

Coventry Village News

The Newsletter of Coventry Neighbors, Inc.
April 2001

FROM THE PRESENT'S PEN

A few months ago I attended a meeting of the Board of Zoning Appeals. Owners of a house in our neighborhood were petitioning the city for a zoning variance. I decided to attend because this structure has been a poorly maintained, disgrace for over eight years. This owner has appeared countless times in Housing Court to face violations and has not yet met his obligations from his last court appearance. This pattern of ignoring the courts mandate has continued for almost their entire length of ownership. Now, after abusing his neighbors and shunning authority, he was asking for a favor. I wanted to be certain that the board knew what had occurred in the past. During time for public comment I read the following statement to the board:

A decade ago, this beautiful building was occupied by residents that had allowed it to slip into an inexcusable state of repair. About eight years ago, those people moved from the house. We were immediately encouraged. We assumed that someone would rescue this wonderful piece of architecture and return it to the glory it deserves. What has happened is just the opposite. Not only did the rescue fail, but it has continued to slide into further disrepair under the tutelage of its current owner. This house, steps from one of our most vibrant and patronized merchant centers illustrates to those visitors what they suspect is happening in Cleveland Heights. Like East Cleveland twenty-five years before, it is slipping into the abyss. This house being the surest example...

... For the past five years, Coventry Neighbors has struggled with ways to address blighted properties such as this one. During that struggle, we have corresponded, talked and sought guidance from Judge Lynn Toler and members of city council to learn the best ways to deal with them. It remains the single most important issue in the minds of our members. When we discuss troubled properties in the Coventry area, this address continually appears.

Our organization firmly believes that the deterioration of this house and our community's inability to appropriately deal with it and protect the neighbors from its blatant disregard of others will ultimately lead to the demise of our city.

We urge you to treat this request with the same dignity and respect the current owner treats his neighbors. Help us to send a clear message, that disregard for a neighborhood will not be tolerated.

After my statement and a similar comment from their next-door neighbor, the owner was visibly upset. His reaction was to spring back and attack Coventry Neighbors. He told the board we were vengeful back-stabbers, only interested in kicking those that are down. He complained that no one from our organization ever offered him assistance or a helping hand. He felt we wanted him to fail by constantly circling while he floundered.

This came as quite a surprise, especially after having recently received a note from one of our CNI members. A neighbor sent a postcard telling me that they liked reading the Coventry Village News, but they wished we would devote more space to news about the neighborhood.

Interestingly, both of these comments have merit. The errant homeowner was right, no one from Coventry Neighbors ever stopped by his house to ask if they could lend-a-hand. The writer was also correct. Some of the recent newsletters contained mostly my personal ramblings and editorializing, but little news that the community could use. Both points are, however unavoidable. We do not have the wherewithal to assist residents in their rehabilitation. Sometimes, our neighborhood is quiet and very little that is newsworthy occurs. The differences in their effect and presentation are much more telling. The fellow-member was approaching us from a congregational point of family. They believe in the organization and want it to be better. The homeowner was recoiling after attack, looking for a weak point on which to pounce.

With both of these ideas fresh in mind we made a decision at the last meeting of Coventry Neighbors,

Inc to change to quarterly meetings and quarterly newsletters. The hope is that the articles containing my personal musings will be shorter and the features covering news of our neighborhood will be more plentiful and relevant. Abe Bruckman, Executive Director of the Coventry Village Special Improvement District (CVSID) has agreed to keep us abreast of things with which our neighbors in the business district are facing. I will try to include more information about our friends at the Heights Youth Center. Folks from the Arts Committee have continually provided us with information on their latest goals. In short, we have lots of friends and neighbors that believe, like our members that this is a strong helpful organization and not a vengeful cancer on our community. Help me to prove they are right.

Jeffrey R. Dross – President, Coventry Neighbors

THE COVENTRY ELEVEN

A number of years ago, the Nation Trust for Historic Preservation started publishing a list of the eleven most endangered historical sites in the United States. They said at the time that they realized eleven was an unusual number, but they wanted everyone to realize that the problem was serious and growing. Having a list, one item longer than the traditional "top ten" would illustrate the expanding magnitude of the problem. Coventry Neighbors, Inc. is going to take a cue from the National Trust. We are about to create our own list. A list of the eleven most poorly maintained homes in the Coventry Neighborhood.

During our last meeting, we discussed with Cleveland Heights member of Council, Bonnie Caplan ways to deal with the frustrating bout of errant homeowners. Caplan stated that the three best ways continues to be, complain, complain and complain. That is exactly our intent. Once we have a list compiled, we will present it to the Department of Housing Inspection, the Office of the Cleveland Heights Prosecutor and of course members of Cleveland Heights Council. We will send notice quarterly asking of the status of these blights on our city. With a formal list, we can better follow-up on the progress, or lack thereof.

As you know, maintenance of our housing stock is the only thing keeping Cleveland Heights from going the way of East Cleveland. Fifty years ago, East Cleveland was a desirable community with wonderful amenities, good schools and great neighborhoods. Forty years ago it wasn't. The fine city we all love to call home can wither away just as quickly if we do

not eradicate these cancers on our community. If you have a house that ruins your neighborhood, send us a note. Even if you sent the address before, send it again. That is the only way we'll know if it is still a problem. We must stop these careless owners before they stop us!

I believe that the house located at:

_____ should be considered one of the "Coventry Eleven".

E-mail the address to ladrossceur@core.com or write Jeffrey R. Dross - President, Coventry Neighbors, Inc. [REDACTED] Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44118-2010.

KEY BANK CLOSES COVENTRY BRANCH ON SATURDAYS

As you are probably aware, Key Bank has decided to close its branch on Saturday, stating low consumer traffic and the close proximity of the Severance branch as reasons. The Coventry Village Special Improvement District (CVSID) lobbied vigorously against the move, but to no avail. At this moment, the branch is closed on Saturdays. It is important to remember that our neighborhood has a financial institution open and ready to serve you on Saturday morning. Metropolitan Bank on the corner of Coventry Road and Euclid Heights Boulevard has maintained office hours six days a week. As with all other banks, they are not open on Sunday.

OHIO SAVINGS HAS RELOCATED

After gaseous emissions forced the closure of their branch on the corner of Lee Road and Tullamore Road, Ohio Savings decided to relocate to the former home of Lopez y Gonzales. Their new office is located at the Corner of Lee Road and Washington Boulevard (next to the original Zagarra's). The inside is clean, bright and refreshing. The staff is very friendly with a few staff members returning from the original branch. As with Metropolitan Bank, they have retained their Saturday hours.

LEE ROAD REPAVED

While it is just outside of the "official" boundaries of the Coventry Neighborhood, it is an important avenue to most residents. During this summer, Lee Road will be repaved. From the Cleveland Heights-

University Heights Library to Mayfield Road new curbs will be constructed, parking cutouts will be added and drainage will be improved. As you can imagine, traffic will be quite congested, but once complete, this improvement will be a nice asset to the outskirts of our neighborhood.

UNIVERSITY CIRCLE BUS COMES TO COVENTRY

The CWRU commuter-loop busses that service the University Circle businesses and institutions are now traveling south to Coventry. The South Loop line is an approximate twelve minute trip that runs from 6:00PM to 12:30AM on Sunday through Thursday and from 8:00PM to 2:45AM on Friday and Saturday.

The line starts at the University Circle RTA station, runs up Cedar Hill and Euclid Heights Boulevard, turning around at Coventry Road (in front of Captain Tony's Pizza). It goes back down Euclid Heights Boulevard to Overlook Road, up and down Carlton and back to Overlook Road to the "hairpin" curve onto Edgemoor Road. The loop continues down the Edgemoor Road hill onto Cornell Road and then left on Circle Drive. Behind CWRU, at Adelbert Road another left takes the commuter bus back to the RTA station via side streets, Fairchild Road and Glenwood Road.

This is quite a benefit for students and residents that live in the Coventry neighborhood. Remember to take advantage of this service as you travel the Heights and the Circle. For additional information call CWRU Security at 216-368-3333

ZAGARRA'S IS READY

The owners of Zagarra's grocery are about ready to build their new store. It will be located on the site of the former Cleveland Heights Post Office. The storefronts on Lee Road from Redwood to East Overlook will be removed. Five houses, three on East Overlook and two on Redwood will also be taken. The historic storefront synagogue located on the corner of Redwood and Lee Road will however be preserved (hopefully this will convince the congregation to clean-up and better maintain the building.) Redwood will "dead end" at the back of the new Zagarra's property. Two entrances will be provided onto Lee Road, based on input from residences, none will be made onto East Overlook.

If you haven't seen the architect's renderings, this is a very nice building that is sure to improve the northern section of Lee Road. Let's wish them well.

WRITE TO CLAUDETTE WOODARD

Did you know that Interstate 71 is going to be widened to accommodate the increased population in areas such as Medina? Do you know who'll be paying for this? Do you know what part of the state won't be getting the money used to make it easier for those who willingly moved to this former farm county? (Answers: You should have! You! Yours!)

If all of this sounds unfair, it is time for you to contact your new state representative and let her know that you want her to fight against this type of spending in the future. It is easier to build new things than to finance the maintenance of older areas. New communities such as Medina are "sexy". Our neighborhood doesn't have the same magnetism. Retrieving our fair share of state dollars for rehabilitation and maintenance of our infrastructure should be given higher priority, but usually doesn't. The people that move to Medina or Auburn do so with the knowledge that they are far away from the center city. Because developers decide to build housing tracts, the state feels compelled to upgrade adjoining streets, sewers and amenities. All of these come at the expense of obedient cities such as Cleveland Heights.

A few months ago on television's 60 Minutes, during the letters to the editor section at the end, Morley Safer was commenting about having received 5000 duplicate copies of the same opinion on one of the show's segments. Coventry Neighbors could write a letter, send it along with each Newsletter and ask you to fill-in your name. Your letter would be treated with the same "respect" as Mr. Safer showed on TV. Instead it would be better if each of you took the time to express to Representative Woodard your feelings on this issue. Here are a few pointers to make:

- Cleveland Heights is a mature city. It has mature amenities and infrastructure. Like older humans, these things need care and regular maintenance. These cost money.
- A considerable amount of the funds provided to the state come from our area. They should be returned in kind.
- You should not be penalized for living in an older section of the state.

- Now, more than ever before, Cleveland Heights cannot be ignored. We are at the precipice. Lack of financial support now, could mean the end of a viable, important and historic community.

Send your comments to:
Representative Claudette Woodard
[REDACTED]
Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44121

WANT TO SAVE A TREE AND STILL GET YOUR COVENTRY NEWS?

We have created a Coventry Neighbors e-mail listing. A number of members have already asked us to switch their method of Coventry News delivery. If you enjoy receiving e-mail better than snail-mail, we can begin sending your copy of the Coventry Neighbor News using this method. If you would like us to change, drop us an e-mail message! You can contact Jeff Dross at: ladrossceur@core.com We will happily send you a complimentary copy, but to receive each issue you need to be a member. (If you aren't, that can be easily remedied.)

OUR NEW MEETING AND NEWSLETTER SCHEDULE

Coventry Neighbors, Inc. will hold four meeting per year, one in each season. The winter meeting will be held in January, spring in April, the summer meeting will take place in July and in October we will have our autumn meeting. Newsletters will arrive shortly before the meetings. As has always been the case, meetings will be held in the meeting room at the Coventry branch of the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Library on the second Tuesday of those months from 7:40PM to 9:00PM. Please try and attend.

COMMUNITY EXCHANGE PROJECT

Wouldn't it be great to have someone to...
...walk your dog?
...review your resume?
...fix your leaky faucet?

If you're interested in meeting new people, contributing to the community, and obtaining the services you need...Be part of the Community Exchange Project!

The Community Exchange Project is a new organization that facilitates the trading of services, between community members.

Call 216-381-9548 for more information.

DAY CARE AVAILABLE

The Heights Youth Center still has a few open spots available in their Day Care center located at Hope Lutheran Church. If you're in need of quality care for your youngster, call the Heights Youth Center at 216-932-9785.