



CHRS CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF PRESERVATION

# NEWS

www.chrs.org

July/August 2020

## Celebration of Capitol Hill Homes Continues

By Elizabeth Nelson, House Tour Chair

**T**he House & Garden Tour Committee is doing our very best to embrace social distancing and develop activities that show our appreciation to our advertisers and engage with the community until it's safe to go forward with the traditional, in-person tour.

### Historic Sites Walking Tour

To celebrate Capitol Hill's rich and diverse history, we've arranged a self-guided walking tour of 45 sites, a small sampling of the hundreds of the cultural treasures available to enjoy. Some are noteworthy due to their architecture, or original function and others are important for their connection to individuals and events that shaped our community and our country.

Highlights include one of Barack Obama's residences and the home of Richard H. Cain, an African American Representative from South Carolina. Stop by the former Piggly Wiggly, an innovation in grocery shopping; visit the home of what was once the largest department store owned and operated by a woman. Photos, descriptions, and a downloadable handout are all posted at [chrs.org/historic-sites-tour-2020](http://chrs.org/historic-sites-tour-2020). Look for the list of addresses in the July issue of the *Hill Rag* (pages 65–66).

### What I Love About My House

As promised in the June newsletter, we've posted a small but growing collection of "house selfies," short cell phone videos (< 2 min) of people talking about some feature of their house that they think would be of particular interest or that they're particularly fond of. We even have a submission filmed on a boat in the marina: [chrs.org/what-i-love-about-my-house](http://chrs.org/what-i-love-about-my-house).

Please consider making one yourself. There's no fixed format except for the limit on length—so you can do it however you like. If you're stumped on the technology aspects—or are struggling to decide what to film—send a note to [HouseTourCHRS@gmail.com](mailto:HouseTourCHRS@gmail.com). Don't be modest and have some fun!

### Virtual House Tour

The House Tour Committee is developing a Virtual House Tour to augment (not replace) the traditional, physical House Tour—the "2020 #StayAtHome House Tour." Houses will be scanned using the same technology used for virtual real estate open houses. You'll be able to "walk" your fingers through the houses, climbing the stairs, looking up and down, and pivoting. So far,



The home of Richard H. Cain, Representative from South Carolina.

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# CHRS Board Changes: Welcome and Thanks

By Elizabeth Nelson

There are big changes on the CHRS Board of Directors this year. We will be joined by two new members; two current Board members will have new positions; and two members will be stepping down.

The Board of Directors would like to acknowledge the contributions of the following individuals for their service: First, grateful thanks to Susan Oursler who has served as Member At-Large, Secretary, Treasurer, and Chair of the Budget & Administration Committee. Second, thank you to

Patrick Lally who served terms both as Second Vice President and Member At-Large. We won't be losing either of them entirely, as Susan will continue as the CHRS representative to the Eastern Market Citizens Advisory Council (EMCAC) and Patrick will remain on the Grants Committee.

Beth Purcell, Tina May, Jim Thackaberry, Joanna Kendig, and Beth Hague were re-elected as President, Second Vice President, Secretary, Member At-Large, and

Member At-Large, respectively. Maygene Daniels was elected to a Member At-Large position and will continue as Membership Chair. Angie Schmidt was elected to the First Vice President position and will continue as Newsletter Editor.

Finally, we extend a very warm welcome to Nick Alberti and Jackie Krieger who are new to the Board as Treasurer and Member At-Large, respectively. ★

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## Amending CHRS Bylaws to Permit Board Meetings by Teleconference

The DC Nonprofit Corporation Act 29-406.20(a) allows conducting a board meeting "through the use of any means of communication by which all directors participating may simultaneously hear each other during the meeting." Thus, the statute allows video meetings and telephone conference calls.

However, the CHRS bylaws currently provide for corporate action only by in-person board meetings or written consent by all directors. It has become clear that virtual meetings are a necessary option, but to permit this, the bylaws will need to be amended.

Suggested change to bylaws:

**New Section 11. Meeting by teleconference.** Board meetings may be conducted through the use of any means of communication

by which all directors participating may simultaneously hear each other during the meeting.

Bylaws Article XV provides that the bylaws may be amended if: (1) at least 10 members sign a written request to amend the bylaws, (2) the proposed amendment is published in the newsletter and, (3) members vote to approve the amendment at a meeting or mail in ballot. Fifteen members have signed a written request, and the proposed amendment appears (above) in this issue of the CHRS News.

The next step is a membership vote. If a membership meeting cannot be held within a reasonable time frame, we will proceed to vote by mail-in ballot, probably before the end of September. ★

## Capitol Hill Parade Marches On

Naval Lodge No. 4 and the Jeanne Phil Meg Team at Compass Realty have stepped up to continue one of our cherished community traditions—the Capitol Hill 4th of July Parade. As a physical parade is not possible this year, they decided to go virtual and solicited video clips from the organizations that participate annually.

It was a bit spontaneous so there wasn't time to put out a call for CHRS volunteers, but we found a few good sports and made the deadline. As we go to press, we haven't been given the URL but we will email it to members as soon as we can . . . another incentive to make sure we have all members' email addresses!

# Capitol Hill Restoration Society (CHRS)

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President . . . . . Beth Purcell  
 First Vice President . . . . . Angie Schmidt  
 Second Vice President . . . . . Tina May  
 Treasurer . . . . . Nick Alberti  
 Secretary . . . . . Jim Thackaberry  
 At Large . . . . . Jackie Krieger  
 At Large . . . . . Christine Mullins  
 At Large . . . . . Beth Hague  
 At Large . . . . . Joanna Kendig  
 At Large . . . . . Maygene Daniels  
 At Large . . . . . Alison Ross  
 Immediate Past President . . Elizabeth Nelson

## COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Beyond the Boundaries . . . . . Beth Purcell  
 Budget & Administration\* . . . Susan Oursler  
 City Planning\* . . . . . Monte Edwards  
 Communications\* . . . . . vacant  
 Community Development\* . . . Chuck Burger  
 Community Relations . . . . Elizabeth Nelson  
 Environment\* . . . . . Joanna Kendig  
 Grants . . . . . Larry Pearl  
 Historic Preservation\* . . . . . Beth Purcell  
 House & Garden Tour . . . . Elizabeth Nelson  
 Investments . . . . . John Shages  
 Membership\* . . . . . Maygene Daniels  
 Public Safety\* . . . . . Undine Nash  
 Public Space . . . . . Steve Kehoe  
 Zoning\* . . . . . Gary Peterson

\* Chair is an appointed Board Member

## NEWSLETTER

Angie Schmidt and Kelly Vielmo, Editors

## WEBMASTERS

Donna Breslin, Elizabeth Nelson

## OFFICE MANAGER

Jill Uvena Cullinane

To reach any of the above, please contact the Society offices at (202) 543-0425 or via e-mail: caphrs420@gmail.com.

## ABOUT CHRS

Capitol Hill is a special place. We promote, preserve, and enhance the character of our historic neighborhoods.

Since its founding in 1955, CHRS has worked continuously to make Capitol Hill the desirable location it has now become. Due to CHRS's efforts, Capitol Hill won designation as a historic district in 1976. Today, that legacy of standing up for the community continues with our work in planning, zoning, historic preservation, and public safety.

CHRS is a volunteer organization, made up of Hill residents who love their historic neighborhoods and want to ensure that the unique character of the Hill is around for future generations. Come join us!

To learn more or join, please visit:  
www.CHRS.org

# Zoning Report

By Gary Peterson

Given the restrictions on meetings caused by the Covid-19 virus, the Zoning Committee considered five BZA cases and one Zoning Commission Text Amendment by email on June 16, 2020. Each of the applicants was contacted by email and given an opportunity to add more to the record before we considered their case. One applicant advised us that the relief requested had been changed by deleting one of the special exceptions and the others referred us to what was already on file with the BZA.

**BZA #20232**, 337 H Street NE. This case is an appeal by ANC6C of the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy (C of O) authorizing nonresidential use, retail convenience store, of 90% of the first floor in excess of the 0.5 FAR limit. There was an existing 1994 C of O for a retail convenience store that was issued before the H Street Zoning was enacted.

The retail use would ordinarily be grandfathered in for the new zoning but for the fact the property has been vacant since at least November 2009, thus losing the grandfathered rights. The Committee voted to support the appeal, agreeing that the C of O had been improperly issued. If the appeal is granted, the owner must apply to the BZA for whatever relief that is required.

**BZA #20238**, 203 3rd Street Rear SE. In this case the owner of an alley dwelling wants to add a second floor to an existing residential building in a commercial zone. The lot is currently a tax lot and the applicant needs a variance from the alley minimum width of 24 feet to convert the property to a record lot. A building permit can only be issued for a record lot.

The lot is bordered on three sides by alleys of 10 feet, 10 feet, and 20 feet and the alley access from 3rd Street is 15 feet wide. The applicant also

needs special exceptions for building height, rear yard and alley setback. The addition will increase the height of the building to 21.25 feet, 1.25 feet above the height limit. The rear yard requirements of 5 feet cannot be achieved without demolishing part of the building.

As discussed above, the building cannot achieve the 12.5 foot alley centerline without demolishing part of the building. The committee has previously approved a similar application on the alley. The Committee voted to support the application provided there is a dedicated location for garbage containers on the property and not in public space.

**BZA #20245**, 216 14th Place NE. This case involves a special exception to build a rear addition that increases the lot occupancy from 59% to 65%. The applicant provided letters of support from abutting neighbors and the Committee voted to support the application.

**BZA #20248**, 1006 10th Street NE. The applicant needs two special exceptions, lot occupancy and rear yard, to construct a rear addition. The applicant will demolish a garage at the rear, creating a parking pad for one car, and will use the lot occupancy gained to add a rear addition to the house. The lot occupancy will increase from 69% to 70% and the rear yard will only be 17.38 feet instead of 20 feet. The Committee voted to support the application.

**BZA #20250**, 216 9th Street NE. The applicant has applied for two special exceptions to construct a two story rear addition. The addition will extend 10.25 feet from the house, which will be 10.25 past the rear wall of the neighbor to the north and 34 feet past the rear wall of the neighbor to the south. You are allowed to

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# Historic Preservation Briefs

By Beth Purcell

The Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB or the Board) considered the following cases at its virtual hearings on May 28 and June 25, 2020. HPRB is responsible for determining if proposed changes to a building are consistent with the DC Preservation Act. A “concept review” is a preliminary determination of a building owner’s plan to alter the building, and if the concept is approved, the owner will return to the HPRB for a final review.

**Consent calendar.** The following cases, which CHRS supported, were approved on the consent calendar:

- **222 Kentucky Avenue SE**, HPA 20-304, concept/rear addition.
- **630 Lexington Place NE**, HPA 20-236, concept/three-story addition at rear.
- **1235 E Street SE**, HPA 20-306, concept/two-story front addition.
- **310 4th Street SE**, HPA 20-305, concept/roof addition.
- **515 East Capitol Street SE (William Penn House)**, HPA 20-342, concept/exterior ADA lift and front stair alteration. ★



IMAGE COURTESY BETH PURCELL

222 Kentucky Avenue SE.

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## Capitol Hill Homes, *continued from cover*

eight houses have been identified, some of which will have been scanned by the time you read this article. Links to the tours will be posted on the CHRS website. #StayAtHome House Tour will be free to the viewing public. No date has been set for the release but we anticipate that it will be late summer or early fall.

### Mural Scavenger Hunt

Similar to the Whimsy of Capitol Hill Hunt ([chrs.org/scavenger-hunt-2020](http://chrs.org/scavenger-hunt-2020)), this walking tour will get you out and about in places you may not routinely visit. While many wall murals are in highly visible locations, others are tucked into alleys. If you have a favorite you can suggest, please send the address to [HouseTourCHRS@gmail.com](mailto:HouseTourCHRS@gmail.com).

Thank you to the House Tour Committee: Heather Schoell, Betsy Rutkowski, Jackie Krieger, Etta Fielek, Maygene Daniels, Joanna Kendig, Beth Purcell,

Tiffany Barnard-Davidson, Nancy Metzger and the Communications Committee: Nina Tristan, Jennifer Cate & Carey Paquette. ★

Interested in learning more about historic district designation?

Contact CHRS at [info@chrs.org](mailto:info@chrs.org).



LEFT: One time “crash pad” for then-Senator Barack Obama.

RIGHT: William Cody aka “Buffalo Bill” stayed in this Capitol Hill house.

# Looking Back: Living Near the Capitol, 1930s & 1940s

by Nancy Metzger

Capitol Hill's history is recorded not only in its buildings and in history books but also in the stories that people remember about their lives here on the Hill. The following excerpt is taken from an April 2019 interview with Rosetta Hall Hamm by Mary Ann Wyrsh in which Mrs. Hamm talks about growing up on Capitol Hill near the Capitol during the 1930s and 1940s.

HAMM: When I was a child I had two cousins that lived like a block up from me [107 E Street, SE]. We would always go roller skating. Then at that particular time you could go skate all over. You could skate all in the Capitol. At night if you wanted to go to sleep you laid on the Capitol grounds and went to sleep. Nobody ever bothered you.

WYRSCH: Was it because it was warm that you did that?

HAMM: Yes. I mean in the summertime, I mean people; and you didn't have any police coming around making you get up. It was

just, everybody was just sociable. I mean, it was just a quiet area.

WYRSCH: So, the Capitol grounds were sort of like a park for all of you.

HAMM: Well, yeah, because we would, like Easter time, we would go up on our hill and roll eggs and things like that. People don't believe me when I tell them that when I was younger we would roller skate. We would go down in the House office building and ride the trains to the Capitol.

WYRSCH: They would let you do that?

HAMM: When I was younger. We would ride the trains back and forth to the Capitol.

WYRSCH: The underground trains?

HAMM: Yeah, but the funny thing about it, we never went upstairs in the Capitol. I never went upstairs in the Capitol until [my son] Derrick was like six years old, before I went upstairs.

WYRSCH: But you knew how to navigate the underground.

HAMM: Oh yeah. We knew how to navigate the underground. We were just children and we would roller skate or bicycle ride around there.

WYRSCH: Did you know some of the people you were going by? Did you know the policemen you were seeing?

HAMM: Children, no children we were. . .

WYRSCH: They just thought you were children and they said just move on?

HAMM: We were just children, but even the grownups. We never had any problem with the people at the House office building or the Capitol because now with the Capitol, that was long before the Rayburn Building [was] built. Long time before that happened . . . ☆

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*Mrs. Hamm's complete interview, along with over 200 other interviews, can be found on the Ruth Ann Overbeck Capitol Hill History Project website ([www.capitolhillhistory.org](http://www.capitolhillhistory.org)).*

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## Zoning Report, continued from page 3

extend beyond the rear wall of your neighbors by 10 feet as a matter of right. The lot occupancy will increase to 70%. The Committee voted to oppose the application believing that the addition will have substantially adverse effects on the use and enjoyment of the abutting property, especially the property to the south.

**Proposed Text Amendments to the Zoning Regulations Governing Alley Lots, ZC Case 19-13.** This case involves amending the Zoning regulations pertaining to alley lots. The main reason for the amendment is consistency in language, ensuring that the nine subtitles that address

alley lots use identical language. Most of the amendments are in this category. The amendment also allows pre-1958 tax lots over 450 square feet to convert to record lots as a matter of right, and to allow tax lots created between 1958 and 2016 to convert by special exception.

It is no longer possible to obtain a building permit for a tax lot. The tax lot must be converted to a record lot that complies with the zoning regulations. There are 317 vacant alley tax lots and 353 improved lots that are 450 square feet or greater. In addition, the amendment reduces the required alley centerline setback from 12 feet to 7.5 feet. The 12 foot setback requires

the lot to be on a 24 foot alley, whereas the 7.5 foot is in line with the much more common 15 foot alley.

Finally the amendment will allow 5 performances or art shows per year in an artist studio on an alley lot. The current regulations allow artist studios on alley lots but are silent on performances or shows. Noise regulations and occupancy limits will still apply. The Committee supports the amendments but believes that a clause should be added addressing the location of trash cans. The additional language should state that all trash cans must be clearly accommodated on the lot and not in the alley. ☆



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Capitol Hill Restoration Society  
420 10th Street SE  
Washington, DC 20003

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## Mark Your Calendar!

*Please check website for current information—cancellations and postponements are expected and will be posted as they are known.*

### JULY

**6** Monday, 6:30 pm  
CHRS Historic Preservation Committee.  
Details: Beth Purcell, (202) 544-0178.  
Check [chrs.org](http://chrs.org) for updates.

**16** Thursday, 7:30 pm  
CHRS Zoning Committee. Kirby House,  
420 10th Street SE, first floor. Details:  
[info@chrs.org](mailto:info@chrs.org). Check [chrs.org](http://chrs.org) for  
updates.

**21** Tuesday, 6:30 pm  
CHRS Board of Directors, Capitol Hill  
Townhomes, 750 6th Street SE, 2nd Floor  
board room. Check [chrs.org](http://chrs.org) for updates.

### AUGUST

**3** Monday, 6:30 pm  
CHRS Historic Preservation Committee.  
Details: Beth Purcell, (202) 544-0178.  
Check [chrs.org](http://chrs.org) for updates.

**18** Tuesday, 6:30 pm  
CHRS Board of Directors, Capitol Hill  
Townhomes, 750 6th Street SE, 2nd Floor  
board room. Check [chrs.org](http://chrs.org) for updates.

**20** Thursday, 7:30 pm  
CHRS Zoning Committee. Kirby House,  
420 10th Street SE, first floor. Details:  
[info@chrs.org](mailto:info@chrs.org). Check [chrs.org](http://chrs.org) for  
updates.

## Thank You, CHRS Supporters!

CHRS wishes to thank the  
following donors for their  
invaluable support:

### CONTRIBUTORS

*Annual Appeal*

Beth Hague

### MEMBERSHIPS

*Silver*

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Elizabeth Hannold &  
Douglas Delano