

Crosstown Coalition - Minutes of meeting of delegates - March 25, 2024

The meeting was held on Monday, March 25, 2024, beginning around 6:00 PM at the Community Room of American Heritage Federal Credit Union at 2068 Red Lion Road..

Eugene Destayanik, President of Crosstown Coalition, called the meeting to order, thanked **Heather Stanton** of West Torresdale/Morrell Park Civic Association for obtaining permission to use the space, and welcomed attendees.

The guest speaker, **Senator Jimmy Dillon**, represents a large portion of Northeast Philadelphia, including the site of the March Crosstown meeting and is running for reelection. He took office in a special election to complete the term of John Sabatina, Jr., who had resigned to run for a judgeship. Dillon discussed his personal background as a professional athlete and business owner, and recounted some anecdotes from his experience of life in Northeast Philadelphia. His experience as a legislator had brought him into communication with leaders from other cities across the state, who he said were a source of ideas about potential solutions for local problems. He discussed certain legislative priorities, including combating gun violence (partly through the technique of group violence intervention), protection of youth sports referees from abusive participants, parents, and others, preventing the operation of injection sites for illegal drugs, and the mental health and well-being of students (among whom, within the Philadelphia School District, he said every 650 could call upon the services of 1 guidance counselor). He cited the trend towards residents leaving the City as symptomatic of problems within it, and drew attention to the need for better accounting for government funds paid to contractors of various kinds for well-intentioned purposes. After he concluded his remarks, he and his staff member Matt Darragh engaged with Crosstown members in extensive discussion of the issue of strategic lawsuits against public participation, or SLAPP suits. Discussion focused on the fact that state-level legislation appears likely to be enacted that will possess some but not all features that Crosstown members had sought, and that may not do as much as desired to deter developers from filing suits without merit against registered community organizations to check their efforts to advocate for their communities.

Barbara Capozzi of Packer Park Civic Association provided an update about the ongoing effort of Safehouse to open injection sites for illegal drugs, and the efforts of a group of RCOs and other organizations to prevent the sites' opening. She discussed City Council legislation that had the effect of requiring a would-be operator of an injection site to obtain a zoning variance to do so throughout nine out of ten of the City's Council districts.

Several points touching on the organizational business of Crosstown and matters of interest to RCOs were discussed in succession. **Eugene Destyanik** noted that it was time for delegates to consider who they will nominate and whether they would like to serve as members

of the board of Crosstown Coalition in view of upcoming elections. It was noted that the candidate forum that had been sponsored by Crosstown went over budget. Member organizations' dues will come due in July. Crosstown board member **Marisa Shabaan** of Washington Square West Civic Association noted that, through her work for Representative Waxman, she had become aware of funds available for "evening programming" offered by RCOs. Crosstown board member **David Haas** of Society Hill Civic Association discussed the possibility of Crosstown member organizations working together to obtain discounts for their respective organizations' members.

The meeting adjourned around 7:45 PM.

Chris Bordelon, Somerton Civic Association
Secretary