

Roland Park Civic League

Minutes January 7, 2010

In Attendance: Phil Spevak, Mike McQuestion, Ian MacFarlane, Jesse Halvorsen, David Blumberg, Bill Sharpe, Muriel Berkeley, Doug Munro, Louise Phipps-Senft, Rita Walters, Ken Winkler, Michael Braverman, Chris McSherry, Kate Culotta.

Absent: Jennifer Cooper, Peter Kannam

Special Guests: Fire Chief James Clack, Kevin Cartwright (Fire Dept Chief of Public Affairs) Roman Clark (Special Asst to Fire Chief), Donald Hineback (Chief of Operations) Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, Mary Pat Clarke, Sharon Middleton, Jack Young (C.C. 12th District), Ken Rice, Kathleen Truelove, Martha Marani, David Tufaro. Several fire fighters from the RP House.

Meeting called to order at 7:05 by President Phil Spevak

Minutes from December: motion to approve by Louise Phipps-Senft, second by Ian MacFarlane. Minutes approved as written.

Finances: Jesse Halvorsen presented December 2009 and year-to-date finance report. Motion to approve by Ian MacFarlane, second by Louise Phipps-Senft. Approved.

At this time, Jesse announced that he was stepping down as Treasurer to become plat 5 representative. Jesse nominated John Kevin to replace him as treasurer for Civic League. Motion 2nd by Louise Phipps-Senft. Motion approved. John stood to speak briefly on his experience as investment officer for Montgomery County School System. Served as Roads & Maintenance Treasurer until December 2009. Phil rose to thank Jesse for his time and hard work during his tenure as treasurer. The board approved John Kevin to become treasurer.

New Business:

B-More Streets for People: Presented by Mary Pat Clarke. Expansion of the successful “Sunday Streets” program to close streets across the city for foot and pedestrian traffic. Program would like to tie Druid Hill Park, through Roland Park to Lake Montebello. Still working on details of budgeting, permits and public safety.

Roland Park Fire House: Opening statement from Phil Spevak concerning the relationship between the residents of the community and the RP Fire House and the plan to move forward with renovations to the fire house. Invited Fire Chief Clack to come speak on the budget challenges facing the fire department and the current plans to take trucks and equipment out of service as a cost-saving measure. RP learned 3 weeks ago that there were rotating closures and equipment shut-down throughout the city. Since July, RP equipment had been taken out of service 50 times for up to 24 hours. Community expressed concerns about public safety. Several members of the Fire Department and city council attended [as noted in the special guests list] to join the discussion.

Chief Clack was hired by the city in April 2008. Cited that \$2 million was cut from fire budget from 2005-2008. Chief Clack was asked to cut another \$6 million in 2008, another \$6.5 million in 2009. Looking to avoid closing 4 or 5 stations, opted to rotate equipment shut-downs throughout the city to help balance the budget. Chief Clack has to make additional cuts in the upcoming budget to make-up for the shortfall.

Currently 40 stations in the city. 34 Engines and 18 trucks plus medic units. Roland Park is station #5, with a truck and engine. There are not enough medic units in the city so often an engine or fire truck must respond to medic call. National Fire Dept standard is 4 minute arrival time from time of call. Until 2008, Baltimore City met this goal. Since then, meets the 4 minute response time 80-84 % of the time.

The fire houses closest to RP are #6 Hampden on Roland Avenue; #1 on Glenn Ave to the northwest, #8 on Walters Ave (to the northeast) and #7 in Govans on Greenmount Ave. The RP fire house services to the City-county line. Chief Clack was hesitant to state that currently the safety of the residents of the city is compromised but stated that future cuts would really diminish the ability of the Fire Department to provide adequate safety. Would take an additional \$3.5 million to keep all the current stations and equipment in service through June 2010. Preliminary shortfall of \$13.5 for 2010-2011.

He said that current staff retirement needs is complicated by having to pay overtime to meet the scheduling demands and that the City can't afford to start another fire training class, though they have a list of 800 potentials for training. Currently have 85 openings, but no training class to pull from. 6-7 retire each month. Currently 1,790 employees.

Current pilot programs:

1. Northwest section, Jewish community volunteers started their own medic corp, bought their own equipment and staff it with trained community volunteers.
2. Matched the top 25 medical related 911 callers with home care nurses to help with prescriptions, diabetes and other medical issues. Have seen a large drop on 911 calls from these citizens.
3. MAC: Medical Assist Car, 2 man medic team that responds to medic calls rather than 4 man truck crew. Can save \$800,000 annually, per crew.

Comments: Sharon Middleton commented that she would like to see improved communication between the Fire Dept and The City Council. Mary Pat Clarke commented on the need to restore some funding to the Dept. Council President Stephanie Rawlings-Blake thanked Chief Clack for his commitment and the desire to come to an agreeable resolution while working within the framework of a large budget deficit.

Additional comments and questions from the audience. Residents spoke in favor of restoring money to the fire dept budget, that public safety issues, along with public schools, should be at the top of the city budget.

Adjourned: Meeting adjourned at 8:30. Motion by Ken Winkler. Second by Louise Phipps-Senft.