

RPCL Joined a Request for Judicial Review of the Overlook at Roland Park PUD

By Chris McSherry

In July 21, Hap Cooper and Chris McSherry met with Mayor Catherine Pugh to ask her to veto the Planned Unit Development (PUD) legislation that was passed by the City Council to allow the construction of the Overlook at Roland Park. The Mayor was not willing to do that and she signed the legislation that same day. We were disappointed because we viewed her as our first and last avenue to change the course of this proposed development.

The neighbors who will be most affected by the construction of that apartment building have filed a lawsuit asking for judicial review of the process used by the City Department of Planning and the City Council in approving the PUD, and the RPCL joined the petition for judicial review, so the matter is not settled yet.

The legislation was proposed by freshman City Councilman Isaac "Yitzy" Schleifer immediately after he was sworn in to the City Council. He had rushed the PUD legislation through



CIVIC LEAGUE UPDATE

the Planning Department and the City Council at such a record pace that the RPCL was not aware of its details until the eve of it passing the City Council.

Although PUDs are supposed to be used for the benefit of the community, this one wasn't even reviewed by Roland Park or Mount Washington, two adjacent communities that will be significantly affected. We lobbied aggressively to delay the legislation so that we could weigh in on the proposed development, but no one in the City Council was willing to push that for us. The City Council has a tradition of "Councilmanic Courtesy," whereby land use legislation in a particular council member's district will not be questioned or resisted by other council members.

In light of the City Council's tradition of deferring to the member in whose district the development stands, there was no actual review of this proposed PUD. We are hopeful that the Circuit Court will overturn the legislation, because the Planning Department failed to notify the surrounding communities or consider the impact on them, and because the City Council failed to exercise the required "quasi-judicial review." ❖

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Temporary Signs The Dos and Don'ts in Baltimore City

In this difficult political climate, many of us have expressed ourselves by placing signs on our lawns stating our support for a number of causes. Some are about the environment, immigration, racial justice and other political and social issues. While we do all have the right to express ourselves, these signs are not permitted according to the Baltimore City Zoning Code.

Although it is unlikely that the City will come to Roland Park to enforce these provisions of the Zoning Code, it is the law of our City and we should all try to follow it. Our community prides itself on its bucolic atmosphere, and the proliferation of signs around the neighborhood detracts from that beauty. Please be aware that sign clutter can be a nuisance to your neighbors.

Historically, Baltimore City has allowed temporary signs in connection with community development events and political signs, if removed promptly after the event, and has prohibited all other "yard-type" signs. The current Zoning Article 32 of the Baltimore City Code (the "Zoning Code"), effective June 5, 2017, follows those historical prohibitions.

The Baltimore City Zoning Code, Section 17-607 states that

"Portable signs are prohibited." Section 17-102(s) defines a portable sign as follows: "Portable sign means a sign whose principal supporting structure is intended, by design and

construction, to rest on the ground for support and may be easily moved or relocated for reuse.”

Signs for community development events or political signs are permitted if promptly removed after the event. Section 17-513(a) states as follows:

(a) In general.

Temporary signs in connection with community development events, non-commercial health, art, safety, and welfare campaigns, and political signs, are exempt from sign permit requirements, subject to the following regulations.

(b) Private property only.

(1) These signs may only be posted on private property and only with the permission of the property owner.

(2) Posting on any public property is prohibited.

(c) Prompt removal.

The sponsoring organization must remove temporary signs in connection with community development events, non-commercial health, art, safety, and welfare campaigns promptly at the conclusion of the event or campaign.

Section 17-102(r) defines a non-commercial or political sign as follows: “Non-commercial or political sign means a sign advocating action on a public issue or a candidate for public office.” ❖

LANDSCAPE COMMITTEE UPDATE

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to remedy the wet zone in the bowl section of the upper end of the park. This wet zone cannot be mowed, so the Committee is looking to plant local sedges and rushes to stabilize the area.

The ash trees planted in the grassy median on Cold Spring Lane continue to be monitored for signs of decline. Treatment for ash borer disease was applied in the spring, but unfortunately, a few more trees have since declined. In conjunction with the Department of Forestry, the dead and dying trees will be removed and replaced with *Nyssa sylvatica*, commonly known as black gum. The black gum is native to Maryland, a medium sized deciduous tree that is similar in size and shape to the ash tree. The Committee believes the two species will complement each other and that the new plantings will greatly improve the appearance and health of the Cold Spring corridor.

Many neighbors will have noticed (and hopefully used) the attractive new black bench in front of Eddie’s on Roland Avenue. The bench is a gift to the community from the Roland Park Community Foundation, to replace a city bench previously in that location. Many thanks to Eddie’s owner Nancy Cohen for her assistance and support with this project.

Finally, I would like to request that homeowners contact me at krculotta@msn.com if they notice stumps remaining in the verge following a tree removal by the City. I am currently compiling a clean-up list to turn in to the City. ❖

Pedestrian Safety on the Falls Road and Cold Spring Corridor

On November 7, RPCL representatives and two members of the Landscape Committee attended a meeting held at Poly to discuss concerns over traffic speed and pedestrian safety on the Falls Road and Cold Spring corridor. The meeting focused on improving pedestrian safety on Falls Road and DOT representatives gave a presentation on the planned installation of a new crosswalk linking the shops and bus stops on the east side of Falls Road to the school campuses on the west side. The new crosswalk, expected to be installed in summer 2018, will be surrounded by three 12-foot-wide medians.

We will provide future updates on this project through the Roland Park list-serv and online at rolandpark.org.



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