

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

Meeting Date: Saturday, September 11, 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 10:20 am. 35 persons signed the attendance sheet; 20 were members. Three members of the Emergency Medical Services (AFGE) were present and spoke, but did not sign in.

I. Approval of June 2004 Minutes

The minutes of the June 5, 2004 meeting of the CPCA were circulated and approved as printed.

II. Ratifying the Executive Committee’s Residential Parking Permit Resolution

Mr. Idelson read a resolution approved by the Executive Committee (and printed on the back of page 3 of the June Minutes) stating that the Association is opposed to the adoption of proposed changes in the DC Residential Parking Permit Program, and supports hearings on parking policy reforms. Isabel Furlong moved to ratify. Gregory New seconded. The Resolution was ratified unanimously.

III. Outreach and Membership Drive

Mr. Idelson announced the theme of his third term: *Outreach*. He invited members to pick up copies of a revised membership brochure and distribute them to their neighbors. He noted that membership renewal season for 2004-05 had begun. He also announced that *A Taste of Cleveland Park* cookbooks (\$20) to benefit the Cleveland Park Library were available for sale at the Library and local stores.

IV. Main Program: “Preparedness Meeting”

The President, declaring the 9/11 date propitious for a meeting on disaster preparedness, called for a moment of reflection on the events of September 11, 2001. **Chris Voss**, Director of Planning, Training, Exercise, and Mitigation of the DC Emergency Management Agency (EMA) then gave a Powerpoint presentation on how the District is organized for emergencies, and how citizens can prepare for them.

Mr. Voss stressed planning for a range of emergencies, not just terror, not only disasters such as hurricanes, but also big funerals that tie up traffic, and even one-man protests such as the farmer on a tractor in Constitution Gardens.

Voss said the District Disaster Response Plan was drastically revised after 9/11 to mirror the Federal Plan. The Emergency Management Administration has also prepared 39 community plans which are continuously updated. Citizens alerts will take many forms:

1. *Telephone voice message system*. The message can be pinpointed to specific areas. (It was used recently to notify 3600 households that their water was being cut off.)
2. *Emergency Text Notification*. Residents get text through their phones, pagers, or e-mail.
3. *The Emergency Information Center Website*: <http://www.emergencycenter.dc.gov>. (Use it to sign up for methods 2 and 3.)

Voss made available copies of EMA’s *Family Preparedness Plan* which was inserted in a Sunday supplement of the *Washington Post* this summer. It features a “Go Kit” (items that you should have with you when you must leave your home quickly in an emergency), a plan to notify your family, and a note left on your door so that people who come to check on you will know where you are heading. “The Go Kit” should include a flashlight, a first aid kit, important records, contact information, sturdy clothes, comfortable shoes, even regularly used prescription drugs. (Voss later said he was working on a plan to provide prescription drugs in shelters.)

Evacuation routes, marked by DC flags, will change with the situation, with provision for cross traffic and emergency vehicles.

Dr. Clifford H. Turen, the newly appointed Medical Director of the DC Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department (FEMS), said his mission was saving lives and protecting property, and that he was committed to making his department a model for the nation. The entire work force will be a life support response system focused on fire suppression and medical care. Dr. Turen was questioned about his ability to be a full time director while residing in Howard County and having other responsibilities. He said he was on call 24/7.

Some 300 medical calls are handled daily. 30% do not require transport. 337 EMS people are on duty every day, including EMT (Emergency Medical Technicians), and paramedics. There are BLS (Basic Life Support units) and ALS (Advanced Life Support units). The cardiac save rate is up from 1% in 1999 to 17% today.

The EMS goal of getting the appropriate level of care providers to the scene has been hindered by the loss of paramedics to nursing, which pays more. Nonlife-threatening calls also drain emergency personnel availability.

James B. Martin, Assistant Chief for Operations of the Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department reported that a new Office of Unified Command is taking over 911 for both the police and fire departments. Until now, a police officer took all calls, and routed them to the appropriate agency, which then initiated the dispatch operation. Now, the person taking the call will start the dispatch immediately. Calling 911 remains the most important way to get help. .

V. Questions, Answers, and Comments on Preparedness

Anne Renshaw noted that many in this area depend on the rapid response of the Bethesda Chevy Chase Rescue Squad, and that an ambulance, rather than a fire truck often seemed a more appropriate response. An EMS union representative called for more EMS units vs. fire engines; Dr. Turen said the balance was determined by the budget. He offered to meet with civic leaders to discuss these and other issues.

Sally MacDonald, who has taken emergency response training, urged others to do the same..

Peter Espenschied asked if there was a difference in response time for, say, a broken leg or a stroke. Chief Martin said the person handling the 911 call decides after questioning the caller, but that availability of equipment was the ultimate determinant. He acknowledged that the goal to train all firefighters in emergency medical skills was not yet fully realized.

Nancy Piness praised EMS for rapid and competent response to a series of life-saving calls on behalf of a senior citizens home with which she was associated..

Several audience members praised the speakers for excellent presentations and said they felt more comfortable knowing the preparations underway. Mr. Idelson noted that there was a link to the emergency alert program on CPCA's website: *ClevelandParkIsUs.org*, and said he hoped to include key parts of Mr. Voss's presentations as well.

VI. Adjournment

Mr. Idelson adjourned the meeting at 12:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Gregory R. New and George Idelson