

## MEMORANDUM

To: Residents of Lower Merion Township, Ward 3

From: Michael McKeon, Ward 3 Commissioner (email: mmckeon@lowermerion.org)

Re: Lower Merion Township, Ward 3 Report #39

Date: Jan. 25, 2020

---

### CURRENT EVENTS

#### ST. JUSTIN'S BUS PARKING UPDATE WELSH VALLEY MIDDLE SCHOOL (WARD 3)



The Penn Valley Civic Association held a special 3-hour meeting on Jan. 16, 2020 with the Lower Merion School Board and Township officials to discuss a controversial bus parking plan at Welsh Valley Middle School. The plan calls for the full-time parking of **12 buses** at a fenced in lot next to the former St. Justin's church building. Welsh Valley already accommodates 29 buses for drop-off and pick-up, and residents are very concerned about the traffic, safety and aesthetic impact of the 12 additional buses, and there are fears that even more buses could be proposed in the future. Lower Merion police are evaluating safety concerns.

The School District appeared frustrated that Township zoning limits bus parking locations, and several prior School District bus parking plans had been thwarted by Lower Merion neighbors.

The School District plans to implement the bus parking in the **fall of 2020** regardless of whether school start times are changed. At a Jan. 23, 2020 facilities meeting, the School Board voted to approve funding to purchase 14 buses to replace old buses in its fleet. The School Board will hold a general meeting on **Jan. 27, 2020 (8-10 p.m. LMHS auditorium)** to approve this **bus fleet funding** and discuss other issues such as start time. I am not an expert on School Board procedure, but I do not believe the School Board will vote on funding for the Welsh Valley bus depot work because the cost is considered small and is below the financial vote threshold.

This plan is not scheduled to come before the Board of Commissioners for a vote because it is not considered "land development" (there is no construction/demolition/paving etc.). The Township solicitor advised that bus parking is considered a permitted "accessory use" at public schools, and the School District will not need Township land development approval for the Welsh Valley application.

**The Board of Commissioners is trying to work with the School District to locate a possible alternate location for buses to Welsh Valley Middle School, but we have no alternate at this time. We have also asked the School District to delay the bus depot project at Welsh Valley so we can have more time to look at alternate options/solutions for the School District.**

**ARDMORE THEATER PLAN- NOT ADMITTED!**

On Jan. 22, 2020, the Board of Commissioners denied a developer’s plan to convert the Ardmore movie theater into a 7-story condominium building. The theater is a protected class 1 historic resource located in a historic district, and I thought the developer’s gaudy plans were out of scale with the character of the neighborhood and not legally compliant. The LM planning commission had previously recommended a denial.

Plans for 7-story condo building at old Ardmore Theater voted down



A patio furniture store exists in the façade. The parcel will need to be developed further at some point, and I hope the owner can work with residents to devise a project which is a better fit for the community. Channel 6 ABC news story here:

[https://6abc.com/5872203/?fbclid=IwAR1\\_FAIakQSiO7BNNL1ZA8BR1JPTViBkZLDzk6zQ4bi8odVd7IJgFFruhK4](https://6abc.com/5872203/?fbclid=IwAR1_FAIakQSiO7BNNL1ZA8BR1JPTViBkZLDzk6zQ4bi8odVd7IJgFFruhK4)

Meeting video is here: <https://lmtv.viebit.com/player.php?hash=UR1Hxaab7Msj>

(I spoke out against the project at the 2 hr, 17 minute, 40 second mark)

**BILLBOARD BATTLES!**



Opposition to billboards has been a very important topic in Lower Merion and Haverford Townships.

There are two billboard applications in Ward 3: (1) The Wilkie Lexus billboard along I-76 and (2) a challenge for a location in Belmont Hills by the River on property which may be owned by PECO. These applications are handled by the Zoning Hearing Board. The Wilkie Lexus hearing, which concerns an expanded, illuminated billboard, is scheduled for **February 27, 2020**. The Wilkie Lexus application is unique because this billboard was permitted in 1991, but the owner modified it without a permit and it now exceeds the allowable height and sign area.

ONGOING CONSTRUCTION WORK	
<p><b><u>Gas Main Work</u></b> Utility Line Services is performing work for PECO on <b>Mary Waters Ford Rd</b> from Jefferson Street to Centennial Rd. Contact <b>Rich Brunner of Utility Line Services (215-430-1503)</b> with any questions.</p>	<p><b><u>Aqua Water Main Work</u></b> Aqua is performing water main work on <b>Manayunk Rd</b> behind Bala Cynwyd Middle School. The work area will extend to Conshohocken State Road and work hours are scheduled from 9am to 3pm.</p>



Thank you **Beth Am Israel** (1301 Hagys Ford Rd) for hosting a successful electronic recycling drop-off on MLK Day (Jan. 20). Our family was happy to finally get rid of our old dehumidifier.

**ZONING CODE UPDATE:** The Township has been working on a new zoning code for several years and a draft was advertised in December, 2019. There will be a **hearing** on **February 26, 2020** to decide whether to adopt the code.

Registration for **Narberth Girls Summer Basketball** is now open. This is competitive outdoor basketball for middle and high schoolers: <https://ngbbl.com/>

**Moody's Investors Service** issued a credit report for Lower Merion Township and described our credit position as "extremely strong" while giving Lower Merion the highest possible credit score. [http://www.mainlinemedianews.com/mainlinetimes/moody-s-once-again-praises-lower-merion-township-s-credit/article\\_6c8a8dd8-3b7b-11ea-b884-eb76a2b8900e.html](http://www.mainlinemedianews.com/mainlinetimes/moody-s-once-again-praises-lower-merion-township-s-credit/article_6c8a8dd8-3b7b-11ea-b884-eb76a2b8900e.html)

Please be careful in the **WINTER WEATHER**. The Township received snow and ice on Jan. 18, 2020 which resulted in poor driving conditions on the morning of Jan. 18. The steep and hilly roads in **Belmont Hills** were some of the most treacherous in the Township. I received many resident communications asking why the roads were not pre-treated on the evening of Jan. 17. The Township analyzes the forecast and then makes a determination as to whether to pre-treat. In the past, the Township has received complaints for applying pre-treatment in situations that ultimately did not justify it. It is impossible to predict the weather with 100% accuracy and hindsight is 20-20, but it is certainly our goal to have safe Township roads.

On **March 25**, entomologist **Doug Tallamy** will speak at the Narberth Municipal Building about conserving and restoring nature in our yards. Tickets can be purchased in advance for \$10. Over time, we have damaged our community by planting non-native, invasive plants and trees (and not all non-native trees are invasive). A primary culprit is the Tree of Heaven (native to China) which attracts hordes of destructive lanternflies. Native trees help preserve our native bird and insect species, which are critical to our ecosystem. **THE SOLUTION IS CHEAP AND SIMPLE: IF YOU ARE PLANTING TREES OR PLANTS, PLEASE GO NATIVE!**

The Belmont Hills Library (120 Mary Waters Ford Rd) is now open **6 days a week**.

## HOURS OF OPERATION

Monday and Tuesday (10am - 8pm)  
Wednesday and Thursday 12pm - 8pm  
Friday (12pm-5pm)  
Saturday (10am - 5pm)  
Sunday (Closed)



**CRIME & POLICE ACTIVITY REPORT** Below is a summary of recent police activity in Ward 3:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Comments</b>
1/10/20	Vehicle Accident	Hollow & Sprague	
1/10/20	Theft	193 Belmont Ave (Wawa)	Retail theft \$50-\$200
1/14/20	Family Disturbance	Mary Waters Ford Rd	Domestic

**PLEASE LOCK YOUR CAR DOORS!** Theft from unlocked vehicles is a big issue in the Township.

**UPCOMING COMMUNITY EVENTS**

Jan 27	8-10:00 p.m.	<b>Lower Merion School Board General Meeting</b> , LMHS Auditorium School start time update, school bus purchase
Feb 1	11:00 a.m.	<b>Groundhog Day Craft</b> , Belmont Hills Library (all ages)
Feb 3	6:30-7:45 p.m.	<b>Belmont Hills Civic Assoc. Meeting</b> , Belmont Hills Library
Feb 5	7:00 p.m.	<b>Penn Valley Civic Meeting</b> , Penn Valley Elementary School Presentation re: "Ready for 100" Renewable Energy
Feb 5	6:00 p.m.	<b>Lower Merion Township Monthly Committee Meetings</b>
Feb 6	7:15 p.m.	<b>Combatting Invasive Plants in Your Backyard</b> Narberth Garden Club, Narberth Municipal Bldg, 100 Conway Ave
Feb 11	7:00 p.m.	<b>Kensington in Crisis Screening</b> , Radnor Twnship Bldg, 301 Iven Ave
Feb 11	7:30 p.m.	<b>Neighborhood Club of Bala Cynwyd Meeting</b>
Feb 12	7:00 p.m.	<b>Lower Merion Building &amp; Planning Committee</b>
Feb 14	3:30 pm	<b>Valentine's Day Craft</b> , Belmont Hills Library (all ages)
Feb 18	5:30 p.m.	<b>Battle of Monmouth Historical Dinner</b> , Black Powder Tavern, Wayne
Feb 19	9-11 a.m.	<b>Coffee with a Cop</b> , Starbucks, 31 E. Wynnewood Rd, Wynnewood No agenda- no speeches- just conversation
Feb 19	7:30 p.m.	<b>Lower Merion Board of Commissioners</b>
Feb 22	2-4 p.m.	<b>Mardi Gras Craft &amp; Bingo Party</b> , Belmont Hills Library (all ages)
Feb 25	10:30 a.m.	<b>Therapy Dog Story Time</b> , Belmont Hills Library (children)
Feb 26	7:30 p.m.	<b>Lower Merion Building &amp; Planning Committee Meeting</b> <b>Public Hearing to Adopt New Zoning Code</b>
Feb 27	7:15 p.m.	<b>Zoning Hearing Board</b> , Wilkie-Lexus I-76 Billboard (3 Schuylkill Expressway) Appeal # 4482 Krain Outdoor Advertising
April 18-19		<b>Koegel Complex Free Dump Weekend #1</b>
May 2-3		<b>Koegel Complex Free Dump Weekend #2</b>

*I maintain a **Facebook page**. To receive updates in your Facebook feed, like/follow my page:*

*<https://www.facebook.com/LowerMerionWard3Commissioner/>*

*To contact me about Township business, please email me at [mmckeon@lowermerion.org](mailto:mmckeon@lowermerion.org)*