



CHRS CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF PRESERVATION

NEWS

www.chrs.org

July/August 2022

Mike Canning Leads Members to Hollywood on the Hill

By Beth Purcell

At the June 22 Membership Meeting, the results of the CHRS election were announced. Next, film critic Mike Canning led members on a walking tour of movie locations, providing cinematic anecdotes and historical lore.

An interesting part of the tour revolved around how directors coped with restrictions on filming in and around the Capitol. For example, in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939), the filibuster scene in the Senate chamber looks very realistic. But because director Frank Capra could not get permission to film inside the Senate, he had to spend \$100,000 to have 125 experts recreate the Senate, down to the wooden desks. Some familiar exteriors appear in *All The President's Men* (1976) (Library of Congress) and *First Monday in October* (1981) (Supreme Court).



IMAGE COURTESY ANGIE SCHMIDT

Canning also led us to locations in the neighborhood such as the starting point of the rooftop chase from *In the Line of Fire* (1993) at 314 East Capitol Street NE and a key scene in *Broadcast News* (1986) in front of a rowhouse on the 600 block of East Capitol Street SE.

Thank you for volunteering your time, Mike—we had a lot of fun! ✧

Most Endangered on Capitol Hill

The DC Preservation League recently updated its list of most endangered places. The Main Reading Room in the Jefferson Building of the Library of Congress, designated a National Historic Landmark in 1965, topped the list. There is a proposal being considered by the Architect of the Capitol to make major changes to the Center Desk area and supporting Control Room. This proposal was revealed to the public by a whistleblower complaint filed in April 2022. Please visit: dcpreservation.org/endangered-places for more information.

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CHRS 2022–2023 Board Election Results

By Beth Purcell

The Elections Committee is happy to report that all board members were elected to continue to serve, some in different capacities, and two new At-Large members were elected.

Angie Schmidt, (formerly First Vice President) was elected as President, Christine Mullins (formerly At-Large) as First Vice President, Tina

May was re-elected as Second Vice President. Maygene Daniels was re-elected as Secretary, and Nick Alberti as Treasurer. Jackie Krieger and Beth Hague were re-elected to two-year terms as At-Large. Two new At-Large members were elected: Fynnette Eaton to a two-year term, and Delancey Gustin to a one-year term.

In 2021, Jim Thackaberry and Gary Peterson were elected to two-year terms as At-Large, and continue to serve. Joanna Kendig, formerly an At-Large, continues to serve on the board as Chair of the Environment Committee.

Welcome everyone! We look forward to a great year. ★

2022 HOME EXPO

Join us in Eastern Market North Hall on October 29 from 9 am to 3 pm for our annual HOME EXPO featuring over 20 exhibitors of home craftsman and city services for your home. Talk with and meet exhibitors we are inviting in historic restoration, electric work, solar, roofing, security, construction, window repair, water and energy conservation, and so much more.

Garden Party for CHRS Members at Hill Center

All members are invited to come and enjoy coffee and cake at the Hill Center's East Garden on Tuesday September 13 at 6:30 pm. This will be a great chance for members to reconnect with friends outdoors in a beautiful setting. We are looking forward to seeing everyone again in person. There will also be a very brief membership meeting to vote on the budget. Masks will be available for

anyone needing to go inside to use the restrooms.

The Hill Center is located at 921 Pennsylvania Avenue SE. Enter the East Garden from Pennsylvania Avenue or 9th Street SE. We respectfully request that members RSVP at caphrs420@gmail.com or (202) 543-0425 so that we can plan the refreshments, but please do not stay home because you forgot to respond. ★

IMAGE COURTESY HEATHER SCHOELL



Maygene Daniels (RIGHT), pictured with Beth Purcell (LEFT) and Elizabeth Nelson, hosted the President's Party to thank all of the House and Garden Tour volunteers.



Members of the Restoration Nats, sponsored by CHRS, attended the June Board meeting at the Northeast Library and presented a signed jersey.

Capitol Hill Restoration Society (CHRS)

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President Angie Schmidt
 First Vice President Christine Mullins
 Second Vice President Tina May
 Treasurer Nick Alberti
 Secretary Maygene Daniels
 At Large Fynnette Eaton
 At Large Delancey Gustin
 At Large Beth Hague
 At Large Jackie Krieger
 At Large Gary Peterson
 At Large Jim Thackaberry
 Immediate Past President Beth Purcell

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Budget & Administration* Nick Alberti
 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 Vacant
 Investments John Shages
 Membership* Maygene Daniels
 Public Safety* Undine Nash
 Public Space Steve Kehoe
 Zoning* Beth Hague

* Chair is an appointed Board Member

NEWSLETTER

Angie Schmidt and Kelly Vielmo, Editors

WEBMASTER

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 Beth Hague and Jackie Krieger

On June 9, 2022, three members of the CHRS Zoning Committee met to discuss five cases via Zoom. Representatives from four cases participated to present their proposals. The Committee voted to support three cases and to oppose two cases.

BZA #20731, 1447 Maryland Avenue NE. The Committee voted to *oppose* the applicant's request for a special exception for minimum vehicle parking requirements to construct a front, rear, and third floor addition with penthouse, and to convert to a mixed-use, nine-unit apartment house with first floor retail from an existing approved permit for an attached 6-unit, two-story with cellar, mixed use building.

The Committee notes that the applicant previously got a special exception to provide no parking for the same property. The applicant therefore currently has approval for a 6-unit plus retail space; it is proposing 3 additional residential micro-units at the cellar level with window wells for light, as part of a 9-unit plus retail space.

The Committee voted to oppose granting the special exception because it does not view the project as meriting additional parking relief or having a beneficial impact on the neighborhood and community. It is concerned that the additional residential units will add density to the congested H Street corridor area, where limited parking is currently a problem for residents and businesses alike. Furthermore, we do not see the need for the special exception since the property is near multiple bus lines, a streetcar, and Capitol City Bikes.

In addition to the parking issue, the committee is concerned about the lack of trash handling facilities. There is

no provision for trash in the rear of the building and there is no trash room on the property. Because of the building's size, it will need commercial trash hauling. Large bins cannot be parked on the front public space.

The proposal has one letter of support from one adjacent neighbor and letters of support from ANC 6A, Office of Planning, and DDOT. The BZA hearing was scheduled for July 6, 2022.

BZA #20738, 1609 G Street SE. The Committee voted to *conditionally support* the applicant's request for a special exception for lot occupancy requirements. The Committee's support is conditional on obtaining support from the adjacent neighbor at 1611 G Street SE, who is significantly affected by shadows in the afternoons throughout the year.

The applicant seeks to construct a third story and three-story rear addition, with cellar, to an existing, attached, two-story with cellar principal dwelling unit. The proposal would increase lot occupancy to 67.8%, the rear yard will be set back to 21 feet, and the project will extend 6'3" beyond their neighbors (under the 10 feet by-right limit).

The project is set back 4-5 feet in front behind a parapet, thereby lessening the visual impact of the third story, though the applicants are requesting the full 35 feet by right. The Committee's main concern about this project is the impact on the light of neighbors. A sun study has been completed and shows significant impact on the light of both adjacent neighbors throughout the year—one in the mornings and the other in the afternoons.

Continued on page 5

Historic Preservation Briefs

By Beth Purcell

The Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB or the Board), considered the following case at its virtual hearings on June 2 and 30, 2022. 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.

Hillsdale College owns seven buildings on Massachusetts Avenue NE: 227, 229 and 231 (three story brick bay fronts built in 1892), 233-235 (1857), 237 (1915), and 239 (1887). These are contributing buildings. To further its mission, the college proposed changes to the plaza, facades, entrances and adding a new brick wall at the street front. An earlier version of the project was filed

in HPA 21-423, which was eventually referred to staff. The current submission focuses on changes to 1892 brick bay fronts (currently labeled **227 Massachusetts Avenue**) and the plaza design.

The applicant proposed to create a primary street-level entrance in the middle of the three rowhouses of 227 Massachusetts Avenue. These rowhouses have original second story entrances, reached by metal stairs. (They were likely the first story entrances with the ground floor/basement below.) Please see photograph.

HPO’s *Door Repair and Replacement Preservation and Design Guidelines* provides:

2.7 Expanding or reducing the size of door openings, blocking up, or creating new openings on primary elevations of historic buildings is not appropriate. Flexibility to this principle may be applied for basement door openings located under stairs or otherwise not prominently visible from public view.

While these stairs are not the original 1892 construction, they serve the original function as entries to historic row houses. The applicant sought a more institutional appearance and proposed to remove all three entrance stairs, and in the process, abandon the original second story entrances, leaving them in mid-air, and thus significantly altering perception of these historic buildings and erasing their rowhouse character.

The Board has required preserving original entrances, and should do so in this case. See **201 8th Street NE** (HPA 19-104) and the **Folger Shakespeare Library** (HPA 19-332). We believed that all the stairs to the second story entrances should be preserved, thus preserving the memory of the original rowhouses. The existing plazas in front of the buildings have minimal green space and present a confusing circulation. They occupy the public “parking” space.

The applicant planned to better organize the plazas, add green space and comply with ADA requirements. The plaza plan in HPA 21-423 remains largely unchanged. The proposed plaza emphasized the continuity of space in front of seven original buildings, with limited marking of some original property lines. While the increased plantings, greening of the space are to be commended, we suggested reducing the amount of hardscape. But the proposed brick wall in public space adjacent to the sidewalk still looks too institutional. The effect should be softened, and made more inviting to passersby.

We believed that at this time, the project was not compatible with the Capitol Hill Historic District, based on:

- 1) The removal of the stairs to the second story entrances, and
- 2) The institutional brick wall at the plazas.

The Board approved the project in concept, but asked that the site work be revised to express the individual character of each building, taking into consideration the input of ANC 6C and CHRS, and that the original doors at 227 Massachusetts Avenue remain entry doors, each with compatible exterior stairs.

IMAGE COURTESY BETH PURCELL



The stairs at 227 Massachusetts Avenue NE.

The applicant has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the adjacent neighbor at 1607 G Street SE, who has a rooftop solar panel system, but has not reached an agreement with 1611 G Street SE despite ongoing discussions. Nine additional letters of support from neighbors have been filed and ANC 6B09 has voted to support the proposal. The BZA hearing was scheduled for June 22, 2022.

BZA #20742, 1252 H Street NE.

The committee voted to *support* the applicant's request for special exceptions for lot occupancy requirements and rear yard requirements to construct a third floor with penthouse addition to an existing, attached two-story with cellar, mixed use building.

The Committee notes that the proposed third floor will be slightly set back and that 100% lot occupancy will be maintained. The Committee also notes that the applicant has been sensitive to the design of the building and that the turret tower, an important

architectural feature, has been maintained. Many letters of support from neighbors have been received; one letter from a non-adjacent neighbor opposed the proposal because of light and air impacts. The ANC 6A Economic Development and Zoning Committee supported the project the second time, after the project applicants had done further sun studies. The BZA hearing was scheduled for June 22, 2022.

BZA #20748, 274 Kentucky Avenue SE. The committee voted to *oppose* the applicant's request for an area variance for lot occupancy requirements to construct a second story rear addition to an existing, attached, three story principal dwelling unit. The applicant is proposing to add an addition on the second level to include a screened porch, open deck, and stairwell leading down to the existing grade which would increase lot occupancy to 80.2%.

The applicants maintain that the pie-shaped property area creates an exceptional situation and practical

difficulties due to lack of access at ground level in the rear. The test for granting an area variance is to prove that, because of the attributes of a specific piece property, the strict application of a zoning regulation would result in peculiar and exceptional practical difficulties to the owner of the property.

The Committee believes that the applicant's reasons for requesting a variance do not meet the requirements for a variance and that the property owners are indeed able to use the rear area without the proposed addition. The Committee notes that it would likely approve a special exception for stairwells from the second floor to the ground level, to improve accessibility from the ground level in the rear, if that addition were within the allowable 70% lot occupancy (lot occupancy is currently at 63% and non-conforming). The proposal has received several letters of support from neighbors. The BZA hearing was scheduled for July 6, 2022.

BZA #20754, 301 K Street NE. The Committee voted to *support* the applicant's request for a special exception from lot occupancy requirements to construct two rear decks to an existing, semi-detached, three-story flat. The proposal will increase lot occupancy to 69.8%. A letter of support from the adjacent neighbor has been filed. The BZA hearing was scheduled for July 6, 2022. ★

Preservation Briefs, continued from page 4

The Board approved the following cases on the consent calendar:

- **510 9th Street SE**, HPA 22-228, concept/third story addition and roof deck at rear, window wells and replace stairs at front.
- **639 A Street SE**, HPA 22-277, concept/two story rear addition, replace garage with two-story garage house.
- **135 Kentucky Avenue SE**, HPA 22-278, concept/two story rear addition, second story addition to garage.

- **1320 North Carolina Avenue NE**, HPA 22-325, concept/two-story plus cellar addition at rear.
- **663 Maryland Avenue NE**, HPA 22-331, concept/two-story addition at rear on this unusual-shaped lot next to the Northeast Library. ★

Interested in learning more about historic district designation?

Contact CHRS at info@chrs.org.



CHRS CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF PRESERVATION

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

Mark Your Calendar!

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

AUGUST

18 Thursday, 7:30 pm
Zoning Committee Meeting, Kirby House,
420 10th Street SE. Chair: Beth Hague,
(202) 714-9523.

2022 Virtual House Tour

Now through August 30

If you missed the in-person 2022 Mothers Day House & Garden Tour—no worries! You can still enjoy the virtual tour, featuring 3-D scans of 6 private homes. “Tickets” are \$20 and can be purchased through Eventbrite through August 20. The link can be accessed at any time and as often as desired until expiring on August 30, 2022. Visit:

chrs.org/virtual-tour2022

SEPTEMBER

6 Tuesday, 6:30 pm
Historic Preservation Committee meeting,
420 10th Street SE, first floor conference
room. Chair: Beth Purcell, (202) 544-0178.

15 Thursday, 7:30 pm
Zoning Committee Meeting, Kirby House,
420 10th Street SE. Chair: Beth Hague,
(202) 714-9523.

21 Wednesday, 6 pm
CHRS Board of Directors meeting,
Northeast Library, Mezzanine Room,
330 7th Street NE.

Please consider joining CHRS!

Annual membership is only \$35 and includes the newsletter, a set of historic guidelines, and early access to events, including our annual House and Garden Tour. Visit: chrs.org

OCTOBER

3 Monday, 6:30 pm
Historic Preservation Committee meeting,
420 10th Street SE, first floor conference
room. Chair: Beth Purcell, (202) 544-0178.

19 Wednesday, 6 pm
CHRS Board of Directors meeting,
Northeast Library, Mezzanine Room,
330 7th Street NE.

20 Thursday, 7:30 pm
Zoning Committee Meeting, Kirby House,
420 10th Street SE. Chair: Beth Hague,
(202) 714-9523.

29 Saturday, 9 am–3 pm
CHRS will hold a free House Expo at the Eastern Market North Hall, featuring a wide variety of home service exhibitors and representatives of city agencies. Details: chrs.org/house-expo-2022.