

090507 CPCA Meeting Minutes, May 7, 2009

Connecticut Avenue Stores – an Update

President George Idelson called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm at the Cleveland Park Library. An overflow turnout (135 sign-ins) included residents, merchants, major landlords, leasing agents and public officials concerned with the welfare of the commercial strip on Connecticut Avenue between Macomb and Porter Streets.

Mr. Idelson noted that the meeting provided a rare opportunity for all the stakeholders to network, exchange views and consider ways to support the business community. Information provided by merchants and realtors demonstrated that the Commercial Overlay, which some believed caused vacancies by limiting bars and restaurants, was far less important than taxes, rents, city regulations, lack of parking, failure of city services and the current economy. Mr. Idelson said that CPCA disagrees with the Zoning Administrator's method for counting restaurants. According to CPCA, the 25% limit on frontage for bars and restaurants is not exceeded. There is room for more, he said. Matt LeGrant, the Zoning Administrator, conceded that CPCA has disputed his ruling that prevents a vacated restaurant space from being dropped from the count until a new Certificate of Occupancy is granted. Thus, for example, the former Yenching Palace, under construction as a Walgreen's Pharmacy, is still considered a restaurant.

Councilmember Mary Cheh spoke briefly about forming a merchants' committee and considering changes in the Overlay.

The public forum ended at 8 pm and was followed by a CPCA business meeting. Mr. Idelson explained that the Association had been attacked on the Cleveland Park listserv for its position on the Giant development, which he said had been misrepresented, and had received bundles of new memberships by certified mail with the apparent intention of "staging a coup" at the annual meeting. Mr. Jeff Davis said the Association had failed to "reach out" for a more representative membership. Mr. Peter Espenschied read a proposed constitutional amendment to require candidates for office to have been members of the Association for a least six months at the time of the election. Action at the next meeting would require notice and explanation by September 24. Mr. Gary Kopff suggested that CPCA meet with Mr. Davis. Mr. Idelson called on Gregory New, Chairman of the Nominating Committee to read the names of the proposed slate of officers for the annual meeting. (Attached)

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted.
George Idelson
Acting Secretary

