

Tavistock Civic Association Annual Meeting
Minutes of March 27, 2018
Talleyville Fire Hall 7:00 pm

President's Welcome, Michele Borzio

The president began the meeting began at 7:05 p.m. She thanked everyone for coming and for their understanding regarding the date change due to inclement weather.

Invited Guests

Senator Greg Lavelle

Senator Lavelle provided a brief update on activities occurring in the state, noting that there is nothing controversial in Dover at the moment. His report included:

- The state legislature recently completed a budget that includes a proposed 3.5% increase in spending; \$100 million would be used for improvement projects (such as significant capital improvements to state-owned buildings).
- The Delaware Economic and Financial Advisory Council (DEFAC) agreed to add \$50 million in spending to this year's budget (ending 6/30) and \$50 million in spending next year, representing a 7% increase in budgeted spending. The additional revenue came primarily from capital gains generated by a strong stock market in 2017 and abandoned property.
- The additional revenue, combined with revenue generated by business franchise taxes is sufficient to cover projected spending. However, the Senator noted that the plan raises questions about long-term sustainability.
- The state has made significant progress on mental health issues related to gun control while respecting due process. The Senator provided an overview of a number of bills currently before the House and Senate.

A TCA homeowner asked whether the state will use the extra revenue to pay commitments to government pension funds. Sen. Lavelle acknowledged that this is an issue and will be considered. He said that unfunded healthcare commitments are also being considered.

Greg invited everyone to come to his weekly coffees at Manhattan Bagel. He also asked residents to join his email distribution to hear of upcoming events and issues affecting taxpayers.

Councilman Bob Weiner

Councilman Weiner reported that our community is currently facing a number of County Land Use challenges. The Councilman provided a Fall 2017 handout with more details. His report included:

- The Councilman said that he has been a champion of the project to create a new Delaware Walkway.
- He is advocating for the sidewalk on the south side of Garden of Eden Road.
- He has been happy to work with the TCA Columbia Place working group.
- He also reported that there is no guarantee that the DuPont Country Club will remain open space when it is sold but they are willing to have deed restrictions. Brandywine Country Club has the right to build homes but not apartments.
- Residents were invited to attend to a public hearing at Al DuPont HS on March 28 at 5 pm regarding a proposal to designate the Brandywine Valley as an ND Scenic and Historic Overlay Zone.

Shawn Heacock, Director Brandywine Creek State Park

Shawn Heacock provided attendees with updates about the park. His report included:

- Trail work is underway. Trails that are currently closed should be open by April 7.
- Shawn is not aware of a current Columbia Place proposal to use the park for storm water runoff/water retention but would be opposed to the plan because he doesn't have the staff to support extra maintenance.
- Park staff are working on ways to reduce the park's deer herd. The deer herd in the BCSP is much denser (200-400 deer/square mile) than the region can support (~20 deer/sq mile). Many of the larger trees in the park are nearing the end of their life (250 years), and the deer are feeding on young trees needed to reforest the park. In 2017, in its continued effort to thin the herd through hunting, the park closed for three days of deer hunting, an increase from two days in previous years, but the harvest was disappointing. Next year, the park will offer archery hunting in hopes that it will be more effective and will not require closing trails. Shawn noted that efforts to thin the herd through hunting are complicated by the fact that the BCSP is next to a national park, where no hunting is allowed, because the deer simply migrate to safer ground until hunting is over. Shawn said that the BCSP may need community support to appeal to federal lawmakers to change this law.

- The BCSP has a maintenance crew of just two people, and can always use help from the community. Shawn encouraged Tavistock residents to consider volunteer opportunities at the park, and asked that park users help with trash removal and by respecting the environment.
- Shawn provided a handout with economic information about Delaware State Parks.

Election of officers, Michele Borzio

The president opened the floor for nominations for the position of board president.

Dave Gazzillo nominated Rose Passarella for the position of president; Annie Baker seconded the nomination. Rose Passarella was elected president unanimously.

Eileen Measley nominated herself for the position of vice president; Annie Baker seconded the nomination. Eileen Measley was elected vice president unanimously.

Jeff Porter volunteered to replace Rose Pasarella as area rep for Area J. Chelsea Forstrom volunteered to replace Tom Briggs as area rep for Area F. Brad Haines volunteered to replace Eileen Measley as area rep for Area E.

Treasurer's report, Annie Baker

The community's ending balance was \$2,506.15 as of March 20, 2018.

Residents will receive dues/directory forms from their area reps in the coming weeks.

Residents had questions about the legal expenses for 2017-2018 year recorded on the revenue/expense report and if we were budgeting for more legal expenses in 2018-2019. Annie explained that Dave Gazzillo would address the community's current legal matter during discussion about deed restrictions.

Local police report, Michele Borzio

New Castle County police officer Corporal Kristen Hester was not able to attend the meeting in person but provided Michel Borzio with a written document which Michele shared at the meeting. No robberies, burglaries, or homicides occurred in Tavistock in the last 12 months.

Community safety update, Dave Gazillo and Annie Baker

In a continuing effort to ensure the safety of our community, The Board has formed a new committee to meet with our elected officials to discuss the need for speed calming efforts on Taunton and Burnley Roads. Sen. Lavelle has agreed to initiate discussion with Rep. Hudson to begin the process of asking DeIDOT to conduct a traffic assessment.

The traffic study for Taunton and Burnley began on March 27. DeIDOT will analyze the speed and volume of traffic and offer a recommendation. If traffic calming measures are warranted and approved

by residents, Sen. Lavelle noted that the legislators will need to budget for the work, which may take time.

Some residents raised concerns about drivers going the wrong way around the Taunton/Severn Circle.

The board will share updates with the community as plans develop.

Street tree committee update, Frank Maderich, chair

The emerald ash borer threat to ash trees on Severn and Taunton Roads did not worsen in 2017. No EABs were found in traps in Delaware in 2017, although they are close by in Maryland and Pennsylvania.

Tree maintenance to remove deadwood will be done in the fall as usual.

The tree committee requested a state grant (\$900) for a special pruning project but this grant was not approved. The special pruning project is necessary to improve the canopy and the lifespan of previously planted trees. The community will fund this project and adjust the budget as such.

Columbia Place update, Frank Maderich, co-chair

Developer Jerry Heisler presented changes to the record plan for Columbia Place to the New Castle County Planning Board on 2/6/2018 that call for widening and reducing the number of townhouse units and increasing the number of condominium units.

He also told the Planning Board that the issue of the south side sidewalk had come up. The original record plan had called for a sidewalk, but had disappeared from the latest iteration. Mr. Heisler noted that a sidewalk had been installed by Wawa on the north side, but said he was willing to install a second sidewalk on the south side if feasible. Frank Maderich spoke in support of the south side sidewalk at the meeting.

At the Planning Board working meeting on 3/20/2018, the Board approved sending the project forward. However, before the vote was taken, board member William McGlinchey asked about the south side sidewalk. Land Use General Manager George Haggerty replied that Land Use had met with DelDOT and they had decided that there were technical concerns and that the sidewalk should not be included. Both the developer and the community learned of the decision at that moment.

Councilman Bob Weiner has communicated to the developer his intention to request that the plan be forwarded back to NCC Land Use Department to address the issue why sidewalks cannot be constructed on the south side of Garden of Eden Road, as previously designated on the plan.

The developer is moving ahead with construction plans; A pre-construction meeting is scheduled for 3/29/2018.

The board has agreed to create space on the Tavistock website to inform the community of any developments/updates once construction commences. Community residents can also reach out to Working Group members Meg Campbell and Jay Wheeler with any questions or concerns.

Swale and Storm Drain Maintenance update, Eileen Measley, chair

Neighbors were reminded that swale and storm drain maintenance are homeowners' responsibility. Each home in Tavistock is built adjacent to utility easements that serve as drainage swales, and many homes also have a storm drain located on or in front of the property. These areas should be kept clear of leaves, branches and other debris to allow water runoff from neighborhood to escape properties and help prevent homes from flooding, and to prevent flooded streets from freezing and creating hazardous driving conditions.

Swale maintenance:

- Mow and maintain swale at an acceptable grass height
- Keep driveway culverts open and free of debris, rocks, grass, and sediment
- Keep bottom of swale open to permit flow of water after heavy rains
- Swales convey runoff and will be soggy/wet at times; however, if water is ponding where grass cannot survive, corrective measures may be needed
- Reseed bare areas to minimize/prevent erosion
- Minimize the use of fertilizer, pesticides, and herbicides
- Don't attempt to dig in utility easements without first contacting Miss Utility

Storm drain maintenance:

- Avoid sweeping or blowing leaves into the street
- Keep all street channels clear so that water can reach the drain
- Clear leaves from storm drains
- Dispose of leaves in yard waste containers or compost bins
- Make sure composted leaves cannot leach into the storm-water system.
- County regulations prohibit homeowners from connecting home drainage pipes to the storm-water system

Issues with swales and drainage should be addressed neighbor-to-neighbor. Residents can also call DeIDOT and committee chair Eileen Measley.

Deed restrictions update, Dave Gazillo, chair

Many projects do not require approval. If no substantive changes are being made to the footprint of the property, for example replacing the sidewalk or enclosing an existing porch, approval is not needed.

New members are needed for the Deed Restrictions committee.

The board was asked to consider 4 requests for alterations to resident properties:

- 2 fence requests – both approved
- 2 additions – patio/patio wall and re-facing – both approved
- One outstanding request – one homeowner wants to install a metal roof. We're not sure this fits in with the aesthetic of our community but the homeowner has bigger issues to address first

(mostly associated with set-backs) he'll be addressing with the county first. We'll return to his roof request at a later date.

A homeowner installed a privacy fence in the 2016-2017 year and was asked to remove it. The homeowner complied with request and removed the fence the following year.

As noted in the Treasurers report, the Tavistock Civic Association incurred legal fees associated with a lawsuit brought on by a homeowner who didn't agree with the board's decision to deny a fence because it did not conform with our historical representation of our deed restrictions. As the matter is currently in litigation, the board has been advised by counsel to refrain from any discussion of the matter at the annual meeting.

Meeting attendees asked what the Association currently owes and what future legal expenses could be. The treasurer explained when giving the Treasurer's Report that she does not currently have the information to calculate the total costs. That information has been requested from counsel.

Homeowners asked how the Association would finance the legal expenses. Dave Gazillo explained that the Board would adjust the budget, for example by decreasing or eliminating funding for tree work. The board also could also levy a special assessment, but this would be a last resort.

A meeting attendee identified himself as the litigant in the lawsuit against the Tavistock Civic Association and sought to share the details of the case at the meeting. He also reported that if TCA loses the case, the Association will have to pay his legal fees; if he loses the case, he will have to pay the TCA's legal fees. After some discussion, Dave Gazillo and other board members encouraged interested homeowners to continue the conversation with the homeowner after the meeting adjourned.

Motion to pass the budget

Shawn Scarpaci made a motion to pass the FYS 4/1/2017 proposed budget, seconded by Eileen Measley. Attendees accepted the motion to pass the budget at 9:00 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 9 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

Annie Baker
TCA Treasurer

Meg Campbell
TCA Secretary

Attachments:

Treasurer's Report
Annual Dues form

The next quarterly meeting of the Tavistock Civic Association Board will be held on May 9 at 7 p.m. at 735 Burnley Road.