

COVENTRY VILLAGE NEWS

JANUARY 1976

NEWSLETTER OF COVENTRY NEIGHBORS, INC.

Pick-N-Pay Away?

Many of you may remember the meetings and mass hysteria last year when Pick-N-Pay announced that its Coventry store would have to expand or be closed. There has been a long silence since then about the store's future. This silence is very ominous.

Those who have bothered to ask questions about the Pick-N-Pay situation are admittedly ignorant. They were told P-N-P leases its Coventry building. They were told the lease will expire, possibly within the next year. They had heard the man who has since become the President of P-N-P argue that small stores like the Coventry store are not economical from the point of view of a chain store operation. They have heard that owners of four land parcels have not been able to agree on a package deal which would allow P-N-P to build a large regional store on its Coventry site. But they do not know the full story about the store's future, nor do they pretend to know it.

When asked in public months ago what the City was doing about the P-N-P situation, the Law Director of Cleveland Heights replied that negotiations were in progress but that he was not at liberty to comment on them.

P-N-P is not obliged to notify the community if it intends to close its store. One person who knows the grocery business in Cleveland estimates that the Coventry store could be vacated in as little as three weeks' time. The same source offered his opinion that some other chain, such as the Sav-Mor chain or the Eagle chain, might possibly be interested in the Coventry location at some future date.

There is no sure indication P-N-P will move out of Coventry. On the other hand, at this date, there is no sure indication it will stay where it is. The only known fact is that there has been public silence about this P-N-P store for a long time now.

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Note: The Coventry Library Advisory Committee will meet on Sunday, January 25th at 2:00 p.m. at the Coventry Library to discuss continued operation and use of this branch library service in the Coventry area. All are welcome. For more information, contact: John Picken 321-1721
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OUR NEXT MEETING OF COVENTRY NEIGHBORS, INC. WILL BE ON MONDAY, JANUARY 12, 1976 AT 8:00 P.M. AT THE UNITARIAN SOCIETY, 2723 LANCASTER ROAD. PLAN TO ATTEND.
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Cleveland Heights women are asked to attend the first meeting of the Women's Rights Class of the HCC: Thursday, January 15, 1976, Heights Community Congress, 2158 Lee Road. Your ideas and participation are needed. For further details, call Lana Cowell at 321-6775.
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Housing Service Jeopardized?

The Heights Housing Service came in for some critical "scrutiny" at the November 17 Council meeting, from two Council members who are expected to be quite influential in the coming term. Marjorie Wright, whose term on council continues for another two years, called for assessment by City staff beyond and independently of the review tendered by Harry Fagan, Director of the Heights Community Congress, from which the City contracts the Housing Service. Wright disclaimed any dispute with the basic idea of the service, but said that it "must be able to stand scrutiny," especially in view of the recent increase in Housing Service costs and the difficulty of measuring exactly what effect the Service has.

Alfred Connors concurred; Connors was returned to Council for another four-year term in the recent municipal election. Wright and Connors have been on the minority end of the 4-3 philosophical split that has been manifested on Council in the last two years. The election was a complete upset, with Connors and two new men running completely successfully against the record of the erstwhile majority. One of Connors' campaign issues was the cost of the Housing Service.

Vice-Mayor Lucille Huston noted that the kind of staff assessment for which Wright was calling had indeed been provided by City Manager Robert Edwards in the reports distributed to Council and to members of the public present. Wright indicated that this was not completely satisfactory.

Edwards, in response to a question by Huston, indicated that he favored bringing the Housing Service into the City staff structure. He had previously recommended that the Service be housed in the City Hall annex to facilitate transaction with the City.

The Heights Housing Service was instituted by the City to combat racial steering in real estate sales in Cleveland Heights, after private human-rights groups had demonstrated a pattern of steering Black homeowners into Cleveland Heights and White prospects to the further-east suburbs. Day-to-day operation of the Service is an escort operation that puts prospective buyers into contact with every home that the Service knows is for sale in the City in the price range sought by the buyer. The Council vote on creation of the Service was 4-3; since then, Council has been unanimous in renewing the contract.

There is more to the Service than the escort operation. There is data gathering so that the Service knows that houses are for sale; a constant community contact which brings in volunteer workers for the Housing Service and for other activities of the Congress; and coordination of escorts with people seeking houses. The City must demonstrate that it can match all of these functions, at less cost, if it is to act responsibly in even considering shifting the Service from the Congress to the City.

Such a transfer, it should be noted, will not undermine the Congress. The Housing Service contract with the City is by no means the only source of Congress funding. But the Housing Service itself could be seriously undermined by an unwise administrative shift.

- David Burwasser

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All dogs must have a 1976 registration by January 20th. Licenses
can be purchased at four Cleveland Heights locations including
Heights Pet World on Coventry and Severence Center - Mayfield entrance.
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Street Delegates Welcome in New Coventry Neighbors Structure

Coventry Neighbors, Inc enacted at its November 24th meeting a series of by-law changes that create a new category of voting membership in the organization; Street Club Delegates. The organization thus addressed the long-standing twin problems of creating a formal relationship with the street clubs that already exist in the Coventry School District, and providing the "umbrella" link between the Heights Community Congress and the Coventry street clubs.

The key change is in one new sentence: "Each and every recognized Street Club in the Coventry School District shall be entitled to one voting delegate to the Executive Committee, upon payment of Club affiliation dues of \$3.00 per year." Street clubs are free to instruct, remove or replace delegates; right of participation inheres in the delegate office rather than the particular person.

Street delegates are free to participate in all voting and deliberation. The only prerogative reserved purely to individual dues-paying members is running for office in CNI on the theory that one person should not be answerable to two constituencies. (Of course, any individual--including a street club member--can secure this prerogative by taking an individual, dues-paying membership, also \$3.00 per year.)

In addition, the organization mandated plenary Quarterly Meetings, intended to bring together as wide a gathering of Coventry people as possible for program meetings and policy review.

None of the changes infringe any of the rights or obligations of individual members of Coventry Neighbors as previously existed.

-HISTORICAL RIDDLE-

These changes are an attempt to solve at one stroke a nagging riddle imbedded in the history of Coventry: the relationship of street clubs, the Heights Community Congress and Coventry Neighbors, Inc.

Soon after it came into existence, the Heights Community Congress put into effect a plan for confederating street clubs--which are the foundation of the community organization development that HCC does with the City--into "umbrella" organizations, one for each school district. Coventry Neighbors pre-existed HCC (as did many street clubs) and was a "natural" for the Coventry District umbrella group.

But Coventry Neighbors, Inc. came into existence in a different climate and in a different era. It has always been an organization of individual members. The ideal umbrella group consists purely of delegates from street clubs. CNI members come largely from the multi-family and commercial/residential regions; street clubs happen mostly in single-family areas. CNI's attempts at outreach did bring in some valued individual members from single-family areas, but no solid link with street clubs was effected. Nor did CNI's apartment membership show any signs of speciating into street subgroups. CNI's area of concern includes part of Roxboro District.

Meanwhile, existing and new street clubs in the Coventry District were without an effective umbrella group, putting them at a disadvantage relative to clubs in eight of the other nine school districts.

The present measures are an attempt to cut across this historical riddle by, essentially, combining as much as possible of the best of both modes. The

historical nature of Coventry Neighbors, Inc. is preserved and respected. Coventry District street clubs (some of which predate both HCC and CNI) can finally avail themselves of a confederating structure and a standard link with HCC, the same as (nearly) everybody else.

Will it fly, Orville? Only one way to find out, Wilbur! The next meeting is in the second week in January; will your street club be represented?

- David Burwasser

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A NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION

By Fran Hornik

*Now that the Holiday is passed,
I hope that you've resolved.
That in the year to come,
You really will become "Involved."*

*When working for a Cause,
It's gratifying, you'll agree.
You'll help your neighbors and your friends,
and they'll help you, you'll see.*

*You have a voice that should be
heard,
No matter what your view.
So why not find a group to join,
That thinks the way you do.*

*We all have Civic interests,
That we would like to share.
So please attend a meeting,
With some Folks who really care.*

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The Rising Cost of Ohio

Many of us apartment dwellers came to Coventry because of the cheap rents. It is therefore with regret that we formally announce the apparent demise of the \$80 a month efficiency and the \$180 a month three-bedroom apartment due to a case of advanced progress.

There is no rent control in Cleveland Heights. Rent is set by the laws of supply and demand. Anyone who has every sought an apartment in the area between CWRU and Coventry Road knows the supply has never been great. But rents remained low. Buildings were in poor shape and could hardly be rented at exorbitant prices. Absentee landlords were unaware of the huge demand, and so they did not know how much they could charge tenants. Tenants preferred to live in sub-standard housing rather than complaining, for fear the rents would rise if landlords had to invest more money in their properties. Recently, however, rents have begun to increase noticeably.

Coventry has always been popular because it is close to the universities and closer to downtown Cleveland than many other apartment areas. Now it is popular because it is chic. There are definitely lower rents in other parts of Cleveland Heights. The apartment districts near Noble and those near Cedar-Fairmount are of the old Coventry mold--i.e., run-down and less expensive to rent. But the other districts are not Coventry.

The young professional crowd is moving into Coventry. New landlords are buying buildings and raising rents, often without making substantial improvements in the properties they acquire. Those who can pay the higher rents stay, and those who cannot try to find some other apartment in the Coventry area they can afford.

But the area is slowly running out of cheap apartments. So what happens now?

No trend is discernible yet. When the "hippy" leaves Coventry because he cannot afford to live here anymore, there are some who will be glad to see him go. But it should be remembered that it is the "hippy" who made Coventry chic, who made it the place which is so desirable to hoards of shoppers from Pepper Pike and Gates Mills. When the street people leave, they will take with them something intangible and vital to this area. They will be sorely missed.

- Alan Rapoport

COVENTRY LIBRARY - 1925 COVENTRY ROAD - 932-3600 EXT. 47

WEDNESDAYS (WEEKLY) PRESCHOOL STORYTIME: 10:30 A.M. AND 2:30 P.M.
THURSDAYS (WEEKLY) "STORIES OF YOUNG AMERICA" FOR SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN:
4:00 P.M.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 14 PARENTING COURSE FOR PARENTS OF PRE-SCHOOLERS:
10:30 A.M. AND 2:30 P.M.

A New Law Forces Landlords to Do Their Part. (Make's Them Pay Security Deposits, Too!)

There's a new twist on the security deposit game. Landlords in at least six cities have to put up security deposits--not just take them from the tenants.

Up until now, it's been a one-sided deal. Landlords have demanded money to force tenants to live up to their promises in a lease, but tenants have had no way to make a landlord do his part.

Now there's a court-tested law that sets a limit as to how long needed repairs can go unfixed, and gets them fixed at the landlord's expense if he fails.

This turnabout in the deposit practice came when a health official in Ridgefield, New Jersey realized that tenants could go for days without heat or water if a landlord were negligent or just out of reach. So the official, Jules Capozzi, proposed a city ordinance that could be used for such "emergency" situations.

Here's how the Landlord Security Deposit Act (LSDA) works: the landlord puts up a certain amount of money (depending on the number of units he or she owns) which is kept in an interest-bearing account. The money can be used only in "emergency" situations and all interest is paid to the landlord. A special council of health and housing officials and a councilman administers the act. In Ridgefield, they meet monthly or when they have a complaint, and paperwork is minimal.

The ordinance carefully outlines what "emergency conditions" are: when tenants are without: 1) ventilation or lights, 2) sanitary facilities, 3) water, 4) heat and 5) when there is something that would increase the possibility of fire or accidents.

Also, the landlord is given a chance to make repairs before the council takes any steps. After he is notified, he has 24 hours to start the repairs and 72 hours in which repairs must be "reasonably complete." If he doesn't act, the council can make the necessary repairs with his security deposit.

Unlike many laws that are on the books but never enforced, the LSDA has teeth in it. If a landlord does not put up the deposit, or if he does not pay back the deposit after it's used by Council, he can be fined up to \$200 per day until he pays up.

So far, the Ridgefield council hasn't used any of the deposits. According to Capozzi, the ordinance is a strong deterrent.

Although the ordinance has apparently been effective, it has had a rough road. As soon as it passed, a local apartment owner along with a builders group and several owners filed suit to challenge the law. After battles in the lower courts, the Superior Court of New Jersey decided the law was constitutional. There was only one change during the long battle: an amendment was added (before the final court case) to give landlords who didn't think their money was spent properly a method of appealing the Council's action.

We feel that the LSDA is a fair ordinance for all involved--for years tenants have been putting up money to ensure that they do their part, but there has been no way to force landlords to supply adequate housing in return.

This tough law (enforced by even tougher officials) may be an answer to the complex problem of deteriorating buildings. By forcing landlords to keep up their buildings--or pay dearly--the law may just stop slums before they happen. And, this type of "preventative medicine" is just what the cities need now.

There's hope that the idea may spread. Right now at least five other cities have similar deposit acts and numerous cities and a few states are considering the new law.

As with any type of law, someone will have to speak out to get it passed. So, get to your city lawmakers and let them know you're interested. For a copy of Ridgefield's ordinance, its amendment, and summary of how it works, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Councilman Jules Capozzi, Municipal Building, 604 Broad Avenue, Ridgefield, New Jersey 07657.

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COVENTRY VILLAGE NEWS
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All opinions contained in the Coventry Village News are solely those of the author, unless otherwise indicated. All official pronouncements of Coventry Neighbors, Inc. will be specifically noted.

Articles for publication may be sent to the newsletter c/o Apt. 301, 2753 Euclid Heights Boulevard, Cleveland Heights, Ohio, 44106.

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