

November 29th, 1932

Mrs. M. Alvin Long,  
Corner Lake and Roland Avenues,  
Baltimore, Maryland.

My dear Mrs. Long:

I have a report covering the questions referred to in your letter to me relative to the use of Roosevelt Recreation Center for political speeches.

Under the Ordinance (Ordinance No. 508, 1910), Hampden-Woodberry Neighborhood Association, Inc., was given the privilege (a) of erecting proper building or buildings in West Park, or Hampden Reservoir, and (b) of operating, maintaining and conducting a public recreation center, including therein the aforesaid building or buildings.

The Ordinance gave to the Neighborhood Association the power to promulgate reasonable rules and regulations for the government and control of the Recreation Center, including the buildings, which rules and regulations were required by the Ordinance to be observed by all persons using the premises.

The Ordinance contemplated that the premises, including the buildings, should be used as and for a free public recreation center.

Political discussions have no necessary relationship to recreation activities or uses.

Under the authority vested in it by the Ordinance, therefore, the Neighborhood Association may provide in its rules and regulations that the Recreation Center, including the buildings, shall not be used for political discussions at all. In my opinion, such a regulation is reasonable and within the powers of the Neighborhood Association.

On the other hand, it would be competent to permit the use of the premises for political discussion. In such case, however, it would be unreasonable to discriminate between political discussions by one political party as against political discussions by any other party. If the premises are to be used for political discussions at all, they must be open to all shades of political expression. This is true because the premises are, for such purposes, public property of the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore.