

Throwing Rocks at Hornets' Nests

Timothy Zinn, AWCC President

Recently AWCC has taken a beating on one of those unnamed North Side email chat sites centered in a bordering, but also unnamed neighborhood. Normally I don't bother entering the fray as I have learned from past experiences that doing so usually results in something very similar to the title of this article. I find that these sites are great outlets for the uninformed, the misinformed, the misguided, or for people who just like to complain or have too much free time at their disposal. It only takes one or two times for me to learn that a seemingly benign comment will illicit, in no time flat, an email inbox filled with dozens of rude, senseless, and baseless comments. So I am normally content to sit back and read at my leisure fifty posts about a lost cat, or a maimed bird (perhaps there is a connection here), or a like number of posts about how in the world are we going to keep our streets and sidewalks clean when the city's street sweeper comes only once a month now (hmm, try sweeping your own sidewalk and curb every few days). But occasionally, this insanity is a bit more far-reaching, more pointed, and sometimes damaging to our neighborhood. When these posts begin to appear, I reluctantly sit at my computer to try to confront the ever-mounting speculations, misinformation, and lies. With much angst, I hit the send button knowing fully-well that my inbox will explode in three... two... one.

One such occasion arose last spring when the city announced its repaving schedule and that a portion of Brighton Road from North Avenue to Ridge Avenue was going to be repaved. Suddenly, the chat room was abuzz with accusations that AWCC had wielded its mighty political magic wand and *poof* we have newly-paved streets coursing through our neighborhood. I assure you that I do not arrive at meetings in a floating bubble nor on a broomstick (although I know there are some who will disagree with that last one) and that the AWCC board is not comprised of the faculty of Hogwarts. In fact, last year I requested that Beech Avenue be evaluated for inclusion in the repaving program since portions of the street are now gravel thanks to Equitable Gas's line replacement project several years ago. Just imagine those posts if it had been Beech Avenue that was repaved!

The latest AWCC-targeted posts have centered on the "temporarily closed" BRiX restaurant at 900 Western Avenue. Here, AWCC and the neighborhood has been accused of forcing the closure of the restaurant for failure to comply with "our rules" or not intervening enough to make the business owner's very real issues with city, county, and state agencies, again, "magically" disappear. From our initial meeting with BRiX's owners nearly a year ago to their most-recent zoning hearing, AWCC has been supporting this endeavor every step of the way—even appearing at that last zoning meeting and entering our support into the official record. BRiX is a wonderful addition to the neighborhood and we will continue

AWCC February/March Calendar

AWCC General Membership Meeting

Calvary United Methodist Church
(Beech Avenue Entrance)

Tuesday, February 14 @ 7:30 pm

Tuesday, March 13 @ 7:30 pm

Combined Housing & Planning and North Avenue Committees Meeting

857 Western Avenue

Tuesday, February 21 @ 7:30 pm

Tuesday, March 15 @ 7:30 pm NOTE CHANGE

AWCC Executive Committee Meeting

812 Western Avenue

Tuesday, February 28 @ 7:30 pm

Tuesday, March 27 @ 7:30 pm

So, in closing, I urge you to attend AWCC meetings, join committees, ask questions, and be one of the well-informed, so if you do choose to throw rocks at hornets' nests, you can be armed with accurate information and perhaps a big can of CRC 14010 Wasp & Hornet Killer, just to be safe.

I appreciate the opportunity to serve the Allegheny West neighborhood. The opinions expressed here, are, well, my opinions, and are subject to change now and then, but not often. I am always available, and look forward to receiving your comments, at tzinn106@msn.com

Equitable Gas Pipeline Replacement News

Equitable Gas Company will undertake a significant pipeline replacement project from March 2012 until the fall of 2012 on Pittsburgh's North Side. Streets in Allegheny West that will have natural gas mainline pipe replaced include: Brighton Road, Galveston Avenue from Western to Ridge, and N. Lincoln Avenue.

and fundraisers have allowed the Allegheny West Civic Council to leverage grants and loans for several major restoration projects over four decades. All of these projects have preserved the rich history of our beautiful neighborhood and have continued to enhance the reputation of Allegheny West as having one of the finest existing collection of Victorian homes in Pittsburgh.

Late 1970's: McIntosh Row, six row houses at the end of Western Avenue near the intersection of Brighton Road. Rehabilitated the deteriorating properties into 1 and 2 bedroom apartments; early residents were those neighbors displaced from boarding houses (on Western and N. Lincoln Avenues) as they were purchased and converted back into single family residences. AWCC still owns 4 of these properties.

Early 1980's: Nevin Row, condominiums at the corner of N. Lincoln and Galveston Avenues. These houses were restored after being severely damaged by fire – demolition was set to begin when neighbors literally stepped in and saved them from the wrecking ball. Sold to individual owners after rehabilitation.

Mid 1980's: Allegheny Court, intersection of Western and Galveston Avenues. Converted a dangerous corner that included a nuisance bar into market-rate office space rentals.

Mid 1990's: Denny Row, 900 block, W. North Avenue. Purchased and restored seriously dilapidated row of historic houses; sold to individual owners during restoration process.

Early 2000's: Fitzsimmons Square, 1000 block of Allegheny Avenue. Purchased and rebuilt one of the gateways to Allegheny West – six row houses that were sold to individual owners.

Mid 2000's: Western Renewed!, a \$1.7 million dollar infrastructure project on Western Avenue that included removal of old sidewalk, street trees and curbs and installation of new brick sidewalks, new trees and new curbs. The utility lines will be removed from overhead by the fall of 2012. This project is a partnership between Allegheny West Civic Council, property owners, the City of Pittsburgh and the R.K. Mellon Foundation.

Late 2000's: Allegheny City Stables building, 845 W. North Avenue. The only remaining public works building of Allegheny City, this historic property is the keystone in the North Avenue Lofts project – an ambitious plan to convert the Victorian-aged industrial buildings in the 800 block of W. North Avenue into market rate apartments and

fixtures on Western Avenue. Our new light fixtures. This was part of the city's effort to save money by changing all lighting in the city to LED lighting, which is more cost effective to illuminate.

After several calls that evening, we were out on the street talking to the contractor asking why they were physically taking the tops of the fixtures and putting on something completely different. They were following instructions! We asked them to be very careful with the light fixtures as they were very expensive and were most definitely going back up. Our light fixtures were to be put in a city storage compound.

The next morning I spoke with Ben Carlise, the head of the Department of Public Works about this unacceptable work. He basically told me that if we wanted the light fixtures back, they'd put them back and we'd have to pay to maintain them. When I questioned his comment, he told me to fax over the paperwork that showed the city had accepted responsibility for these particular light fixtures. Of course we have the paperwork!

I followed up with a call to Councilman Daniel Lavelle's office to let him know that we were having this problem. Several other Western Avenue residents also called the Councilman to make sure he knew this was an important topic. By that afternoon, Councilman Lavelle and his staff confirmed that the light fixtures that we paid for and had installed would be returned in less than two weeks! They also confirmed that the City would indeed maintain these light fixtures.

Keep your eyes open for the fixtures to go back up. And if you see Councilman Lavelle, please thank him for making sure we got our light fixtures back.

Look for more good news next month!

Yours in progress,
Gloria Rayman, Project Manager, Western RENEWED!

The West Penn Allegheny Health System Inc. – System Wide Services Division is always recruiting for job openings. You can access job openings for all West Penn Allegheny Health System hospitals - Allegheny General Hospital, Allegheny Valley Hospital, Canonsburg General Hospital, Forbes Hospice, Forbes Regional Hospital and The Western

Allegheny West homeowners and businesspeople, are you contemplating exterior renovations to your property this spring? If so, you may want to contact your Local Historic Review Committee. We are a group of residents and property owners convened by the City Historic Review Commission to review exterior renovation projects and to help property owners manage the building permit process.

Because Allegheny West is a City Historic District, all exterior work needs a Certificate of Appropriateness and/or a Building Permit. Once you have a concept, idea, or plan, check the Allegheny West Historic Guidelines. If your project fits the Guidelines or is fairly simple and straightforward, such as painting, you may be able to get approval for a Certificate of Appropriateness and/or a Building Permit “over the counter” at 200 Ross Street Downtown. The person you will need to contact for this is Sarah Quinn, the City Historic Preservation Planner, 412-255-2243 or Sarah.Quinn@pittsburghpa.gov. However, if you are planning a more significant project, such as replacement of windows or doors with new materials, installation of a fence, or an addition, you will need to have a hearing before the Historic Review Commission. In the second instance, please contact us, your local committee. We will review your plans, make recommendations, and help you get through the process. We can also direct you to contractors, suppliers, and other homeowners who have successfully completed similar projects.

Warning – Do not proceed with work without a building permit! Property owners who have done so in the past have been cited by Building Inspection. Time and money had to be expended to resolve the situations, and projects were delayed.

Your Local Historic Review Committee meets once a month to review projects. To get on the agenda, call Carole Malakoff at (412) 321-3612 or e-mail CaroleMalakoff@hotmail.com.

The Allegheny branch of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh on Federal Street has a wide variety of programs every month for kids ages 1 to 100! From Family Storytime for children 18 months – 3 years to Homework Club for grades K – 6; to the Lego Club and Teen Time Tuesdays; to computer basics and beginning email for adults, there’s something for everyone! To see a complete list of programs for February, check out their website at:

Cedar Avenue. This is not a league, so there is no commitment to be there every week. We do, however, need a weekly turnout of about 10 people. The bowling alleys are located on the second floor of the lodge. Bowling begins around 6:00 PM and we typically bowl three games. The price is \$2.50 per game and includes shoe rental—what a deal! Come to bowl or just socialize in the second floor lounge and cheer on your neighbors. Bowling is followed by the weekly performance of the Pittsburgh Banjo Club—every Wednesday, always open to the public, and never a cover charge.

Timothy Zinn

Membership Committee News

The Membership Committee will meet at the Civic Council office (812 Western Ave) on Thursday, February 16, 7:30 PM, to discuss several ideas.

A Social Outreach Network has been requested and a planning discussion will be held. Everyone is welcome to attend and share their ideas as to how best notify our members and neighbors of social events and new ways to reach out to others with similar interests.

Plans for our 25th Annual Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper will be discussed and finalized as well.

Please come and help...Volunteers are needed!!

AWCC Membership Join Today!

To become an AWCC member, send your Name, Address, Phone Number and email address to:

Allegheny West Civic Council - Membership Chair
812 Western Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15233

Annual Dues are \$3 and Lifetime Dues are \$45. Checks should be made payable to AWCC.

Pay for your membership online with your credit card! Go to www.alleghenywest.org, click on the “Tours” button (it is set up to take payments for our Christmas tour) and then click on the Christmas Tour logo. Scroll to the bottom for the “purchase” link.

II. REPORTS OF OFFICERS

A. Treasurer's Report

III. REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

A. Housing & Planning/N Avenue Committees

1. North Avenue Sub Committee
2. Western Avenue Project
3. Light of Life Relocation/Expansion
4. Equitable Gas work in neighborhood

B. Membership

1. Wednesday Night Bowling
2. Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper, 2.21

C. Property

1. Realtor report

D. Ways & Means

E. Friends of Allegheny West

1. Purchase of string trimmer for lots/alleyways/AWCC property
2. Neighborhood clean-ups, Earth Day
3. Memorial trees and dedication service

F. Communications

IV. NORTHSIDE LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE REPORT

V. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. West Park Benefactor Challenge Grant

VI. NEW BUSINESS

VII. ANNOUNCEMENTS



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Friends of CLP Allegheny – Monthly Meeting

Saturday, February 18 / 9:00 AM, CLP Allegheny, Federal Street

Looking for a chance to give back to the community? Join the Friends of CLP Allegheny, meet others from the neighborhood and help shape your local library.

Meet the Author: Jim Hollock

Wed, February 29 / 7:00 PM, CLP Allegheny, Federal Street

In *Born to Lose*, author Jim Hollock tells the story of Stanley B. Hoss, a name that still sends shivers up the spines of local residents, conjuring up an unmatched time of terror in the Allegheny Valley. The program will feature a reading and discussion, followed by a book signing.

THE GAZETTE

The monthly newsletter of the Allegheny West Civic Council

Editor: *Gloria Rayman*