

# **Lansdowne Borough**

## **Town Forum**

**May 11, 2016**

### **MINUTES**

The Lansdowne Borough Town Forum was held on Wednesday, May 11, 2016, at 7:00 p.m. at the 20th Century Club.

Present: Mayor Anthony Campuzano, Police Chief Dan Donegan, Borough Secretary Barbara Henry, Public Safety Committee Chair Janet English, Community Relations Committee Chair Magda Byrne; Environment Committee Chair Eric Aubrey, Code Director Mike Jozwiak and Lansdowne Economic Development Committee ("LEDC") Executive Director Debbie Brodeur.

Mayor Campuzano led the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Mayor commented that the forum was being held to discuss topics related to public safety, code enforcement and economic development in the Borough and to address concerns and suggestions from residents. The forum was also held to inform residents what the Borough officials are doing to make living in Lansdowne a better experience. Each category was broken down into five topics with a public comment period after each category.

#### **PUBLIC SAFETY** - Police Chief Donegan.

**A. Animal Control** - Chief Donegan explained that as of June 1st the agreement between the Chester County SPCA and the Delaware County Animal Protection Board will be terminated. The Delaware County Animal Control service will continue for Lansdowne. Dr. Weinberg, a new veterinarian at the former Emas Pet Hospital on Baltimore Avenue has agreed to use the office as a temporary shelter for dogs for 72 hours while trying to find the owner. After that period, the dogs will be put up for adoption. The Chief noted that there is not a big problem with stray dogs in Lansdowne. Chester County has offered to continue their animal control service to the Borough but the cost would be \$8,000 annually, even before an animal could be sent out there. The Mayor commented that a meeting will be held with Dr. Weinberg next week to discuss the shelter plan. Stray cats are more of an issue in the Borough but Animal Friends of Lansdowne and the Delaware County Humane Society implement a trap-neuter-return program to keep the feral cat colonies to a minimum. The Chief also commented that there have been complaints about some residents not picking up their dog waste and asked that they be more considerate in this regard.

**B. Marshall Road Update** - Chief Donegan noted that there were 21 reportable accidents last year at the Marshall Road/Owen Avenue intersection. Penn Dot has approved a stop sign for Marshall Road but it may take a month or so to install it. Penn Dot will pay for the entire project

and will provide some more road work and street line painting. The Chief commented that a brief grace period will be given until residents get used to the sign.

**C. Overnight Parking** - There is no overnight parking in the Borough from 2:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m. unless you buy a parking permit. The cost is \$40 a year and applications are available on the Borough web site or at Borough Hall. Overnight guests can only stay 5 nights during a 30 day period and the permits are only valid for one vehicle. If buying a new car, the owner can scrape off a piece of the permit as proof of purchase and return it to the police for a new sticker at no additional cost. The overnight parking signs are in the process of being updated and replaced.

**D. Crime Prevention** - The Chief commented that the biggest risk has been crimes of opportunity involving unlocked vehicles and that keeping all valuables out of sight in a car is a great deterrent. Also, don't leave bikes unlocked and unattended on lawns or porches. The Mayor commented that all towns have their share of crime and it is no reflection on Lansdowne but these criminals are just passing through looking for an opportunity to steal, especially from easy targets like unlocked vehicles. The Chief also commented on various scams, particularly one involving the IRS, and reiterated that the IRS never calls taxpayers demanding tax payments or credit card numbers or threats to call the police on you for unpaid taxes. No personal information whatsoever should ever be given out to anyone you don't know or have not authorized to do business on your behalf.

**E. Neighborhood Watch** - The Chief explained that he and Officer Larry Albertoli would be glad to meet with any resident wanting to set up a Watch. A Neighborhood Watch covers about 10-20 houses in a small area and is all about neighbors looking out for and helping other neighbors.

**F. Police Academy** - The Chief reported that the Academy just had its second graduation with 21 cadets. The Police Academy was set up to help further good communication with area youth and the police and to show what the police do and why. The Academy is primarily for boys and girls between the ages of 13 and 17 and runs for 8 weeks. The program has been extremely successful and runs every March. The Mayor reiterated how much the participants enjoy the program and praised Chief Donegan and Officer Albertoli for their hard work.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

1. **Ellen Lustgarten** - resident. Ms. Lustgarten reminded residents to use the police "vacant house check" when going away for any extended period of time. Simply fill out an application at Borough Hall with your name and address and they will do regular patrols of your house.

2. **Cathy Kauffman** - Gladstone Road. Ms. Kauffman commented that speeding in Gladstone Manor is a huge problem and primarily involves commuters leaving the train station and running the stop signs, especially at Gladstone and Walsh Roads. Some of the Manor residents are guilty as well. Ms. Kauffman wondered if a police officer could be put there as a deterrent. The Mayor indicated he would look into the matter and talk to Septa as well.

3. **Richard Smalley** - resident. Mr. Smalley commented that traffic on Union Avenue going into Yeadon was getting worse and the lights were not timed correctly. Chief Donegan noted he was aware of the problem and the timing had been adjusted. Councilman Aubrey also commented that the traffic clogs when stopped for a train crossing at the tracks that affects the light cycles.
4. **Marla McLaughlin** - Willowbrook Avenue. Ms. McLaughlin commented that lighting in the Borough is a problem because a lot of homeowners do not have motion sensors or lights on at their house and asked if these could be made available at a group discount for interested residents. Councilman Aubrey noted that part of the problem will be resolved when the new street lighting program gets underway with better wattage and led lights. Ms. McLaughlin noted that motorists ignore the 'pedestrian crosswalk' signs in the Borough.
5. **Suni Best** - Nyack Avenue. Ms. Best congratulated Chief Donegan on the success of the Police Academy graduation. Ms. Best thanked Councilwoman Byrne and the Mayor for the outstanding efforts involving the Comcast Cares Day. Ms. Best asked if the pictures from the event were available for viewing. The Mayor indicated they would soon be put on the Borough web site.
6. **Jane Nelson** - Ardmore Avenue resident. Ms. Nelson commented that it is very dark along Ardmore Avenue, especially at Stratford Avenue, and had observed people in cars on cell phones doing something illegal. Chief Donegan indicated he was aware of the situation and one arrest had been made there last week. Ms. Nelson asked if there was a limit on how many cars an individual residence could have for overnight parking. The Chief indicated there was no minimum.
7. **Terry Baraldi** - West Plumstead Avenue. Ms. Baraldi felt that neighbors don't talk with their neighbors anymore and asked if a block party could be arranged as a tie in to the National Night Out event so that people could get to know one another. She also wondered if residents could put a "Safe House" sign in a window in case a child or adult needed help and could go to these designated houses. The Mayor commented that the Fire Company used to have these types of signs and Councilwoman English will follow up with them.
8. **Molly Olshefsky** - West Greenwood Avenue. Ms. Olshefsky asked if the application for the police 'vacant house check' could be done online. Chief Donegan said currently this was not an option but could send an e-mail. Ms. Olshefsky commented that someone who is known to some residents was putting bagged dog waste in the storm sewers. Councilman Aubrey mentioned that he had received complaints of people putting dog waste into whatever trash can is available in the area. Ms. Olshefsky asked how to encourage bikers, joggers, walkers, etc. to use the sidewalk instead of walking in the middle of the street. Chief Donegan commented it was illegal for bikers to ride on sidewalks. Ms. Olshefsky suggested having an article in the next borough newsletter addressing how parents can teach their children how to be safe when home alone.
9. **Cynthia Glendenning** - resident. Ms. Glendenning commented that the street lights are too dim in the first block of East Greenwood Avenue off Lansdowne. Also, the Wawa parking lot is dangerous for walking pedestrians due to motorists not being observant when leaving the store.

**10. John Bronchek** - resident. Mr. Bronchek asked if the new traffic lights on Baltimore Avenue and near Gladstone Manor have surveillance cameras on them. Chief Donegan commented they have the capability for surveillance if the Borough wants it.

**11. Doris Alexander** - East Plumstead Avenue. Ms. Alexander noted there is always someone driving the wrong way on the one way section of Plumstead Avenue and feared someone would get killed. Chief Donegan commented he was aware of the problem and has received other complaints about the same issue. Misinformation from GPS systems is also part of the problem in that area.

### **CODE ENFORCEMENT - Mike Jozwiak, Codes Director.**

**A. Vacant Property** - Mr. Jozwiak explained that part of the problem is due to the foreclosure problem that began in 2008-09 with massive foreclosures due to predatory lending practices. The due process for getting these properties back for sale can take up to two years. Usually with the first foreclosure notice the owners move away and by law, code violation citations have to be issued to the original owner, who now cannot be found. The long legal process also includes sending a certified letter within 8 days of the original complaint, going before the Magistrate, and then issuing an arrest warrant if the owner fails to show up in court. Residents need to know if a house is vacant or not. For example, copper pipe poaching degrades the value of a house because of the water damage and the Codes Department should be notified of a vacant property so that the utility companies can be called to turn off electric and water. Mr. Jozwiak indicated the Borough is looking into keeping a vacancy registry and the Mayor commented that they will continue to look into solutions for the vacant property problem.

**B. Property Maintenance** - This sets the standards for the town. Mr. Jozwiak noted that the Codes Department issues 78-96 citations a month for non-compliance issues. Codes personnel are willing to work with residents who need small changes like paint to help maintain the home's appearance. The Codes Department is currently looking into having a home beautification program.

**C. Abandoned Vehicles on private property** - Borough code stipulates that properly inspected and registered vehicles can stay on private property. Forms are available for landlords if a tenant moves out and leaves an abandoned car on the property.

**D. Trees** - Mr. Jozwiak suggested having a talk with your neighbor if they have a tree that is overgrowing onto your property. By law one neighbor cannot cut down another neighbor's tree unless the tree is dead and poses a safety threat. In that instance the Codes Department gets involved in cutting it down. Mr. Jozwiak suggested that if one tree is cut down, replace it with another one, as Lansdowne is known for being a 'tree community' and free trees are available from the Borough at various times during the year.

**E. Permits** - Many residents ask why permits are necessary. Mr. Jozwiak explained the major reason is to protect homeowners from poor workmanship and unqualified contractors. Any client should get references about the contractor and check to see if they are properly registered with the state. The work should also be inspected to ensure it is up to current day code

standards. There is no permit fee for residents doing their own project under \$1,000. Contractors are charged \$25 if the job is under \$1,000 and permit fees are based on the cost of the job.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

**1. Helen Scott** - Eldon Avenue. Ms. Scott asked where the trash bins should be stored as more residents are keeping them out in front of properties. Mr. Jozwiak commented this was a property maintenance code issue and will look into it. Councilman Aubrey commented there was some discussion about changing the trash collection sites.

**2. Molly Olshefsky** - Ms. Olshefsky asked that the trash pickup behind the houses stay the same. She asked if 3-4 contractors could be hired to redo sidewalks at a reduced group rate. Councilman English indicated it was not legal for the Borough to hire contractors in this regard but private citizens could do so. The Mayor pointed out that this had been tried in the past with bad results. The other problem is that it would raise taxes and some residents have longer sidewalks that need repair.

**3. Helen Marcarelli** - Ms. Marcarelli commented that removing a tree does not require a permit and would like this policy changed as this is being done by unqualified companies. Ms. Marcarelli asked who would be responsible if the worker fell off the tree and what measures are in place to protect the homeowner from a lawsuit. Mr. Jozwiak noted any tree workers should show an official insurance card before doing any tree work.

**4. Jeanette Bergen** - Ms. Bergen asked what could be done about certain properties on McKinley and Stewart Avenues that squeeze 4 cars onto a 2 car parking pad and block part of the sidewalk. Chief Donegan commented that the parking enforcement officer will not go onto private property and it is a gray area with the police as to who actually owns the sidewalk.

### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT - Debbie Brodeur, LEDC Executive Director.**

Mrs. Brodeur commented there are four categories to economic development in Lansdowne: (1) Design; (2) Marketing/events; (3) Business Development and Retention; and (4) Safe, Clean and Green and highlighted some of the projects that resulted in each category.

**DESIGN** - The LEDC Design Committee is currently not active but if new facade grants are approved or the Borough invests in new informational products, this Committee will be re-activated.

**MARKETING/EVENTS** - The Marketing Committee sells and promotes a positive image of Lansdowne by marketing its unique characteristics through advertising, special events and marketing campaigns. The Committee has developed a new logo, a new brochure, social media sites and a new web site with an extensive calendar of events. The Borough has also hosted several events recently, most notably the InsideOut Program with the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the annual Arts and Crafts Show and the upcoming Arts on the Avenue Festival. The Committee also hopes to put together a video: "Why Lansdowne?" The first food truck event as part of the InsideOut Art exhibit was such a success that a second food truck event will be held on June 25th.

**BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND RETENTION** - The Business Development Committee helps existing businesses expand and recruits new ones by turning successful downtown unused space into productive business sites. The Borough welcomed some new businesses this year, most notably Aldi's and Walgreen's. The newest business opening soon is Jamey's House of Music which will be located on the 2nd floor of Patrone's restaurant. The Committee is also compiling a survey to ask residents what kinds of businesses they want in Lansdowne.

**SAFE, CLEAN AND GREEN** - Keeping the town safe and clean is critical for a successful town image. In keeping with health initiatives, the Borough partnered with Mercy Fitz Hospital for three walking tours and three more tours are being planned. The Walkshed study will provide a safe opportunity for movement through the town with improved walkways and street crossings as well as improved vehicle intersections. The Mayor thanked Helen and Larry Marcarelli for their hard work in planting a multitude of flowers along the busier streets in Lansdowne to keep it beautiful.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

**1. Molly Olshefsky** - asked whose responsibility it is for the cobblestones around the trees. The Mayor indicated this was the Borough's responsibility. Ms. Olshefsky asked if the holiday lights in the business district will be kept on all year. The Mayor indicated it is being discussed and the hope is to have them lit at night all year.

**2. Mary Kay Bowden** - Glentay Avenue. Mrs. Bowden thanked and praised the panel members and Mayor for all their hard work and patience in putting together this forum as well as all the initiatives that have been planned and executed in the Borough.

The Mayor thanked all the residents who came out and participated. The forum adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Ann Henry  
Borough Secretary