

Roland Park Civic League

March 4 2010 minutes

Attendance: Phil Spevak, Jesse Halvorsen, Bill Sharpe, Mike McQuestion, John Kevin, David Blumberg, Michael Braverman, Doug Munro, Ken Winkler, Peter Kannam, Louise Phipps Senft, Muriel Berkeley, Chris McSherry, Kate Culotta

Absent: Rita Walters

Special Guests: Donald Kann, Jean Mellot, Ilene Asner, Tyler Gearheart, Robert Ginyard (Sharon Middleton's office), Kathleen Truelove, Ken Rice

Meeting called to order by Phil Spevak at 7:05

Start of discussion on CHAP [Chapter Historic & Architectural Preservation] in Roland Park

Introduction by Phil Spevak and opening statements by Jesse Halvorsen, Jesse used to work in Housing Department under Michael Braverman and worked on projects in partnership with CHAP.

Discussion broken into 3 segments

Jean Mellot: review of the historical significance of Roland Park. The nations first “street car suburb” designed by George Kessler and the Olmsted Brothers for the Roland Park Company. Roland Park was planned as a village with space set aside for individual homes, churches, library, post office, country club for recreation and open green space. To a lesser degree, apartment and attached homes were included in the design.

Ilene Asner: history of covenants in Roland Park. Covenants are a homeowners agreement to restrict design decisions for the benefit of the whole community. In plat 1, the covenants were not very restrictive or limited. Varied from house to house and tended to place limits and restrictions on farm animals, cess pools and outhouses. Plat 2-6, covenants written for 25-50 years, most expired in the 1950-1960's. Restrictions common in these later covenants include: house minimum of 2000s/f, 30 ft setback from street, no institutional use, no farm animals. Items not covered in the covenants: trees, shrubs, street scape and architectural styles. Applications must be submitted to R&M to alter the exterior of dwelling or erect a “building. Enforcement of covenants by R&M is through the legal system with the use of liens against the property to enforce removal or tear-down. In order to rewrite the covenants, would take 60% majority of voting civic members to approval.

Donald Kann: Current Chairman of CHAP. Roland Park is currently listed on the national registry of historic neighborhoods, boundaries of Falls Rd, Cold Spring Lane, to Northern Pkwy, Roland Ave, Wyndhurst and University Pkwy. Does not include the Tuxedo area, Wyndhurst or Evergreen. During his speech, Donald Kann stated:

1. Designated in 1974. CHAP was created by city charter in 1964. Baltimore has the most designated historic building in the country.
2. CHAP has a staff that works closely with the City Planning Dept. and individual neighborhood associations. CHAP publishes their standards.
3. CHAP does not raise property taxes
4. CHAP does stabilize property values
5. CHAP does recognize historic tax credits
6. CHAP reviews all exterior permits within the district, protects against demolitions and expanding institutional use.
7. Current conditions are “Grandfathered” in.

To pursue CHAP designation:

1. CHAP is an ordinance of the Mayor & City Council. The area would be assessed, property surveyed and boundaries set. The boundaries are not automatically set by the Historic National Registry.
2. The community would be given the opportunity to respond through several public hearings.
3. Once the community reaches an approximate 60% willingness to participate, another public hearing by the Planning committee. A hearing in the City Council and signing by the Mayor.

Questions and Comments from audience:

1. Would a CHAP application be needed for exterior work that doesn't require a permit? YES
2. What if it is not visible from the street? YES
3. What action can be taken if a property or owner is in violation of CHAP? CHAP can levy a fine, place lien on property or take other legal action.
4. How does R&M fit into CHAP? R&M would still exist, they would be the first step to seek approval and assist the homeowner before moving onto CHAP. CHAP would try to follow RP guidelines, but not legally bound to. CHAP can take a different view. CHAP has higher authority over R&M.
5. The covenants would remain in affect under CHAP
6. CHAP is an important part of the overall Master Plan currently under review in Roland Park and throughout the City.
7. Several people expressed concern for the added step and additional time the process would take to approve exterior changes.
8. Several people made comments as to the redundancy of both covenants and CHAP and which was the more appropriate to have.
9. A decision was made to continue the CHAP discussion and not make a formal decision or vote at this time.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 PM without any other business discussions. Motion to adjourn Louise Phipps Senft, second by Chris McSherry.