

Hillcrest Community Civic Association
Monthly Meeting
April 5, 2003

Minutes

Pastor Senger opened the meeting at 10:02 am. Following a reading by Chaplain Hawkins on the arrival of spring, the minutes of the March meeting were read and approved on voice vote.

Lieut. Sims reported increases in robberies, assaults, and burglaries, but one fewer stolen auto. He urged caution about police impersonators doing carjackings. In response to a question about Lieut. Sims' assignments to non-neighborhood duties, Capt. Dixon said he is part of the Civil Disturbance Unit covering protests downtown, but has the majority of his hours in the Sixth District. He said that 5 officers are on duty in PSA 610 on the midnight shift. Lieut. Sims introduced Officer Mason, who is on special detail to do public outreach. Vince Spaulding requested more enforcement on illegal signs. Dennis Logan said citizens need to be more pro-active, especially by locking their cars against theft.

Faye Lyles announced the Crab Feast for September 13, with tickets increasing to \$40 due to rises in crab prices. Information Chair Poteat introduced Safeway Manager Steve Gray, and asked for volunteers to help get the newsletter out. Marvin Bowser introduced the Garden Tour committee and said that tickets for the June 14th event, covering 32nd and 33rd Streets ("Old Hillcrest") would be \$10. Membership Chair Gloria Logan reported 387 active households, but only 121 with paid-up dues.

Anne Beers Principal Anthony Fears thanked HCCA members for their attendance at the March 7 open house, and said that Beers was the only DCPS school to be a first-place winner in the Interdistrict Science Fair.

Public Safety Chair Ed Wilhelm reported on the mediation meeting regarding Clancy's, whose owner said that every patron is frisked. He invited support at the upcoming hearing. He also discussed the Family Radio Service, which can provide communications in case of emergencies, and asked members to sign up for an informational meeting.

Vince Spaulding reported that a contractor has been selected for the new Rec Center, and construction should start this month. He also requested support for the upcoming zoning meeting at which the new Parks and Recreation regs will be discussed. Environment Chair Phil Hammond distributed a new Tip Sheet on a hazardous waste collection event at Carter Barron on April 12. Several Members suggested the District locate it east of the river next time. He also discussed the upcoming neighborhood cleanup on the same date.

Legislative Chair Don Murray distributed a critique done by Kwame Brown of recent Council legislation. He said the Committee will seek quarterly meetings with Councilman Chavous; build coalitions with Ward 8 and at-large Councilmembers; add Hillcrest's voice to citywide issues before the Council; pursue specific interests such as housing, education, and health; and monitor hearings and offer testimony on legislation.

ANC7B chair Kathy Chamberlain said the Commission had sent a letter thanking Safeway for staying open during the snowstorm; that Ron Mitchell, Ward 7 liaison for DCDOT, had convened the Ward 7 ANC chairs in which the HCCA traffic recommendations were relayed. She asked for volunteers for an April 26 cleanup of the Pennsylvania Av area just east of the bridge, which the ANC will publicize with businesses there; and said that the next ANC meeting will address the question of surveillance cameras.

Lucy Murray introduced guest speaker Tom Branham, the City Assessor, who discussed the impact of the District's move from triennial to annual real estate assessments. He said the old values were phased in 1/3 each year, so the result was undervaluation. He said that with 173,000 properties, 8,000 of which change hands annually, the District is concerned about comparability across neighborhoods. Paul Savage raised the question of whether "comparability" should be linked to the presence of community amenities. Mr. Branham said the District uses essentially the same methodology as surrounding communities. John Harrington asked about people being forced out of longtime homes due to assessment increases; Mr. Branham discussed the homestead tax abatement for seniors and other mitigating factors. He informed HCCA members how to check for accurate values on the agency's website (www.cfo.dc.gov), and how to appeal if they believe assessors have erred.

DHCD Director Stan Jackson spoke of the upcoming development at the Anacostia Gateway site, saying he's aiming for an "upscale" mix of retail and commercial uses. The goal, he said, is a "viable, strong, robust" community East of the River.

At-Large Councilmember Phil Mendelson briefly discussed the Council's budget work, saying they were looking for ways of avoiding cuts in libraries, DCRA, and other key activities. In response to a question from Mary Hammond, he said that the new tree bill imposes a fee for cutting of trees over 55" circumference; it's a way to reduce loss of tree cover, but does not apply to sick trees.

Phil Hammond announced that Ward 7 Democrats had elected Vincent Gray as their new leader; and Alice Stewart of the Palisades Association thanked HCCA for its donation to support a reception following the July 12 "Neighbors Through Art" musicale.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:05 pm, with 62 members and guests present.

*Respectfully submitted,
Nelson Smith
Recording Secretary*