

070211 CPCA MINUTES  
CLEVELAND PARK CITIZENS ASSOCIATION  
AND CHEVY CHASE CITIZENS ASSOCIATION  
SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2007

First Vice President, Peter Espenschied chaired the meeting, which focused on the topic “Who should run our schools?”, featuring speakers on pending proposals (by the Mayor and the DC Board of Education) to restructure the DC school system.. The meeting began at 2:00pm with an audience of over 60 people. Espenschied called for a motion to approve January CPCA minutes, which was seconded and passed without objection. Espenschied announced that the March meeting would feature Mayor Adrian Fenty and that current plans for the April meeting include a candidates forum, prior to the May elections, for Council and Board of Education vacancies.

Edward Cowan moderated the education panel which included Mary Levy, Director of the Public Education Reform Project, Eric Lerum, Chief of Staff to the Deputy Mayor for Public Education, and Kevin Clinton, Executive Secretary of the DC Board of Education.

Levy opened by noting that the governance of the DC Public School system has long been divided between the funders (currently the Mayor and DC Council) and the administrators (the Board of Education), which has led to an ongoing “blame game” and general dissatisfaction. There is no governance model, since, in the rest of the country, public education is a function of state government (and local school boards) while DC is functionally both a city and a state. Furthermore, over one-fourth of DC public school students are enrolled in charter schools, which are overseen by their own chartering authorities independent of the Board of Education and the DC Public Schools Superintendent. Levy noted that the Mayor’s proposal calls for transferring the Board of Education’s authority to the Mayor and Council and establishing the school system as a city agency, comparable to the Police Department and other departments under the Mayor’s office. The Board of Education proposal would retain the current structure, while setting goals for improvement.

Lerum said that the Mayor’s proposal would streamline accountability by aligning “state-level” responsibility and policy and allowing the school system and superintendent to operate as a “local-level” system. There will be

an Integrated Collaboration and Integrated Service Commission, comprised of all DC child-caring agencies, an Ombudsman Office to enable parents to connect with the system, and a facilities construction authority to oversee new construction, repairs, and decisions on school closings.

Kevin Clinton said that the Board of Education recently approved a “blitz program “dealing with issues related to non-union pay parity and facilities and is proposing an ambitious 18-month plan focused on: management (increased flexibility in collective bargaining, fiscal management, procurement efficiency, increasing response to special education needs); infrastructure (facilities improvement, repairing toilets, heating, and other quality-of-life problems at up to 75 schools; and increasing opportunities for parental input and involvement. Clinton reported that the Board of Education is committed to increasing student test proficiency by 10%, serving 5% more special education students, and recruiting new principals, teachers, and resources. In summary, he commented that the plan would allow the Board of Education to do what it was elected to do.

Cowan opened the discussion to questions from the audience, which included queries about the master education plan, improving the quality of education and student achievement, the cost impact of the proposals, the need for more data on DC students, accountability issues, and teacher recruitment. It was generally agreed that there is a need for greater coordination and transparency.

Espenschied adjourned the meeting at 4:00pm.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Joan Buchanan, CPCA Recording Secretary