

THE NORTHWEST CURRENT

Association seeks unity after voting

By **BRADY HOLT**
Current Correspondent

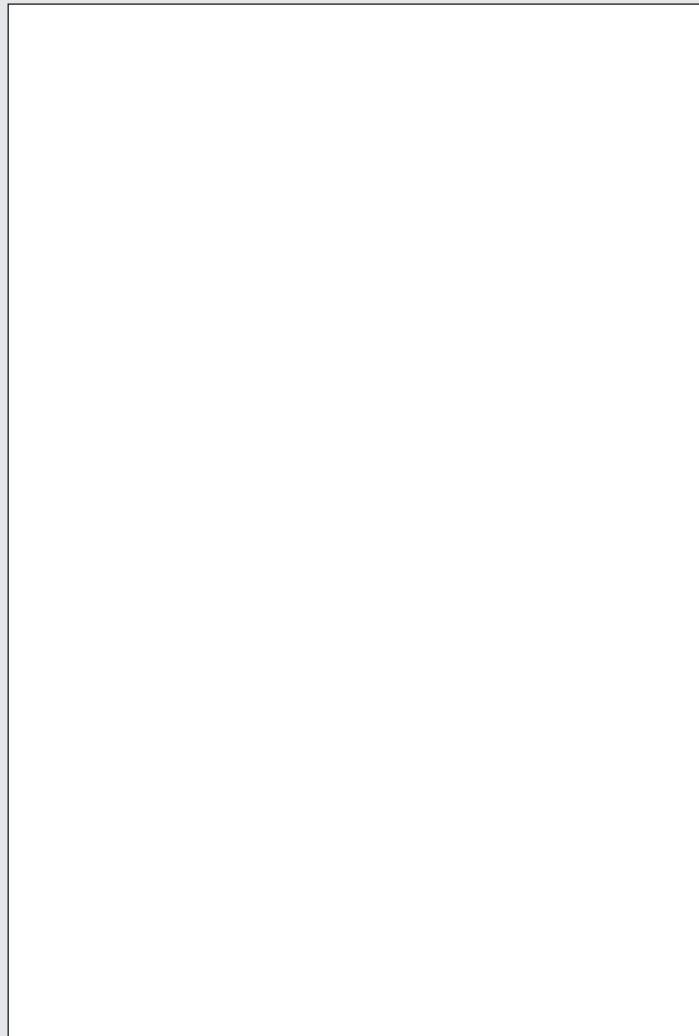
A week after the Cleveland Park Citizens Association's election, the new president said he hopes to bring together a membership that is newly invigorated but still sharply divided over development issues.

John Chelen won the presidential post last Tuesday 258-213, as his seven-member "Unity" slate swept the opposing "Reform" slate in the citizens association's first contested election. He is now faced with incorporating the opinions of the substantial minority that opposed his group.

Despite the urging of several candidates, fewer than half of the 471 voters picked every Unity candidate. Around 230 voted for the full Unity slate, around 150 voted for every Reform candidate, and the rest either chose candidates from each slate or made no selection for some positions. Chelen won by the election's narrowest margin.

"We have to recognize that there are big differences in opinion," Chelen said. "We can't gloss over the fact that people want change. None of us wants to have this unhappy discordant group of people."
See **Election**/Page 10

A COMMUNITY QUILT



Bill Petros/The Current

Virginia artist Judith Busby visits the panel she contributed to a community quilt during a recent opening event at the Textile Museum. See story, page 19.

Agency readies study of Klinge Road trail

■ **Transportation:** Doubts linger about future of roadway

By **ELIZABETH WIENER**
Current Staff Writer

Nearly two decades after a short stretch of Klinge Road was closed to car traffic, the city is deciding exactly how to turn the eroded pavement that runs through Rock Creek Park into a hiker-biker trail.

The District Department of Transportation will host a "public scoping" meeting tonight at the National Zoo's Visitor Center. The

purpose is to take comments on a pending environmental assessment of the project, required before the federal government approves and helps fund what is now being called the "Klinge Valley multipurpose trail."

The assessment must consider alternative uses for the trail and their impacts on land use, historic resources, storm water, erosion, and — of course — transportation.

If the review is accepted by the Federal Highway Administration, the federal government will pony up 80 percent of the project's cost. The
See **Klinge**/Page 20

Years in the planning, Fort Reno fields debut

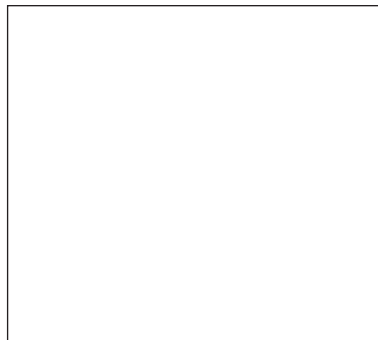
■ **Parks:** Tenleytown complex includes baseball, soccer fields

By **IAN THOMS**
Current Staff Writer

Mayor Adrian Fenty last week unveiled new \$2.2 million athletic fields at Fort Reno Park in Tenleytown, marking completion of a project more than a decade in the making and giving local schools and sports leagues sorely needed options for games and practices.

After numerous false starts and years of jurisdictional wrangling, the city finally broke ground on the project last fall. Over the next 12 months, the D.C. Department of Parks and Recreation oversaw the construction of a 90-foot baseball diamond, a full-size soccer field, and a small practice soccer field that can be split into two soccer fields for players under age 6.

"There's a great sense of relief," Ward 3 Council member Mary Cheh said in an interview. "Years ago, when I used to coach my girls in soccer ... and I'd go to Montgomery County, I'd almost drool when I saw



Matt Petros/The Current

Players from Wilson High School and sports leagues joined Mayor Adrian Fenty and Council member Mary Cheh for the ribbon-cutting.

the kinds of fields they could plan out there. Now, we have the types of fields that would be the envy of anyone."

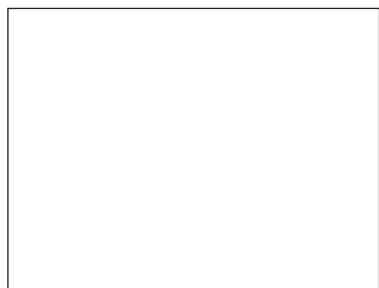
The formal effort to renovate the athletic fields at Fort Reno began in 1995. After about eight years of negotiations, the city was able to convince the National Park Service to turn over management of 9.8 acres of the 45-acre federal park. The next five years were lost to inaction and planning.
See **Fields**/Page 28

Wilson High mulls modernization designs

By **JESSICA GOULD**
Current Staff Writer

Members of the Wilson High School community reviewed plans for a modernized campus Thursday, expressing excitement about the prospect of upcoming improvements, while peppering facilities director Allen Lew with questions about wheelchair accessibility and the wisdom of adaptive reuse of the original building in its entirety.

Parents have long called for an overhaul of the circa-1935 school, where paint peels off the bathroom walls, ergonomic machines line the hallways, and wheelchair lifts fail to function. Acoustics in



Courtesy of Cox Graae + Spack

Plans include a sky-lit atrium at the school's center.

the auditorium are so poor that attendees at Thursday's meeting had difficulty hearing the presentation.

"This is desperately needed, folks," principal Pete Cahall said, straining to be heard. "We're trying to give students a first-world education in a Third World facility."

Now, after years of waiting, plans seem to be moving forward.

In June, officials announced the selection of Cox Graae + Spack Architects to oversee the school's redesign.

The plans, chosen from a pool of 21 submitted, feature a four-story, sky-lit atrium at the school's center, a
See **Wilson**/Page 21

NEWS

■ **Zoning Commission agrees to re-examine Giant provision.** Page 9.
■ **Union objects as D.C. teachers receive pink slips.** Page 3.



SPORTS

■ **Sidwell Friends boys soccer still undefeated in league.** Page 17.
■ **St. John's cruises in home opener against Paul VI.** Page 17.



PASSAGES

■ **All Souls Episcopal blesses the animals.** Page 19.
■ **St. Albans School celebrates centennial.** Page 19.



INDEX

Business/9	Passages/19
Calendar/30	Police Report/6
Classifieds/45	Real Estate/23
District Digest/4	School Dispatches/36
Exhibits/35	Service Directory/40
In Your Neighborhood/24	Sports/17
Opinion/14	Theater/34

KLINGLE

From Page 1

federal government could also decide to require a more detailed environmental impact statement, according to local transportation officials.

The environmental assessment is the latest chapter in a saga that has had more twists and turns than the short 0.7-mile stretch of road, which once linked motorists in wards 1 and 4 with schools, stores and jobs in Ward 3.

That stretch of Klingle, between Porter Street on the east and Cortland Place on the west, was blocked off because of severe erosion in 1991, a time when the city lacked funds to fix it. It has been the subject of controversy ever since.

Proponents of reopening the road said it provided a vital link between neighborhoods east and west of the park and that its closure increased congestion on other east-west roads. Opponents said the stretch of road carried little traffic and that an environmentally sensitive stream valley through a national park was neither a safe nor sensible place for cars.

The politicians also weighed in. In 2001, then-Mayor Anthony Williams recommended converting the roadbed into a trail. In 2003,

the D.C. Council voted to reopen the road. Then, in May 2008, Ward 3 Council member Mary Cheh got her colleagues to reverse themselves, and they voted to spend funds only on a hiker-biker trail and sorely needed erosion control.

In the meantime, the federal government — and especially the National Park Service — made clear its reluctance to approve an environmental impact statement that would have allowed cars back onto that stretch of Klingle. A draft statement was written, debated, rewritten and even “reformatted” at the federal government’s behest, but it was never formally approved.

The process for the environmental impact statement “was not completed because of council legislation to build a trail,” Transportation Department spokesperson John Lisle said in an e-mail. “The development of a trail is a different type of transportation facility with potentially different impacts [than a road], but data collected for the EIS will be used for the assessment of the trail where possible.”

Whether the “multipurpose trail” is really the end of the road remains to be seen.

Laurie Collins, a leader of the Coalition To Repair and Reopen Klingle Road, said a service road might still be required to service util-



Bill Petros/Current File Photo

Klingle Road has inspired controversy since 1991, when the section through Rock Creek Park closed to cars due to erosion.

ities in the park, and that any hiker-biker trail should be “wide enough to allow for pedestrians, bikes, rollerblades, joggers, strollers, and wheelchairs.”

“If it costs multimillions for a neighborhood hike bike trail, there is an opportunity for the council to rethink the road,” Collins said in an e-mail to The Current. And since the federal government can fund only 80 percent of the

cost, she noted, the project will have to go back to the council to appropriate the other 20 percent.

There are also questions Collins wants answered. Since the land was given to the District in 1885 to be used as a “highway,” she wonders whether it is legal to convert it to a trail. And five houses that were approved for construction on the Tregaron estate that borders the closed portion of Klingle cannot be built without road access, Collins noted.

But Jason Boehm of the Sierra Club’s D.C. chapter, which fought equally fiercely to keep the road closed, believes a hiker-biker trail will indeed be the final outcome.

“The D.C. Council voted overwhelmingly in support of a trail instead of a road through Klingle Valley, so I believe this issue has been decided,” Boehm said. “I don’t think the council has any interest in revisiting this policy decision.”

Lisle said work on the Klingle Valley Trail environmental assessment began in July. He said the department hopes to release the document for public review in the spring and complete the assessment process by next summer.

More information and a complete schedule can be found at klingletrail.com. The scoping meeting will be held at the Visitor Center auditorium from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. tonight.

GIANT

From Page 9

of the grocery store, restaurants or retail.

May was not satisfied with that explanation. “This is not the only grocery store in the area,” said May. “Why is it so difficult to find out what the hours are going to be?”

The Zoning Commission dismissed a request by neighbors to

reconsider parking restrictions. Some neighbors had hoped the commission’s order would include a provision to prohibit the tenants of the development’s planned residential building from participating in the city’s Residential Parking Permit program. But the Zoning Commission said such a requirement lies outside its jurisdiction.

“RPP is out of our jurisdiction, so for me I think it’s off the table,” said Hood.

TRAFFIC

From Page 8

calming.

But Gary Thompson, chair of the Chevy Chase advisory neighborhood commission, said that isn’t the tune Ricks had played for his group. “I don’t know how seven commissioners misunderstood that. I think we all heard the same thing,” Thompson said. “I don’t know what to say except that what she said and what she meant seem to be two different things.”

In June, the Chevy Chase advisory neighborhood commission concluded from Ricks’ presentation on speed humps that her department requires a commission’s approval to install traffic calming.

Later, the Transportation Department angered the Chevy Chase commissioners by installing three speed humps on the 3700 block of Morrison Street without waiting for the commission to study the potential impacts on neighboring parallel streets.

Thompson added that if it is Transportation Department policy not to give the commission a voice on speed humps, he will put pressure on the District’s elected officials to change that policy. “It’s just anti-democratic,” he said. “We’re the ones who live in this neighborhood and drive on the streets. ... We should have some weight in the

process.”

Thompson and other commissioners have long asked the Transportation Department to conduct a broader transportation study of Chevy Chase to have a better understanding of what impact one block’s traffic-calming might have on the neighborhood’s broader network of streets.

Ricks said such a plan is in the works, and that her department will study the entire city in chunks. Once the District has done its large-scale planning, Ricks said, the Transportation Department will be able to examine more systematically the ripple effects of each traffic-calming measure.

But she added that quick speed-hump installation is a necessary stopgap for traffic-weary residents. “The notion would be that these larger plans take quite a bit longer to do. A lot of people don’t want to wait that long,” Ricks said. “They’re feeling very intense needs to solve their problems right now.”

But Thompson said he has become increasingly skeptical of the Transportation Department’s long-term plans.

“Oh, I don’t believe them. It’s just words at this point,” he said. “If they do, then great, but it strikes me right now as something they’re just saying to placate the 90 percent of our community that isn’t happy about this.”

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