



Chestnut Hill Local

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Thursday, June 6, 2024

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Mermaid Lane gets zoning protections

Posted Friday, May 31, 2024 8:55 am

by **Carla Robinson**

Chestnut Hill's three Registered Community Organizations, surprised by last month's introduction of a Neighborhood Conservation Overlay for Mermaid Lane, have arranged for a public meeting with City Councilmember Cindy Bass to discuss the proposal, which is now on track to become law.

The meeting, which will be held on June 3 via Zoom, is being scheduled in response to concerns from some community members who feel they were not adequately consulted during the bill's introduction and subsequent approval process.

The bill, which creates a zoning overlay with design and material requirements for new construction and renovations in the southern portion of Chestnut Hill bounded by the SEPTA Chestnut Hill East rail line, Cresheim Valley Drive, Germantown Avenue, Winston Road, Moreland Avenue, Devon Street, Ardleigh Street, and Springfield Avenue was introduced by Councilmember Bass on April 25. It was voted out of City Council's Rules Committee on May 21 despite receiving a negative review from the Philadelphia City Planning Commission (PCPC) at its May 16 meeting, and it is now on track for final approval in June.

In response to some testimony against the NCO at that May 16 meeting, the PCPC called for a 45-day pause to allow other Registered Community Organizations (RCOs) in Chestnut Hill to consider the matter. With the City Council preparing to break for the summer, that delay would have pushed a vote on the matter into the fall.

But Bass, who chairs the Rules Committee, arranged to lift the pause and held a vote on the bill during City Council's May 21 Rules Committee hearing. The committee voted to dispense with the first reading and go directly to the second reading on June 6, with a third and final reading scheduled for June 13.

Mermaid Lane neighbors who developed the conservation district say they have been fighting to protect their neighborhood from what they perceive as a threat of inappropriate development. They say they were surprised when some CHCA members appeared at the May 16 PCPC hearing to speak against their proposal.

Camille Peluso, a Mermaid Lane neighbor who is also an architect and sits on the CHCA committee that considers zoning issues, said she thought the group had garnered CHCA support in February.

"We're not trying to upset people," Peluso said. "We're just trying to establish some guardrails."



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Laura Lucas, who chairs the Chestnut Hill Community Association board, says a lack of good communication led to these events unfolding as they did. While the CHCA was aware that the NCO was in the works, she said, it had not fully discussed the details. Chestnut Hill residents feel very invested in decisions that affect the overall neighborhood, she said, and have developed a tradition of “doing more” than is legally required to include the entire community.

“So it’s a lesson learned about the importance of good communication,” Lucas said, adding that she hopes the meeting now being scheduled will give the “community at large” a chance to understand the new rules.

“This meeting will give the authors of the NCO an opportunity to review it with the neighbors and property owners who will be impacted,” Lucas continued. “While such meetings are not required, Chestnut Hill has a robust practice of engaging the community on issues and projects concerning development and zoning.”

The NCO was originally developed in response to the Goldenberg Group's 2021 proposal to construct 285 housing units on the 4.4-acre property at 100-102 Mermaid Lane. The property, zoned for single-family residential, formerly housed the Chestnut Hill Friends Meeting and the headquarters for Blossom Philadelphia, a defunct organization that provided services to adults and children with physical and intellectual disabilities.

The NCO mandates that front facades be set back to match adjacent properties, with sloped roofs having a minimum 18-degree pitch and additional setbacks or mansard roofs for stories above the second floor. Front porches must be at least six feet deep and cannot be enclosed unless 80% glass is used. Curb cuts are limited to 12 feet wide, and front-facing garages or carports are prohibited unless accessed from a shared driveway, alley, or rear street.

The standards also prohibit roof decks and require massing, window proportions, and building materials to be consistent with the Chestnut Hill National Historic District's character. Vinyl siding, concrete block and unpainted pressure-treated wood are prohibited. Utility equipment and refuse enclosures must be screened, and 15% of front yards must be landscaped.

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[A trio of childhood friends brings development home \(/stories/a-trio-of-childhood-friends-brings-development-home,32191\)](#)

NW Philadelphia: Unprotected and vulnerable (/stories/nw-philadelphia-unprotected-and-vulnerable,32170)



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LOCAL CALENDAR

<p>Fri, Jun 21 @6:00pm Sponsored (</p> <p>Darryl Bennett</p> <p>The Fire Thu, Jun 06</p> <p>Helium Presents: Uncle Lazer</p> <p>Helium Comedy Club Philadelphia Thu, Jun 06</p> <p>A Royal Round</p> <p>The Royal, Where Music Lives Thu, Jun 06 @7:30am</p> <p>Celebrate Father's Day with The Night Kitchen Bakery</p> <p>The Night Kitchen Bakery</p> <p>See All Events (https://chestnuthilllocal.com/events/)</p>	<p>Tue, Jun 11 @6:00pm Sponsored (</p> <p>Adult Sip + Paint with Flygirrl at Victory Brewing!</p> <p>Victory Brewing Company Philadelphia</p> <p>Add Your Event (https://hub.cityspark.com/event/submission/ChestnutHill?utm_medium=internal&utm_source=widget&utm_campaign=add-ev)</p>	<p>Tue, Jun 18 @4:00pm Sponsored (</p> <p>Pokémon TCG: How to Play Workshop</p> <p>Montgomery County - Norristown Public Libr...</p>
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THE LATEST



In 'King Kong,' love will destroy you (/stories/in-king-kong-love-will-destroy-you,32488)

RKO's 1933 classic, "King Kong," opens with a fake Arabian proverb and famously ends with another unforgettable quote: "It was beauty that killed the beast."

(/stories/in-king-kong-love-will-destroy-you,32488)

Talented designers return to Hill's PhilaMRKT pop-up (/stories/talented-designers-return-to-hills-philamrkt-pop-up,32487)

PhilaMRKT, a one-day pop-up featuring some of the area's best artists, is returning to Chestnut Hill on June 7 at Kismet Cowork, 12 W. Willow Grove Ave.



(/stories/talented-designers-return-to-hills-philamrkt-pop-up,32487)



(/stories/songs-of-the-dust-bowl-at-historic-germantown,32486)

Songs of the Dust Bowl at Historic Germantown (/stories/songs-of-the-dust-bowl-at-historic-germantown,32486)

Folk musician Saul Broudy, who specializes in bluegrass, country, blues, rockabilly and roots music, will highlight the songs of Woody Guthrie on June 8.



(/stories/mt-airys-supper-sessions-return-for-a-culinary-extravaganza,32485)

Mt. Airy's Supper Sessions return for a culinary extravaganza (/stories/mt-airys-supper-sessions-return-for-a-culinary-extravaganza,32485)

Mt. Airy is gearing up to host its signature outdoor event, Go Mt. Airy Supper Sessions, a monthly festival.



(/stories/stay-or-go-a-heros-dilemma-in-father-comes-home,32484)

Stay or go: A Hero's dilemma in 'Father Comes Home' (/stories/stay-or-go-a-heros-dilemma-in-father-comes-home,32484)

Just in time for "Juneteenth," Quintessence Theatre presents "Father Comes Home from the Wars, (Parts 1, 2 and 3)" by Suzan-Lori Parks.




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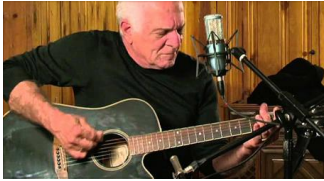


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