

COLONIAL VILLAGE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

April 21, 2010
Attendance: 44

Board Members Present: Anita Beavers, Mike Morofsky, Mary Bechtol, Evie Bush, Kathy Miles. Board Members Absent: June Kenfield and Bill Matt. Anita brought the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance. A donation box was put out for Meals on Wheels to commemorate Paul Kenfield who passed away last month. He and June had worked for that organization until shortly before his death.

LPD Officer Colby dropped off crime maps but was unable to stay. There was an incident of a house getting egged, one burglary of an unlocked car and a house was broken into and robbed during the day. Kathy Miles gave information about using longer screws to reinforce door jambs.

Minutes were read and approved.

Treasurer's report: The current balance is \$1,736.09. Grants of \$1,000 from the Mayor's Advisory Board will fund the newsletter and website. With the help of Carol Wood, councilmember-at-large, we also received funding for the annual picnic and rental of the obstacle course.

County Commissioners: Dale Copedge and Vic Celentino reported that Calvin Lynch is ill. The board has chosen a new Comptroller. Her name is Mary Lannoye. She was previously Budget Director for Governor Granholm. The budget deficit for the County for 2011 will be \$5 million which is an improvement from previous projections, due to a grant given to the Health Department. Questions were asked about the re-paving on Waverly Road from Lansing Road to Moores River. Carol Wood will raise that issue at the Tri-Co Planning Commission meeting next Wednesday. Mary Bechtol reported that she recently used Capitol Regional airport for an evening flight and that it was dark and no place was open to get refreshments. Vic said that due to the many airlines bankruptcy filings traffic is down 59% and they are having trouble recruiting new carriers. They are trying to acquire more freight carriers. A decrease in property tax revenue due to the many foreclosures has also affected them.

Speaker: Dr. T.C. Wallace, Superintendent of the Lansing School District, spoke about the efforts of the district to deliver services to meet student needs and parental wishes. He has been in the education field for 43 years; 23 of them as superintendent, mostly in Michigan. Ideally he would spend 75% of his time instructing classes but due to the impact of the economy he spends 95% of his time deciding where he can cut expenses. He reported that this is the worst he has ever seen for funding of the schools. Projected deficits for June of 2010 are expected to be \$15 million. A'Lynne Robinson, 3rd ward councilmember, mentioned that this is a problem state-wide and that Jackson is expecting to lay off 55 staff members, 30 of them teachers. Lansing expects to lay off 100 staff, most of them will be administrative and non-instructional.

He pleaded for people to contact their legislators and request more funding for education. He also mentioned an organization called S.O.S. (Save Our Schools, Save Our Students, Save Our State) that works on this. The district is proud to report that in spite of the cut in funding the MEAP scores are up for the last 3 years in a row. Two schools reached 100% proficiency and 18 of 21 grade schools are at 90% proficiency. They expect a reduction of \$265 per student for the coming year. Class size is also expected to increase by several students. Middle school class size will probably be 30 to 35 students. Part of the problem is that State law requires the schools to have a budget in place by June but the State does not finalize a budget until October, and frequently changes the monies for schools; a sort of take-back.

Question Period: Stuart Miller, who has a grandson in school, brought up that the district is not forwarding student records in a timely manner when a child changes schools. Dr. Wallace took his name and number and promised to look into it.

Ten years ago a teacher contribution for medical expenses was \$500 per month; now it is \$1,500. Cassie Larrieux expressed the hope that nutrition and physical activity would be retained at existing levels. Dr. Wallace mentioned a program called "Healthy Fit Kids" that is a partnership with Sparrow hospital that works on this priority. Sue Salzman, principal at Elmhurst, mentioned that her students have a walking club and try for 40 miles a month. When concerns regarding school discipline were raised, Dr. Wallace said that overall they get good co-operation from parents, but that some object to their children being corrected. Others wanted to know if a dress code was feasible and again, he said it takes parent co-operation. The budget had to cut summer school and there is discussion of closing Sexton high school. Year-round schools would be approximately 16% more costly to operate. There is discussion of a 4-day

school week with longer hours but there are expenses to that also. He mentioned that some school properties would probably be sold. Carol Wood asked that consideration be given to the needs of the neighborhoods before a sale. Kathy asked if the Lansing district would be implementing the “National Organizer Curriculum” and expressed concern that one book used in the agenda by Saul Alinsky was dedicated to Lucifer. Mr. Wallace said that as he had never heard of the program, the answer was no.

Area 1: Mike told us about the raid (twice) by Lansing police and Special Ops at a house on Marion. The occupants had been to the previous month’s meeting and objected to license numbers being taken down. The CSO meeting to discuss basement flooding following sewer work on Rundle, Boston, Loraine and Quentin is scheduled for April 27th. Some of these neighbors have spent thousands of dollars due to this problem. He showed pictures of flowers in resident’s yards. A’Lynne Robinson will look into a problem with a house at 1630 Gordon that was asked by the city to remove a large pile of leaves. Instead of removing them, they were put by the curb by a fire plug and are blowing around the neighborhood. Walter from Code Compliance will look into long standing complaints about the house. Walter also mentioned that Greg Scrimger is out and they are still short 1 officer. Anne Pearson raised a concern about the house at 1125 Mt Hope that is in such disrepair. Walter said an order to fix or demolish will be issued this week. Mike has had no response from Comcast to his letter.

Area 2: Mary had an article on coyotes that she made copies of detailing how other cities are dealing with the problem. Critter Control is trying to capture the ones near South Holly Way.

Area 3: Bill reports someone on Pleasant Grove has been feeding the coyotes and letting their dogs play with them. The dogs are aggressive and have threatened some neighbors. Animal Control was made aware of the problem. Letter carriers have asked that we remind dog owners to be sure their dogs are under control. (Anita gave Bill’s report)

Vice President: Evie mentioned that the students at Elmhurst will be planting a flowering tree on May 4th at 3:00 for Arbor Day and all are invited to come for that. She also said that there has been increased vandalism at the school such as the lights being broken on the front porch again. The principal has even been targeted with graffiti. Evie asked that neighbors bordering the property to please keep an eye out so that trouble makers can be held accountable for their actions.

City Council: Carol Wood handed out the Mayor's Budget Summary for 2010-2011 and explained some of the charts. Special attention was given to the last page which detailed actual and anticipated costs. City employees are working 36 hour, 4 day work weeks and 17 vacant positions have been cut. This includes 1 person from the code compliance office. Closing the Washington Park ice rink is on the table for a potential \$231,000 savings. Closing the Miller Road Senior Center could save about \$20,000 and closing Scott House, which is used for veteran and gardening groups, could save about \$7,000. In order to have a balanced budget, the police department must cut an additional \$1.9 million from its budget. The administration is working with the police union on different issues. If no concessions are reached, it could mean the vacant position within the department would not be filled and potentially 17 officers could be laid off. Carol said the "Rainy Day Fund" exists to use in tough times to prevent layoffs and could be used at this time. There is also a possibility of a Public Safety millage to be used to prevent layoffs. A'Lynne Robinson said that a 1 mil levy would typically cost someone with a house assessed at \$100,000 approximately \$56 more per year. She encouraged citizens to write letters to the City Council expressing their wishes regarding these cuts. It was voted on by attendees that we send a letter asking Council to keep the Washington Park Ice Rink open, make no further cuts in police staff and Mike asked for special emphasis on filling the open position in Code Compliance to help preserve neighborhoods. A'Lynne Robinson also talked about the stress level among officers now that they are working 12 hour shifts.

Carol announced 2 special events that will be taking place. The first is a dinner fundraiser for Eve's house, a domestic violence shelter. That will be held April 27th from 5:00 to 6:00 at Grace Lutheran church at 528 MLK. This is being sponsored by council members Wood, Hewitt and Jeffries. The second event is a Personal Safety and Self Awareness seminar April 27th also at Grace Lutheran from 6:00 to 7:00. Instruction will be given by LPD officers Southworth and Churchill. Everyone 18 and older is welcome. This is sponsored by Neighborhood Watch. Mayor Bernero has been charging the cost of press releases against the Parks Department accounts but that was discovered and monies have been repaid.

President's Remarks: Anita reminded us of the upcoming neighborhood garage sale on June 5 and that newsletters will be coming out soon. We need volunteers to deliver the newsletters and for the refreshment committee. Call Anita at 882-0015. Anita thanked Evie and Pat Zue for tonight's refreshments and Pat for the beautiful floral bouquet. The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.