

College Gardens Civic Association

816 Fordham Street
Rockville, Maryland 20850
www.collegegardens.org

COLLEGE GARDENS CIVIC ASSOCIATION (CGCA) MEETING MINUTES, March 4, 2008

Mark Pierzchala, President, College Gardens Civic Association, convened the meeting at the Senior Center by introducing the CGCA officers. He mentioned that he cannot run again for president because of the term limitations; two 2-year terms are the maximum for any officer. He requested anyone interested in any of the four positions, President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer, to contact him. Two of the current officers have expressed willingness to serve again. Mike Phillips, Vice President, is searching for volunteers.

Mark introduced a special guest, Erica Leatham, Attorney for Combined Properties. Combined Properties owns College Plaza.

Mark said that about 95 % of College Gardens Homeowners have paid for the directory (this makes them official members of the CGCA).

Sue Van Grack stated that the CGFCA account has \$8009.60, of which \$1000 is dedicated to a pond study. There is difficulty getting someone willing to conduct this study. The question was raised about the reason for this study if the pond will be rebuilt. The reason is to understand the pond and its biology and to get a footprint of it, especially to be able to answer questions such as "How does the new pond compare against this pond?"

Someone asked why this meeting could not be held at the new College Gardens Elementary School. The school is not ready for meetings. For example, no posters are allowed on the walls yet. It takes about two years for the dust to settle.

The Spring Social on March 15 will be at the Glenview Mansion. About 50 people so far have bought tickets. The last social was in 2002. The sponsor, John McKee who is celebrating his 50th wedding anniversary that evening, is paying for the rent, the band, and the food. Two Girl Scout troops will help with the event and will receive the proceeds from the ticket sales. Mark has explored the alcohol issue and there will be wine and beer, with donations accepted.

Someone asked how to stop delivery of The Examiner to his house. There is a phone number on p. 2 to call to stop delivery.

The rest of the meeting was devoted to two related topics, the new zoning for Rockville and the redevelopment of College Plaza.

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RORZOR. Mark presented his testimony to the RORZOR (Rockville's zoning planning commission) that had not yet been approved by the general membership of the CGCA. There was a section-by-section review of the testimony. The membership agreed with most of the testimony except for (1) the CGCA would work with Combined Properties to define a new mixed-use zone for College Plaza, and (2) the CGCA would make a more definitive statement with respect to the definition of a 'family unit'.

He also asked for several people to form a committee to work with Combined Properties.

COLLEGE PLAZA Combined Properties will eventually redevelop College Plaza. Under RORZOR, the plaza would have mixed-use designation, meaning a combination of office, commercial, and residential. Combined Properties proposed MXCD – corridor district with higher density. Mark proposed MXNC- neighborhood center in a letter to the RORZOR committee and currently the MXNC designation is in the draft. But Combined Properties notes that this would mean some current buildings (the tile store, KFC) would be non-conforming. They can exist under the zoning but any renovation would require meeting the new zoning. The CGCA does want the plaza redeveloped but the issue is how to do it. After much discussion about height limitations, residential density, parking, safety, lighting, entry/exit safety, neighborhood services, public facilities, tree preservations, and other items, it was decided that a small group of people should take these concerns and work out a reasonable approach to the zoning to satisfy the CGCA. The following points were agreed by the membership:

- No towering buildings
- Tallest structures should be as far as possible from Rutgers
- Some residential is okay, but not high-density residential
- No industrial
- The neighborhood is prepared to be flexible on retail uses
- There should be adequate parking
- There should be walkable neighborhood shopping, especially from Yale Village and Scarborough Square
- Rutgers should be only residential
- Lighting cannot affect the neighborhood adversely
- Adequate exit and entry for traffic.
- Existing uses in College should be conforming.

Erica Leatham noted that it would take 4 or 5 story buildings to support the parking. The ideal would be to have the tall buildings close to Rt 355 but the zoning does not permit this. Members suggested that we work a new "zone." Other parts of the city facing similar issues may like this new "zone." Mark will send information about his topic and the need for a small group to sign up, take the general principles (topics identified in above paragraph) and work them into something definitive. They should let the Planning Commission know we are working on this matter.

Beyond College Plaza, other topics concerning RORZOR within College Gardens concern accessory apartments and accessory structures.

Accessory apartments: These are handled in the same way in the RORZOR draft as in the current zoning ordinance. For example, now, boarding (not separate kitchen facilities is allowed). Proposals for accessory apartments must go through an appeals process.

Definition of family unit: Mark proposes lowering the number of unrelated adults living in a house. There was some discussion of limiting this number to “3”, but it was pointed out by Mike Phillips that this would not pass if this number is lower than the current zoning definition. Therefore the membership agreed that the number of unrelated adults should not be any higher than at present (i.e., it should not be increased.)

Accessory Structures: There was considerable discussion of this issue. Any new structures can take only so much of the yard for both visual and economic impact. 10 to 12% of the backyard may be used and the water impact must be considered. All the logic is explained in his testimony. In the end, nothing was changed on this issue from the testimony published in the March 1 newsletter that was distributed to all single-family homes.

Home-based businesses: Mark explained that people in any home-based business may be required to keep a log of how many people visit their house every day.

Political Signs: In the letter that the CGCA will send to the Planning Commission, there will be the recommendation that political signs not be allowed to be displayed until 30 days before the election. This represents a return to previous practice. This was proposed by Bill Hickman.

The meeting was adjourned