

Annual Report

2016



philadelphia
crosstowncoalition

Members of the Coalition:

Bella Vista Neighbors Association • Callowhill Neighbors Association • Center City Residents' Association • Central Roxborough Civic Association • East Falls Community Council • East Passyunk Square • East Passyunk Crossing Civic Association • East Point Breeze Neighbors • Fishtown Neighbors Association • Garden Court Community Association • Hawthorne Empowerment Coalition • Logan Square Neighborhood Association • Northern Liberties Neighbors Association • Overbrook Farms Club • Packer Park Civic Association • Passyunk Square Civic Association • Queen Village Neighbors Association • Society Hill Civic Association • South Broad Street Neighbors Association • Spruce Hill Community Association • Washington Square West Civic Association • West Powelton/Saunders Park RCO • Woodland Terrace Homeowners Association

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Crosstown Coalition, a federation of Registered Community Organizations from 24 neighborhoods in Philadelphia, a city of neighborhoods, is celebrating its second full year as a Pennsylvania non profit.

The Crosstown originated in 2007 when four civic associations allied to address the City's proposal to revamp the Zoning Code. Over the next four years, the Coalition added seven members. Its representatives attended more than 50 Zoning Code Commission meetings and generated hundreds of pages of analysis. Many Crosstown suggestions found their way into the new zoning code which became law in August of 2012. Almost immediately afterwards, the Nutter administration proposed the AVI (Actual Value Initiative) which proposed realty tax reassessments program for all city properties . The Crosstown turned its focus to the AVI program, acquiring ten new members in the process and producing a 37page analysis of the reassessment valuations and two 40 page "How To" manuals on the new tax programs.

In April of 2014, the Crosstown members decided to convert the organization from an ad hoc single issue federation to a formalized nonprofit corporation devoted to the pursuit of common goals of its constituent members under the direction of a board of delegates appointed by member civics.

The Crosstown concentrated in three areas in 2016: education, zoning and land use and RCO best practices. Some highlights

OUR FIRST BILL PASSES !; The year closed with the passage of Bill 160865, sponsored by Councilman Bobby Henon, which actualized a long standing Coalition request that the orange zoning notices describe the zoning issues to be presented at the noticed hearing.

BEST PRACTICES: One hundred and ten RCOs were invited to our first "how to" workshop on running a civic association and 39 groups sent members to the October event.

CROSSTOWN SODA TAX COMMENTS: 339 Crosstown members from 16 zip codes responded to a four item Crosstown questionnaire on the proposed soda tax with 76% of the respondents favoring the initiative.

Stephen Huntington

Chairperson

OFFICERS

Stephen Huntington - Chairperson,
Center City
Residents,shuntington@hhflaw.com

Jeff Hornstein - Vice Chair,
Queen Village
Ilene Wilder - Vice Chair -
East Passyunk

Celeste Hardester-
Secretary Central Row

Ed Panek - Treasurer Logan
Square

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Chair of Education Committee
Jeff Hornstein Queen Village

*Chair of Zoning and Land Use
Committee*

Joe Schiavo Old City

Chair of Best Practices Committee
Rob Kettell, Old City

Chair of Communications Committee

Ilene Wilder East Passyunk

*Chairs of SLAPP Task Force
Committee*

Stephen Huntington Center
City Residents

Peter Gold Old City
Tanner Rouse Center City Residents

DELEGATES

Judy Applebaum - Washington Sq. West
Michelle Atherton - Bella Vista Neighbors
Chuck Bode - W Powelton/Saunders Park
Japp Bjil – Woodland Terrace
Jeff Braff – Ctr City Res.
Jonathan Broh - Wash West CA
Monica Calkins - Spruce Hill C A
John Consolvo - Fishtown NA
Barbara Capozzi - Packer Park Civic Assn.
Cynthia Cronin-Kardon - Overbrook Farms
Greg Damis - South Broad Street Neighbors
Eugene Desyatnik - Bella Vista Neighbors
Bill Epstein - East Falls Community Council
Lucia Esther - West Powelton/Saunders Park
Beth Dougherty – East Passyunk Sq
Charles Ellisson – East Point Breeze
Nicholas Esposito – East Kensington
Lucia Esther –W. Powelton/Saunders Prk
Dominic Falso - East Passyunk CA
Patrick Forcina – West Passyunk NA
Jamie Gauthier – Grdn Crt CA
Charles Goodwin – Ctr City Res
Meg Greenfield - East Falls Community Council
Miguel Garces – East Point Breeze
Barry Grossbach - Spruce Hill C A
Lauren Hanssen Flaschen – Grdn Crt CA
Celeste Hardester – Ctral Rox Civic Assn
Jennifer Harrison _ West Passyunk NA
Peter Harwan - Fishtown Neighbors Assn.
Jeff Hornstein - Queen Village N A
Dan Horowitz - Society Hill C A
Steve Huntington - Ctr City Res

Eleanor Ingersoll - Queen Village N A
Maurice Jones – Grdn Crt C A
Maurice Jones – Grdn Crt C A
Lorna Katz Lawson - Society Hill Civic
Lauren Leonard – Queen Village NA
Roseanne Loesch – Soc Hill Civic Assn
Sam Little - Logan Sq. Neighbors Assn.
Ann Lynn - East Point Breeze Neighbors
JG McMillan – West Passyunk NA
Sarah McEneany – Callowhill NA
Dave Marley - West Powelton/Saunders Park
Haneef Nelson - Hawthorne Empowerment
Brian OKeefe - Callowhill NA
Gregory Oliveri – Woodland Terr
Graham O’Neil – East Kensington
Ed Panek - Logan Sq. N A
Lynda Payne - Ctrl Rox. Civic Assn.
Jim Petkovits – Ctral Rox.C A
Matt Ruben - Northern Libs.
Eric Santoro - Spruce Hill C A
Matt Skolnick – Bella Vista NA
Leah Strenger - Callowhill N A
Don Simon - Central Rox. Civic. Assn.
Gordon Stein – East Kensington
Andrew Stober – Passyunk Sq.
Andrew Toy - Logan Sq. NA .
Mary Tracy - Society Hill Civic Assn.
Jamie Ware - Fishtown N A
Ilene Wilder - Passyunk Sq. Civic Assn
Ian Wilson– Fishtown N A
Peter Zutter - South Broad St. Neighbors

SCHOOL GIVING CIRCLE

The Philadelphia Public School Giving Circle, organized by Crosstown Delegate Andy Toy with a major assist from Crosstown Vice Chair Jeff Hornstein, is set to distribute funds to neighborhood primary schools who have applied for Giving Circle funding. The Crosstown will serve as a 501 c 3 conduit for distributions to school groups that have not qualified as charities.

ANTI SLAPP BILL EFFORTS

Senate Bill 95, drafted through the efforts of a Crosstown committee members, Peter Gold, Steve Huntington, and Tanner Rouse provides safeguards against SLAPP suits (Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation) . After passing the Senate by a 48 to 1 bipartisan vote in 2015, the bill was presented to the House Judiciary Committee. Eighteen Crosstown civics wrote individual letters to the 21 members of the House judiciary committee, 378 letters in total. Even so, the Bill did not pass before the legislature terminated and will have to be reintroduced in 2017. The bill incorporated substantive protections for defendants named in SLAPP suits (who often are civic associations) by facilitating the prompt dismissal of SLAPP claims with an award of attorneys fees, costs and damages.

CROSSTOWN MEMBERSHIP GROWS TO 24

Three new community groups have become dues paying members of the Crosstown Coalition bringing total membership to twenty four civic associations. The new Coalition members are East Kensington Neighborhood Association, East Point Breeze Neighbors, and Garden Court Community Association. New member East Kensington Neighborhood Association represents the river wards area bounded on the west by Front Street/ Kensington Avenue, and on the east by Frankford/Kensington Avenues, and by Norris Street to the south and Lehigh Avenues to the North. East Point Breeze Neighbors located in South Philadelphia represents the community situated between Broad and 18th and Washington Ave to Passyunk. Garden Court is situated in West Philadelphia and comprises the area between 45th and 52nd streets from Locust St to Cedar Avenue. Crosstown civics issued an electronic survey to their members

REVISIONS TO ORANGE ZONING NOTICE

Patience is bitter, its fruit is sweet. The Zoning and Land Use Committee, led by Joe Schiavo, first proposed in 2013 that the orange zoning notices affixed to properties describe the issues to be raised at the Zoning Board of Adjustment hearing being publicized. In October Council passed Bill 160865, introduced by Councilman Bobby Henon, which provides that L & I referral or refusal be posted adjacent to the orange hearing notification.

IMPROVEMENTS TO STREET PLATTING BILL

In June the Coalition wrote Council suggesting that Bill 160525 eliminate a requirement that Planning Commission comments on street platting be received after Council enactment of platting ordinances. A taskforce of representatives from 5 Crosstown members visited 13 Council offices in July and August to discuss the proposed revisions. The bill as passed in September reflected the Crosstown suggestions by providing that the Planning Commission with authority to approve street platting

PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA IMPROVEMENTS

At the request of Crosstown, the Planning Commission now employs live links in the PCPC meeting agenda broadcast to the public. The new live links connect the reader to the document and plan files relevant to each agenda item, providing the public the opportunity to be better briefed in advance of the Commission meeting.

XTOWN INPUT TO RCO REGULATIONS

In late March, the Planning Commission published proposed revisions to administrative regulations pertaining to Registered Community Organizations (RCO's). The Crosstown Zoning and Land Use Committee, chaired by Joe Schiavo, prepared a memo proposing fifteen revisions, and engaged in numerous public and one on one meetings with Planning Commission staffers. Of the fifteen original recommendations, six were adopted in whole or in part. Among the more important Crosstown recommendations which have yet to be adopted are suggestions that:

- RCOs be required to have a minimum area just as they are presently barred from exceeding a maximum area,
- Political wards should be required to meet the same RCO qualifications required of non political civic associations.
- When public meetings are postponed, new meeting notices should issue.

PLANNING COMMISSION ANNUAL OMNIBUS BILL

For the first time, Crosstown members met with PCPC staff to review and comment on the annual PCPC omnibus bill intended to amend observed Code flaws and propose Code improvements, as required.

SECOND ANNUAL EDUCATION SUMMIT

For the second year in a row, the Friends of Neighborhood Education (FONE) a coalition of 35 neighborhood primary schools chaired by Jeff Hornstein, convened a summit of local friends groups. This year 120 people from 35 schools attended an April 2 gathering featuring workshops on fundraising, on forming and operating Friends of Schools groups, and on diversity initiatives.

BUILDING BETTER CIVICS WORKSHOP

The Coalition's Best Practices Committee, led by Rob Kettell, invited 110 RCOs to attend a Building Better Civics Workshop held on October 22. Eighty people from 39 RCOs attended and participated in four workshops devoted to land use, community engagement, fundraising and operational best practices.

SUGAR TAX SURVEY AND DEBATE

The Crosstown provided the administration and Council the results of a four question survey on the "Soda Tax" which elicited replies from 339 Crosstown residents in 16 zipcodes. 251 respondents (76%) favored the three cents per ounce tax and more than 75% took the time to make narrative comments on the proposal. Of those favoring the tax, 67% thought the rate appropriate while 23% believed it was too high and 10% thought it to be too low. On May 23, shortly before Council's June 16th vote on the tax, the Coalition sponsored a debate on the topic moderated by Sam Katz with two speakers pro and con.

OPPOSITION TO SIGNS ON MSB & ONE PARKWAY

At its November meeting, the Crosstown delegates voted unanimously to oppose a proposal presented to the Planning Commission calling for the placement of large advertising signs on the Municipal Services Building and on One Parkway, 1515 Arch. In a letter to the Mayor and Council President, the Coalition noted that while it was not opposed to placing ads on City buildings, it did object to the erection of large advertisements on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway.

MISCELLANEOUS CROSSTOWN COMMENTS

Over the past year, the Crosstown wrote to express support for:

- Protected pedestrian walkways at construction sites, Bill 161108
- Sustainability review in the Civic Design Review process, Bill 160966
- The inclusion of live electronic links in the Planning Commission agendas
- Consideration of Crosstown Zoning and Land Use Chair Joe Schiavo for Zoning Board of Adjustment vacancy
- Preserving Parks and Open Space zoning on parcel adjacent to Pennypack Park

