



# COVENTRY

## VILLAGE NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER OF COVENTRY VILLAGE NEIGHBORS INC.

March 2000

### *From the President's Den*

By the time you read this, we will know if the Cleveland Heights - University Heights School levy passed or failed. Without the wisdom of Gallop, supposition is only a game. As it regards this opinion, it doesn't matter. In either case, the hole in the dike has or hasn't been plugged. Short-term solutions are by definition temporary. We, as a community have not solved the problem; we have only monetarily patched the fault. It is bound to "blow" again at any time.

We have a crisis of education funding in our state. If you live in Beachwood or Independence you probably haven't noticed. If you reside in Shaker Heights or Cleveland Heights it is immediately apparent. Your child's education and the expense per pupil are dependent upon the home you select. If you like tree-lined streets and classic architecture, they come at the expense of higher real estate taxes and lower investment per pupil. If you're inclined to select a home in an area with a burgeoning commercial base, damn the foliage, your business neighbors are footing a large portion of the cost. Good for you, you hit the jackpot! Lower financial obligations for you and a more favorable investment in each of the community's students.

Now, let's look at the opposite side. Most of us have very little to do with the geographical location of our employer. We go where the job is located. After we've been hired or relocated, we find out about the monetary realities of our employment situation. When you work in a city that is not your residential city, you pay taxes to that city as well as your home city. Some share financial reciprocity. More and more, that courtesy has disappeared. By nature of the job's location, your financial obligations have been decided. You have very little to do with it. You simply pay.

By now, you all know a great deal about me. Here's one more point. I live in Cleveland Heights (no surprise) and work in Independence, Ohio. About seven years ago, the company I work for needed larger quarters. After a number of "false-starts" they agreed to buy an available property on Pleasant Valley Road (doesn't the street name grate like a Brittany Spears recording?) In weeks I was transported from the convenience of E 38<sup>th</sup> and Superior Avenue to the "boonies" of Independence. On top of the in-

**DON'T FORGET  
COVENTRY NEIGHBORS  
WILL MEET THIS TUESDAY  
MARCH 14  
AT 7:40 P.M.  
IN THE COVENTRY LIBRARY**

**PLEASE JOIN US!**

convenience, I am now required to pay a larger amount of community taxes to a city where I have no representation. The fact that I sit at a desk in this city does not mean I have a vested interest in the operation of its government. Even though I pay a large amount of my salary to them, it does not mean that the city invites me to participate in the activities of its government. I can not influence decisions. I have no way to voice my concern or objections. For lack of a better term, I am a slave to the government of Independence, Ohio. I have no say. I simply pay.

We also elected a State Representative a few days ago. (Sure, there's a general election. It doesn't sound like much of a challenge.) This person will replace Barbara Boyd. Other districts are also injecting fresh blood into State Legislature. Thank God they're gone. (Disagree? Name one thing Boyd & friends did. [Pause] I thought so.) We suffer under a system where a potentially great governmental body suffers from impotence. Our state legislature should have attacked this issue, but instead has been too busy arguing about how to spend proceeds from the tobacco lawsuit windfall. Senseless issues such as State Bugs occupy time rather than the real problems that affect ALL Ohioans.

In an environment of acceptable political stumbling, we expect less of our elected officials and they are happy to oblige. We've received less with Boyd. She alone can't be blamed however; she's just following the head lemming. Let's demand more of Silverman, Woodard or Evans (and maybe Rapaport.) The challenge to our next state representative (and our existing State Senator) is the equitable assessment of taxes to pay for schools. It is time to address this injustice. Children should not suffer because of the location of the building their parents choose to call home.

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The courts have recognized the issue. People understand the dichotomy. The legislature must now pony-up.

One more thing needs to be brought to your attention about my personal life. My wife and I have no children. We never wanted them and remained comfortable with our decision. The fact that we have none of our own does not discount our concern for the community's care of children. We do not carry a parent's emotional link to children, but they are important to the community, therefore we have taken an interest. What is best for the kids is best for everyone.

I pay lots of taxes. You pay lots of taxes. By nature of the city we live, taxes are an integral part of life. I want a strong school system. It protects my investment in property within the city. Wouldn't it be nice if the taxes we pay would insure an equitable education for all of the state's students, regardless of the city they reside? Wouldn't it be nice if all of this could be done with an eye toward representative assessment of taxes? The State Legislature is the perfect body to deal with this issue. They can redefine the way people pay for governmental services.

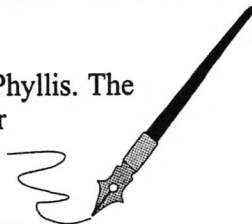
Eric, Claudette or Phyllis. Promise us you will work for an equitable assessment of taxation to fund all of Ohio's schools. Promise that you will rectify the antiquated practice of taxing the interlopers. We weekday visitors to other cities are powerless. Long ago "Taxation without Representation" was protested and defeated. How have we come so far from the Tea Party? I understand the realities of politics. I know the frailty of your elected status. Sometime, you must rise above the chattel and do what is best for the greater good. Everyone is affected by taxes. Until an overhaul of the system is initiated, we will all live under the shadow of inequity.

Keep your fingers crossed that a new, enlightened generation of officials has been elected. Hope that people with a new outlook are declared the winners. Pray that different people will hold office. Without new direction, the mistakes of the past will be repeated again and again. One plus one equals two. Are we interested in lawmakers that assume an answer of three is acceptable?

Eric, promise you'll do something about the sloppy system you've inherited. Claudette, tell me that you won't stand for the status quo. Phyllis, vow that you won't stumble over this issue the way Barbara and her peers had. If an affirmative reaction is returned from all of you, our community can only benefit.

Don't let us down Eric, Claudette or Phyllis. The city, the state and the world rely on your vote and concern.

*Jeffrey R. Dross*  
President, Coventry Neighbors



## A GOOD NEIGHBOR

A few years ago, Coventry Neighbors asked Brother Nussbaum, Director of Off-Campus Student Life for John Carroll University to address our organization's meeting. It was a very informative evening and the Brother took some strong concerns back to the university. He also explained some of the limitations he suffered under. One of the policies that Brother Nussbaum initiated since taking the position is mandatory community sensitivity classes. Two one-hour sessions introduce the concerns of the community to every youngster about to consider living off-campus. Last month I was asked to participate in the winter quarter seminar. I addressed the student and answered some of their question about landlords, tenants and community ordinances. Below is the text of my talk to the students.

*For the past week I have been trying to think about what to say to a group of young people that are about to join a neighborhood. Nothing seems right. I could tell you to always behave, keep you music low or at the very least play only Motown and never have a party that lasts past 9:30PM. I suspect that those are unreasonable demands. None of you know me, so the chances of your actually paying heed to what I say is pretty slim. To make matters worse, something unfortunate happened today.*

*I am currently serving on a software implementation project at my work. A part of that process is teaching us to teach others. Today in class I learned that people remember, on an average of only 20% of what they hear and 30% of what they see. If I was going to be of any value this evening, I was going to have to really work hard so that the only thing you remember isn't, "a tall guy wearing a funny tie talked about Coventry."*

*Let me tell you about my neighborhood.*

*I live in Cleveland Height in the Coventry area. I currently serve as President of Coventry Neighbors. To help you understand my point, I'd like to tell you a little of the history of the organization.*

*Coventry Neighbors was started in 1969 by a group of tenants in the area apartments who were upset that some area landlords would not rent to African-American applicants. They wanted the city to get involved to enforce the law. The city had its own problems; it was at a crossroad. Neighborhoods were being threatened by unscrupulous real estate agents and the stability of the city was at risk.*

*The organization became a powerful force in the neighborhood. They constantly fought for important issue. They worked with and challenged the city to change laws so that ALL of the residents of the community would be served. Their personal involvement helped to keep one of the metropolitan area's most vital suburbs alive and well.*

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*Once the battles had ended and were won, the reason for the organization had dissipated. Fewer people attended meetings. Fewer tenants participated and more homeowners joined in an effort to protect their investment.*

*Fast forward to today. As the business district of the neighborhood changes, the organization's reason for existence has changed. Living on the cusp of a commercial area creates new challenges for residents. Today, the average citizen is less likely to participate in neighborhood meetings. Typical meetings consist of about a dozen people. We usually find ourselves in a roundtable conversation with someone from the city's government talking about our concerns and worries and the cities future direction.*

*All that changes when we start talking about housing issues. Whenever the topic involves anything to do with neighbors and housing care, the meetings explode. The normal docile participant becomes enraged with passionate anger.*

*Now this is important, this is part of the 20% I want you to remember. You must realize that people are passionate about the place they live. It represents the largest single investment in most every person's lifetime. It means security and safety. Once something starts to impact it, they use any method necessary to protect it. That is exactly what members are doing when we decide to discuss housing issues. They don't hate the neighbor, or the orange and purple paint you've used to express your creativity. They hate what it is doing to their very real, very important investment.*

*Most people have some pretty basic needs when it comes to home and neighbors. This should fill the remainder of the 20% you take away. They want neighbors that are friendly, but the don't want annoying characters like those played in the movies by Jim Carrey or Ernest, constantly butting into their daily activities. They want neighbors that are quiet. People understand that occasionally you're going to have a party. They however, expect you to respect THEIR right to a good night's sleep. They expect neighbors to take care of the exterior of their house. Most people don't expect your yard to look like the gardens at Versailles. Well cut grass and a neat exterior are very simple expectations. Excessive dog barking, car horn blasts and loud music are guaranteed to offend your neighbor. If that surprises anyone, I'd be interested to visit your childhood home.*

*These few little points will make the difference between a successful relationship with your neighbor and a litigious one.*

*So, why should you listen to me? You're only here because this session is required. I'm just another old guy that has forgotten how much fun college was and after all, once this semester is over, you'll be leaving the area or the neighborhood. Well, the reality is that, at birth, you joined a community. I know it wasn't your choice, but it is one, which was handed to all of us. We are however, given a choice on how we react to that opportunity. The list of present and former*

*members of Coventry Neighbors decided that they wanted to be positive forces in their community. They worked together for the greater good. On the opposite side, one of the "slum" landlords in my community is now serving thirty days in jail because he has refused to maintain his property for the last fifteen years.*

*The path you choose is yours. Make the best of it.*

### **VISIONING PROCESS BEGINS - TIME TO PARTICIPATE!**

The professionals have been hired and the members of the Visioning Committee have been selected. The Cleveland Heights Visioning process will start this month. Eight neighborhood meeting have been placed on the calendar to insure that every citizen has a chance to participate in the strategic plan for the city.

Tuesday March 14, 2000 7:30 - 9:00 PM  
Forest Hill Presbyterian Church  
Lee Road & Monticello Boulevard

Thursday March 16, 2000 7:30 - 9:00 PM  
CH-UH Main Library 2345 Lee Road

Tuesday March 21, 2000 7:30 - 9:00 PM  
Fairmount Presbyterian Church  
2757 Fairmount Boulevard

Thursday March 23, 2000 7:30 - 9:00 PM  
Hope Lutheran Church  
2222 N Taylor Road at Northvale

Tuesday March 28, 2000 7:30 - 9:00 PM  
Unitarian Universalist Society 2728 Lancashire Road

Thursday March 30, 2000 7:30 - 9:00 PM  
Oxford Elementary School 939 Quilliams Road

Tuesday April 4, 2000 7:30 - 9:00 PM  
Hebrew Academy 1860 South Taylor Road

Thursday April 6, 2000 7:30 - 9:00 PM  
Euclid Avenue Christian Church  
3663 Mayfield Road at Yellowstone

Everyone is invited to attend each meeting. All citizens should try and make an effort to attend at least one. The meetings will all follow the same basic outline. An introduction to the meeting and the process first, then members of the Visioning Committee will lead smaller groups of attendees in an intimate discussion on their concerns and feelings about the city. Both positive and negative aspects will be sought and shared.

Don't get shut out! Make sure your opinions are voiced. The future of your community and your residential investment make these very important sessions.

If you have any questions about the process or the meeting call Julie Alandt at 291-5811.



Coventry Village News is published by Coventry Neighbors, Inc. The newsletter is distributed free throughout Coventry Village. Mailed subscriptions are available. Meetings are held on the second Tuesday of every month at 7:40 p.m. at the Coventry Village Library, Euclid Heights Boulevard. & Coventry Road.

When you join Coventry Neighbors, Inc. you can be sure of having a voice in shaping your neighborhood's future. Membership includes a subscription to the Coventry Village News.

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c/o Jeff Dross, President c/o Bruce Biddle, Editor  
[Redacted]

Individual \$7.50     Family \$10     Senior Citizen \$5

NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
ZIP CODE \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

CNI needs street representatives to communicate with the local neighborhoods and assist with the delivery of the newsletter.

**YES!** I would like to assist CNI by becoming a CNI representative for my street.

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Please return this form with your check to:  
COVENTRY NEIGHBORS, INC.  
c/o Bob Klemenc  
[Redacted]

**COVENTRY** Village News  
c/o Bruce Biddle, Editor  
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[Redacted] Expires: 11/9/2000