

Fairmount Civic Association

The Voice of Fairmount

TO: FCA Membership
FROM: Larry Reynolds, President
RE: 2009 Recap of FCA Business & Activities

As I completed my second year as President of the FCA and turn the leadership over to Sheryl Haynes, I thought it useful to report to the membership of the Association about the activities that we engaged in during 2009

While the final financial numbers for 2009 are not yet wrapped up, over the last couple of years the FCA has been spending \$3,000-3,500 each year while only bringing in about \$2,500 in dues. The balance of expenses has been covered by drawing down the association's bank balance of \$16-18,000. In the short term this is OK, but it explains why the Board has often made an effort to remind members to renew their active membership and pay their dues. A couple of years ago the FCA earned about \$2-3,000 additional income from the House Tour Program, but this program has been discontinued by the city-wide sponsor Friends of Independence Park and also from our own burnout of the 75 or so volunteers needed to run the House Tour. In the absence of these additional income sources, the FCA needs to encourage Fairmount residents to renew their membership so that the Association can continue efforts to improve the neighborhood.

A legitimate question is "How is the money spent?". Typically, \$750 is donated to the Philadelphia Mennonite HS to host the 10 membership meetings throughout the year. A similar amount has been spent on meeting refreshments to feed those members who may have skipped dinner to make the FCA meeting and about \$500 or more is spent for the PO Box, the FCA web site, and FCA mailing and supplies.

As outcome for this expense the FCA has regularly invited guests of interest to speak to members at meetings and provide a comfortable environment for the meetings. In 2009 the meeting speakers were:

- January- We were surprised to have a mystery guest in the person of Mayor Nutter. Several people remarked that we should have advertised his appearance, so that more residents might attend the FCA meeting. Unfortunately, this was not possible since we did not get a confirmation that the Mayor would make the meeting until late that afternoon. So for those disappointed that they did not know about the Mayor's appearance, please accept the apology of the FCA Board. We were also pleased to have the Commander of the 9th Police District, Captain Dennis Wilson at the January meeting.
- February- Reps from the Rodin Museum/ Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society gave a preview of the new gardens that will be created on the Rodin site. It is part of the \$ 17MM state project to upgrade the Ben Franklin Parkway.

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- March- Democratic DA candidate Brian Grady, Democratic Controller candidate Brett Mandel, Republican Controller candidate Al Schmidt gave their campaign pitches.
- April- DA candidates Seth Williams (elected), Dan McCaffery, Dan McElhatton, and Michael Turner had their turns to present their platform.
- May- State Senator Larry Farnese gave us an update on Harrisburg politics.
- June- Heidi Siegel, President of the Friends of Eastern State Penitentiary Park
- September- Captain Wilson of the 9th Police District
- October- Darrell Clarke, City Councilperson for our 5th District was the primary speaker and he provided updates on city issues, such as changes to the BRT and the city's finances, as well as take questions from Fairmount residents

In addition to the meetings, the FCA was able to provide support a number of neighborhood events during the course of the year:

- Provided free tickets for residents to attend five different Philadelphia Orchestra concerts at the Mann Music Center during July.
- Secured 100 free tickets or neighbors to visit the Philadelphia Zoo on Fairmount day in October
- Provided funding for the children's Easter Egg hunt.
- Provided funding for the children's art show during the Fairmount Arts Craw in April
- Provided funding for the children's Halloween Party at Ward Park.

The FCA in Partnership with the Fairmount CDC, Fairmount Tree Tenders, and the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society has supported the PHS program that resulted in nearly 100 street trees planted in Fairmount during the spring and fall plantings.

Over the course of the year, the FCA provided some financial support for several community garden initiatives such as the Parrish St, garden, Bulldog Park on Fairmount Avenue, and the Ribbon of Gold plantings along the Fairmount Avenue face of the Eastern State site.

As is traditional, in June cash awards were made to two graduating students at the Philadelphia Mennonite HS, Bache-Martin School, and St. Francis Xavier School for their scholastic accomplishments

A very important activity of the FCA is to assure that the voices of the immediate neighbors and the neighborhood in general are heard by the Philadelphia Zoning Board when development projects are reviewed. The Zoning Committee of the FCA headed by Bob Shamble continues to be very active in the review of Fairmount developments/rehabs as proposed by residents and developers. The Philadelphia Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA) expects and solicits input and views from civic groups and neighbors regarding developments in their neighborhood. In 2009 Bob and the Zoning Committee reviewed proposals for nearly 20 properties.

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The FCA made a proposal to SEPTA at a service-planning meeting for the public on February 24. One of the items on their agenda was a possible re-routing of the 43 bus (which runs across Spring Garden St.) to include service to the University City area. Many in the neighborhood have expressed their concern over the poor SEPTA service from Fairmount to University City, so the FCA Board sent a letter to SEPTA in support of the route 43 proposal, but more importantly to consider a re-routing of the underused, in our view, route 7 bus to include a loop into the University City area. This would be a big improvement in SEPTA service for residents of Fairmount and other Lower North Philadelphia neighborhoods, who need to get to 30th Street Station and University City. The letter was well received by SEPTA, and they indicated an interest in the Route #7 proposal, but as might be expected no commitments were offered for the 2010 Service Plan. The FCA continues to follow up on this proposal.

In closing, I would like to thank the many volunteers and Board members who have donated their time and energy to make our Fairmount neighborhood a better place to live. And also please encourage your neighbors to get involved and join the FCA.

Larry Reynolds