

Minutes of the January 2004 Meeting of the Cleveland Park Citizens Association

Meeting Date: Saturday, January 10, 2004
Location: Cleveland Park Library
3310 Connecticut Avenue, NW; Washington, DC

Cleveland Park Citizens Association (“CPCA”) President George Idelson called the meeting to order at approximately 10:15 a.m on a bitter cold winter morning.

I. Approval of December 16, 2003 Minutes

The first order of business was the approval of the minutes of the December 16, 2003 meeting of the CPCA. A motion to approve such minutes was moved and unanimously approved.

II. Update on Neighborhood Matters

The first order of business was an update on a few neighborhood development matters.

First, Bonnie LePard, president of the Friends of Tregaron Foundation, who made a brief presentation at CPCA’s December meeting, provided some further details regarding a new proposal put forward by the owners of the fourteen undeveloped acres of the Tregaron property to build homes on such land. The Tregaron estate is a twenty-acre wooded parcel between Macomb Street and Klinge Road, west of Connecticut Avenue. The Washington International School owns six acres of the Tregaron estate and leases use of the remaining fourteen acres. The owners of the remaining fourteen acres would now like to sell the property and developers have proposed building 18 homes on such land, including underground garages and a new road. At the same time, the Washington International School also has a proposal for some additional building on its portion of the Tregaron estate. There is a January 15, 2004 neighborhood meeting regarding the developers’ proposal. The Historic Preservation Review Board has expressed a desire to consider the two proposals together. CPCA’s executive committee will consider this matter at its upcoming executive committee meeting.

Next, Barbara Beelar then provided an update on attempts to improve the traffic perils along 37th Street NW near Tilden Street between Sidwell Friends School and Hearst School. A working group of representatives from both schools and the ANC has been formed to consider several ideas to help alleviate the situation. The working group has submitted certain traffic suggestions to DDOT. In addition, the District’s Department of Parks and Recreation will soon present its plans for certain renovations to the Hearst playground.

Finally, Mr. Idelson spoke about the formation of a Cleveland Park Business and Professional Association. The group is in the formative stages; Mr. Idelson sits on its steering committee.

III. Presentation by Private School Expansion Task Force

The next order of business was a presentation by two members of the Private School Expansion Task Force, a group put together in May 2002 by Ward 3 Councilmember Kathy Patterson. The Task Force just released its final report, which contained eight recommendations to improve the process surrounding attempts by private schools in residential neighborhoods to expand.

Penny Pagano, aide to Councilmember Patterson, introduced two members of the task force, Gary Stevens and Stephen Marcus. Since its May 2002 formation, the task force met for 3-4 hours approximately once per month. The task force also held one public meeting. The task

force presented its recommendations and final report to Councilmember Patterson in November and will present the final report to the public this month. Messrs. Stevens and Marcus described the report and the eight final recommendations of the task force.

Next, three invited guests formally presented their opinions regarding the task force's recommendations: Nancy MacWood, ANC 3C chair; Mike Saxenian, Assistant Head of Schools at Sidwell Friends School; and Bruce Beckner, neighborhood activist against the proposed NCRC expansion. Ms. MacWood stated that she would have liked to have seen recommendations to have schools lessen their impacts on neighbors, not just inform neighbors of their plans. Mr. Saxenian talked more generally about Sidwell's upcoming expansion plans and its disclosures regarding the school's expansion plans located on Sidwell's web site. Mr. Beckner spoke about government-imposed mediation, which he believes is a much-too-costly process. Mr. Beckner also agreed with Ms. MacWood that allowing for after-the-fact BZA clarifications of BZA orders will only prolong the process and not allow for finality of the process, which is essential. Mr. Beckner also believes strongly in the "clean hands" doctrine, that schools disregarding their enrollment caps should not be permitted to then apply for permission to expand in any way.

CPCA then opened the floor to audience questions and opinions; a lively discussion of private school expansion issues followed. Ms. Beelar stated that Sidwell has not given the neighbors adequate time to evaluate its expansion plans and recommended that Sidwell follow the task force's recommended 90-day (as opposed to 30) notice provision to the community. Mr. Saxenian defended Sidwell's handling of its expansion plans and the timeliness of its disclosures to the community.

IV. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at approximately 12:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Donald A. Fishman and George Idelson