



Coventry Village News

September, 1989

The Newsletter of Coventry Neighbors, Inc.

Volume 11 No. 3

Officials of City, Medic, and Pick-n-Pay will meet with neighbors on September 12

Coventry Neighbors, Inc. (CNI) has invited representatives of Pick-n-Pay, Medic Drugs, and the City of Cleveland Heights to the organization's meeting of September 12, 7:45 PM, at Coventry Village Library. Everyone is welcome.

Bob Bann, Planning Director for the City of Cleveland Heights, will represent the municipal government. Nat Lipsyc, President of Medic Drugs, and Susan Alcorn, head of public relations for Pick-n-Pay, have also agreed to attend.

* * *

Nominations for officers will be accepted at the September 12 meeting. Nominations will be accepted again at the meeting on October 10, and elections will be held that night. CNI has six officers: President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, and two Trustees-at-Large. In addition, we will seek to fill the post of representative to the Heights Community Congress.

The only requirement for office in CNI is that one must be a member of the organization; membership must have been established at least thirty days prior to the election.

* * *

At the meeting of August 8, CNI resolved to communicate to City Council the neighborhood's concern about the loss of the Pick-n-Pay store. More than a thousand signatures were obtained on petitions which were presented to City Council at its regular meeting of August 21. CNI members and other con-

cerned area residents filled Council chambers to capacity that night, and eight people spoke to Council.

The text of the petitions, addressed to Members of Council, was this:

"We support the retention of a supermarket in Coventry Village.

"We hope that you will use all the powers at your disposal to encourage a revitalization project that meets the needs of Coventry Village."

The effort had a substantial effect. Council members pledged that the local government would do what it can to bring another food retailer to Coventry Village. Reports of the meeting appeared in the *Plain Dealer* and the *Sun Press*.

Small park will be rebuilt this fall

Plans are now nearly complete for the rebuilding of the park in front of Coventryard. Spencer Caress, the City Hall man in charge all the projects in the community's parks this summer, expects to seek bids for this project within the next several weeks.

The basic design scheme of the small park will remain the same. Roughly, the areas that are now grass will be replaced by elevated planters containing trees. Walk-ways will be substantially widened. In place of grass, the planters will have ivy, pachysandra or a similar species as ground cover.

The walls of the planters will be wide enough to provide places to sit. Several wooden benches, similar to the ones now in the park, will be provided. There will be a drinking fountain. Several sources of water—for irrigation and for cleaning—will be provided. More

continued on next page

Park . . . from first page

trash receptacles, similar to those now on the area's sidewalks, will be added.

New lighting fixtures will provide more illumination and better color rendition. The "pawn broker" light fixture now on the corner of Euclid Heights Boulevard and Coventry Road will be removed.

Most of the facility will be constructed of poured-in-place concrete. Other materials may be used for some paving; this will depend on cost. The budget for the project is approximately \$145,000. The source of funds will be the \$12,000,000 parks improvement bond issue approved by the voters last November.

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Phone: 371-6095.

Coventry Village . . .
*where we all get along together
pretty well.*

Coventry Neighbors, Inc. met four times with City staff and Blunden-Barclay Architects in developing plans for the park. Discussions began with general design concepts, and continued through approval of final of the plans. The City and the architects were immensely cooperative; they accepted many suggestions and made several important changes in the design. —LB

An editorial . . .

We've got enough carry-outs

Raj Mathur, proprietor of the Taj Mahal restaurant, wants a new license to sell beer and wine for consumption off the premises. City Council recently filed, through channels of state government, a formal objection to Mr. Mathur's request. Council acted at the urging of Police Chief Martin G. Lentz.

The City's action needs and deserves the support of the Coventry neighborhood. The last time Mr. Mathur operated such a license, he got caught selling alcohol to minors—twice in one weekend. The incident typifies Mr. Mathur's attitude toward the standards of this community and the laws of this state.

But nowhere is Mr. Mathur's lack of social responsibility more clearly and publicly expressed than in the management of his real estate.

The building Mr. Mathur owns and does business in was once elegant and prosperous. Standing on the south-east corner of Coventry and Mayfield Roads, it housed a pet shop whose windows became a tourist attraction. Small businesses thrived on its second floor.

Under Mr. Mathur's ownership, that second floor, vacant and unheated through a slew of winters, is falling apart, as is the structure's highly-visible façade. The portions of the first floor occupied by Mr. Mathur's own restaurant and retail store have an appearance of vagrant disuse.

A license to sell alcoholic beverages conveys a very valuable privilege. Mr. Mathur has not shown himself worthy of the trust which such a license implies.

Loss of the food store is most important issue in Coventry, readers say

The loss of the Coventry Pick-n-Pay store is an issue of major concern to area residents. In a recent survey, conducted by the *Coventry Village News* and the Heights Community Congress, half the respondents said that the food store's departure would be a "major loss." Eight percent called it an "inconvenient loss," and twenty per cent called it "no loss."

A lobbying effort by Coventry Neighbors—including a petition drive that gathered more than 1,000 signatures—has apparently persuaded the local government to assist in finding a new food store for the neighborhood.

The departure of Pick-n-Pay from Coventry Village is just another chapter in a trend sweeping the supermarket industry in America. Smaller, older stores are being replaced by larger facilities. The Coventry store has only about 12,600 square feet of floor area. Among stores operated by large chains, few stores remain that are less than about twice that size. The new Finast store, under construction at Severance Center, will contain about 68,000 square feet. Some new stores—called "hypermarkets"—have been built with as much as 250,000 square feet of floor area.

At the same time, the organizations that operate these stores are becoming larger. Bigger companies can make more efficient use of resources, especially in activities like warehousing, shipping, and marketing. Firms that cannot take advantage of these efficiencies have great difficulty surviving in this fiercely competitive industry.

Pick-n-Pay began with a single store—the one here on Coventry. Pick-n-Pay is now part of First National Supermarkets (FNS), which operates 122 stores under the names Finast, Pick-n-Pay, and Edwards. They do business in Ohio, Connecticut, New York, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Massachusetts. With total gross sales of about 1.5 billion dollars (and a net of about 17 million), FNS was ranked twenty-second among the largest fifty American food

retail organizations in a study early this year by *Supermarket News*, a trade publication.

FNS is in turn owned by Ahold USA, part of the multi-national conglomerate Ahold NV, based in Zaandam, The Netherlands. Ahold USA also operates Bi-Lo stores in the Carolinas and Georgia; and Giant Food Stores and Martain's Supermarkets in Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Maryland. Pierre J. Everaert, President and CEO of Ahold USA, has expressed interest in adding to his firm's collection of food stores.

* * *

Despite these market forces, an independent operator could almost surely be found to take over the Coventry store—if it were available. When Heinen's left Shaker Square, a small operator was found for that store. Carl's stores are prospering in several small Cleveland locations.

But the Coventry store is not available to a food store. FNS, which owns the building, has leased the space to Medic Drugs.

A food store of some sort might be put in the former book store space, now shared by High Tide/Rock Bottom, Coventry Cats, and Tommy's Restaurant. All of these are expected to return to their old locations before the Pick-n-Pay store closes. Our municipal government has agreed to help with recruiting efforts in this direction.

* * *

About eight years ago Pick-n-Pay was a tenant in the building, then owned by an out-of-state family trust. In an effort to encourage the redevelopment of the east side of Coventry, the municipal government persuaded FNS to purchase the building. FNS leases all the other buildings its stores are located in. Then the City and FNS split the cost of hiring architect Richard Fleischman to design a large new building to be constructed on land stretching (more or less) from Coventry Pizza to Heights Laundry and Dry Cleaning. The project was to have been financed, in part, with the proceeds of an Urban Development Action Grant (UDAG).

In its Strategic Development Plan, approved about a year ago, the city government again

continued on next page

Pick-n-Pay . . . *from previous page*
expressed interest in achieving the redevelopment of the Pick-n-Pay site, and other land on the east side of Coventry Road. If the City really wants to make that development happen, it should begin the land assembly process *now*. The FNS property and several other bits of land are now ripe for acquisition. Time will see costs soar. All these properties could be held by the City in a sort of "land bank" operation until a developer is found.

Progress is, however, apparently being made in negotiations which would make what's now Pick-n-Pay's own parking lot into part of much larger, integrated public parking facility that would include the existing municipal parking facilities on that side of Coventry and seven parcels of land on Rock Court, behind Pick-n-Pay. —LB

Neighbors act to save a tree as work starts on Jaguar-Cleveland

Jody Telfair-Richards came out of her Preyer Road home on the morning of August 29 to see men with chain saws about to cut a few trees. The trees were to be cut to make way for the expansion of Jaguar-Cleveland. The auto dealership is located on the south side of Mayfield Road, between Superior and Preyer Roads.

Ms. Telfair-Richards placed herself between a large ash tree and a worker with a chain saw about to cut it down. The tree got saved.

City Manager Robert Downey worked out a change in plans for the Jaguar project that would allow the ash tree, four feet on diameter at its base and believed to be more than a hundred years old, to remain. A *cul-de-sac* being created on a corner of Cumberland Park will be moved thirteen feet to the west, out of respect for that handsome tree.

The change of plans was explained to Preyer Road residents by Mr. Downey and Richard Calder, head of Jaguar-Cleveland, at a meeting on the site Wednesday, August 30. The meeting afforded home owners an opportunity to express their unhappiness with the condition in which much of the site has been left for about a year.

Land on Preyer Road, where two houses were removed last summer, contains an unsightly, twenty-foot-high mound of dirt, and much of the site is covered with weeds as high as a man's chest. Neighbors were angered by this, and were concerned that a now-completed paved area hadn't been constructed as originally planned. Mr. Downey explained that the work had been done according to the plans worked out among the developer, residents, and the municipal authorities.

Expansion and modernization of the Jaguar-Cleveland facility was given governmental approval more than a year ago, after lengthy negotiations. Then the project stalled when bids for the work came in at 1.2 million dollars above the architect's estimates.

Mr. Calder said that most of the project will proceed swiftly now. Because of the unexpectedly high costs, one of three new buildings originally proposed will not be built. —LB

Library goings-on

The Coventry Village library has become a more comfortable place with the recent installation of air conditioning.

Poetry readings are held at the Coventry Village Library, usually on the first Sunday of each month, at 2:30 PM. Up-coming readings will be by these poets: James Languard Marie Shine on September 10; Ben Gulyas and Wendy Shaffer on October 1; Bill Arthrell and Deborah Glaefke on November 5; Steven B. Smith and Mary Turzillo on December 3.

Preschool Storytime (for ages three to five) will begin again in October. Sessions will be held on Tuesdays (October 3 through December 19) from 7:00 to 7:30 PM; and on Wednesdays (October 4 through December 20) from 10:30 to 11:00 AM.

Toddler Storytime (for ages two and a half through three) will be held on Wednesdays, beginning October 4, for eight weeks. Registration is required.

The Proud Hands will meet Mondays September 11 and 25 at 6:30 PM.

A program aimed at teaching library patrons better skills with computer indexes will be offered at the Main Library, 2345 Lee Road, at 7:30 PM on Wednesday, October 4.

Around Coventry . . .

Miracles in Coventry . . . Gary Grabowski, proprietor of the Miracles Restaurant in Cleveland's Tremont neighborhood, is taking tentative first steps toward opening a second restaurant, this one in the old location of Hunan on Coventry, a small building that was once a garage behind Coventryard.

Mr. Grabowski's operation in Tremont is widely regarded as one of the region's best restaurants. Many workers from down-town offices travel to Tremont for lunch at Miracles. Mr. Grabowski believes that most of his evening business comes from the East Side.

If Mr. Grabowski is able to overcome zoning restrictions and other problems in the way of his proposal, it could become the key to solving one of Coventry's most intractable development problems. The courtyard area was lively and thriving until fire destroyed the original Coventryard a decade ago. Except for the very successful Hunan Restaurant there, the courtyard has been largely disused since that fire.

Lewis Zipkin, owner of the building just to the east of Coventryard, recently proposed façade renovations and other improvements for his building, including an effort to bring life back into the rear courtyard. Mr. Zipkin's building contains several thousand square feet of now-vacant commercial space that faces onto the courtyard. There's been nearly no interest in leasing that space recently because the courtyard is nearly devoid of healthy activity. Mr. Grabowski's proposal could bring the life that additional development demands.

Now a bit rough and gone-to-seed, the courtyard—and the alley leading to it—could become exciting, attractive, and productive. There's a balcony on the rear of Mr. Zipkin's building, and agreements with the local government allow the Hunan restaurant to put seating out there. Coconut Joe's, the restaurant in the lower level of Coventryard, and the proposed Miracles could offer seating below. Turkey Ridge Tavern and Eatery could install a door through a large, blank wall that separates its dining room from the alley, adding to that

establishment a sidewalk café.

All this would require huge coöperation among numerous investors and governmental regulators. A nasty solid waste disposal problem would have to be addressed.

Foreclosed . . . Three plaintiffs ganged up, over the last ten months, to file foreclosure actions against Irv Gulko, owner of the vacant restaurant building on the corner of Coventry and Hampshire Roads. Society Bank sought to recover \$102,222.43 for first and second mortgages; the federal Small Business Administration sought \$144,824.50; and Caesar's Boardwalk Regency, of Atlantic City, asked for \$3,000.

Judge James F. Kilcoyne, of the county court of common pleas, signed a judgment for the plaintiffs on July 28.

No deal . . . Scott Myers, the Coventry resident and theatrical entrepreneur who has been seeking since last year to establish a live stage showcase in the now-vacant Coventry Cinema, thought a few weeks ago that he had a deal which would allow him to purchase the building. He had reached a verbal agreement on the purchase with Lou Sheer, the theater building's Arizona-based owner.

Then, as papers formalizing the transaction were being drafted, Mr. Sheer called Mr. Myers, saying that the deal was off. Sheer has listed the building for sale with a commercial real estate broker.

Tour . . . The Heights Heritage Tour, all of it, will be within walking distance of Coventry this year. The tour, which annually provides an opportunity to visit some of the spectacular homes of this community, will be held on Sunday, September 24, from noon to 6:00 P.M. The theme and title of this year's tour is, "A Sentimental Journey to the Top of the Hill."

Tickets to the tour cost eight dollars; five dollars for senior citizens.

The preview, a day earlier, will be in in the renovated Amphitheater in Cain Park.

Tickets are available at High Tide/Rock Bottom, and elsewhere. For information, call 321-6775.

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The next regular meetings of Coventry Neighbors, Inc. will be held on
Tuesdays, September 12 and October 10 at the Coventry Village Library, 7:45 P.M.

Join Coventry Neighbors, Inc. Today! You must be a member for at least
30 days to vote at our meetings. ALL MEMBERSHIPS AND SUBSCRIPTIONS EXPIRE
AT THE END OF EACH YEAR.

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