

LPCA General Meeting Minutes - November 13th, 2024

Held at Francis Scott Key Elementary-Middle School

Preliminaries:

- Pledge of Allegiance
- New Neighbor Introductions
- Treasurer Update:
 - We are still finalizing festival expenses but it was very successful.
 - \$78,091 - General Fund
 - \$3,744 - Dog Park
 - \$8,892 - Park Fund
 - Last month's biggest expense was the donation to the former LPCA president.
 - Paypal payments for \$5 annual memberships now accepted (and checks to PO Box); cash will be accepted at meeting, and checks can be mailed to Locust Point Civic Association, PO Box 27097, Baltimore, MD 21230-0097
- There was no update on memberships. Please renew your membership for 2024.
- September & October Minutes Review/Vote:
 - Minutes were made available online.
 - A motion was made to approve the September minutes and was seconded. The motion carried with no objections or abstentions.
 - A motion was made to approve the October minutes and was seconded. The motion carried with no objections or abstentions.

Committee Reports/General Updates

Safety:

- BPD Southern District representative was not in attendance.
 - Officer Rivera can be reached at Raul.Rivera@baltimorepolice.org.
- Look out for a safety walk in January! (date TBA)
- The April meeting will be our safety meeting. The LPCA has invited higher level police representatives. Please attend.
- There was no DoT representative in attendance.
- As a reminder, if you open a 311 ticket please email the board with the ticket number.
- Safety concerns can be sent to contacts@mylocustpoint.org.

Parks & Beautification:

- Volunteer Day - October 20th: Thank you to the 50–60 volunteers who participated in the park maintenance day. Beds were cleaned, bushes were trimmed, and gardens were mulched. Great job, everyone! Ms. Twist was had to celebrate.
- Solar lights will soon be installed on the flagpoles. The first installation will be at Andre & Fort (Marine Memorial) flag. A big thank you to the Marine Barracks and the Longshoremen for their support and guidance. New lines and cleats will be installed on the main flagpole in the park and the committee is hoping to replace the flag with a new one this summer.
- The Department of Forestry will be doing work in the park to remedy the dead trees and the dead limbs.
 - Question: Can you get them to look at the trees in the neighborhood?

We can mention it then.

- Question: Is this a city agency?

Yes, they are part of Parks and Rec.

- Question: What was the incident two weeks ago?

A person was walking under a tree and a limb fell and struck them.

- Longhouse project: It is taking a long time but they are hoping to send the project to bid in the early spring.
- If you are interested in joining the parks and recs committee in one of the targeted task forces, questions can be directed to parksandbeautification@mylocustpoint.org.

Education & Schools:

- The PTO Secretary and Assistant Principal from FSK were in attendance.
- Enrollment is way up.
- FSK will be fully staffed as of next week.
- The Holiday Extravaganza and Wreath Sale (see LPCA website) will be on December 7th. If you know any interested vendors, please reach out to the PTO. There will be 50 vendors plus a food truck. They are still looking for a Santa (9:30-11:30 AM).
- Tonight was the kickoff for the annual giving campaign at Little Havanahs. The campaign runs for a month. The proceeds will be used to create a healthy learning environment. Wearefsk.org has a donation link and checks/cash can be taken to the office.
- Harris Teeter is no longer donating back to schools for VIC card users. You must register for the Harris Teeter delivery service to earn a \$10 credit back to your school.

Social:

- December 11th is the Holiday Party at the Knight of Columbus. It runs 5:30-9:30 PM in lieu of the monthly LPCA meeting. It is open to the entire community. We still need a Santa.
- The Locust Point Holiday Parade will be December 13th, starting at 5:30 pm
- More to come after the new year.

UA Community Garden Updates:

- The soil results and report from the City are now available on our website, revealing numerous high values for lead, chromium, and arsenic. According to the City's conclusion, as long as the community garden soil is not disturbed, no remediation is required.
- A garden representative met with a lawyer to request clarity on the results and has sent the findings to the EPA, although no formal follow-up plan has been established. Some of the high contamination values were detected near the school, raising significant concerns.
- There is no action plan in place, and the focus is on disseminating information to the community. Discrepancies within the report have been identified, including missing samples, unclear sampling locations, and incorrect screening values. The community has asked the City to revisit the report, collaborate with residents, and present the complete findings.

- To address the discrepancies, the community has also requested the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) report to compare it with the City's findings. Efforts are underway to involve the Department of Health due to concerns about the potential impact on students.
- The City has advised that ground cover is needed to minimize risks.
- Question: Do the park volunteers disturb the soil?

We aren't sure. Tree plantings have happened. We need clarity from the agencies.

- State Senate President Bill Fergeson:
 - The City has reached out to the Department of Health, and the State Department of Health will take the lead on this issue moving forward. This situation is concerning in many ways, as there is no safe level of exposure to lead. Unfortunately, living in a post-industrial or industrial area can contribute to these risks.
 - According to the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) report, the contamination hits were limited to selected areas and should not require the closure of the park. However, maintaining adequate grass cover is essential. The ballfield was already capped with soil.
 - The City will facilitate a review and meeting with the community, MDH, and the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) to address concerns and next steps.
- Question: After reading the report, it was hard to figure out if the sample was an average or specific to the 2 foot depth. Do we know?

The testing company took each core and used a phosphorus tool to identify the highest concentration. Then they performed the test from that area.

- Question: What were the discrepancies from the report?

They did not report all the sampling areas and are missing about 10-15 samples. The map in the report is incorrect. There needs to be a review to make sure the report is consistent with the testing.

- Comment from the floor: The numbers in the report did not strike me as glaring. I wouldn't stop using the park but I would like more information.
- Comment: The writing on the wall is that every park in the city is likely in a similar situation or worse.
- Comment from Matt Shultz (as part of the South Baltimore Youth Soccer League):

Thank you for getting the word out. This is the first we heard of the issue (Parks and Rec did not notify the league).

- The LPCA will post any updated information to the website.
- The testing used 50 samples from the garden, but far less throughout the playing fields. There is an outstanding question to figure out if they need more testing. They did test a few spots in the back of the school, but not in the front.

- Question: Can we do the sampling?

The LPCA could, but the last time they did not trust our results. We can inform the City of the results for their documentation.

- In other news, 28 trees have been replaced (3 died). The Baltimore Tree Trust provided replacement trees. Thank you to John and Bobby for helping during the replacements.
- Another tree was replaced by the little league field near the Porter Street crosswalk.
- There was a Domino Sugar tour in November. The tours can host 12 attendees at a time. Domino will be doing the next tour in the spring. These fill up very fast.
- The LPCA extends thanks to Domino Sugar. They send a welcome packet to new Locust Point residents and it includes an LPCA card in each one.
- The school partnered with the Baltimore Tree Trust and planted 25 trees. The Trust will do maintenance monthly for 2 years.
- Questions can be directed to locustpointcg@gmail.com.

Communications/Newsletter/Website:

- Please check out mylocustpoint.org for information and opportunities.
- If you would like to receive our emails, send a note to contacts@mylocustpoint.org and like our page on Facebook for updates. Send any editorial ideas or interest in volunteering on the newsletter - communication@mylocustpoint.org.

Community Improvement Grants:

- LPCA has given a \$500 grant to support the LP Holiday Parade.
- These grants are available to the entire neighborhood. Projects may beautify, benefit, or otherwise enhance the community with a preference given to those ideas with lasting impact or creating broad new connections. Please consider submitting a grant to contacts@mylocustpoint.org. The grant form is available on the website <https://mylocustpoint.wordpress.com/about-the-lpca/community-improvement-grant/> and on Facebook.

LPCA Website:

- Please check out the website at <https://www.mylocustpoint.org>.

New/Old Business

Serenity Wine

- Someone has applied to transfer the liquor licenses. More information to come.

Tide Point Taskforce

- Next meeting 11/19 @ 7 pm at 1215 E. Fort Avenue.
- Employees are officially leaving the Tide Point location this month.
- No news on the sale of the property.
- Please email contacts@mylocustpoint.org if you would like to participate.

Guest: Senator Bill Ferguson

- Digital Bay Update: There is a prohibition on transferring a license when a bond bill is attached to a property in this neighborhood. The owners are interested in selling the properties, but any subsequent sale will require approval from the Board of Public Works.

Previously, liens were placed on properties with bond bills attached, but that practice was discontinued. A working group is now reviewing the process and exploring ways to reestablish protections, including approval, review, and auditing procedures for bond bills.

- Upcoming Legislative Session:
 - Post-COVID Adjustments: Last year marked the first "normal" legislative session after COVID, but this year will bring new challenges.
 - Maryland and Baltimore have significant exposure to the Federal government. Approximately 10% of W-2 employees in the state are federal workers, and 20% of Maryland's GDP comes from federal contracts. Institutions like the University of Maryland and Johns Hopkins are major recipients of NIH funding. Efforts will focus on protecting these critical assets.
 - Projects like the Red Line and the Francis Scott Key (FSK) Bridge face uncertainty.
 - The potential repeal or reduction of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) could impact Medicaid subsidies. Maryland currently has a waiver ensuring cost parity between public and private Medicaid programs, which brings \$7 billion into the state through premiums. Losing this funding would be a significant blow.
 - Federal tax cuts are set to expire but are likely to be extended or adjusted. If not, Maryland's tax revenue projections could decrease.
 - Baltimore's population growth has been driven by immigration. Discussions about mass deportations could have a profound impact. Coordination with the Governor and other officials is ongoing to address these challenges.
 - A private settlement between the Sierra Club and Talen Energy will lead to the shutdown of two coal plants. While this is beneficial for the environment, it is expected to result in rising energy prices, starting in June. Policies are being developed to address the anticipated price increases.

Guest: Delegate Mark Edelson

- Delegate Edelson serves on the Appropriations, Oversight, Transportation, and Environment Committees and will be involved in addressing issues related to the Francis Scott Key (FSK) Bridge and energy generation.
- Legislative Initiatives:
 - A bill is being proposed to address reckless driving, which has increased since the COVID pandemic.
 - The Transportation and Climate Act aims to ensure that major transportation projects consider climate impacts during the planning process.
 - Another bill focuses on improving the quality of Holocaust education in Maryland's school system.
 - A study is being proposed for a Baby Bond Initiative, which would create accounts for children from low-income families to be used for college education or other opportunities.
- Delegate Edelson encouraged residents to get involved in the legislative process, which operates on a rapid 90-day schedule. Citizens are welcome to testify and observe proceedings.

Guest: Delegate Luke Clippinger

- Delegate Clippinger is the Chair of the House Judiciary Committee. The committee oversees criminal, civil, family, and juvenile law.
- Of the 1,500 bills introduced last year, 350 came from the Judiciary Committee.

- This year, the committee will focus on issues related to judicial elections and non-economic damages in civil suits.

Community Questions to Delegates

- Question: Is it feasible to address all these issues in 90 days?

The honest answer is no. The initial budget will be introduced on January 15th, and the new administration will be sworn in on January 20th. Delegates are preparing for fast action in January and February. The focus will be on enabling the executive branch to take responsive action.

- Question: Maryland defines clean energy to include trash burning. What would need to happen for that definition to change?

This issue has been discussed since 2011 when trash incineration was classified as a Tier 1 energy source (alongside biomass, solar, etc.). There have been adjustments over the years. A bill will be introduced this year to remove trash burning from the Tier 1 energy category.

- Question: Do you have any insight into how the last Trump administration impacted the budget?

The tax cuts had a dramatic impact. The Red Line project, part of a slow-moving federal program, faced delays. Projections for entitlement programs, such as S-CHIP and Medicaid, were significantly underestimated, resulting in \$700 million in shortcomings due to increased demand for care. Additionally, \$600 million in child care subsidies saw higher-than-expected uptake. The focus has shifted to education, public safety, and environmental initiatives.

Maryland was recently awarded the new FBI headquarters, but there is concern that the incoming administration may reverse that decision.

- Question: Who is missing tonight from Team 46?

Delegate Robyn Lewis was unable to attend. She serves on the Environment and Transportation Committee and will chair the Subcommittee on Ethics and Land Use. Her work focuses extensively on urban forestry and public health initiatives.

- Question: How are committee assignments determined?

Maryland has only six committees, which is much smaller compared to other states. In Maryland, each legislator serves on just one committee, allowing them to develop deep expertise in that specific area. However, this also means that 5/6 of the legislation occurs in other committees, requiring members to build relationships with colleagues in those committees to stay informed and collaborate effectively.

- Question: Are there any Baltimore-centric issues coming up?

Most of the issues they address have a direct impact on Baltimore City, particularly in

relation to the budget. This group is dedicated to representing the city and advocating for its interests.

- Question: Were there priorities that were tabled after the election?

There were plans to prioritize investments in affordable housing and community justice issues. However, the current focus has shifted to managing the flow of funds.

- Question: How much of an impact does the federal government have on the vacant housing issue?

Due process protections for vacant properties with unclear titles remain a challenge. Federal community block grants, which support housing efforts, could face tighter restrictions. The state has a \$50 million initiative focused on housing in the Baltimore area. The goal is to continue addressing vacant properties and transferring them to entities that can effectively manage and repurpose them.

- Question: Are there any plans for universal Pre-K?

The Blueprint for Education is a 10-year investment plan that is still in progress. One of the main challenges is the diverse delivery system, as many private providers have opted not to participate. Efforts are underway to understand what changes are needed to bring more of these facilities online.

Community Announcements / Guests

- No more dumpster days for 2024! Stay tuned for 2025 dates.

Motion and Second to Adjourn the Meeting

- Motion was made and seconded.
- December 11th is our holiday party! We hope to see you there.

Adjourned 8:42 pm