

CLEVELAND PARK CITIZENS ASSOCIATION

MEMBERSHIP MEETING

January 12, 2010

A meeting of the Cleveland Park Citizens Association (CPCA) was convened at 7:00 p.m. at the Cleveland Park Congregational Church on Tuesday, January 12, 2010. In addition to the six officers who were present, a total of 37 people signed in. John Chelen, President, introduced Vincent Gray, Chairman of the DC City Council, the featured speaker of the evening.

Gray commended CPCA for inviting him again, a yearly tradition for over five years. He recognized the importance of community groups like CPCA in helping to represent community interests, and said he would address the questions posed to him as to how to make CPCA more effective in this respect.

Gray next described the DC's fiscal challenges over the past 15 or 16 months, noting that the projection of the deficit for FY 2008-09 had risen throughout the year, and now stands at some \$340 million for FY 2009-10. He described measures the Council had taken to deal with the deficit - including dipping into reserves, using stimulus funds, raising the gasoline tax and sales tax (with a sunset provision) and the cigarette tax, and cutting programs.

He then turned to the list of questions submitted to him by CPCA about how the organization could be most effective in dealing with the city government. Among the many suggestions he made were that an association should develop an annual agenda and identify the items that involved a legislative presence, on which members should

testify (perhaps in a panel format), send emails, invite Council members to speak at and attend meetings, and work with Council members' expert staff and with the ANC. He urged that CPCA monitor the hearing schedule via the DC Register or the City Council website, and that communications include suggested solutions as well as statements of the problem. As to whether it was better to focus on local or city-wide issues, he said it was necessary to take care of the home front first, but that it was valuable to become familiar with other parts of the city, perhaps through partnering with another civic association (as Hillcrest and Palisades have done) to learn about others' issues and to benefit from mutual support. With respect to dealings with the Executive Branch, he suggested that the directors of the relevant agencies be invited to speak on specific issues at meetings; he also raised the possibility of community tours to point out the issues with which citizens are concerned. Finally, he suggested the possibility of looking at Ward-wide concerns, through periodic meetings involving all citizens' associations and all ANC Chairs within Ward 3, and the relevant Council member(s).

Gray responded to audience questions about a possible bottle/can deposit program, property tax abatement for businesses (in response to landowners' appeals and to provide an incentive for businesses to locate in DC), the need for a more consistent and professional process for appealing property assessments, issues of public education (noting especially the addition of a preschool program, DC's new community college, and the continuing problem of meeting special education needs), the impact of the City Auditor and Inspector General, the contracting issues faced by the Department of Parks and Recreation, the reason he would consider running for Mayor, the possibility of tuition credits for higher education, and the impact of the new baseball stadium. He declined to say whether or when he would announce his candidacy for Mayor.

After Chairman Gray departed, at 8:30 p.m., the meeting turned to committee reports. John Chelen described the purpose of the Governance Committee and its five Subject Teams. Tina Tummonds outlined the issues being addressed by the team working on CPCA Mission; Jeff Davis described the issues being considered on Membership; and Ted Thomas described those on Leadership. Mark Rosenman described the work being done on Decision-Making, and John Chelen addressed the work being headed by Anne Large and Jeremy Sher on Meetings.

Comments included the fact that preservation of the quality of life in Cleveland Park is at least as important as "improving" it, and that the presence of only 35-40 people out of a membership of some 850 was distressing and showed that new methods of operation may be needed. It was noted that CPCA is a voluntary association in which relatively few people do the work and care enough to show up at meetings; the role of people who are not educated about the issues or active participants in the association should be carefully considered. It was also pointed out that the value of interacting with neighbors is one of the core benefits of a citizens' association. Chelen noted that the Power Point slides prepared by Governance Committee members, including a number of questions, would be posted on the CPCA website; he urged participants, as well as those who had been unable to attend the meeting, to study the reports and share their responses and views via e-mail to the study team leaders or to the CPCA listserv.

Susie Taylor, for the Connecticut Avenue Coalition Committee, reported that with Cereal Bowl leasing the former Starbucks space, perhaps a tanning salon in the storefront next door, DC Diner in the former McDonald's space, and Palena expanding into most or all of the former Magruder's, the vacant retail space on Connecticut Ave will soon be filled. She also said that Cleveland Park Day is being resurrected, under the leadership of Curt Large and Pierre Abushacra, and is being planned for May.

Ruth Caplan said the Greening Cleveland Park Working Group, under the leadership of MaryAnn Nash, held their first meeting the previous evening, and that the six members present had assumed responsibility for one or more of the short-term tasks agreed upon (see CPCA website).

Barry Winer reported on the status of and timetable for the Membership Survey, which had been discussed at a kick-off meeting on January 9th. The survey will be designed by a team currently being formed, and it will be made available for review prior to being distributed in late February or March. He invited volunteers willing to help in the survey process (for which expertise is welcome but not necessary) to contact him at darkstar965@yahoo.com.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Hamilton, Recording Secretary