Monday, November 20, 2017
Meeting Report

Attendance: S. Marmarou, J. Slifko, M. Goodman-Hinnershitz

Others Attending: B. Rivera, A. Johnson

The meeting was called to order at 4:05 pm by Mr. Marmarou.

I. Interviews

- Raymond Schuenemann – appointment to Charter Board
  Mr. Marmarou questioned why Mr. Schuenemann is interested in serving on the Charter Board.
  Mr. Schuenemann stated that he has been interested in getting more involved as in the past when
  he served on several boards. He received a promotion at work which had him traveling quite
  extensively; therefore, not providing him with the ability to be more active in community
  matters. He stated that in the last year, his supervisor has given him more flexibility where he
  has more time to dedicate to doing things of this nature.

Mr. Marmarou stated that it would be nice to see him get involved with the College Heights
  group; that he would be beneficial with some of their business. Mr. Schuenemann stated that he
  has actually given that much thought and would like to see if he may become a part of that group
  in the near future, time permitting.

Mr. Slifko questioned how long Mr. Schuenemann has been a resident in Reading. Mr.
  Schuenemann stated that he’s been here approximately 10 years.

Mr. Slifko questioned if Mr. Schuenemann was aware and has an understanding of the City’s
  form of government. He stated that the primary purpose of the Charter Board is to keep a
  balance of power between Council and the administration and to be able to think independently
  without bias. Mr. Schuenemann stated that he believes he would be an asset to this Board and
  looks at matters brought before him independently by thoroughly reviewing the facts.
Mr. Marmarou questioned if he would have an issue with attending meetings. Mr. Schuenemann stated that it would not be an issue as he now has flexibility to make his own hours at his place of employment.

Mr. Slifko questioned if he has had an opportunity to read the Charter to which Mr. Schuenemann responded affirmatively. Mr. Schuenemann stated that he will be looking to the current Board members for orientation on the processes utilized by the Board.

Mr. Slifko began to list the current members of the Board and some pertinent background information on each. There was a brief discussion regarding who on the Board Mr. Schuenemann is familiar with.

Mr. Slifko asked what type of law Mr. Schuenemann specializes in. He responded that he specializes in complex litigation such as securities fraud class action suits and also consumer law. He stated that he mostly represents pension funds and matters of that nature. There was a brief discussion on the different facets of the law he’s worked in.

Mr. Slifko explained the process of being appointed to this Board and thanked Mr. Schuenemann for his time and interest in serving on the Board. He expressed the belief that he would be quite an asset. Both Mr. Marmarou and Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz concurred.

The Nominations and Appointments Committee recommends the appointment of Raymond Schuenemann to the Charter Board

- Jill Fleming – appointment to Historical Architectural Review Board (HARB)

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned why Ms. Fleming is interested in serving on this Board. Ms. Fleming stated that she recently purchased property in the historic district which is in the 1200 block of Perkiomen Avenue. Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that she serves that area. Ms. Fleming stated that she is having some difficulty meeting the fire requirements. Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that she understands her frustration and that she has helped various individuals by explaining the process.

Mr. Marmarou questioned if attendance at meetings would be an issue for Ms. Fleming to which she responded negatively stating that although she travels for business, she has flexibility to allow her to attend meetings.

Mr. Slifko stated that, as he understands it, HARB’s purpose is to interpret and apply the regulations of what determines the historic significance of a property. He questioned if Ms. Fleming has had experience with applying regulations set to any circumstance of her work. Ms. Fleming stated that she has been a Human Resource Manager for the last 20 years and has encountered a variety of different settings that called for her unbiased, decision making-skills based on regulations set in her department. Mr. Slifko stated that, in his opinion, the decisions that have to be made by the Board aren’t always so clear cut. In fact, they can be quite
Ms. Fleming stated that in more difficult cases, if there is some precedence set forth, that is usually a good starting point in determining an outcome.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned how Ms. Fleming would prepare herself to take on the role of being on this Board. Ms. Fleming stated that she would require some training which she looks to Ms. Johnson to be able to assist. Ms. Johnson concurred that she would assist her. Ms. Fleming stated that she is eager to learn and become versed with the HARB regulations. She stated that she desires to contribute to her community by being an involved individual. She just recently moved into the US from Canada and has been traveling back and forth on business tying up some loose ends. She has the need to stay active and this is something that has interest her.

Mr. Slifko questioned if she has had prior experience with historic properties. She stated that this would be the first time and she is venturing into unchartered territory. She has not owned a property that is part of a historic district until now. She stated she has already begun researching regulations for purposes of decorating her property which will be a Bed and Breakfast type location.

Mr. Slifko stated that he believes the City of Reading is a treasure as it is in close proximity to some major cities such as New York and Philadelphia which he feels have lost their heritage by progressing so quickly. Reading has been fortunate to be able to sustain its history along with some surrounding cities such as York, Allentown and Easton.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz agreed stating that the Reading Railroad was such a massive international corporation and so many of the homes you encounter were a result of that and other local industries such as the silk mills.

Ms. Fleming stated that she finds the history of Reading quite fascinating and would like to continue learning more about it as she plans to incorporate the history into her décor for the Bed and Breakfast.

Mr. Slifko stated that in looking at a map recently while working with the UGI Meters case, there are more areas within the City that are eligible to become historic districts. In fact, these eligible areas encompass a majority of the City. He asked Ms. Johnson if this is something that is going to be occurring in the short term. Ms. Johnson stated that there is interest in expanding the historic districts. The city was surveyed in 1979 and out of that survey, some of the historic districts we have today were born.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that Hessian Camp is interested in joining the ranks. Ms. Johnson stated that there is a process by which a district becomes historic if eligible and it does take time. The last two districts took about three years each to achieve historic district status.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz explained the appointment process to Ms. Fleming and thanked her for her interest in serving on this Board.
At this time, Ms. Johnson left the meeting.

The Nominations and Appointments Committee recommends the appointment of Jill Fleming to the Historical Architectural Review Board.

- Jeff Darlington – reappointment to the Board of Ethics

Mr. Marmarou questioned Mr. Darlington’s interest in serving another term on the Board of Ethics. Mr. Darlington stated that currently there are three members serving on this Board including himself. He stated that the goal is to fill another position as board member but it has proven to be a challenging task. He stated that in the past year or so the Board has had more items of interest. This Board is a very important aspect of City Government.

Mr. Slifko questioned how items come forward as an Ethics issue. Mr. Darlington stated that one or two have come to their attention by way of complaints.

Mr. Marmarou questioned if the State ever intervenes and implies that the City should have taken care of a particular issue that now is at State level. Mr. Darlington stated that, to his knowledge, that has not occurred.

Mr. Slifko asked who the members of the Board of Ethics currently are. Mr. Darlington named the members and the solicitor. Mr. Slifko commented on the Ethics training that was provided most recently and asked if the Board had participated in that venture. Mr. Darlington stated that it was mostly put together by the solicitor and the Human Resources Manager at that time. He agreed that the presentation/training was very well coordinated and planned out.

Mr. Marmarou asked if he may impose by asking if the issue regarding the donated sports tickets went through the Ethics Board. Mr. Darlington concurred stating that he has not seen this before but that all was adhered to appropriately. Mr. Marmarou stated that he was surprised because the individual that provides the tickets has never asked for anything in return. He opined that it’s beneficial that the public see Council at these venues as Council represents the City. Mr. Darlington empathized with Mr. Marmarou but explained that because these tickets have a value, it can be looked at in a different manner.

Mr. Slifko questioned if there were any suggestions Mr. Darlington could bring forward to improve the Ethics Board and its functionality. Mr. Darlington stated that having at least one new member would be beneficial to the Board. He stated that perhaps members from different parts of the City too would be a plus.

Mr. Slifko stated that he would officially be reappointed at Council’s next Regular Meeting and he thanked him for wanting to serve another term on the Ethics Board.

The Nominations and Appointments Committee recommends the reappointment of Jeff Darlington to the Board of Ethics.
• Margaret Mary Yevics – appointment to Shade Tree Commission

Mr. Slifko questioned Ms. Yevics’ interest in serving on this Commission. Ms. Yevics stated that initially Mr. Evans suggested she serve, as her background would be an asset; and she has been giving much thought to serving the community in some way now that she is retired. She stated that those two components have been the driving force for her to apply to serve as a member of this Commission.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that with Ms. Yevics being a Master Gardener, what her perspective may be on our City as a “tree” City. Mr. Yevics stated that having the background that she does, she tends to favor native trees. Mr. Slifko stated that there are so many limitations with having trees in the City due to pollution and concrete and other variables.

Mr. Slifko questioned if there were some other goals Ms. Yevics would like to see the Shade Tree Commission meet. Ms. Yevics stated that she’d like to see better education to the public about the maintenance of trees in general. She shared some examples of poor maintenance of trees at different locations throughout the City.

Mr. Marmarou questioned if Ms. Yevics knew any of the current members of the Shade Tree Commission. She stated she does not know anyone who is serving. She stated that her interest came about mostly through Mr. Evans. Ms. Yevics stated she is eager to be a part of this Commission as she likes to research items she may not know much about but with her background as Master Gardener, she believes she can be a valuable asset.

Mr. Slifko explained the process of being appointed and thanked her for her time and interest in serving on the Shade Tree Commission.

The Nominations and Appointments Committee recommends the appointment of Margaret Mary Yevics to the Shade Tree Commission.

Meeting was adjourned at 5:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted by,
Bea Rivera, Legislative Aide