

Fells Prospect Community Organization

Minutes

March 9, 2011 at 7:30 pm

I. Introduction: The meeting was called to order at 7:35 by Victor Corbin, President

II. Committee Reports and Announcements

A. Treasurer's Report - \$6,500 in account

B. Land Use Committee – Project at 1621 Bank might be a problem.

C. Social Committee – Comment from Mary Beth Lennon: would be willing to organize happy hours once a month. Garden Club may organize scavenger hunt.

D. Crime Committee – none

E. Traffic/ Parking Committee – Rumors of Butchers Hill going for residential permit parking. Voted not to go with permit parking. Upper Fells Point will move forward for permit parking. Will talk with them and Jim Kraft about potential problems. Next month, Tia Waddy from DOT will talk with us about greening, traffic calming, etc.

F. Beautification Committee – Adopted green lot near Captain James and are making plans to beautify it. First Saturday of April will do cleanup of neighborhood in 600 block of Chester Street.

G. Any other reports or announcements

Chubbies may be reopening. Permits for construction. Residents please be vigilant and document activity.

Mayor's Cleanup on April 16th: Will participate and arranging a dumpster and pickup of trash. Getting donations for drinks and snacks.

Local Cub Scout Collecting Food for the Hungry—Canned goods.

III. Old Business

Ravens Nest #27 Inaugural Winter Picnic Pub Crawl—Had good attendance. Raised \$1,300 for Youth Recreational Activities with The Friends of Patterson Park. Flier at meeting; looking for more participation.

Alley Gating greening: Continuing with greening project of placing planters, etc.

IV. New Business

Anne Fleishman - Vertical Garden – Baltimore Contained—Not able to attend.

Southeast Anchor Library—Garden Stakes Workshop

Wed. March 23, 6-8pm

V. Presentations

Chad – Spirits Tavern—Not able to attend. Recently moved into area.

Rachael Mirowitz from Red Line—14.5 mile light rail line; stations being planned now. Fleet and Broadway station will be underground. Will be community meetings in May about what will work in this area.

Q: What is timeline for project? A: Number of years. Waiting for federal funding and arranging engineering study. Construction to begin between 20016 and 20018. After preliminary engineering, then apply for federal money.

Q: When will federal funds be available? A: Competition with other projects in Maryland. Federal funds would be for 50%; state cover the rest.

Q: Would this light rail be faster than current one? A: That is the goal. Cars today are smaller, sleeker, and will be able to move faster. Q: One track or two? A: Two tracks.

Q: Is this going to happen, or can it be stopped? Doesn't connect with other transportation systems, and taxpayers

are going to have to pay for this.

More questions. Alana Ridge stopped discussion for time constraints. Presenter gave contact information.

Association has invited all mayoral candidates to our meetings.

Otis Rolley – Mayoral Candidate

He is not a politician. He is city planner with masters in city planning from MIT. Has long career working in city for development. Worked on master plan. Worked on transition team and was chief of staff for Mayor Dixon. Was CEO of Maryland Transportation Authority and organized groups to get funds for public transportation system. He is father of three, happily married. Works downtown at Urban Policy Development. Needed to leave government to run for mayor. Working now in education to fix schools, neighborhoods and businesses.

Wants to run for office because Baltimore has inspired him, and politics have frustrated him. Grew up in inner city. Was grateful for Jesuit program that gave him academic enrichment when he attended one of the worst high schools in the city. Baltimore residents work hard, and city is not living up to its potential. With all its neighborhoods, Baltimore is an amazing city, but is undervalued. Wants to do what is best for people of Baltimore rather than best for politicians. Given our economic reality, we need someone who can be CEO, CFO, etc. of the city. Why not elect someone who has lived and worked in the city and knows the city? Wants neighborhood revitalization, education reform, economic development. Services from city government should be open, not dependent on money and importance of customer. No excuse for lack of respect, even if not able to do the job. Wants to create customer service that is respectful and honest. Training, not more money, can fix this. Wants to televise all government meetings, so residents can view on television. Board of Estimates meets every other Wednesday, but there is a mini-meeting before, where issues are decided before regular meeting. He would stop this.

Opened up presentation for questions.

Q: Education: Impression of Alonzo. For or against his direction? A: Values education; has been pleased with his direction. More needs to be done, but what he has accomplished in three years is impressive and indicated what Baltimore is capable of. Wants to see sustainability in his programs—less about him and more about a system that is effective. Now focus is on him as figurehead.

Q: Property taxes? A: Part of his neighborhood revitalization strategy. How to deal with vacant properties and their drain on taxpayers. Acquisition programs don't have enough funds. But raising property taxes doesn't work. Suggests charter amendment; lowering property taxes; introducing incentives for purchase of vacant properties. If taxes are higher for vacant properties, then owners will be moved to sell and make more available for rehab.

Q: City government and agencies? When Fells Prospect tries to get something done with the city, personnel is inefficient, but no one wants to get rid of these people. A: He is not supported by powers in city government. He made changes in Planning by talking with personnel and making decisions about who to keep. Would have no problems with making personnel changes, but wants efficient staff.

Q: What can the new mayor do to make union contracts more able to work with the city? A: Most of his problems with unions weren't with union agreements but with managers. He would work to negotiate best contracts for workers and city.

Q: How can Baltimore keep people from leaving? Taxes are driving people out. A: We won't be Detroit; have a diversified economy. Have lost population through high taxes, environment bad for businesses. Very good for nonprofit, but bad for profit businesses. Need to refocus on economic development. Need for focus on areas of job development. Work to attract small and mid-size startup businesses. Get colleges and universities to train people for these businesses; should work in symbiotic relationships with the colleges and universities in the city.

Q: Crime and police? A: Problems may have resulted with trying to do more with less in police. Screening at hiring of police needs to be more effective. People no longer feel connected with community. Need to rebuild relationships. Police knew that 300 people were doing the majority of murders. Have focused on them, and that has been effective. Need to focus on quality of life, too.

Q: Last three administrations have focused on 10-year plan to end homelessness. Have received much grant money to end homelessness, but have not been effective. Feelings that city is pandering to homeless at the expense of taxpayers. A: Pandering is due to lack of accountability. Dollars spent on scattershot low-income housing, but did not

change lives of residents or change the neighborhoods. To deal with homelessness, must focus on creating wealth through jobs rather than supporting poverty. Too much concentration of services in certain neighborhoods, should be spread out more evenly in city.

Q: Property taxes: How do we reduce them without cutting services? A: False argument is that we need to raise taxes to reduce deficit. Can't do that until city attracts businesses and deals with vacant properties. Lower property taxes except on vacants; give breaks for rehabs, and money will come in from recordations and permits, etc.

Q: Jim Kraft spoke about budget. A: Mayor creates budget, but City Council members are afraid to challenge Mayor. Mayor must present a balanced budget, so deficit results from not meeting that projection. He would readjust agencies. Management in some is top-heavy. He would bring staff on board that would be knowledgeable. Go to www.otisrolley.com. Election is September 13.

Comment from Mary Beth Lennon: Baltimore can make changes happen, and residents can make them happen.

Comment from Alana: Received letter from city apologizing for inconvenience. Thanks to Jack Young and others who helped.

Want to help with City Cleanup, email Victor.

Q: Fliers about cleanup? A: Can do.

Raffle: Winner for \$25 gift certificate for Salt.

VI. Adjourn: Meeting was adjourned at 9:07 pm