

## June 2010 CPCA Elections

Yes, Gabe Fineman is not running in the June 2010 CPCA elections. There are basically two reasons.

### First, and less important, I will lose

That has never stopped me before. From the Youth March for Integrated Education (<http://tinyurl.com/22kwug2>) 50 years ago, to my recent attempts to have the CPCA follow its own rules, I try and do what is right rather than what is popular. This time the deck was stacked against me.

It was clear to me that without a slate to run with and with a short campaign window (one month instead of three) there was little hope of getting an appreciable turnout for the election. Last time with posters on every pole and banks of phone people, only a little more than half voted. If 20% vote this time, I will be amazed. I wanted a longer campaign window and had pressed since December for a way to reach the majority of voters not on the Listserv that I had started, but was rebuffed in my attempts to get the street addresses of the members so I could mail to them in March and April or go and talk to them on weekends. Instead of telling me that the CPCA would not follow the DC law (<http://tinyurl.com/26lacun>), the Executive Board dithered and even delayed several months to hold a 'survey' that was not about obeying the law or releasing the street addresses under a confidentiality agreement, but about issuing a directory with email addresses and phone numbers.

I met with the Nominations Committee (being slated would assure election) and was rejected because I was not a team player. That is, I told them that if the Executive Committee reached some major decision that I disagreed with, I would continue to work to change the minds of the Membership. I suppose that is the basic philosophical disagreement I have with the current leadership. I believe that we should follow the current rules until they are changed and not simply pick and choose which ones to follow. The most basic of those rules is that the CPCA is a grass roots organization run by direct democracy. Section IV of the Constitution (<http://tinyurl.com/27ph53d>) says that all actions of the Executive Committee must be put to the membership for approval (or rejection) at the next meeting. This has never happened under this Executive Committee. They want a 'team player' that will accept decisions of the Executive Committee as final and never to be questioned. That is not me and I did not conceal my views from them.

Some people think it was Machiavellian or petty for them to slate Jeff Davis for the same post (Recording Secretary) that I had announced for. I considered it amusing and to be expected. Jeff and I worked together on the Giant Foods revitalization of Wisconsin Avenue and ran on the Reform Slate ([www.ReformSlate.com](http://www.ReformSlate.com)) in the last election and I would have to run for another slot for which I was less suited.

## Second, and more important, I am losing hope

When I committed to myself to improve the CPCA last year, I viewed it as a multi-year project that would see improvement every year. The Listserv was central and designed to foster better communications between members and engage them in CPCA issues. The Listserv now has a large membership (about a third of the total CPCA membership) but the participation level has dropped with only about 35 people posting anything at all since the last election. That is about how many people come to meetings that average 25-30 per meeting.

The Reform Slate had hoped to jumpstart participation in the organization with open committees and virtual participation through committee Listservs. That is still planned by people like Suzie Taylor, but hers is the only open committee (allowing non-CPCA members to participate) and the virtual part has not happened yet. Instead, the other committees (like Governance) were closed and only allowed comments on their conclusions. It is part of the fundamental difference between the two slates last year. Reform wanted wide input and an open process with decision making from the bottom up and Unity wanted wide input and a closed process with decision making from the top down. See <http://tinyurl.com/36duawa>. It now seems as though the few people that attend meetings and vote agree with the top down process.

I was particularly disappointed when one person near me at the last meeting said that she disagreed with something but would vote for it anyway since the Executive Committee had gone to a lot of trouble to formulate it. I was particularly disappointed that I had to introduce two motions to require the organization follow its own rules: (a) to allow new business at every meeting; and (b) that actions taken by the Executive Committee be actually put to a vote as required (see above) by the constitution. And I was particularly discouraged when both were voted down by at least a two to one vote. I now expect that if I were actually elected to the Executive Committee, it would never meet again when I was present and that all decisions would be made by the other members without my input.

Many people have told me that I am wasting my time with what is really a club for 30-50 home owners on Newark and surrounding streets that get to play with the dues of almost a thousand others and pretend to represent all of Cleveland Park. I do not believe that my time is wasted. I believe that the Listserv stands ready to energize the organization in the next controversy. I believe that the Podcasts of the meetings allow many more members to see what happens at the meetings than just the few that attend. I believe that absentee and remote voting will have to come to prevent the organization from withering to the few that attend meetings. I believe that the CPCA can play a vital part in improving our neighborhood. It will just have to do so without me as an officer.

-Gabe Fineman  
Porter Street