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February 2014

Two Community Meetings About the Virginia Avenue Tunnel

By Monte Edwards

On January 16, over 400 people filled a community meeting at the Department of General Services Building with Mayor Vincent Gray about the proposed Virginia Avenue Tunnel expansion. The crowd overflowed into the hall and entry foyer and others had to be turned away.

The meeting began with prepared statements from concerned neighbors addressing access during construction, safety, public health/pollution, the three- to six-year open trench construction plan, the dangers of a derailment involving hazardous cargo, environmental justice, and the lack of any benefit to DC.

An interesting fact emerged: CSX admitted they are transporting Bakken crude oil through DC. This is the highly volatile crude from North Dakota/Montana fracking that was responsible for 47 fatalities and the destruction of half the town in Lac-Maginet in a train derailment this past summer in Canada. Some observers have speculated that the port in Norfolk, Va., could present a tempting oil-by-rail destination via the Virginia Avenue Tunnel. Such developments would be years away, if they happen at all. For now, CSX's crude oil business is concentrated to

the north, near East Coast refineries and oil transfer hubs such as the Port of Albany in New York.

More than once, Mayor Gray used the term "if the tunnel is rebuilt..." A recurring theme in the questions and the Mayor's response was "where is the benefit to DC for the hardships we are asked to endure?" The Mayor described the hardships that DC endured during the construction of Metro, but emphasized the citywide and regional benefits that resulted. Most comments were focused on the hardships, risks and concerns during the three- to six-year period of reconstruction, but there was some concern expressed about the long-term impacts of the project on restricting the ability to realize the goals and objectives of passenger and commuter rail expansion.

On January 25 Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton held a community meeting about the proposed tunnel expansion. Again, the initial meeting room was unable to hold all of the attendees. EPA was to have attended to explain the long list of deficiencies enumerated in their response to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). But EPA did not show up and Delegate Norton was

furious. To their credit, at least three CSX officials, FHWA and DDOT did show up and answered questions—although not to the audience's liking.

CSX tried to explain that in 2013 there were only three tank cars of Bakken crude shipped through the Virginia Avenue Tunnel. But people began to murmur loudly that they wanted to hear about alternative routing. As a transportation expert in the District, I was able to summarize the need for a second river crossing. CSX countered that this was very

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President's Column: Watershed Moment

By Janet Quigley

The Anacostia Waterfront Initiative (AWI) is an interesting and ambitious project with intimidating numbers and lofty goals. In the 14th year of a 30-year, \$10 billion plan, it is spearheaded by the District and has 19 regional and federal agency partners working on various stages of more than 50 projects. AWI is expected to produce a clean and active river, new riverfront parks, revitalized residential neighborhoods, job opportunities and multi-modal transportation options, and has several accomplishments to date including the 11th Street Bridge.

There are five program areas: Transportation, Environmental, Economic, Community Development and Recreation, led by four DC agencies: the Deputy Mayor for Economic Development, the District Department of Transportation (DDOT), the District Department of the Environment and the Office of Planning. Recreation does not have a dedicated lead agency.

DDOT manages eight transportation projects as part of AWI, five of which directly affect Capitol Hill: 11th St Bridge, the Anacostia Riverwalk Trail, Barney Circle-Southeast Boulevard, Pennsylvania and Potomac Avenues, and the South Capitol Street Corridor project. With AWI, DDOT presented a status report in December that illustrated their considerable progress, but also how important the need is for coordination among the many agencies and projects. CHRS has commented before that the CSX project and the Long Bridge Study would benefit from coordination.

The Good News: Anacostia Riverwalk Trail

Recreation outlets are increasingly important as open space on the Hill decreases while the population grows. The Anacostia Riverwalk Trail is a welcome development for the community. In 2006 I led a muddy bike tour of the budding trail from the Navy Yard to the Fish Market, past Buzzard Point and around the Nationals Stadium construction site. It was a diamond in the rough - minimal signage, patches of dirt and gravel, few bike lanes on the streets. Today, DDOT has completed 12 of 20 miles, with pedestrian bridges over the railroad tracks on the east and west sides of the river. Bugs remain to be worked out, such as bicycle bans in portions and limited access due to 11th Street Bridge construction, but it is encouraging to see how much progress has been made. Extensions to Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens and the National Arboretum, and improvement of the Buzzard Point segment are eagerly anticipated.

Barney Circle and Southeast Boulevards: \$20 Million Roads to Nowhere?

More puzzling is DDOT's proposed revision of Barney Circle and construction of a four-lane, five-block boulevard from 11th Street to the Circle. While the Circle might stand a little updating, and pedestrian access to the riverfront would be welcome, the \$20 million project seems excessive unless the thoroughfare actually extends to or past RFK Stadium—something the neighbors and CHRS have consistently opposed.

DDOT unveiled the first plans for this project in February 2013 at

a community meeting that drew more than 200 residents—the largest turnout since the Kentucky Courts public housing discussions. CHRS supported pedestrian and bicycle connections from L Street to M Street (over/ across the former Southeast Freeway) but expressed concerns about neighborhood cut-throughs, noise and pollution (see *CHRS News*, April 2013).

DDOT returned to the community in November 2013 with revisions. While they heeded some of CHRS and the neighbors' concerns (pedestrian but no vehicular connections at 13th, 14th and 15th Streets, road not immediately adjacent to L Street homes, include lower Kentucky Avenue in the study, allow pedestrian access through the circle), the proposals were still unpalatable. Four Boulevard options were presented: two above grade with underground parking that would accommodate buses; two at grade with parking; two placing the road closer to the river, two farther; all proposing four lanes. (See drawings at www.anacostiawaterfront.org.) Curiously, the pedestrian walkways to the river were wide enough for two lanes of cars. And although the potential for parkland exists, all four proposals showed a disappointing ratio of asphalt to grass.

In December CHRS reiterated to DDOT its support of recreational access, concerns for neighborhood impacts, opposition to bus parking and a park road, and contended that the need has not been shown for this \$20 million project. ANC 6B has recommended DDOT return to the drawing board.

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Capitol Hill Restoration Society (CHRS)

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To reach any of the above, please contact the Society offices at (202) 543-0425 or via e-mail: CapHRS@aol.com.

www.CHRS.org

Celebrating more than 55 years helping to preserve and protect Capitol Hill's residential character, the Society is the largest civic association on Capitol Hill, and one of the largest in the District of Columbia. From the beginning, the Society has played a key role in maintaining the diverse, residential character of our neighborhood. With your participation, we will continue to do so for many years to come.

To start or renew a CHRS membership:

- ★ On the web at www.CHRS.org
- ★ Call (202) 543-0425; choose option 2
- ★ Pick up a form at one of our meetings

Starting at just \$25 per year for a single membership, it's a great deal.

Northeast Branch Library Reopens

By Elizabeth Nelson

As of press time, the Northeast Branch Library was scheduled to reopen to the public on Monday, February 3 with a ribbon cutting ceremony at 10 am. Since September 2012, the library has undergone a \$10 million renovation project that includes:

- restoration of original woodwork
- new plumbing, electrical and HVAC systems
- improved lighting
- increased space for library programs
- larger meeting room
- quiet study rooms
- new restrooms
- new elevator and stairs
- new and restored furnishings and fixtures

...to say nothing of a roof that doesn't leak.

The library is located at 330 7th Street, NE, and has been very much missed by its neighbors, who've had to travel to either the Southeast Branch Library or the Rosedale Library while it was closed. It's quite wonderful to have it back in service and with improved facilities. The larger meeting room is especially welcome as public meeting spaces are in short supply on the Hill.

CHRS appreciated an invitation from the DC Public Library (DCPL) agency to consult with them about the proposed renovations. The CHRS Historic Preservation Committee reviewed plans and provided comments to DCPL's project team, the DC Historic Preservation Office, ANC 6C, and the Friends of the Northeast Library about the rear stairwell addition and treatment of historic interior spaces. The Committee is looking forward to seeing the completed improvements. ★

New Editor Needed

Do you have a solid background in writing and editing? Do you love the work that CHRS does on Capitol Hill? If so, and if you're looking for a way to get more involved with CHRS, then editing this monthly newsletter may be just what you're looking for!

Responsibilities include assigning and editing articles for ten issues per year. You should be able to attend monthly Board meetings (the third Tuesday evening of the month, except August and December) and other CHRS events as necessary in

order to either write about them or edit what someone else writes. Once a month, you'll need to devote the better part of two weekdays to preparing the next edition on a tight deadline. You will have a backup editor to help with final copyediting. The new editor will work alongside the current editor for several months to learn the job.

To find out more about this rewarding volunteer position, please contact Lisa Dale Jones at: lisadalejones@gmail.com. ★

Zoning Briefs

By Gary Peterson

The CHRS Zoning Committee considered the following cases in January:

#18661; 405 8th Street, SE. The applicant needs a variance from the rear yard requirements and from off-street parking requirements to allow the construction of a rear addition to an existing commercial building in a C-2-A zone. The applicant proposes a one-story, rear addition that will have a green roof. There is no rear access to the property that would allow parking, and the addition will have no impact on the neighboring commercial uses. The Committee voted unanimously to support the application.

#18689; 1620 A Street, SE. The case involves the request for a variance from the off-street parking requirements to allow the construction of a new flat in an R-4 zone. The only way to provide one parking space requires a curb cut, and the applicant cannot get a permit for the curb cut. The committee voted unanimously to support the application.

#18692; 1717 E Street, NE. The applicant seeks a variance from the use provisions to construct a new eight-unit apartment house in an R-4 zone. This 8,246 square foot, vacant property is encumbered with an easement for a major sewer line. The line runs diagonally across the property and covers about 30% of the property. The applicant needs to use special pilings to construct the building. There is alley access to the rear of the property, and six parking spaces are proposed in the rear. Another two parking spaces using an existing curb cut for access are proposed for the front of the building. The committee believed all the parking can be provided from

the rear and voted to unanimously support the variance with this parking condition.

#18693; 636 A Street, SE. The applicants seek a special exception to allow a rear addition and a covered walkway connecting to an accessory building to an existing one-family row house not meeting the lot occupancy, rear yard, and court requirements in an R-4 zone. The applicant wishes to add a two-story rear addition and a covered walkway to a two-story carriage house already used as an apartment. The kitchen for the house is currently in the basement and the construction will build a new kitchen on the first floor. The committee asked that the plans be amended to show the connection to the carriage house and to show the removal of the range in the basement. The committee expressed concerns that, with three kitchens, another owner could rent out the basement. The applicant has now amended the plans. Based on the amendment, the committee voted unanimously to support the application.

#18694; 1362 H Street, NE. The applicant requests a variance from the floor area ratio to allow an addition to an existing sports bar and lounge in a C-2-A zone. The applicant's proposal includes adding a roof deck. The committee voted to support the application with the proviso that there be no music on the deck and that it be closed by midnight.

#18701; 1247 E Street, SE. The applicant needs a variance to use the first floor as a coffee shop within an existing apartment house in an R-4 zone. This building is unusual because it was built with commercial/manufacturing with an interior loading dock on the first floor and apartments on the second floor. In time, two units were built on the first floor and the commercial portion of the floor was used as the clubhouse for a rugby club. In 1992 a variance was granted to use the clubhouse for not for profit offices. CHRS took no position on this variance in 1992. There is mixed support in the neighborhood, and the committee voted to take no position this time. ★

Help Wanted: CHRS Office Manager

CHRS is looking for a mature, personable, well-organized person with general office skills, including computers. Members of the Society and residents of Capitol Hill preferred.

Work includes maintaining membership records of the Society; responding to telephone and email inquiries by supplying routine information and publications or by referring inquiries to the proper Board member; helping prepare for and attending all Board and Membership meetings; maintaining stocks of literature and promotional materials; and assisting in preparations for the annual House and Garden Tour and other events.

Work 12–15 hours per week at the CHRS office at 420 10th Street, SE. Schedule can be flexible. This is a paid position.

If interested, call the CHRS office, (202) 543-0425 and speak with Gloria Junge, the current office manager.

Sharing Our Homes, Our Gardens, Our History: The 2014 Capitol Hill House and Garden Tour

By Susan Young

The 57th Annual CHRS House and Garden Tour continues the tradition of "Sharing our Homes, our Gardens, Our History," this Mother's Day weekend, May 10–11, 2014. This year the homes are located in the area between 3rd and 9th Streets and Constitution and Independence Avenues.

As in years past, on Saturday evening there will be a twilight tour followed by a Sunday afternoon Mother's Day tour. This year the hours will be Saturday from 4–7 pm. and Sunday from 12–5 pm. This year's tour also features refreshments, a raffle and speaker events. Out-of-town visitors and locals always enjoy this exciting and informative event, as it affords them a close-up look at homes and life on Capitol Hill.

The House and Garden Tour is CHRS's biggest annual fundraiser, with proceeds supporting preservation efforts on Capitol Hill throughout the year. Funds raised help support restoration workshops, education programs, historic research and impact studies.

As a CHRS member, you may purchase up to four tickets for the event at a discounted price through April 20, 2014. The purchase price includes a tour brochure, which describes the history of all houses on the tour, along with historical tidbits about Capitol Hill. We're always grateful for the local merchants who purchase ad space in support of the Tour.

Volunteers are needed! We encourage members to participate in the House and Garden Tour by volunteering NOW as well as the weekend of the event. Committees needing volunteers include: Ticket Sales, Event Support, Refreshments, Mother's Day Raffle, House Docents and Sponsors.

The Tour is always an exciting event and by volunteering, you not only contribute to your community, but have the opportunity to meet your neighbors on Capitol Hill.

We're still adding houses. Anyone within the footprint of the event who wishes to open their home to visitors, please contact CHRS at CapHRS@aol.com, or call 543-0425. ★

Thank You CHRS Supporters

We thank the following new members, patrons and sponsors.

NEW MEMBERS

Robert Coomber
Kerith Grandelli
Edward Minor &
Diego Fernandez
Anne & Jack Thompson

PATRONS

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Roberta Gutman
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Carol Kurtz
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Lisa Wilson & Tim McCormack

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Todd DeGarmo & Bill Sales
Cheryl & Matthew Chalifoux
Orlando Gonzales (new member)
Nancy Simpson & Keith Bridger

PLATINUM SPONSOR

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Capitol Hill Candidates Forum: February 28

The Hill Rag will hold a series of three Candidates Forums for the Ward 6 City Council seat. CHRS has joined as a co-sponsor, as have several other organizations. All three candidates for the seat have agreed to participate. The dates and locations are:

February 28, 7–9 pm at Hill Center, 921 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE

March 4, 7–9 pm at Westminster Presbyterian Church, 400 I Street, SW

March 11, 6:30–7:30 pm at the Shaw Library, 1630 7th Street, NW

The forums are free and open to the public. Bring your questions and your friends!

Capitol Hill Village Seminar: Transforming Your Home for Easier Living

Do you want to learn how to make simple changes to your home to make it safer and more comfortable? Are you thinking of making more substantial changes to the layout and functioning of your home to reflect your current and future needs?

The Housing Committee of Capitol Hill Village is sponsoring a seminar that can help you learn more about these issues. Speakers will be Tori Goldhammer, an occupational therapist whose consulting business helps homeowners adapt their homes for safety and comfort, and Byron Buck, whose company renovates and modernizes homes.

The seminar is open to all without charge, but seating is limited and registration is required. Please call 543-1778 to reserve your seat.

Friday, February 21, 10 am–noon
at Hill Center, 921 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE. ✪

Blogging the History of A Street, SE

CHRS Member Bill Peterson has created a blog about four blocks on A Street, SE (he lives in the 500 block).

The blog is devoted to the history of A Street between Third and Seventh Streets, SE. Peterson gets his material from sources such as the digital archives of the Washington Post and the Evening Star, Boyd's Directory, census records, and information compiled by individual owners about their homes. The emphasis is mainly on the people who have lived on A Street rather than architectural history, but he makes use of any information he can find.

If you're interested in the area, or want an example of the possibilities of blogging to record and publish local history, please visit the A Street, SE blog at <http://astreetse.wordpress.com>.

Tunnel, *continued from cover*

long-term and did not affect their plans now.

Several people wanted to know why a second crossing was not among the alternatives considered. FHWA responded that it was "not consistent with the needs and purposes" of the expansion, but did not bridge the logic so most people felt this remark was a hedge.

The next milestone in the process is the Final Environmental Impact Statement, where CSX and FHWA will address the issues raised by many concerned citizens, the EPA, CHRS and the Committee of 100. Stay tuned. ✪

President's Column, *continued from page 3*

Capitol Hill may lose a golden opportunity for a spacious, recreational riverfront if there is not more inter-agency coordination. A designated champion for DC parks would identify and amplify recreational interests on the Southeast Anacostia waterfront. Without such coordination, the goals can become skewed. One of DDOT's stated goals is to "create great urban boulevards with mixed

uses, landscaping, and great civic spaces." If you have a hammer, everything looks like a nail. The writer Fran Lebowitz once said, "To me the outdoors is what you must pass through in order to get from your apartment into a taxicab." I would like to think our city government has a higher regard for the outdoors. ✪

One-Story Commercial Buildings in Hill East: Pharmacy at 1444 Independence Avenue, SE

By Beth Purcell

Hill East has several one-story commercial buildings, which met community needs for goods and services and continue to add to the neighborhood's distinctive character.

Several independent pharmacies at 1444 Independence Avenue, SE (formerly B Street, SE) served the community between 1915 until the mid-1980s. 1444 Independence Avenue is a one-story brick corner building built in 1915 as a store. It has a canted entrance with store windows on each side of the building (facing Independence Avenue and 15th Street).

The first pharmacist was Edgar R. Allaband, who added a vertical sign "DRUGS" over the front door. He lived nearby at 113 15th Street, SE. Herbert C. Douglass ran that pharmacy between c. 1925 and 1965 followed by Robinson's Apothecary and Alliance Convalescent Supplies.

In the 1990s, the building became a photography studio. During this period, the Capitol East Community Development Corporation sponsored a project for children to paint a mural on the 15th Street side of the building, which they called "Rays of Sunshine." It was later painted over.



IMAGES COURTESY BETH PURCELL



TOP: 1444 Independence Avenue, SE. BOTTOM: "Rays of Sunshine" mural.



Capitol Hill Restoration Society
 420 Tenth Street, SE
 Washington, DC 20003

Mark Your Calendar!

FEBRUARY

3 Monday, 6:30 pm
 CHRS Historic Preservation Committee, Kirby House, 420 10th Street, SE, first floor. Details: Shauna Holmes, 546-5211.

4 Tuesday, 7:30 pm
 Overbeck Lecture: "Who was Michael Shiner?" Genealogist and author Leslie Anderson will talk about Michael Shiner, a freed slave who worked at the Washington Navy Yard and kept a diary from 1813 to 1869. Naval Lodge, 330 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE. Free; reservations required. E-mail OverbeckLecture@CapitolHillHistory.org.

13 Thursday, 7:30 pm
 CHRS Zoning Committee, Kirby House, 420 10th Street, SE, first floor. Details: Gary Peterson, 547-7969.

18 Tuesday, 6:30 pm
 CHRS Board of Directors, Capitol Hill Townhomes, 750 6th Street, SE, second floor. Details: Janet Quigley, 543-0425.

28 Friday, 7–9 pm
 Candidates Forum for Ward 6 City Council seat. Sponsored by *The Hill Rag*, CHRS, and others. Hill Center, 921 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE.

MARCH

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57th Annual Capitol Hill House and Garden Tour

May 10–11, 2014

Reserve your tickets today! Visit us at www.chrs.org or call 543-0425.