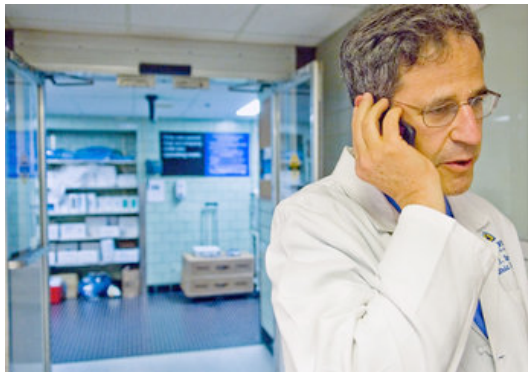


Ex-Roland Park president just getting started

Spevak wants to help reshape public health policy

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(Enlarge) Dr. Phil Spevak talks on the phone with the parents of a patient at the Johns Hopkins Childrens Center on May 24. The pediatric cardiologist ended his two-year term as president of the Roland Park Civic League last week. He would like to take on a new role, helping to shape public health policy. (Staff photo by Nicole Martyn)

Baltimore City Councilwoman Sharon Green Middleton stopped into a pizza restaurant on Falls Road one evening last month and saw a familiar face.

It was Phil Spevak, president of the Roland Park Civic League -- and he was informing the staff that their advertising sign on the sidewalk outside was illegal.

"Wow, he is policing the area," Middleton thought to herself.

Middleton, of District 6, which includes the Roland Park area, told that anecdote May 19 as she praised Spevak's tumultuous, but productive, two-year term as president of the Roland Park Civic League.

"Phil Spevak does such a wonderful job," Middleton said at the end of the civic league meeting to present the final master plan

draft for the neighborhood.

An audience of more than 200 people gave Spevak a standing ovation.

It was Spevak's last night as president after a term in which the league:

- * Stopped the sale of 17 acres of Baltimore Country Club green space to the Keswick Multi-Care Center, which wanted to develop the site as a retirement community.
- * Opened subsequent negotiations with the club for the league's fundraising arm, the Roland Park Community Foundation, to purchase the land so it can be preserved.
- * Drafted a master plan that has the support of city planners and elected officials -- including Middleton -- and is expected to be a blueprint for the area's future for years to come.
- * Started an ongoing fundraising campaign to renovate Roland Park's aging firehouse.

The community has rarely seen such a fertile time of neighborhood activism, marked by signs that said, "Keswick No!" when the development battle was raging last year -- and signs last week that heralded the master plan draft presentation with the words, "This is it!"

"He is, in my opinion, the new gold standard," said Spevak's predecessor as president, David Blumberg.

After league board elections, Spevak, who juggled his Roland Park league duties with his day job as a pediatric cardiologist at Johns Hopkins Hospital, passed the president's gavel to board member Ian MacFarlane, an environmental consultant.

MacFarlane will continue negotiations to buy the country club property.

"They're big shoes to fill," MacFarlane said.

Most of those at the meeting signed a poster with a photo of Spevak in the middle. Among the comments was one that said, "Cheers to the man with 36-hour days!"

What's next for Spevak? For one thing, he's being wooed to chair the ongoing master plan committee for the league.

The former Brookings Institution think tank research assistant, who won't give his age but has a 1973 master's degree in economics from Williams College in Massachusetts, is mulling a wider role in medicine, perhaps by helping to shape public health policy, or perhaps in politics, although he wouldn't be more specific.

"I could see myself in administration, in government," he said.

But for now, he's looking forward to spending more time with his family -- teenagers James and Sarah, and wife Melissa, a pediatric radiologist at Hopkins, who he said has been understanding of his hectic life.

"She still likes me," he said.

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