

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

Meeting Date: Saturday, March 6, 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.

I. Approval of February 3, 2004 Minutes

The first order of business was the approval of the minutes of the February 3, 2004 meeting of CPCA. A motion to approve such minutes, with no edits from those copies distributed, was moved and unanimously approved.

II. Miscellaneous Matters

Mr. Idelson noted the passing of another Cleveland Park "treasure," resident, historian and Pulitzer-prize winning author Daniel Boorstin. Mr. Idelson also announced that the scheduled April 6 evening meeting is cancelled because of the Passover holiday. Instead, CPCA will co-host a special neighborhood meeting on Cathedral garage issues on April 21, 2004.

III. Lead in our Water

The next order of business was a series of presentations and discussion regarding the developing issue of lead in our District drinking water. The *Washington Post* broke the story several weeks ago and it is still a developing story. First, Councilmember Carol Schwartz's staffperson June Phillips, Deputy Committee Counsel, Committee on Public Works and the Environment, discussed Councilmember Schwartz's recent actions as Chair of the Council's Committee on Public Works and the Environment. Councilmember Schwartz hosted hearings on February 4 and 10. The Council is now overseeing or doing three things related to this issue: a special investigation of management controls at the DC Water And Sewer Authority (WASA), an independent audit of water by the District's Inspector General of sampling protocol by WASA, and a letter from Councilmember Schwartz to President Bush and Congressman Davis regarding the lead issues. Another Council hearing is currently scheduled for March 17, 2004.

Next, Jerry Johnson, WASA general manager, answered a question from Barbara Beelar on testing water at recreation centers. Johnson stated that water will be tested at recreation centers such as Hearst Recreation Center. Johnson stated that WASA has worked hard since DC's last major water scare in 1996 on the public relations aspect of incidents such as this one. Unfortunately, the current problem is, in part, a mystery as to what the source of the current problem is. Next, Michael Marcotte, chief engineer of WASA, spoke about the scientific issues of the water problem. Mr. Marcotte stated that *all* metallic piping systems contribute to some lead in water. And of course *lead* service lines in particular contribute to more lead. There are 23,000 District homes serviced by lead service lines. Just replacing lead pipes to people's homes will not solve the problem as people have lead pipes *within* their homes. Further, cutting the lead pipes outside homes to add non-lead pipes within or outside homes may actually worsen the problem. Marcotte stated that he hoped in 3-4 months, WASA will have also formulated some chemically based answers to treating the water differently.

Marcotte suggested first running the tap for ten minutes, perhaps taking a shower or other non ingested use, before drinking or using water for cooking in the morning. He stated that residents can access WASA's lead service linedatabase at WASA's website or they can call

WASA at 787-2732 to get information on which homes have lead service lines and also to request a water test kit. Marcotte briefly described the two-draw system for taking water samples. Peter Espenschied asked how apartment dwellers are affected and how they can test their water. Marcotte noted that apartment dwellers have fewer lead service lines than private homes. Another resident asked a question about the recent changes at Dalecarlia Reservoir in treating drinking water and whether these changes have caused the District's pipes to corrode more. Another resident asked about the source of water and about getting an outside group to investigate WASA and the issue.

The next speaker was Dr. Brent Blackwelder, President of Friends of the Earth and Cleveland Park neighbor. Dr Blackwelder is very familiar with clean water issues and has held monthly meetings of the DC environmental network for years; the meetings are currently held at 1717 Massachusetts Avenue, NW on the first Thursday of each month. Dr. Blackwelder spoke about his ten tips and recommendations, including having citizen review panels; asking Mayor Williams to make clean water a priority; asking for better city council oversight of WASA; and asking for better testing of water at schools.

Next, Erik Olson of the Natural Resources Defense Council talked about the health issues of lead in water and its effect on everyone, not only on children and pregnant women. Mr. Olson talked about the different types of filters and mentioned that WASA is sending filters to people in single family homes who have lead service lines, but they are not sending filters to apartment dwellers or to residents without lead service lines. Mr. Olson criticized WASA's testing at schools and its failure to test at homes without lead service lines. Mr. Olson recommended that residents with children and pregnant residents who have been drinking water get blood tested. WASA officials defended their testing at schools.

Then residents asked questions of all of the presenters. One resident stated that she has a problem of confidence in WASA altogether since it kept the problem silent for two years. Mr. Olson stated that he believed WASA was making the problem worse by not replacing the lead service lines all the way to people's homes. Robert Scholes asked about the effect of WASA's shift from chlorines to chloramines in the treatment of water. Other cities had made similar changes. Faith Wheeler, of Takoma Park, DC, asked about the Potomac River and filth in the water. WASA's general manager addressed the issue of terminated WASA employee Seema Batt and stated that her termination was for performance reasons, not because she raised lead issues. Barbara Beelar discussed the issue of food stamp recipients not currently being permitted to purchase bottled water with food stamps. The City Council is looking into this issue. Mr. Idelson then recognized Councilmember Phil Mendelson, who was in attendance.

Mr. Idelson discussed filters and their effectiveness, since most filters only last six months. Mr. Olson responded to a question about filters and referred people to nsf.org, 1-877-8NSFHELP, an organization that certifies filters. J.R. Windsor, a realtor, asked what he should tell clients about potential sources of information. WASA's general manager stated that WASA's website has lots of good information. The District Department of Health website is also a good source of information. WASA's webmaster was present to provide on-the-spot service in determining the nature of service lines to specific homes and to order test kits helping people from his laptop research whether they have lead service lines, and he spoke. Mr. Olson referred people to epa.gov/safewater. Ken Chase asked how WASA will synthesize all the data points from residents' testing. Marcotte talked about phosphates being a prime candidate for a solution to this problem, but phosphates have other side effects on people's skin. A discussion followed about the costs of replacing all of the lead service lines versus the long-term health costs of the lead problem in general. David Bardin, one of the Mayor's six appointments to WASA's Board, described the Board's role in setting WASA

policy. But he stated that the Board does not manage WASA. He also discussed issues of water rates and expected higher rates from all the costs of remediation.

Peter Espenschied talked about a lack of vision and coordination at the highest level of government, and suggested that there may be links between these lead problems and the poor reading levels at our schools. Barbara Beelar raised the question of pet safety and lead in the water.

IV. Adjournment

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

Respectfully submitted,
Donald A. Fishman and George Idelson