

Report on a Special Meeting on Neighborhood Security

December 2, 2019, Church of the Holy Trinity

Following widespread concern about unsafe street conditions in the neighborhood and specifically a murder which



occurred at 18th and Walnut Streets, CCRA convened a special meeting of residents to address these issues. The meeting was held at the Church of the Holy Trinity and was attended by over 200 people and several senior officers of the Philadelphia Police Department, including Commanding Officer Michael Hooven, Chief Inspector Joel Dales, Inspector Walter Smith and Community Relations Officer O'Shea, among others.

John Gardner, the Rector of the Church, welcomed the crowd and expressed the Church's support for a safe and welcoming community.

Maggie Mund, CCRA president, introduced the meeting, gave a brief history of neighborhood conditions and development over the past two decades, and opened the meeting up for questions. The following is a summary of the issues raised by those in attendance and police responses:

- Issues with unruly students after school need to be addressed; the Department is aware and deploying more assets accordingly.
- A proposal to deploy a police vehicle in Rittenhouse Square, with lowered stack lights, was well received.
- Sydenham Street needs more police attention.
- While homelessness is not a crime, the diversion of homeless people in the neighborhood to the underground facility at Dilworth Plaza for services is ongoing.
- When calling the department, people should report offending behavior and not homelessness.
- The possibility of coordinating cameras on buildings and throughout the neighborhood was discussed. The department described its Safe Camera Program.
- Houses of prostitution on Ludlow Street were discussed.
- A request for more signage of prohibited behavior was discussed.
- The Mayor's directive from 2016 was discussed requiring a more nuanced approach to arrests for offensive and illegal street behavior, essentially requiring Outreach Teams and multiple tickets before arrest for aggressive panhandling, sleeping or sitting on streets, unlawful assembly which interferes or intimidates, etc.



- The need to address poverty and drug use was emphasized.
- One person asked how to prevent these incidents from happening again.
- There was a lengthy discussion about training officers to respond to the quality of life issues, which make the neighborhood feel less safe and deteriorating over the past few years, rather than taking the attitude that there is nothing that can be done.
- It was noted that school dismissals were staggered to allow effective police deployment.
- The police noted that they do monitor security cameras on a 24/7 basis and deploy units when they see problems.
- It was agreed that there seemed to be more knife than gun crimes but no explanation for why this is the case was offered.

The meeting concluded with appreciation for the officers' presence and a large sign-up of people willing to help respond to the problems noted. Listening to our neighbors, organizing meetings like this one and focusing on Center City's problems and possible solutions is central to the mission of CCRA. We thank everyone who came. In our next communication on this issue, we will report on next steps we are taking to capture the energy of the meeting and address the problems that have been identified. Stay tuned.

