

**Columbia Heights Civic Association
January 8, 2007 General Meeting
Minutes
Sarah McKinley**

Present:

Sarah McKinley
Geoff Gerhardt
Peter C. Jones
John Antonelli
Linda Palmer
Linh Ong
Ron Haddox
Reggie Nixon
Joan Rineberg
Allen Muchnik

Note: CHCA President Ed Miltenberger was present at 7:00 p.m., but was ill and had to leave. The meeting was conducted by Secretary Sarah McKinley. The group had a quorum of board members present.

Approval of Minutes

The group approved, with minor corrections, the minutes of the Annual Meeting on September 28, 2006. The minutes of the November meeting, approved at the December meeting, have already been posted on the CHCA web site.

Talking Points for Towing at Westmont Shopping Center

Sarah McKinley presented a one-page set of talking points about CHCA concerns over aggressive towing at the Westmont Shopping Center. She has been contacted by the Arlington Heights Civic Association, which will be holding a meeting on January 23. Sarah McKinley and/or Ron Haddox will attend this meeting to discuss these issues. Arlington Heights is interested in taking joint action with CHCA. The group made some minor changes to the talking points paper, which Sarah and Ron will take to this meeting (see attached). Any action discussed at this meeting, or any joint letters, would be brought back to both groups for final approval. Sarah will also brief Ed Miltenberger on this meeting to provide him an opportunity, as CHCA President, to attend.

Report on Lighting

Geoff Gerhardt presented a report on lighting, based on a survey of the neighborhood that

he and Dana Schlichtmann conducted. (See attached.) The report identified 133 street lights, of which 13 were not working. These consisted of four different types of lights: lights attached to telephone poles, black “colonial” top lights on top of concrete poles; the curving “cobra” street lights; and the newer Carlisle street lights.

Geoff agreed that he would contact Dominion Power to inform them about the malfunctioning lights. Sarah McKinley will continue to explore whether CHCA can receive funds through the NCAC in Arlington County to replace the older street lights, particularly the “colonial” top units, with the newer Carlisle lights.

Survey of Columbia Heights Neighborhood Street Lights

Conducted by CHCA Members 1/2/07

TYPES OF LIGHTS									
	Black "Colonial" style	Black "Carlisle" style	Gray "Cobra" style						
Telephone Pole									
STREET SEGMENTS	Working	Not Working	Working	Not Working	Working	Not Working	Working	Not Working	Total Lights
1. 16th St. from Walter Reed to Barton St.	8	0	8	1	0	0	0	0	17
2. Barton from 16th St. to Columbia Pike	0	0	19	1	0	0	0	0	20
3. Cleveland from Col. Pike to 13th Road	7	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	9
4. 13th Road from Barton to Walter Reed	6	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
5. Edgewood from 16th St. to Walter Reed	3	0	8	0	5	1	0	0	17
6. 11th St. from Edgewood to Cleveland	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
7. 12th St. from Cleveland to Walter Reed	0	0	4	2	0	0	0	0	6
8. 13th St. from Walter Reed to Cleveland	0	0	4	2	0	0	0	0	6
9. Wayne St. from Col. Pike to 12th St.	0	0	0	0	1	0	6	1	8
10. 12th St. from Wayne to Courthouse	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	3
11. Courthouse from deadend to Col. Pike	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
12. Scott St. from Col. Pike to deadend	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
13. Rolfe from Col. Pike to deadend (15th)	12	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	13
14. Walter Reed from Col. Pike to 16th St.	9	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	13
Total	58	5	43	6	10	1	9	1	133

Notes:

- (a) There are few lights on Edgewood Street between 11th Street and 13th Road; the intersection 13th Road and Edgewood is very dark and has been the location of recent car vandalism.
- (b) The survey did not include the lights along Columbia Pike

Treasurer's Report

Linda Palmer, CHCA Treasurer, reported that we have \$215.58 in the bank, no outstanding bills, and 36 paid members. This report is the same as in December, 2006.

Civic Federation Report

John Antonelli reported on the January 2, 2007 Arlington Civic Federation meeting, which included three representatives from CHCA. Our civic association had the most representatives of any of the neighborhood groups at this meeting. The Civic Federation meeting was primarily an opportunity to address the County Board, whose members were present and gave an abbreviated first-of-the-year report. John Antonelli asked Board Chairman Ferguson whether his environmental initiative would result in costs to tax payers. His answer was that it would, but those costs would more than be made up in overall savings.

John Antonelli had drafted a resolution concerning plans for changes in the Metro line, which was subsumed into a resolution that was put forward by the Transportation Committee. John was asked to speak to the issue, and the resolution passed unanimously.

Changes at Career Center

John Antonelli reported that there is now public discussion about a possible public private partnership regarding the Career Center next to Patrick Henry Elementary School. Someone in the county has asked Safeway if it could build a supermarket on that site, with the Career Center stationed on top of the store. Arlington Heights is reportedly not in favor of this plan because of concerns about parking, loading, traffic and other potential problems.

Update on Walter Reed

Reggie Nixon provided an update on issues CHCA had raised with Ike Snead, Director of the Walter Reed Community Center. The center originally ordered the wrong shields for the lights in the parking lot, but they have reordered. Reggie will be checking to see when those will be installed.

As for idling buses, Ike needs to have information before he can take action. He asks what kind of buses they are. John Antonelli informed us that they were the "Seniors in

Action” bus.

We had also asked about handicapped access. Some of our members had complained that people in walkers or wheelchairs wouldn't be able to open the doors without automatic buttons. Although the center didn't have the funds to install those buttons, the county defines handicapped access by how heavy the door is, that is, how hard it is to open. As an alternative, they have asked the customer service reps, now stationed near the front door, to help elderly and handicapped users by opening the doors for them. Peter Jones reported that for the 20-30 minutes in the morning and evening that seniors are entering or leaving the building, the doors are held open to allow those with walkers to get through.

Programs/Plantings for Walter Reed

Peter Jones reported that he has been meeting with Area 4 Supervisors of the Parks and Recreation Department to plan new programs. By 2008 the county should have new programs for seniors, and after school programs for children. The next meeting is January 23. Peter also discussed the problems with the County's handling of tree plantings, which result in dead trees and wasted tax dollars. The group approved Reggie Nixon drafting a letter about this issue, which would be sent by CHCA to the County Board. John Antonelli made the motion, seconded by Joan Rineberg.

The meeting was adjourned.

Columbia Heights Civic Association
Parking at Westmont Shopping Center

Residents of the Columbia Heights Civic Association are concerned about towing practices at the Westmont Shopping Center, at the corner of Glebe Road and Columbia Pike. Over the past year there have been numerous incidents of citizens who have had their cars towed, even though they were shopping in the immediate vicinity of the shopping center.

Aggressive towing, and illegal practices by the towing company, are causes of concern. For example, towing companies are required to provide photographic evidence of illegal parking prior to towing. In many cases this has not been done.

In addition, customers are often not aware that stores very near the Westmont Shopping Center are not considered “legitimate” businesses for purposes of towing. If a customer goes into a shop in Westmont, then visits a neighboring shop, like the jewelry store next door, they are likely to be towed. This is not consistent with a progressive policy that encourages community parking to allow shoppers to visit multiple stores without having to move their cars. Forcing shoppers to relocate vehicles with every purchase exacerbates traffic and environmental problems.

Finally, the impact of aggressive towing will be felt by the business owners themselves, as customers begin to take their business elsewhere rather than face the possibility of being towed.

Other businesses have found alternative solutions. For example, Bangkok 54 Restaurant and the Papillon Bike Shop use parking supervision to make sure their customers are assured of safe parking.

We recommend the following actions:

- 1.) Clear signs should be posted, in English and in Spanish, outlining towing policies at Westmont Shopping Center.
- 2.) The signs should clearly spell out which business customers are allowed to park there.
- 3.) There should be a parking attendant to warn people of possible towing.
- 4.) If this issue is not promptly resolved, CHCA members, and residents of neighboring civic associations, should consider boycotting the Westmont Shopping Center.

