

The regular meeting of the **February 2024** Village of Ardentown was convened at 7:35 pm on **Monday, February 12, 2024**, in person in the Candlelight Theater and online via Zoom. Melissa Parsonson, Town Chair, presiding. A quorum was present.

***In Attendance:***

- |                      |                                   |                     |                          |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Melissa Parsonson | 10. Barbara Mondzelewski          | 17. Suzanne Cherrin | 26. John Demsey          |
| 2. Cindy Cohen       |                                   | 18. Marian Pione    | 27. Lindsey Sherwood     |
| 3. Annie Gutsche     | 11. Jill Emery                    | 19. Michael Pione   | 28. Bev Bizup Hawkins    |
| 4. Anne Lutz         | 12. Dan Emery                     | 20. Connor McGivney | 29. Roby Anstett (guest) |
| 5. Cheryl Regan      | 13. Maureen Gordon                | 21. Michael O'Toole | 30. Edmond Bischoff      |
| 6. Peter Slattery    | 14. Joan Fitzgerald (leaseholder) | 22. Janna Scheflen  | 31. Elaine Schmerling    |
| 7. Alison Wakelin    |                                   | 23. Lee Painter     | 32. Cort Hayflinger      |
| 8. Dotty Verne       | 15. Susan Kaye                    | 24. Joe Painter     | 33. Clare Consavage      |
| 9. Bethany Rees      | 16. Lisa Wilson Riblett           | 25. Oliver Gutsche  | 34. Drew Jordan (guest)  |

***Attendance via Zoom:***

- |                 |                     |                   |
|-----------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Harry Themal | 2. Betty Ann Themal | 3. Uttam Shanbhag |
|-----------------|---------------------|-------------------|

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Minutes for the November 2023 meeting approved as submitted.

**GOOD & WELFARE:**

- Shakespeare Gild Young Actors Workshop went well, thanks for supporting our kids.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

- **Arden Swim Club** – Drew Jordan, President of Swim Club ([drewjordandesign@gmail.com](mailto:drewjordandesign@gmail.com) or phone/text – in ACRA Directory), attended to encourage people to visit and join the pool. Seeking fresh ideas and to reengage with the community. Please reach out to him with ideas and energy. Possible lap swim times? Looking at having open time after morning swim team for lap swim/classes. Confirmed there are senior membership rates.

**TREASURER'S REPORT:** Peter Slattery reported the following current balances as of February 12, 2024.

Operating Accounts:

Checking: Starting Balance	\$12,235.36	Savings: Starting Balance	\$23,294.38
Income	\$ 19,271.17	Income	\$ 2.07
<u>Expenses</u>	<u>\$15,290.70</u>	<u>Expenses</u>	<u>\$ 10,000.00*</u>
Current Balance	\$ 16,215.83	Current Balance	\$13,296.45

*\*Transfer to cover TrashTech reimbursement from Trust. To be returned to Savings upon 2024 town budget payment.*

Total Checking & Savings: \$29,512.28

Expenses: \$ 15,290.70

Trash Tech	\$9,760.29
Restoration	4,250.00
Admin/Salaries	910.41
Snow Contract	370.00

Income: \$ 19,271.17

Trustees (Trash)	\$18,000.00
Comcast/Verizon	1,271.17

Municipal Street Aid:	\$14,270.36
ARPA Funds:	\$73,807.92
Arden Bldg & Loan Balance:	\$17,923.84

He also submitted the following 2023 Treasurer’s Annual Report:

Village of Ardentown Treasurer’s Annual Report 2023		
Village Account:	Income	\$ 56,372.85
	<u>Expenses</u>	<u>55,732.64</u>
	Net Profit/(Loss)	\$ 640.21
Municipal Street Aid:	Income	11,222.96
	<u>Expenses</u>	<u>22,330.00</u>
	Ending Balance	\$ 14,270.36
ARPA:	Income	\$ 0.00
	<u>Expenses</u>	<u>4,678.50</u>
	Ending Balance	\$ 73,807.92
Total Cash Assets:	Checking	\$ 19,092.26
	Savings	13,296.08
	MSA Account	88,078.28
	<u>AB&amp;L</u>	<u>17,923.84</u>
	Total	\$ 138,390.46
	Restricted	\$ 89,078.28
	Unrestricted	\$ 49,312.18

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

**Archives (Arden Craft Shop Museum):** Bev Bizup Hawkins reported this month’s “Afternoon with the Artist”’s feature artist is Ardentown resident Clare Consavage, with an open house Sunday 1-3 pm the 11th of February. Works on display until first week in March, during regular Museum Hours in the Bernie Schwab Room. All proceeds from sale of Clare's art goes directly to and thru Clare. Museum donations are always appreciated. Tell your friends and family and visit often. Phil Fisher sculpture donated to the Museum, to be installed in the Spring.

**Assessment:** Janet Cosgrove not in attendance – no report. But Lee Painter wishes to serve on committee (filling vacancy that goes until Sept 2024).

**Audit:** Jill Emery reported the Village and Trustees records are in hand and the audit team is aligning on possible dates to meet in the next few weeks.

**Budget:** Alison Wakelin presented the 2024 final budget (below).

Village of Ardentown: Municipal Budget 2024				
INCOME	2023 Proposed	2023 Actual	Variance	2024 Proposed
Comcast/Verizon Cable	3,100.00	2681.17	-418.83	3100.00
Interest AB&L	500.00	958.73	458.73	650.00
Transfer from Trust	13,500.00	13500.00	0.00	13500.00
Income from Grants	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Donations	0.00	3200.00	3,200.00	0.00
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>17,100.00</b>	<b>20339.90</b>	<b>3,239.90</b>	<b>17250.00</b>
COSTS	2023 Proposed	2023 Actual	Variance	2024 Proposed
Town Secretary Salary	1,000.00	1000.00	0.00	1000.00
Website Maintenance Salary	600.00	600.00	0.00	600.00
Town Treasurer Salary	400.00	400.00	0.00	400.00
Administrative Costs	1,200.00	980.38	-219.62	1200.00
<b>Subtotal Administrative Costs</b>	<b>3,200.00</b>	<b>2980.38</b>	<b>-219.62</b>	<b>3200.00</b>

Playground Committee	250.00	0.00	-250.00	250.00
Registration Committee	100.00	71.96	-28.04	100.00
Memorial Garden	300.00	125.00	-175.00	300.00
Assessment Committee	100.00		-100.00	300.00
Community Planning Committee			0.00	
Internship	200.00	100.00	-100.00	200.00
Committee Expenses	300.00		-300.00	300.00
Public Works Committee		975.00	975.00	
Paths and Natural Areas	5,600.00	9138.25	3,538.25	5600.00
Signs	500.00	0.00	-500.00	500.00
Snow Removal	5,500.00	800.00	-4,700.00	5500.00
			0.00	
<b>Subtotal Committees and Works</b>	<b>12,850.00</b>	<b>11210.21</b>	<b>-1,639.79</b>	<b>13050.00</b>
DLLG Annual fee	525.00	525.00	0.00	525.00
ACRA	1,000.00	1000.00	0.00	1000.00
Arden Library	400.00	400.00	0.00	400.00
Arden Page	600.00	600.00	0.00	600.00
Arden Craft Shop and Museum	850.00	850.00	0.00	850.00
Buzz Ware Village Center	1,400.00	1400.00	0.00	1400.00
<b>Subtotal Memberships &amp; Donations</b>	<b>4,775.00</b>	<b>4775.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>4775.00</b>
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>20,825.00</b>	<b>18965.59</b>	<b>-1,859.41</b>	<b>21025</b>
<b>Non-Discretionary Items</b>				
	<b>2023 initial balan</b>	<b>Received</b>	<b>Spent</b>	<b>2024 Initial Balance</b>
Municipal Street Aid	25,377.40	11,222.96	22,295.00	
American Rescue Plan Act	78,486.42	0.00	4,678.50	73,807.92
Trashtech		36,000.00	37,010.18	
Memorial Gardens Account	940.00		125.00	815.00
<b>VILLAGE ACCOUNTS</b>	<b>2023 Initial Balance</b>			<b>2024 Initial Balance</b>
AB&L Savings	17,269.82	654.02		17,923.84
Village Account	8,820.45	65,685.88	55,975.77	19,092.26
		(10,000 transfer from savings)		
<b>MSA and ARPA</b>				
MSA	25,377.40			14,270.36
ARPA	78,486.42			73,807.92

**Motion: TO APPROVE 2024 VILLAGE BUDGET AS PRESENTED.** Motion seconded.

**Vote:** All in favor. **Motion passes.**

**Buzz Ware Village Center:** Shari Phalan reported: a) Community Event Requests and Rentals: Eleven new rentals. b) Security Instruments - New radio panel installed. c) Awakened Heart has requested to place a "Peace Pole" outside. In discussions. d) Art Loop: October artist: Jeffery Xu - Artist/ Designer. November artist Jill Althouse Wood. December Art Loop was a huge success. No art loop in January. February will be child artists of Arden. e) Sudbury School has moved back into the building. f) New twinkle lights have been hung on ceilings in Room 1 and 2; nice white wires now. g) Gutter guards have been installed. h) Coffee House: 10/13/23 Alex Levy, Opening Act. 11/10 Lindsey Lee Singer. 12/15 Hot Breakfast. November had a tribute to Randy Hoopes. 1/2/24 Damon Forsberg musician. Fold-Down changing table has been installed. j) Telebration: November 18 @ 3:00 p.m. k) Cards and Games for Adults will be September 17, 2-5 p.m. l) Jester Art is back as well as Ikebana. m) Peddlers, Potions and Practitioners - Booth space income \$5330.00, Door \$2527.00, Raffle \$60.00. Total Income = \$7857.00. Total guests = 1265. Donations go into the Renovation fund for improvements and restoration of the Buzz. n) Party for Peddler volunteers was held on November 3. o) Cell phone literacy class was held on October 30 by Don Lipari. p) Exercise Classes - ongoing: Tai Chi - Mon, Thursday (change from Wednesday) and Sat. Yoga continues, Monday Night Art Studio. Arden Bookies: first Thursday of the month. New Class "Move Well" by Joan Phibbs will start in December. q) Free Little Library: Has gotten good use and feedback has been positive. r) Audit was done in September All found to be in good order. s) 100th Year Celebration of the Arden school is coming up in 2024. Discussion continues.

**Community Planning:** Peter Slattery reported to meet first Friday of month at 11 am, all are welcome in person or on Zoom. Including exemption for chickens/goats (agricultural initiative), village speed limit, etc. Hoping routine meetings will move the committee work along.

**Memorial Garden:** Betty Ann Themal reported that beginning this month Edmond Bischoff will be chair of this committee. The terms of two members of the committee end in February: Chris Monson and Betty Ann Themal. Chris will stand for re-election at February meeting. Betty Ann is standing down.

**Playground:** Cortney Hayflinger in attendance, no news to report.

**Public Works & Safety:**

- Oliver Gutsche reported on road improvement work and rain water work. Only meet once between town meetings, encourage anyone to attend or join the group.
  - 1) Earth Day Cleanup & Storm Drain Clearing: Scheduled for April 13 (rain date April 14). We hope to involve more residents and include cleaning storm drains. Perhaps also inputting them and where cleared, into our (hopefully) new ArcGIS system. Any volunteers to help learn ArcGIS? Janna Scheflen working with a group to get a ram vac to come remove dirt out of gutters – to do a test with outside of Candlelight.
  - 2) Gutter Repairs on Sconset – Neighbors on board, 4 different sections in front of driveways – repair, berm and blacktop into driveways. Work to start in April, date TBD. Work to cost \$13K, approved at November 2023 minutes.
  - 3) Storm water help for Henry George Green – water collecting on green – tearing up green across from Ivy Gables from trucks pulling out. Looking at building a rain garden with ARPA money, will bring proposal to town meeting.
  - 4) Ivy Gables parking lot – water rushes down hill and leaving washed out trails onto Millers Road and into woods. Looking at improving water flow, maybe a French drain to collect the water and feed into a drain. Will report updates at next town meeting.
  - 5) Rain Garden on Pettit Green – bottom garden not getting amount of water it should – water flows down road but not into the swale. Looking at changing water flow when we do road work on that section. Suggest we all check our nearby storm drains and help keep them clear.
  - 6) Water Flow between Brae & Sconset - Had meeting with NCC environmental coordinator last Fall 2023, looked at right of way between Brae and Sconset and water flow issues, flooding properties. Asked for options to control water flow, having difficulty getting an update from the County. Will keep trying.
- Elaine Schmerling reported on:
  - 1) Restoration Work: Elaine reported ivy was cut from at least 100 trees in Sunnyside in December, with Redtail Restoration and volunteer Liz Ryan. Lee Painter and an Arden volunteer pulled invasives yesterday.
  - 2) Phragmites: Elaine reported Cory (Advanced Ecology) chopped the top layer of the phrag root system this winter. Liz Ryan has helped distribute native seeds to the areas. Hoping for increased areas with native habitat.
- (Mike O'Toole asked about bottom of Brae Road and spraying trees that kills the trees.)  
Elaine: Power company was going to spray everything under power lines. In past they have used helicopters that spray everything. Elaine has been trying to save native trees and shrubs – our solution was to target just the top canopy trees – targeted applications applied to spare the shrubs and native trees. This saved many trees. It is a challenge with the Power company, but we are working to not have them kill everything. The phragmites work is also helping with restoration.

ARPA PROPOSAL FOR OPEN SPACES PROJECT: Elaine presented ARPA proposal: “Vegetation survey and mapping of open space in the Three Ardens”. We are requesting **authorization to spend \$7,298 in ARPA funds towards a comprehensive inventory of ecological conditions of open spaces in Ardentown.**

This is a combined three-Ardens effort (under Ben Gruswitz’s leadership) to expand upon the few plant surveys in the woods 20+ years ago, and to develop a detailed mapping interface to record geospatial data with current conditions, and anticipating future conditions that may warrant intervention. The number quoted is a cost-share with Arden & Ardencroft for a total survey of all the Ardens, each village’s share is based on percentage of open space and population for each village. Planning will start in March 2024 and field work is scheduled for April-October 2024. The proposal includes a public presentation in January 2025 to the Ardens, and a mapping tutorial for all interested parties.

This project will help us plan future work and responses to new conditions – i.e. loss of a prominent tree species (now, ash trees; future – diseases that could affect beech, walnut and other trees). It would help us manage our 68.6 acres of open space (including woodlands and greens), providing us with detailed data helpful for grant applications. Data will be entered into a cloud-based system, ArcGIS, which can be used throughout town on additional items, e.g., street trees & tree work; street work including speed bumps, potholes, signs and painting; playground work; etc.

(GIS system will need future funding?) Yes, if we like and want to continue, will be \$385/year.

(Wildlife species too?) Not currently, but could include in future, if desired.

**Motion: TO AUTHORIZE SPENDING \$7,298 OF ARPA MONIES FOR A COMPREHENSIVE INVENTORY OF ECOLOGICAL CONDITIONS OF OPEN SPACES IN ARDENTOWN (ARDEN & ARDENCROFT ALSO SEEKING FUNDING FOR THEIR VILLAGES).** Motion seconded.

Vote: In favor unanimously. **Motion passes.**

(What about money for trees around our leaseholds? Could ARPA monies be used for that?) For future discussion.

**Registration:** Anne Lutz reported the committee met on February 3<sup>rd</sup>. a) ACRA Directory is being readied for 2024-2026 Directory – Ardentown residents information was submitted to ACRA Directory team. Look for upcoming announcement from them for an opportunity to update your own information at their website. b) No resident changes known since our November 2023 town meeting.

(Roby Anstatt from Radnor Green here tonight visiting; a member of the Claymont Environmental group.)

## **TRUSTEES REPORT:**

- Lisa Riblett reported: 1) the Safe Routes to School project at the intersection of Sconset and Harvey Roads is underway. It is supposed to take about three weeks to complete, weather permitting. 2) Two large, invasive Norway maples behind 2320 Sconset Road on common land are scheduled to be removed very soon. We are still waiting for a date for the removal and clean up of the felled tree on Brae between 1511 The Mall and 2305 Brae Road.  
(Ivy Gables update?) Asbury Inc. (non-profit) purchased in Dec 2023. Staff seems happy with the change.  
Lisa: Feb 22 Millers Road – Oak tree on Ivy Gables land scheduled to come down.  
(Carriage House status?) In their contract to work on it. Want to see that moved forward.
- Annie Gutsche reported: 1) Land Rent: As we shared with you last year, this year there will be a 3% increase in Land Rent. The bills were sent out today, and they are due on March 25. We have held the increase to be in line with the inflation rate, which is presently 3.4 %. Tomorrow (Feb 13, 2024) the Brandywine School District is holding an operational referendum. If the referendum passes, school taxes could go up by 9%. We have prepared for this increase within our budget. This increase does not cover what may happen with the NCC Reassessment that is coming in 2025. The 3% increase makes for

a balanced budget. 2) Candlelight Theatre: There have been a few recent incidents at the Candlelight, and we ask the community to please be aware so these don't happen in the future: a) Someone was caught on the security camera using the Candlelight dumpster to dispose of furniture and other large objects (enough to fill a pick-up truck). Ardentown does not pay for these dumpsters; if residents have large objects for disposal, we have our own large trash agreement with TrashTech. b) Recently, a group of four teenagers walked by the Candlelight during an evening show, and one entered the lobby and began to yell. They did leave after one of the actors intervened. This is disruptive to the Candlelight's shows, and potentially not safe for the kids.

(Also see nighttime activities in the Candlelight parking lot – if you see things contact the authorities.)

#### **TOWN CHAIR REPORT:**

- Melissa Parsonson reported School Referendum vote is tomorrow, February 13<sup>th</sup>, at library or schools. Mosquito Control time coming up: OK to participate in mosquito control if requested? Yes.

#### **OLD BUSINESS:**

- **WILMAPCO Ardens Transportation Plan Monitoring Committee** - Bethany Rees reported the monitoring committee has had 3 meetings so far. Meetings are held via Zoom on the first Monday of each month at 1:30 pm. The public is welcome to attend to observe the meetings and information as well as updates on the plan are available at [wilmapco.org/ardens](http://wilmapco.org/ardens). We have learned that in a few years DART Transit intends to offer microtransit options in the Ardens which would be on-call transit connections to various destinations, including the new Claymont train station and standard bus lines, and will discontinue the current route 11 bus line. There would be public hearings before any changes take place. WILMAPCO has designated funding to study the impact of reducing down to 1 lane where there are now 2 lanes approaching the Ardens by the 95 overpass from Claymont. DelDOT wants to see this before a project goes into an engineering phase. Two items from the WILMAPCO Transportation Plan that will be implemented soon include 1) Reducing the Veale Road speed limit from 35 mph to 25 mph from Marini's and St. Edmunds to Harvey Road in both directions; and 2) Introducing signage on Harvey Rd displaying the 25 mph speed limit at the CSX train tracks overpass as you enter the Ardens from Claymont. All of the individual projects for the transportation plan will be voted on before implementation, but these seem to be 2 items that Ardentown can just be informed of since the addition of the speed limit sign by the train tracks is just DELDOT replacing a missing speed limit sign that should already be there, and the reduction of the speed limit in Ardencroft. Ardencroft did vote to implement the speed limit reduction at their town meeting. A subcommittee of the Monitoring committee was formed and has had 1 meeting so far. The subcommittee will work with a consultant hired by WILMAPCO to create better visualizations of what plan implementation in select areas of Harvey Rd could look like, and work with them to ensure context-sensitive materials are used in various parts of the plan. The subcommittee will also be identifying opportunities for integrating art into the plan's projects, like painting the grey utility boxes along Harvey Rd or murals along the concrete walls of the 95 overpass. Bethany has reached out to members of the Arden Artisans Collective to seek out artists interested in doing projects like this.
- **Ardens CERT (Community Emergency Response Team)** – a) Melissa reported the Coordinating Committee members unanimously passed a motion of support for up to \$15K for generator project for gathering spaces in the Ardens in the case of emergency, and agree to assist in future maintenance costs.  
b) Lisa Riblett reported the next Ardens CERT meeting is March 5 at 7:00 pm at the BWVC. The team is working on making plans to help the people of our three Villages in the case of an emergency. Everyone is welcome to join.

## NEW BUSINESS:

- **ARPA Funding for Shady Grove Stage Updates** – Peter Slattery reported that Allan Kleban is looking into converting the Shady Grove stage to an ampitheatre, maybe \$70K. If questions, see Allan.

## ELECTIONS:

- **Archives** - 1 position up for Feb 2024 election: Beverly Bizup Hawkins.  
[Allan Kleban & Maura Lynch serving 2023-2025]  
Beverly is willing to stand again. Vote: All in Favor.
- **Memorial Garden** - 2 positions up for Feb 2024 election: Betty Ann Themal & Chris Monson.  
[Cheryl Regan, Barbara Mondzelewski & Edmond Bischoff serving 2023-2025]  
Betty Ann is stepping off committee, Chris Monson willing to serve again.  
Vote for Chris: All in Favor. No one volunteered to fill Betty Ann's position – will remain open.
- **Assessment** – Lee Painter to fill current open position (until Sept 2024).
- **Upcoming in May**: Audit, Playground, Public Works & Safety

Meeting adjourned at 9:12 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Cindy Cohen, filling in as Secretary of Ardentown