

## Minutes of Civic League Monthly Board Meeting

Wednesday, November 3, 2021

Hybrid: Zoom & in person at 4801 Roland Ave., Roland Park Presbyterian

Attending: Claudia Diamond, Mary Kay Battafarano, Ed Goodlander, David Blumberg, Steve Ralston, Ann Barron Carneal, Ken Rice, Martha Holleman, and John Morrel. Via Zoom: Patricia Carroll, Andy Niazy, Bobby Marinelli, Margaret Black, and Tom Hoen. Absent: Rachel Dawson, and Rita Walters.

### 1. Routine Business

- a. President Claudia Diamond called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.
- b. Draft minutes from October's meeting were **approved**.
- c. At-Large Plat Rep. candidates: Raman Tallamraju, Alisya Davis and David Fitzpatrick were introduced by Ed Goodlander and **approved**.
- c. *In Our Community*: Claudia highlighted our local Fire Station, followed by Ann Barron who asked for volunteer/s to lead the effort in creating an online calendar schedule where local residents can sign up to provide holiday meals for the firefighters. Steve Ralston accepted.
- d. RPCL Speaker Series at the Enoch Pratt Library is tomorrow night at 6:30PM with City Administrator, Chris Shorter. RSVP in advance to Julie Johnson, Librarian.

### 2. New Business

- a. Claudia introduced guest speakers attending via Zoom, Paul Plymouth (Paul) of Verizon and Matt DeSantis (Matt) of City Planning who join us concerning the **5G cell nodes planned for installation in Roland Park** (and citywide). She thanked Joel and Mary DePalma for bringing this to our attention last month, and confirmed that as planned our written request to pause all activity was issued to the City October 9th.
- b. An initial announcement was then made by Matt indicating the proposed location at Kenwood and Hawthorne has in recent weeks been revisited by City Planning who now objects to the site based on reduced tree canopy. An alternative site will be selected.
- c. 600 installations exist, of various shapes and sizes in all types of neighborhoods, even adjacent to historic structures. The City remains supportive of wireless deployment.
- d. Paul presented a PowerPoint, showing 2 small cell configurations: the wood utility pole and a cobra head metal street light. There are currently 9 on-air and an additional 9 planned, pending construction. This low powered cell equipment

is meant to provide relief to network congestion by working together and in tandem with larger towers. Spacing between each small cell site ranges from 300 to 800 ft.

- e. Claudia shared 3 categories of concerns recently raised by residents: aesthetics, health & safety, as well as property values; reminding all that jurisdiction over this project may reside with the City, State or Federal government, not the Civic League.
- f. David Witkowski (DW), a telecommunications expert specializing in electromagnetics and radio frequency, attended remotely from CA. He was referred by a neighbor aware of his recent work with cities and industry, bringing scientific rationality to this type of meeting. His main message: the low signals emitted by 5G cell nodes have no measured effect on the human body. He cited tens of thousands of studies, waves' inability to penetrate walls or glass, and <5% of allowable exposure per FCC guidance.
- g. A question and answer session occurred over 30 minutes, see details on pages 2-3..
- h. Claudia concluded the 5G discussion, recognizing a fourth community concern: process. She acknowledged agreement amongst those present tonight that in the future the process works better for all of us. Finally, confirming her role in leading the RPCL Project Approval Process required before our Board takes a position on this matter, she mentioned it will again appear on our next meeting's agenda (12/1/21).

### **3. Committees**

- a. Transportation - Mary Kay shared an update on the Falls Rd/Northern Parkway Study, a joint letter drafted this week by adjacent neighborhood associations lobbying for CIP funds to be awarded in the next month so the recommended work may begin in 2022. It was suggested that the study link again be posted on our website.
- b. Landscape Committee of Community Foundation- Kathy Hudson offered the planting of Zelkova trees in our medians decades ago as an example where process can work with City. More recently, in the last 3 years there has been a standing request for pruning their dead wood. Kate Culotta is creating a dead tree inventory for those in the public space, i.e. verge; please contact her to add any near you. The City has informed us they will not replace the two stolen benches from Roland Ave., it's possible the Community Foundation will fund their replacement.
- c. Master Plan- in followup to our recent education efforts relative to local Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Martha suggests that next comes action. She'll be exploring possibilities with others who've expressed interest and report back.

- d. Roads & Maintenance, Architectural Review Board(ARB)-John Morrel thanked Tom Carlson for many years of leadership and service as his term expires this month. Pat Ward was then approved by unanimous vote to fill the At-Large position on ARB.
- e. Ed Goodlander reminded Board Members to retrieve our meeting reminder signs tonight or tomorrow.

**4. Adjournment** The meeting was adjourned at 9:10PM.

This meeting was recorded, video posted on our website: rolandpark.org

**Addendum-Q&A Outline 7:50-8:20**

submitted by Mary Kay Battafarano, Secretary RPCL

- Shira Robinson, a neighbor, shared fears of negative health effects from electromagnetic fields in close proximity to residences, supported by a recent New Hampshire Study whose written overview she circulated to those attending. Her question/s: how do we know that Verizon and the City are looking out for our best interests? And, what is to be gained or lost by expanding the 5G network?
- DW responded pointing to the number and quality of studies within the whole body of scientific evidence. He referenced hedonic analysis of property values that indicate an upward trend due to connectivity. Concluding by recalling resistance and anxiety when other new technology was introduced: i.e. electric power/lighting, and microwave ovens .
- Andreas Andreou, a JHU Scientist who experiences poor cell connectivity in his nearby residence spoke. He acknowledged emf sensitivity concerns but advised cell phones held close to our bodies are more dangerous than 5G nodes.
- Several present asked if Verizon and the City are committed to following the Design/Aesthetic Requirements for Small Wireless Facilities eff. 3/28/19; neither Paul or Matt responded directly. Instead they identified a “fast track” when all elements are met and an in-depth review where exceptions are permissible.
- A question was raised about city revenue generated by this arrangement. Paul clarified that municipal fees are capped by the FCC, so Verizon pays BCDOT a nominal franchise licensing fee plus \$270 per pole annually.

- David Blumberg challenged earlier statements about increased property value due to cell connectivity, because of recent trends upwards for other reasons.
- Kathy Hudson asked if the community can have some say in site selection and knowledge of it. Paul offered the on-air sites in the area as examples of tight wiring. Matt stated that tree trimming, wiring and trenching require wireless applicants to obtain city permits and undergo review. The points of contact for daily communications were identified as Verizon's Sara Callahan and City Planning's Cedrick Lee. Contractors are hired to perform the installation work.
- Kathy then asked if trees will interfere with 5G and require pruning, which Matt replied is not usually the case but if on private property will involve the owner. However, neighbors present spoke of observing advance pruning by unmarked trucks. Outstanding grass replacement at Oakdale & Roland was brought to Matt's attention; he stated that will occur in due course by contractors.
- Lisa Davis raised the possibility of other carriers sharing infrastructure, which Paul informed us is not planned. He also mentioned Verizon's long term goal is to introduce 5G speeds for home use.
- Paul responded to several questions about pole replacement and positioning. Verizon is taking the opportunity to replace older poles as they install nodes, and if warranted shifting within a few feet to accommodate other infrastructure. Alley locations are not feasible for two reasons: negotiating with individual property owners would be required as the BGE easement does not extend and off street locations are not as useful in responding to coverage goals.
- Joel DePalma reminded us that unlike cell phones which can be turned off, the nodes remain on 24/7/365. He then asked several rhetorical questions: how do Verizon's coverage goals fit with our community's goals, will there be more poles installed by other carriers, and why were City guidelines not followed for the location in front of his home but rather based on tree canopy as an exception?
- Steve Ralston, Plat 2 Rep. questioned how the Board will research this complex matter. Claudia explained that tonight we listen and educate ourselves, this according to our bylaws. Mary Kay added clarification that additional steps will follow as outlined in the RPCL Project Approval Process established 2018.
- Joel DePalma reported being told by Verizon that individuals have no standing, but Councilwoman Middleton advised him she'll listen to the Civic League.

- John Morrel asked about the possibility of additional Verizon small cell locations being added in the future, Paul indicated under the current build plan through 2022, Verizon could add 1 or 2 more locations based on demand.
- If there are changes to the 5G plans in the future, City Planning and Transportation departments will be involved in plan review and permitting.
- Notice is provided by posting a flyer on each pole (or staked at site) for 2 weeks.
- Is there a citywide Plan for introducing public technology with community input? None in place per Matt, due to changing administrations and limited staff.
- Matt explained that Section 106 review performed by Maryland Historic Trust (MHT), as the designated State Historic Preservation Organization (SHPO), rarely alters local decisions. Paul added that the submission typically occurs after public notice as a “request for concurrence”, if no local objections were raised; but a wood utility pole with a single light does not require 106 review.