



# Haverford Civic Association

## Lower Merion Township

## January 2025 Newsletter

### Greetings, Haverford neighbors!

Old Man Winter welcomed the young New Year with a blast of Arctic air and a snow squall or two this month. Did he mean to send a message, or just give 2025 one of those bracing shocks that's supposed to kick-start the metabolism? Time will tell.

Speaking of inclement weather, some four dozen hardy souls braved the falling snow to attend Haverford Civic Association's belated 2024 Annual Meeting, held January 16 at the Merion Cricket Club. Lower Merion Township's new superintendent of police headlined the event, which probably had something to do with the surprisingly robust turnout on a blustery Thursday night.



### Highlights from the Annual Meeting

Andrew J. "Andy" Block, a lifelong Lower Merion resident with 38 years of policing experience, took over the reigns as Lower Merion Township Police Superintendent last June. He told Association members the top two concerns local residents have brought to him are robberies and traffic. He spoke at length on both topics.

**SATG Redux:** Our region is plagued with seasonal crime waves involving residential burglaries that generally start in the fall, Block said. The majority of the perpetrators are part of the South American Theft Group, an organized criminal enterprise that operates throughout the Northeast. As happened last year, the burglaries began in October and have persisted. At least two arrests have been made and the suspects jailed, awaiting trial.

These are "professional burglars," said Block, are not violent and carry no weapons. They generally go after jewelry and small valuables in upscale homes when no one is home and

are in and out in four to five minutes. They avoid occupied homes and those with video alarm systems. Block specified several safety measures local residents can take, suggested asking for a home security assessment and availing themselves of the Vacant House Watch Program.



**Heavy Traffic:** When not dealing with criminal incidents, “the number one call” the police get, Block said, is about traffic. He pointed to multiple initiatives currently underway to address this concern. One of the first actions Block took after his appointment was to beef up enforcement on local roads, he said. A recent report on Montgomery Avenue alone listed 52 citations, 12 warnings and 17 equipment notices issued.

A comprehensive traffic study along the full length of Montgomery Avenue will kick off in spring, Block reported. Most of the funding for the study comes from a \$272,432 grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation awarded the township last summer.

And, Block added, at least three busy intersections will have red-light cameras installed under PennDOT’s Automated Red-Light Enforcement program, including one at Lancaster Avenue and Haverford Station Road, one of the most dangerous corners in the township.

Finally, under a cooperative agreement between the township and Lower Merion School District and just in time for school in the fall, all district school buses will have cameras installed. The cameras will record the license plate of any vehicle failing to stop for the flashing red lights when buses load and unload students. The violation carries a \$300 fine.

## Township Commissioners’ Updates

*(Anthony Stevenson, Ray Courtney and Scott Zelov each represent a part of Haverford)*

**Playing the Percentages:** Lower Merion Commissioners increased the township real estate tax by 6.5 percent at their final budget hearing December 18 on a 10-to-3 vote. It is the first township tax increase in 13 years.

Although the township manager recommended a 5 percent increase, Todd Sinai, the commission president, proposed an increase to 6.5 percent, reportedly to balance revenues with expenditures. Commissioner Zelov said he did not support the larger increase.

(Lower Merion real estate taxes are levied independently by three different taxing authorities: the school district, the county and the township.)

**A Final Note:** Commissioner Stevenson announced he will not be running for reelection. He was first elected in 2017.

## 2025 Annual Report and Election

Association President Charlie Davis ran down some of the highlights from 2024, offered a preview of 2025 events and introduced the new officers and board of directors for 2025.

### Officers:

- *President* — Charlie Davis
- *1st Vice President* — Catherine Abrams
- *2nd Vice President* — Anthony Arechevala
- *Secretary* — Charles Ault
- *Treasurer* — Lee Tabas

### Board of Directors:

Hala Imms, Barbara Cohen, Anne Mezey, Mo Gillen, Michael Talarico, John McIntyre, Robert Bocchino, Tom Wilkinson, Andy Orr, Ellen Langas, Jane Carton, Mary Walsh, Tony Vale, Karen Bleznak, Jen Pavao

### 2024 Highlights:

- Began publication of a monthly newsletter
- Gave the Association's [website](#) a bright new look and a simplified design, adding drop-down menus, our new logo and tag line and a new picture of Sharpe Park
- Sponsored spring and fall community work days at Sharpe Park in support of The Garden Workers' beautification efforts
- Threw a smashingly successful Party in the Park in October featuring a live band; free hot dogs, cookies and lemonade; pumpkin painting for kids of all ages; mobile units from Lower Merion Police and Narberth Ambulance; a scavenger hunt; raffle prizes and an art sale
- Held productive monthly talks with Haverford Commissioners
- Supported efforts to rehab and redevelop historic Haverford Rail Station
- Arranged for installation, storage and refurbishing of the seasonal Snowflake lights on our stretch of Lancaster Avenue

### 2025 Preview:

- Continue publication of the monthly newsletter
- Continue to sponsor spring and fall community work days at Sharpe Park
- Host another Party in the Park
- Continue our meetings with Haverford Commissioners
- Support and monitor the township's traffic calming initiatives
- Explore partnership activities with like-minded community organizations
- Initiate a fund drive to replace the aging Lancaster Avenue Snowflake lights
- Survey newsletter subscribers about their interests and concerns regarding the local community and what the Association can do to further their priorities

### Treasurer's Report:

- 47 paid members in 2024

- 74 (and counting) paid members to date in 2025
- Bank balance as of December 2024 – \$2,429.13

## Minutiae

*(Highlights from the January 14 HCA Board Meeting.)*



**Getting Dimmer:** Treasurer Lee Tabas lamented the deteriorating condition of the Snowflake lights on the Haverford section of Lancaster Avenue. Several of them have already been replaced, but many remain noticeably dim, especially compared to the brighter ones displayed in Ardmore and Bryn Mawr. A proposal to replace them all and hold a fund drive to pay for it was tabled for further discussion.

**Traffic Report:** Almost a year ago, Lower Merion Commissioners created an Ad Hoc Traffic Calming Committee, but it has never met. Board member Barbara Cohen said she tried to contact committee chair Commissioner Andrew Gavrin by phone and email, but so far has gotten no response.

Cohen asked Commissioner Anthony Stevenson if Lower Merion Police issues a report or any sort of metrics on traffic calming measures and suggested such a report be regularly published. Stevenson said he would bring up the issue at a meeting of the Police Committee. Two days later, at Haverford Civic's Annual Meeting, Police Chief Andy Block said he would direct the department to issue such a report.

**Subscribers Wanted:** The Association's monthly newsletter is a project of the Membership Committee to reach out to the broader community and foster greater engagement with our membership. We encourage subscribers to our email list to share the newsletter with their friends and neighbors. Subscription requests can be sent to [haverfordcivicasociation@gmail.com](mailto:haverfordcivicasociation@gmail.com).

## Stay connected!

Don't miss our next meeting to stay informed and involved. Your voice matters in making Haverford a better place for all!

**Tuesday, February 11, 7:00 p.m.**  
**Merion Room of the Merion Cricket Club**  
**325 Montgomery Avenue**  
**Haverford PA 19041**

Warm regards,

The Haverford Civic Association Board

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