
  - Is there a plan to send out notification to let people know? Will try, maybe just for 2025 at end of year.
  - Need to come up with an easy to administer system so people know

### **Other notes**

- contact Anthony Uro for sand barrels (winter)
- clean up on Chestnut is the first Saturday of every month. We have garbage bags and safety vests available.

### **President (Dan Schmick) takes meeting back**

- No news from welcoming committee

### **New business**

- Civic Association will fund \$150 for the upcoming block party. There are no objections, Shannon Shelton (Event Committee) will facilitate, more announcements to come on

#### Facebook group

- There will be a margarita machine, tents, yard games
- Bring things to share would be great, food, beer, etc.
- Starts at 12 till dark
- There were 5 or 6 households from Indian Field at last years party
- Shannon will make a sign for Indian Field
- Elected officers 2 year positions are up
  - We need new president ( from IF) - current VP is no longer interested
  - VP spot also open (HW)
  - Mark will continue acting as treasurer
  - Secretary spot open as well
  - 4 officers, 4 directors: could use 2 new directors in HW, replace Sean or Lois (or re-elect).
  - Jerome Robinson nominated for President - no objections.
  - Vice President spot - Dan Schmick happy to help out as VP, no objections
  - Ken Velasquez re-nominated for Secretary, no objections.
  - Anthony and (?) will remain as director, positions are up next year
  - Robert Schless nominated as new director in HW, will need to see if Sean or Lois will leave position - Dan to ask.
- Shannan Shelton (Event Committee) - asks if anyone has any interest in a community yard sale. Potentially on a Saturday or Sunday in October or November. Shannan to send out notification. Coordinate with the larger Darley Civic association suggested.
- Robert Schless - there is a sink hole in front of John Marshalls house. Dan to email to Rep Levin.
- Indian Field pothole on North Trail (#16) was fixed but needs to be re-fixed.
- There is flooding and possibly a blocked culvert at Darley Road at Chestnut Street intersection - water flows across road creating larger hazard in the winter months
- South Trail grate (on road) still not fixed
- Armand brought milkweed plants to hand out. Notes they grow 1-1/2 to 2 feet. Will grow pods and self seed. Great for butterflies/pollinators.
- Mark LaVere (Treasurer) notes Japanese knot weed growing in area and is super invasive. Company called Redtail Restoration Services can do native species and help eradicate invasive species. Bamboo is illegal, county will make you take out if near property lines.
- Note to potentially have someone from DCH to come to meeting to talk on native and invasive species. Ken Velasquez (Secretary) to check into.

**Meeting Adjourned.**