
ALLEGHENY WEST GAZETTE

June 2012

UPDATE: LOL – No Laughing Matter

Timothy Zinn, President

In the November edition of the *Gazette*, I wrote about the Light of Life's (LOL) proposed "mega-campus" to be located at 635 Ridge Avenue in a former Pittsburgh Public Schools building. The LOL's vision for this property is for it to serve as the sole location in which to combine all of the services that the organization currently provides at various locations in the city. At last month's general membership meeting, residents asked if I would publish an update to that article since many of you noticed that LOL recently closed on the property for \$1.1 million. This transaction was completed in advance of obtaining the necessary permits from the City to occupy the building.

It is important that I provide some background to this situation. More than thirty years ago, AWCC adopted a Master Plan document for the entire neighborhood, which called for only residential uses on all lots fronting the Allegheny Commons Park, including all parcels along the subject block of Ridge Avenue. That Master Plan resides in the offices of the City Planning Department, and the zoning of all of those park-front properties has remained "Residential" for more than three decades. We have consistently fought (and won) major land use battles to reject incompatible uses. That AWCC Master Plan has been revisited several times over the years, with no changes to our plans for residential development facing the Commons Park. Most recently, the Community College Master Plan was revised and accepted by the City Planning Commission in 2010, and included – at our insistence and with the agreement of CCAC and City Planning Staff - the retention of the Residential Zoning facing the Park. The proposed use by LOL is not in keeping with AWCC's Master Plan and is not permitted under the current Zoning Code.

LOL presently operates its administrative offices and a women's program on Western Avenue. Just seven years ago LOL worked with AWCC to locate this program in Allegheny West, at which time AWCC officially supported LOL's proposal and applauded a scattered site service location plan for the organization.

The idea of a single LOL combined campus was discussed in the Mayor's office on March 17, 2011, among a very select group of community representatives. Allegheny West was NOT invited. A LOL-led community involvement process evolved from that meeting and AWCC was eventually invited to join in June. Three meetings were held to discuss potential locations of the campus. AWCC formally objected to the Ridge Avenue location, making clear that we would absolutely oppose such a proposal, and no further discussion of the site ensued. Instead, the discussions centered around another site on California Avenue.

On October 17, 2011, with no input from neighborhood representatives participating in LOL's community involvement process, LOL submitted a \$1.1 million bid for the Ridge Avenue property. AWCC board members met with LOL's staff to discourage the organization from pursuing the Ridge Avenue site and its mega-campus model. We advocated that they return to the scattered site model, noted that the Residential Zoning prohibits any such use on the site, and stated clearly that we would immediately engage highly competent legal counsel to see that the Zoning Code is upheld. LOL's Executive Director refused to withdraw the organization's bid.

In November 2011, several Allegheny West residents appeared before the School Board in opposition to the sale of the Ridge Avenue school building. Ignoring community concerns and contrary to the School Board's own criteria for the sale of surplus property, the Board voted 5-4 to sell the property to LOL. On April 27, 2012, LOL closed on the property.

AWCC

June/July Calendar

AWCC General Membership Meeting

Calvary United Methodist Church
(Beech Avenue Entrance)

Tuesday, June 12 @ 7:30 pm

Tuesday, July 10 @ 7:30 pm

Combined Housing & Planning and North Avenue Committees Meeting

857 Western Avenue

Tuesday, June 19 @ 7:30pm

Tuesday, July 17 @ 7:30 pm

AWCC Executive Committee Meeting

812 Western Avenue

Tuesday, June 26 @ 7:30 pm

Tuesday, July 31 @ 7:30 pm

The reasons behind AWCC's objection to the relocation and concentration of LOL's services in our neighborhood are many. Besides LOL breaching a long-standing working relationship and trust with AWCC, LOL's plan is in complete violation of AWCC's Master Plan document, as adopted by the City of Pittsburgh and reflected in the long-standing zoning for all of Ridge Avenue facing the Park. The negative impacts of some of LOL's service locations are well-known and documented, in particular the men's shelter on East North Avenue. Moving the location and expanding this service merely transfers its negative impacts to the other side of the park. The creation of a "Mega-Campus" would create over-whelming impacts to any single community. For these reasons, AWCC remains committed to prevent this development in our neighborhood. AWCC has retained top legal counsel to assist the organization's efforts to this end.

This and other topics important to the stability and quality of life in our neighborhood will be discussed at AWCC's general membership meeting on Tuesday, June 12, beginning at 7:30 PM in the chapel of Calvary United Methodist Church.

I appreciate the opportunity to serve the Allegheny West neighborhood. I am always available and look forward to receiving your comments, at tzinn106@msn.com.

North Side Leadership Conference Annual Awards

2012 Neighbor of the Year – Bob Griewahn

May 2007 turned out to be a very good month for Allegheny West. Not only was a lovely vacant building on Western Avenue purchased and given a new lease on life as a stately commercial building, but one of the owners would step forward as liaison between the new-to-the-neighborhood business and the Allegheny West Civic Council and quickly become a very important voice in the Civic Council.

Bob Griewahn, the Allegheny West Civic Council's 2012 Neighbor of the Year, is a partner in the law firm of deClaire, Griewahn & Scott, a full-service law firm representing both businesses and individuals, with a particular emphasis in the areas of real estate transactions, creditors' rights and taxation. Bob, along with his partners Charles LeClaire and David Scott, started to attend the Western Avenue Neighborhood Improvement District meetings almost immediately and Bob brought a wealth of education knowledge with him.

While Bob resides in Highland Park with his wife Laura Smith, he wanted to get to know his work neighborhood so he and Laura started attending Allegheny West neighborhood events. Always willing to listen, he began to be sought out for his opinion and advice on various issues. He attended monthly neighborhood meetings and he and Laura volunteered as tour guides for the annual Christmas Tour – he was hooked!

In 2009 when the Treasurer's seat was open on the WCC board, Bob stepped forward for a two-year stint as treasurer. Not a small task for anyone as AWCC owns apartments and property and runs without any paid staff!

In 2011 Bob took on the role of Vice President of WCC and also took one of the seats representing AWCC on the NSLC Board of Directors. When the AWCC treasurer was unable to serve a second year, Bob agreed to return to the Treasurer position for 2012.

Not only has Bob kept our books in order, he has so graciously opened his office for all of the Christmas tour volunteers – all 150 of them - twice! He and Laura also helped set up the parties and take it all back down. He has done all of this with a smile and a great (sometimes wry) sense of humor.

The Allegheny West Civic Council proudly congratulates Bob Griewahn as the 2012 Neighbor of the Year.

2012 Lifetime Achievement Award – Alex Watson

Alex Watson, a 52-year resident in Allegheny West, epitomizes the most positive aspects of a good neighbor and a community preservationist. Coming to the North Side from the northernmost sections of Allegheny County, Alex and Merle Dickinson had an eye to the beauties of the historic home they purchased on Lincoln Avenue in 1960. Both found ways to preserve the lovely features of their new home while retaining some of its apartment units, which enabled them to slowly undertake the process of restoration. Alex and Merle were among the founders of the Allegheny West Civic Council that emerged in the mid 1960's, when the impact of the growth of Community College, the great demolition of many homes in the area, and the construction of highway systems threatened the very fabric of what was to be "Allegheny West." At that time, Alex, with an education in landscape design, was the manager of the Sears Roebuck garden department, the largest such operation on the North Side. It was no surprise to many of his neighbors when Alex's magnificent courtyard garden was featured in *Pittsburgh Magazine* as one of the city's best urban gardens.

Throughout the history of the Allegheny West Civic Council, Alex took on a leadership role in many of the organization's programs and projects. Among them were:

- The organization of the community's Springfest events in the 1970's. In opening his home to many visitors on Springfest tours, Alex's home was featured in a *Pittsburgh Press* Roto Magazine feature.

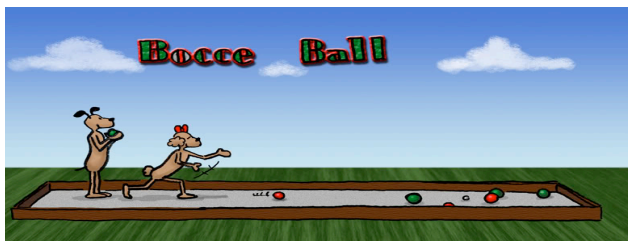
- The preparations for a HUD application whereby AWCC was able to procure and restore a row of badly deteriorated homes on Western Avenue, now known as McIntosh Row. Alex played not only an instrumental role in the application for funding, but he oversaw the work on the project, and for several years, managed these properties for AWCC.

- The beautification of the vacant corner of Western Avenue and Brighton Road. Alex designed and supervised the transformation of a horrible visual entrance to the Allegheny West neighborhood into a stunning garden plot.

- The essence of neighborliness has been provided for over two decades as folks who take the annual Allegheny West Victorian Christmas Tour have been welcomed with warmth and music (with Alex at the piano) into the beautifully decorated Watson home.

- Alex has opened his home for community meetings, house tours, garden tours, educational tours, and always for his neighbors and friends for many social events. Alex is the epitome of what it means to be a good neighbor to all.

For this and countless other examples, Allegheny West congratulates Alex as a Lifetime Achievement Awardee



COMING SOON
Summer Bocce Ball in Allegheny West

Western Renewed! Project Update

More wires have come down! Take a look up the next time you are on Western Avenue and you will notice there are significantly fewer utility lines crossing the street. Five more wires should be coming down within the next two weeks.

We are working to secure the final Right of Way easements to permit wires to cross properties to reach another property. If you are reading this and have a ROW agreement that you haven't returned, please contact Jon Huck at jon@pittsburghnorthside.com. He can walk you through the paperwork and answer all of your questions.

The biggest difficulties are related to the "Courtyard Properties" (832-840 Western) and the "McIntosh Row Block" (800-820 Western). Both are difficult because they are landlocked – that is, there is no easy way to get power from the alley to each of the structures. But we have made great headway working with Duquesne Light's engineers and Rock Electric.

We are poised to complete the project in 2012 and look forward to the future pleasant aesthetic of Western Avenue.

Equitable Gas Pipeline Replacement Update

Equitable Gas Company's Pipeline replacement work is progressing safely and on schedule on N. Lincoln Avenue thanks to the cooperation of their customers and good weather!

Business and residents may visit the Equitable Gas website at www.equitablegas.com for project updates. If you have concerns about your property in regards to this project, please contact Jeremy Cunningham, North Side Project Supervisor at 412-307-5542.

Equitable Gas appreciates the patience and understanding of all customers during these upgrades.

The Allegheny Branch of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh has many FREE programs available for children, teens and adults. To find out what's happening in June, email Allegheny@carnegielibrary.org or stop by in person at 1230 Federal Street.

A Tour and Tasting in the Homes and Gardens of Old Allegheny

Friday, June 15 and Saturday, June 16 5-9pm

We are looking forward to a very enjoyable event. Guests will visit 7 homes and gardens in our neighborhood, taste a different wine in each, and try a delicious d'oeuvres prepared by some of our noted neighborhood chefs.

Our chefs, Linda Iannotta, Ingrid Berglund, Carrie Doyle, Mary Callison and Matthew Miller, will be busy making stuffed pitas, chocolate truffles, and meat balls in a bourbon glaze this week. Wines for the evening will come from local wineries, the Michael Stephen Kavic Winery in Carnegie and RWine Cellar in the Strip. Homeowners have been busy planning, planting, and pruning. They would appreciate your help greeting guests, pouring wine, or serving food.

To volunteer, contact Carole Malakoff,
carolemalakoff@hotmail.com.

If you know someone who has been waiting to order tickets, let them know that tickets will only be available until Monday evening, June 11. They can be purchased on-line at www.alleghenywest.org.

Allegheny West Neighborhood Mixer

Friday, June 22, 2012 -- 6pm

Join us at Peppi's Sandwich Shop



927
Western
Avenue

BYOB and enjoy your favorite sandwich

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.

Your paid membership enables you to vote at monthly membership meetings.

AWCC General Membership Meeting Agenda
June 12, 2012

- I. READING OF MAY 2012 MINUTES
- II. REPORTS OF OFFICERS
 - A. Treasurer's Report
- III. REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES
 - A. Housing & Planning/N Avenue Committees
 - 1. North Avenue Project/ Stables Building/ VAF Building
 - a. Stables Building – NSDF Loan Extension/Development Plan
 - b. Stables Building – Renewal of Listing Agreement
 - c. Value Added Foods Building – Listing Agreement
 - d. Galveston Lots
 - 2. Western Avenue Project
 - a. Electrical Moves
 - b. Western Avenue Gateway Project
 - 3. Light of Life Relocation/Expansion
 - 4. North Shore Event Parking
 - 5. Grievance Sub-committee
 - 6. Consultant on Zoning Enforcement Issues
 - B. Membership
 - 1. AW Neighborhood Mixer – June 22nd
 - 2. Summer Bocce
 - C. Property
 - 1. Realtor report
 - 2. Sale of 806 Western
 - D. Ways & Means
 - 1. Summer Wine Tour – June 15&16
 - E. Friends of Allegheny West
 - F. Communications
- IV. NORTHSIDE LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE REPORT
- V. UNFINISHED BUSINESS
- VI. NEW BUSINESS
- VII. ANNOUNCEMENTS

IF ANYONE'S GOING TO LOSE SLEEP, IT'LL BE US.



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Pittsburgh, PA 15233
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