

GIFFORD PARK ASSOCIATION GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Thursday, February 16, 2023

DATES TO NOTE

Monday, Feb. 27, 7 p.m.: Historic House Tour Steering Committee, at Elgin History Museum

Tuesday, Feb. 28, 6 p.m.: LWVoters Elgin Area's Meet the Candidates Night for those running for Elgin's mayor and city council, at Gail Borden Library, Elgin

Thursday, March 9, 7 p.m.: NENA-GPA's Elgin's mayoral/council candidate forum on Zoom

Monday, March 13, 7 p.m.: Elgin Historic District Committee meeting, at 156 S. Gifford

Wednesday, March 15, 6-8 p.m.: Elgin Parks & Recreation Department's special public meeting on potential plans for Lords Park Aquatic Center, at Lords Park Elementary School, 323 Waverly Drive

Thursday, March 16, 7 p.m.: GPA General Membership meeting, at Elgin History Museum

Saturday, April 22, Time TBA: Spring cleanup day for the EHD

Saturday, April 29, 1-4 p.m.: Open Elgin, a self-guided architectural tour of Elgin buildings

IN ATTENDANCE (most via Zoom)

Paul Bednar, Bill Briska, Barbara Evans, Tyler Grace, Janine Hnatusko, Trish LaFleur, Dan & Pat Miller, Mark & Glenna Preradovic, George Richter, Andrew Stein, Councilwoman Tish Powell and EPD Officer Alva

CALL TO ORDER: GPA President Paul Bednar

R.O.P.E. REPORT (Officer Alva, NENA's R.O.P.E. officer, substituting for Officer Payne)

This past month has seen five burglaries of homes and cars: two within the EHD on North Porter and Channing Streets and 3 just north of the EHD on Hickory Pl. and N. Liberty Street. The EPD is urging residents not only to lock their cars and the doors to their homes but also to be sure that their homes' windows are locked. And if anyone sees someone suspicious loitering around, please call the EPD.

March 5th is this year's date for the Polar Plunge, an annual event carried out in many locations nationwide whose proceeds go to the Special Olympics. EPD Officer Josh Miller, who is in charge of Elgin's, has asked if GPA would consider donating to it. This will be discussed at our next general membership meeting.

SECRETARY'S MINUTES & TREASURER'S REPORT

The motion to approve the minutes of the January 19th general membership meeting was seconded and passed unanimously.

So, too, was newly elected treasurer Dan Miller's report of GPA funds: \$158,754.40 in total, \$71,064.75 of which is in a checking account and the rest in four CDs.

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. Elgin Historic District [EDH]. (Chair, Pat Miller)

April 22 is the date for the annual EHD cleanup and May 6 the date for the pocket park cleanup, the latter necessary to reduce GPA costs when the park is turned over to the person hired for routine summer maintenance.

Pat noted a number of things that this committee could/should be doing:

- Publicizing and actively encouraging applications for existing grants from both GPA and the City;
- Creating guidelines for additional grants for things such as tree planting & color consulting;
- Creating a brochure to inform all who purchase property in the EHD of the design guidelines they must adhere to as well as of the benefits of being in a National Register Historic District;
- Assessing the things that need addressing in the EHD and providing City Code officials with a prioritized listing of them;
- Determining if ordinances adequately address problems or if enforcement of them is lacking;
- Installing holiday wreaths on EHD signs;
- Overseeing care of the pocket park and corner curb plantings.

Those of us living here before the inception of GPA know how much effort went into bringing the area up to what it now is. We also know that carrying out tasks such as those Pat delineated are crucial to maintaining and enhancing the EHD. But we are aging and need younger residents to join us. Sadly, as Pat noted, with only Tyler Grace on her committee thus far, many of the things that should be done are unlikely to be. So please consider joining this committee and attending its 7 p.m. meeting on March 13 at Pat's home.

2. Elgin Historic House Tour (Chair, Matt Martin)

The Steering Committee will meet Monday, February 27th at the history museum to begin planning for a successful 41st tour, which will be in the Spring-Douglas area. All with an interest in the tour are invited to attend.

3. Membership (Janine Hnatusko)

Five properties in the EHD have sold within the last 30 days, only one of which will be owner-occupied.

GPA is still in need of a new chairperson for this committee as Janine is now heading the Program Committee, which is in itself a major responsibility. Tyler Grace, however, has volunteered to help her with membership paperwork until a new chair is found. In the works is a revised membership form that asks applicants about their specific interests and talents.

Because we do not want our newer, younger members to burn out, we are appealing for someone to step up to chair this committee.

4. Program (Janine Hnatusko)

GPA's general membership meeting on April 20th is tentatively scheduled to be a spring education session. While the specific focus has yet to be determined, two under consideration are exterior paint colors and historic plantings.

The date for the summer picnic is still in flux, though toward the end of June seemed promising to those of us at tonight's meeting. Also in flux is the date for GPA's October Fall Fest. Most felt that this past year's was a bit too early, but because what seemed to be an ideal date—October 21st—conflicts with Nightmare on Chicago Street, October 14th and the 28th are now under consideration. Also yet to be determined is whether the annual GPA Holiday Party will be December 8th or 15th. Janine would like feedback on which dates are preferable. And she would also like people to join her to plan these events.

5. Publicity (Trish LaFleur)

This past month GPA gained four new Facebook followers for a total of 1,166. While the number receiving emails via Constant Contact remained at 493, that 53% are opening them is amazing, considering that the 20% is the norm.

Whether GPA needs to continue to pay a monthly fee of \$30 for trouble shooting was discussed. Andrew Stein will work with Trish to make a final determination of this.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Lords Park Pool

Between 6-8 p.m. on March 15th, Parks and Recreation is holding a special public meeting on its future at Lords Park Elementary School. All who care about this matter need to make an effort to be there.

In the meantime, Paul Bednar will write another letter on behalf of GPA to voice our opposition to closing it, and will include points made in responses to an email he recently sent out about it.

Andrew Stein suggested that we ask Parks & Rec to consider also using the pool for educational opportunities such as CPR safety and life-guard training. This, however, is already being done at the Centre.

Councilwoman Tish Powell said that the difficulty in getting life guards to staff it, not the cost to get it back up and running, seems to be the major stumbling block for those who would like to keep it open. But it need not be, she added, if people think outside the box and, for example, consider training adults for the job.

2. Missing and Damaged Signs in the EHD

Dan Miller reported that the City has installed all of the street signs and has promised to install the two EHD entryway signs this spring.

3. Traffic Circle at Gifford and Division Streets

Of the 43 who responded to the survey that Dan Miller sent out after last month's GPA meeting to 290, all but two were either in favor of keeping the circle or making the intersection a 4-way stop instead. But as so few responded, the question remains whether GPA should take a stand on this matter. This will be decided at our March 16th meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

Candidate Forums

Barbara Evans reported that at the recent DNA Neighborhood Outreach Committee meeting, SWAN reported having had a successful night in which its residents gathered to meet the mayoral and council candidates that will be on our ballots April 4th. And NENA noted that on March 9th, it was having one on Zoom which would include breakout rooms of small groups for individuals to ask questions

of the candidates. Barbara thought that it was important that GPA sponsor one as well but suggested that since time is of the essence, we might ask NENA if we could be a co-sponsor of theirs. Paul is going to pursue the possibility with NENA and then poll our Board members about the matter.

MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS

1. Changes in City Personnel

Jennie Phillips, formerly in charge of 511, is the new head of Neighborhood Services. (Aaron Constantino has moved to IT.)

2. STOP CPKC Initiative (Barbara Evans)

The cities of Elgin and Woodale as well as the villages of Roselle, Bartlett, Itasca, Bensonville, Hanover Park and Schaumburg joined forces to oppose the acquisition of the Kansas City Southern Railway by the Canadian Pacific Railway shortly after it was proposed. Giving strong support to their STOP initiative have been Sen. Dick Durbin and Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi, and for good reason, for at least eleven additional freight trains, which would be permitted to be two miles long rather than "just" the current allowed one and a half mile) will be traveling on the Metra Milwaukee West line each day. And as the freight trains will have precedence, not surprisingly Metra also joined the STOP initiative.

Nevertheless, on Jan. 27th, the federal Surface Transportation Board, which will make the final decision on whether the merger can go through, gave a green light to it. "Not surprising," said those in the know, as that board has a history of rubber stamping requests from railroad companies. Yet though the STB is expected to make the final ruling on April 1, the STOP coalition has not given up and is working on negotiating things to mitigate the impact the increased freight traffic will have on its communities.

And the message to those of us on the Neighborhood Outreach Committee was to not give up either but to instead urge our groups to send letters addressed to the Federal Service Transportation Board ASAP to Mayor Kaptain (with STOP CPKC on the envelope) detailing the negative effects the merger would have on our community. Or you could go directly to www.stopckpk.com and click on the Call to Action and write your message in the message box.

But before sending a message, awareness of the STB's Final Environmental Impact Statement about the merger is imperative. Councilwoman Powell has posted the link to all three volumes of that report on her Facebook page, However, as time is of the essence, I have focused on just Section 3 of Volume 1, for when studied, its information is alarming enough. My report on key parts of this section is attached to these minutes but also includes the link to all three volumes.

JANUARY 20, 2023 UPDATE: In light of the recent derailment of 38 cars of the Norfolk Southern—some of which carried hazardous materials and caught fire—in East Palestine, Ohio, both of IL's U.S. senators and two of its House representatives have asked the STB chairman to defer a vote until the agency

"conducts a more thorough and accurate study of the impacts of the merger on the Chicago region." So write those letters, please.

The motion to adjourn was seconded and approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Evans, secretary