

# 2011 Year in Review

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JANUARY

## Changes at the top

Responding to the resignation of Board of Commissioners President Bruce Reed just before Christmas, two Democratic candidates stepped forward to seek appointment to finish the remaining year of his second term representing Cynwyd's Ward 13. After public interviews, C. Brian McGuire of Bala Cynwyd, a regional manager with AARP, whom Reed had recommended to succeed him, was elected in an 8-5 board vote over real-estate attorney and longtime Cynwyd resident Stuart Ebby.

Reed, whose civic service in the township extended back 20 years, delivered a farewell speech Jan. 13 in which he both highlighted achievements such as the concept of the Cynwyd Trail and decried the partisanship on the board that had marked his four years as president.

On the same night McGuire was appointed, Ward 7 Commissioner Liz Rogan was elected president, becoming the first Democratic woman to hold that office in Lower Merion.

But the changes were not done. Two days after Reed's resignation became effective, his vice president, Mark Taylor of Penn Valley's Ward 1, announced his intention to resign effective Feb. 15 for personal reasons.

## Barnes fight not over

That was the message about 50 neighbors, students and other opponents of the move of the Barnes Foundation's art from Merion to Philadelphia wanted to send in a "Barnes Day" protest Jan. 2, the 139th anniversary of the birth of the gallery's founder, Dr. Albert C. Barnes.

The Friends of the Barnes Foundation announced it had hired a new attorney, Samuel C. Stretton of West Chester, to take a fresh look at the lengthy legal record in the case and bring a new legal action before Montgomery County Orphan's Court Judge Stanley Ott. It was Ott who, almost six years and one month to the day earlier, granted the Barnes Foundation permission to act against Barnes' will by moving his priceless collection of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist art.

Stretton said he had found "certain serious ethical issues" about the role of the Pennsylvania Attorney General's Office in the case, revealed in the documentary film "The Art of the Steal."

## New labor agreement

Narberth Borough Council voted unanimously Jan. 5 to authorize a new four-year contract with its six-member police force. The new labor agreement provides for no salary increase in the first year. All other borough employees also will see no salary increase in 2011, in consideration of economic conditions, borough manager Bill Martin said. Martin said this is the first time a contract has been negotiated with no salary increase in the first year.



PETE BANNAN/Main Line Times

George Ross of Merion Station eyes the Barnes Foundation Museum in Merion. After a lengthy court challenge, all of the galleries were closed to the public in June in preparation for the move to a new museum in Philadelphia.

## Cynwyd Heritage Trail expansion

PennDOT announced a grant to Philadelphia to extend Lower Merion's Cynwyd Heritage Trail across the Manayunk Bridge. The bridge-crossing was one of 41 "Smart Transportation" projects in communities throughout Pennsylvania chosen to get a total of \$24.7 million through the agency's Pennsylvania Community Transportation Initiative, or PCTI, program. A design study and public meetings are planned.

## Judge sets trial schedule in 2007 LMSD discrimination suit

A discrimination lawsuit filed July 30, 2007, was put back on the dockets in January after a judge set a new trial schedule as mediation talks broke down.

The case, *Blunt et al. vs. Lower Merion School District*, was scheduled to return to the trial pool in November.

Eight black families filed the suit in federal court in Philadelphia claiming the district failed to provide an adequate education for their children.

## LMSD fires teacher for dating student

Lower Merion school officials suspended Lower Merion High School physics teacher Robert Schanne pending an investigation that

he dated an 18-year-old student five years ago, according to a letter that was sent out to parents Jan. 4.

By the end of the month at the next board business meeting Jan. 24, the board voted to fire him.

## LM citizens fight back against crime wave

As burglaries and other serious crimes increased in Lower Merion Township, some officials said that trend could be helping bolster volunteers for the township's Community Watch program.

Lower Merion Community Watch officials reported that many people joined over the previous year.

In an e-mail, Lower Merion Police Supt. Michael McGrath said burglaries have been increasing since October of 2009.

## LMSD eyes 3.31-percent tax hike

Lower Merion school officials proposed a 3.31-percent tax increase for the 2011-12 school budget.

Victor Orlando, business manager for the district, said the new rate is increasing from 22.2895 mills this year to 23.027 mills the next year. A person with a home assessed at \$250,000 will pay \$5,757, up \$185 from the current budget.

FEBRUARY

## Funding gap in LM

In a somber update on the long-awaited Ardmore Transit Center project, township manager Douglas Cleland reports to commissioners that the initiative still faces a \$37-million funding gap and warns that the project may have to be scaled back to match the available funding or mothballed until more funds are available.

Options were to be explored with community members in several meetings of the board's Ad Hoc Ardmore Committee in the next months.

## New life for Palmer Seminary

The township got a rezoning application for the Palmer Theological Seminary property at Lancaster and City avenues in Wynnewood. A developer wants to rezone the parcel for multi-family housing, to support a plan to convert the Horace Trumbauer-designed main building and later chapel building to apartments, in exchange upgrading the structures to Lower Merion's most-protected Class 1 historic status.