

Mckenney Hills-Carroll Knolls Civic Association Meeting Minutes
Capital View-Homewood Park Recreation Building
June 23, 2009

Richard Tingley, Vice President, with Board members Randall and Kaplan

Vice President Tingley called the meeting to order at 8:15 p.m. He welcomed the large assembly and conveyed President Steadman's regrets at her absence. He explained that the meeting would be devoted to the issue of future of the MCAD (Montgomery College of Art and Design) building and grounds on Georgia Avenue, and that Councilwoman Valerie Ervin would be there to speak on the issue and answer questions.

Special Program:

Officer Larry Elkin, from the K-9 unit of the Montgomery County Police Department spoke of the use of the building for training. He said that they had used the building once, but would not do so again as it was not suitable for the dogs. There was so much broken glass on the floor that risk of injury to the dogs' feet was too great.

He answered questions related to MCAD. If there is suspicious activity on the premises, the Park Police should be called: a park falls under the jurisdiction of the Park Police and Montgomery County will be called in when needed.

Marc Elrich, Councilman at Large, spoke about the issues in general terms saying that there may be compromises possible in the final disposition of the property. He encouraged residents to "not let the perfect be the enemy of the good" in considering possible viable options.

Norman Kaplan provided historical context and history of MCAD and the surrounding community, pending the arrival of Valerie Ervin, who was coming from another civic association meeting.

Valerie Ervin, Councilwoman for District 5, has studied the MCAD problem extensively and outlined several possible solutions, including the Legacy Open Space, land swap, and would look into the Chesapeake Bay watershed project that a resident suggested from the floor. She is optimistic that a satisfactory option can be found, with the land swap being the most promising. The Montgomery County budget, like all municipal and national budgets, is stretched to the limit, which makes the land swap a viable avenue to pursue.

Ervin reported that a new member of the Planning Board would soon be appointed. She urged residents to write to other Council Members besides

herself and Elrich, as a letter with five signatures would be a strong recommendation to take to County Executive Leggett.

She expressed disappointment that there was no one there representing the Montgomery College Foundation.

She answered questions from the residents, facilitated by Beverly Sobel.

Why not use part of the land commercially to finance a park in the remainder? The zoning is R60, residential, not commercial. The MH-CK Covenant was upheld, so any development would have to be single-family homes.

How can Montgomery College Foundation sell land that was given to them when we as taxpayers fund the institution?

The Foundation's purpose is to find ways to support the mission of Montgomery College. Elrich added that the College is financially strained, just like all other institutions, and the sale of the property would be only a small part of their need.

Residents mentioned several other questions that Councilwoman Ervin referred to her assistant Sonia Healey for attention and action.

Councilwoman Ervin again expressed her optimism on a satisfactory resolution. he said the community has to decide what it wanted (a park and a soccer field or a park and an organic community garden) so that the plan could move forward when a decision was reached regarding the property itself.

After the meeting, a M-NCPPC representative informed Beverly Sobel that M-NCPPC does not maintain recreation centers. Moreover, it would cost significant dollars to rehab MCAD to be one. The community overwhelming is in need of green space. A few days after the meeting, Sobel was informed that if M-NCPPC is able to acquire MCAD that it would be several years before a soccer field was created there. In the interim, the building would come down and an unprogrammed field of grass would be in its place. Sobel suggested that if the plan is for a soccer field several years from now that they let the community start a pilot community garden where the building is now. In this way, the land can be used and improved for several years. The soccer field idea is not set in stone. Several years from now, M-NCPPC could reevaluate the needs of the communities and determine what the best use is at that time.

Vice President adjourned the meeting at 9:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Martha Randall, Secretary

The association e-mail is mh-ck@hotmail.com, the web is mhckcivic.org, and the home page gives information on how to join the listserve.