

Brookdale Citizens' Association Annual Meeting
May 11, 2005
Minutes

Dave Montgomery, the President, convened the meeting at a little past 7:30. The minutes from the 2004 annual meeting were distributed and accepted.

The President then called on Pat Kitchen, Chair of the Nominating Committee. Pat announced the following slate of candidates on behalf of the Nominating Committee:

Dave Montgomery, President
Steve Heyman, Vice-President, Orchardale
Eric Wallgren, Vice-President, Wohlshire
Marie Moylan, Vice-President, Brookdale North
Barbara Ingersoll, Vice-President, Brookdale South
Hal Wolman, Secretary
Suzanne Richman, Treasurer

The slate of the Nominating Committee was moved and seconded and elected by a voice vote without dissent.

Dave described the action taken by the Executive Committee with regards to GEICO's request to the Planning Board for an extension of their permission to develop the GEICO site. The Executive Committee decided it was in the interest of the community to support the GEICO request in exchange for GEICO's agreement to sell one of its remaining six Brookdale houses and to reforest the buffer site between GEICO and the community by replanting 20-30 trees.

Jim Norton stated his dissatisfaction with the Executive Board's strategy and moved that the Board should insist, in its negotiation, that GEICO sell all of its homes as a price for the Association's support. A long and vigorous discussion ensued, during which some members expressed dissatisfaction with the way the Executive Committee had handled the negotiations, and, in particular, its lack of communication with the membership. It was noted that the Planning Board had, in fact, extended GEICO's authorization for five years. Other members noted that the Executive Board had been elected to make decisions on behalf of the membership and that the Board and its President had done an excellent job of negotiating gains for the community in a situation in which it had virtually no bargaining power.

A motion to amend Jim's original motion was then offered stating that the Executive Committee should pressure GEICO to sell all its remaining homes in the neighborhood. The amendment was defeated by voice vote. The original motion was then restated as follows: it is the position of the Brookdale Citizens Association that GEICO sell all of its homes in the neighborhood as soon as possible. Hal Wolman then asked whether this was, in fact, simply a restatement of existing policy. Norm Knopf stated that it was not and reminded the members that the Association had agreed to GEICO continuing to own houses that are contiguous to its property until development had occurred. Others urged better communication between the Executive Committee and Association members through e-mails and the Brookdale website.

The motion was defeated by voice vote.

Bob Cope, Brookdale's representative to the Citizens' Coordinating Committee for Friendship Heights (CCCFH), gave a report on development issues CCCFH has been concerned with. The development on the Hechts' site is underway. Ultimately Hechts' will be on the corner of Western and Friendship Boulevard. There will be an apartment building on Friendship and Willard. Hechts will lease the community center to the County Planning Board which now says that the County Department of Recreation will operate the center.

Bob also reported that we were able to get a provision inserted into the county code making clear that any requirement for MPDUs (moderately priced dwelling units) ultimately adopted for residential developments in

the area not reduce public facility space, amenities, or recreation space called for in a master or sector plan. This protects such space in the Friendship Heights sector plan. Finally Bob noted that the Bethesda Sector Plan has been reopened in order to increase height limits in the Woodmont Triangle. He suggested this might be an opportunity for the Council to require that a swimming pool open to the community be located in one of the new buildings.

Ron Tripp, the other Brookdale representative and Chairman of CCCFH, next gave a report on other developments: the Westbard/River Road Sector Plan, more detailed information on the stores and shops that will be located on the Chevy Chase Land Company site (East side of Wisconsin Avenue), and the New England Development Company site (Hechts).

Ron also reported that he, Bob and Eric Sanne had discussed the need for a drop-off lane on Wisconsin Avenue, where the current drop-off space is now in front of the Hechts store, with council member Howard Denis. Apparently state money for a planned, if inadequate, drop-off lane has disappeared. Council member Denis is trying to get state money reinstated or to have the county take it on as part of its capital improvement program.

In addition, Ron reported on the continuing controversy about what to do with the sludge residual from the Dalecarlia Reservoir in the Washington Aqueduct project. The Army Corps of Engineers is recommending that it be trucked out along Dalecarlia Parkway and either up Massachusetts, crossing over to River Road at some point or across Western to River Road. The latter, in particular, would bring about 20 heavy trucks each day along Western Avenue and River Road in Brookdale. Finally, Ron mentioned that there were plans being discussed to widen River Road between the Beltway and Western Avenue. Such a widening would increase the bottleneck at River Road and Western since River narrows down to one lane each way in the District.

Dave then opened a discussion of infrastructure needs in Brookdale. He noted improvements the County has made in terms of drainage and storm sewers in Orchardale and on Westport and Cortland. In addition he added that the County is willing to do more (we are now on the official County master list for "Renew Montgomery"). The County will soon be doing curb renewal, and apparently while they are working in an area, they are under an obligation to do additional needed work. Thus, they are seeking additional documentation of public works needs in Brookdale. Larry Howe has agreed to be our public works coordinator and to work with the County as they proceed. The County will start with the south end of Brookdale and work its way north. Dave urged anyone who wishes to identify a public works problem in their neighborhood to get in touch with Larry Howe.

Association members then engaged in a long discussion of cut-through traffic. Dave noted that the County has provisions for what qualifies as "restricted access areas." Restricted access areas must have a sufficient volume of traffic in the case of streets in Brookdale, 100 cars per hour and previous tests of this standard showed we fell far short. Alternative suggestions included better traffic enforcement, stationary radar units (but these are expensive), and a lower speed limit. Dave said that the Executive Committee would address this problem during the next year. Other members complained about the danger of crossing the street at Friendship Boulevard and Western Avenue, made even more difficult by the trucks blocking the way while they are servicing the Hechts construction site.

Dave then reported on his efforts to do something about the litter problem along Western Avenue near GEICO and the Friendship Heights Metro stop. After failing to get the County, DC, and Metro to address the problem, Dave talked to GEICO, and they agreed to pick up from the trash can at the bus stop as part of their usual routine. Richard Yates responded that GEICO failed to do a good job of picking up litter from their own property and frequently mowed right over litter when cutting their lawn. Dave said he would take this up with GEICO.

Subject to final budget negotiations, the County Council may reverse their policy, and trash disposal receptacles will be put back in place in Brookdale Park. In response to an observation that the Brookdale interior streets were becoming more littered, it was noted that much of this resulted from the increase in construction activity by homeowners and that homeowners should instruct contractors working for them to pick up their litter.

Richard Yates is investigating the possibility of developing a legislative proposal that would require commercial

operators to clean litter from their property at least once every business day. He will report back to Dave on this.

Dave reported that the delay in moving ahead with the Brookdale Park playground was a result of the architect withdrawing from the project. Work will hopefully resume in the fall. In response to a question about why trees in Brookdale Park that had been cut down had simply been left there, it was explained that citizens had complained that healthy trees were being cut down. As a consequence the County tree cutters stopped their work, and the County arborist met with Brookdale citizens to explain the policy on which trees to cut. Sometimes seemingly healthy trees had to be cut because their positioning constituted a safety risk.

Gwen Lewis announced that June 25th will be park cleaning day and asked for volunteers to participate.

Dave asked for Association members to volunteer to contribute to the Association's work. In particular, he asked for someone to help with making corrections to the Brookdale Directory. Abigail Grossman volunteered to do so. He also mentioned the need for someone to do a systematic history of the Association.

The meeting adjourned shortly after 9:00 PM.

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