



NEWS

October 2001

US Commission of Fine Arts Joins CHRS in Rejecting Massive Box Building Proposed Next To Union Station

by Charles W. McMillion

The US Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) has strongly rejected the design drawings of the Louis Dreyfus Property Group for their proposed Station Place office building on the eastern side of Union Station.

On September 20, the CFA heard a presentation by Dreyfus architect Kevin Roche and comments from the CHRS Task Force team leaders on historic context, design, and scale. Nancy Metzger, Russell Sturm, and Drury Tallant did a magnificent job presenting the results of the teams' many hours of research and discussions. The Commission went out of its way to praise the Task Force's professional presentations, contrasting them sharply with the "nimby and emotional comments normally heard from community groups."

The Commission's comments are best summarized by J. Carter Brown, long-time CFA Chairman and world-renowned architectural authority. Mr. Brown declared the building was too tall, too close to 2nd Street, too inaccessible to H Street, and of insufficient



J. Carter Brown

architectural interest for the site. In closing, Mr. Brown told Mr. Roche that his proposal looked like a "beached whale," and that the CFA needed a

proposal that "we can swallow without choking." We could not have said it better ourselves.

The reputation and authority of the CFA is such that the current Dreyfus proposal cannot go forward. Certainly we hope the Dreyfus team and their extremely talented architect will quickly regroup and develop a proposal for Station Place that the CFA and everyone else can support enthusiastically.

In the meantime, the CHRS Station Place Task Force and team meetings will continue. Kevin Roche and the Dreyfus team had repeatedly told Task Force members and many District officials that the CFA had already given assurances of approval. They had also indicated that the unanimous community opposition expressed at an August 14 meeting was of no consequence to the developer. They were mistaken.

On the eve of the CFA hearing on September 19, the CHRS Task Force hosted a presentation from the Louis Dreyfus development team. Notwithstanding encouraging signs of working with the community on key traffic and construction management issues, the development team repeated adamant opposition to Task Force pleas for major changes in the design and massive scale of the proposed building.

Reluctantly but unanimously, the Task Force voted to oppose the current project. Its opposition was based on concerns with the project's height,

design, overall scale, lack of adequate setback from 2nd and F Streets, lack of any publicly accessible mixed use, and the absence of both written commitments for construction management and a full environmental impact study.

The CHRS Task Force's opposition to the project was endorsed on September 20 by the Board of the Stanton Park Neighborhood Association, which has worked closely with the Task Force. The endorsement of the CHRS Board came a few days later.

Congratulations to the scores of CHRS and SPNA members who have worked so hard on our Task Force, and particular kudos to Nancy, Russell, and Drury for their outstanding job before the CFA. We appear to have helped stop a massively inappropriate development on Capitol Hill, but we must work just as hard to encourage a suitable proposal that everyone can enthusiastically support. ✧

CHRS Web Site Inaugurated

Click your way to <http://www.chrs.org> to see the Society's newly inaugurated web site. (If nothing appears, try again in a week; we're trying hard to get this up in October.)

Presidents' Column

by Rob Nevitt

I don't know why the word "Restoration" was chosen as the operative word in the name of the Society; I can only imagine the discussion that took place almost fifty years ago. It's clear, however, that in the face of self-interested economic development aiming to destroy Capitol Hill's historic fabric, the Society was formed to protect it and the life style that went with it.

"Restoration" seems an appropriate word to dwell on in the aftermath of the horrific events of September. "Restoring" may not seem to be asking much, though usually it asks more than is possible. To make entirely whole again is an elusive goal, whether we are talking about externals or the more important abstract elements of some real or imagined era that went before.

We are committed to restoration—though not to perfect reproductions of walls and roofs as they were built, and certainly not to the exact values and behaviors of people of more than a century ago. Rather, we want to show respect for those builders of long ago and for the evolving spirit of community that seems particularly characteristic of Capitol Hill.

Within this context, I call your attention to two developments.

The District's City Council has passed nuisance property laws that should make it easier to hold to account owners and landlords who let their properties deteriorate even to the point of demolition by neglect. Council Member Ambrose has seen that these laws passed. She recently confirmed to me that she recognizes the next part of this formula: city employees must understand the law and enforce it. Regulations must be written and departments given the money to hire inspectors and to develop the systems to bring malefactors to account.

The CHRS is going to put our energy behind the law. We will create mini task forces to identify properties, to do the research, assemble the facts, and put pressure on the city to do all the law allows about such "nuisance properties"—a broad term that makes each example a different problem. How much we can do depends on how many people are willing to work on these task forces. Mark Anderson, the Society's Second Vice-President is heading this effort, and he would like to hear from people who can volunteer their time and talent.

The old Naval Hospital at 921 Pennsylvania Ave. also cries out for greater restorative impulses. Many, many people have taken up the cause of restoring this grand old



historical building. We do not want to preempt or interfere with the efforts of other organizations, but we do want to be a party to them. Board member Barbara Eck is the point person investigating how the CHRS can play a useful part in the effort to restore this property.

The first part of the job is to raise the money necessary to restore the physical plant. This is a tall order, and one that requires a permanent, responsible, and ongoing authority that can manage the building and what happens in it. Recently, I have heard a lot of sentiment for making it into a true Community Center, one that offers common space for meetings on a one-time or on-going basis, and provides headquarters and activity space for such organizations as CHAW, CHAMPS, and the ANC.

I am awed as I watch America wade into the job of restoring life at the Pentagon and in lower Manhattan, and I am humbled to be talking about the more mundane details of life in our neighborhood. But it seems proper and fitting that the same spirit guides what we do. Each person doing his or her part in making life go on gives that spirit longevity, and is a symbol of the optimism that must remain characteristic of this country and community. ✧

News Needs Writers

CHRS News is seeking additional writers to report more of the many Capitol Hill stories that need to be told. This is your opportunity to contribute to an improved News, and to report on events and what's special in this neighborhood. You'll earn, as a reporter/writer, the same salary (nothing) that the editors get, but you'll receive the satisfaction of sharing your talent with the community and seeing your name in print.

Please contact Communications Chair Bernadette McMahon (543-4544 or bcmahon@his.com) to volunteer for assignments or suggest topics, or submit prepared articles directly to News editor Hilary Russell (hrussell@olg.com). We'll be glad to have you join the team!

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To contact any of the above, please contact the Society offices by calling 202/543-0425 or sending email to CapHRS@aol.com.

Founded over 40 years ago to preserve and protect Capitol Hill's residential character, the Society is now the largest civic association on Capitol Hill, and one of the largest in the entire District of Columbia. From the beginning, the Society has played a key role in maintaining the diverse, residential character of our neighborhood.

Preservation Café Series: From Conservation Easements to Eighth Street

by Nancy Metzger

The pros and cons of placing a conservation easement on a building within the historic district was the subject of the fall's first Preservation Café, held September 12 at the Caffe Italiano upstairs room.

Carol Goldman, President of The L'Enfant Trust, presented information about the value of a conservation easement, both to historic preservation and to the property owner. Since conservation easements are recognized as charitable contributions under the tax code, the value of the easement is deductible for federal income, estate, and gift tax purposes. However, the L'Enfant Trust urges potential donors to seek competent tax counsel before placing the easement on the property. Since the easement is a "gift to the street," the owner of a property must receive the consent of The L'Enfant

Trust before any exterior changes (even painting) can be made to the property. (This is in addition to the regular historic preservation permit that is required.)

One of the possible drawbacks mentioned was that future owners of the property are bound by the easement, since it is granted in perpetuity and is recorded with the local land records. This might be considered a liability when the time comes to sell the property. Approximately 75 properties on Capitol Hill are now listed with the L'Enfant Trust.

For more information about the L'Enfant Trust call 483-4880 or check their web page www.lenfant.org.

"Reconnecting Eighth Street"—the historic resources of Barracks Row/Eighth Street and their use with the Barracks Row Heritage Trail—will be the topic of October's Preservation Café. Details are provided on page 7. ✧

Call Box Update

by Nancy Metzger

Paul Williams, city-wide call box coordinator, states that no qualified contractor responded to the Department of Public Works' request for stripping, cleaning, and priming the city's historic call boxes, though several contractors expressed interest and at least one now has the required bonding. A revised Request for Proposal with a short closure date should be published during September. Williams reports that Mayor Anthony Williams is still very enthusiastic about the call box project. The D.C. Heritage Tourism Coalition and the D.C. Commission on the Arts are planning two public workshops on the art/history component of the call box project sometime this fall.

The Greater Capitol Hill Call Box task force met in June and selected approximately 10 locations as the first to be completed. A number of photographs have been ordered that will serve as the basis for the history/art interpretation to be placed within the call box. Artists have been working on models and plans for the first ten boxes. CHRS is coordinating the Capitol Hill effort with representatives from Stanton Park Neighborhood Association, North Lincoln Park, Capitol Hill East, Barracks Row, and other groups. ✧

Rounding Up CHRS Activities

by Bernadette McMahon

The Fall membership meeting on September 24 provided an ideal opportunity for CHRS Board members to update the membership on the many ongoing activities in which the Society is engaged. Despite the sparse turnout, the presentations made clear that development and preservation issues are getting the Society's attention from one end of the Hill to the other.

At the meeting chaired by Society President Rob Nevitt, business items came first. The 2002 budget and four proposed amendments to the CHRS Bylaws (published in the September News) were submitted to a vote and passed unanimously. Rob then introduced, in turn, the Committee Chairs and Board members most directly involved in crucial CHRS projects.

Charles McMillion, Chair of the Task Force on Station Place, announced the recent decision of the US Commission of Fine Arts to reject the design and scale of the massive office building proposed by the Louis Dreyfus Property Group. Charles praised the contributions to the Task Force of Russell Sturm, Drury Tallant, and CHRS Historic District Committee Chair Nancy Metzger, as well as the advice provided by City Planning Committee chair Dick Wolf. (The complete story on Station Place appears on page 1.)

Immediate Past President and Community Development Chair Brian Furness then provided updates on the status of the proposed halfway house at the DC Jail site, the ongoing battle with Boys Town, and the Bryan School development project. The halfway house was removed from the budget of the DC City Council after much local lobbying, but has been reinstated by Congress. The amount in the budget item has even been increased, leading some to speculate that "Lorton on the Anacostia" might be a

long-term consequence. Brian's report included an impassioned update on the Boys Town controversy (reported on page 8), and a consoling success story. He spoke glowingly of the partnership between the community and Eakin/Youngentob Associates, developers of Bryan School, suggesting that the project is an exemplar of the way that in-fill developments can be undertaken on Capitol Hill (see the July News).

Nancy Metzger, Chair of the Historic District Committee, then displayed the latest drawings prepared by Holladay Corporation for the Medlink development (between Massachusetts Avenue, and 8th, C, and 7th Streets NE). New facades, new buildings, restoration of the 1928 and 1958 hospital buildings, and changes in automobile entry and exit will affect all four sides of the one-block project. The much revised and improved designs were to be submitted to the Historic Preservation Review Board on September 26; Nancy said that they would probably be considered acceptable. She also described the historic survey of the southern end of 8th Street SE that is now being completed. Its findings reaffirm 8th Street's role in the development and history of Capitol Hill. Fascinating information being unearthed—including the frequent visits of President Jackson

and President Lincoln to the neighborhood—should support the expansion of the Historic District to the section of 8th Street south of the SE-SW Freeway. These topics and others related to the 8th Street/Main Street project will be the subject of the next Preservation Café (details on page 7).

Second Vice President Mark Anderson updated the status of DC's new "nuisance property law", reported on by Lyle Schauer in the June News. Regulations are currently being written, and additional inspectors have been hired. The Society plans to keep a watch on the implementation of the regulations, and will monitor the effectiveness of the inspection operations. CHRS is also seeking ideas to offer to the city about ways that citizens can assist in identifying candidate buildings and in monitoring enforcement. Mark also described the recent plans for the Kentucky Courts development (see page 6).

At-Large Board Member Barbara Eck, the Society's point person on the Old Naval Hospital (921 Pennsylvania Avenue SE), reported on the many local organizations with an interest in the restoration and use of the building. Barbara will represent the Society in dealing with other neighborhood organizations as decisions are made about the building's future. ✧

Welcome New Members

Susan Anderson & Doug Shulman
Jeanne & Harry Floyd
Mitchell Fulton & Michael Skadowski
Thomas Grooms
Norman & Joyce Herring
Kit Keller
Brian Kernek & Erika Moritsugu
Eric & Holly Takamura

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The 45th Annual CHRS House Tour Off to a Great Start

by T.C. Benson

Dreaming of spring already? I know I am—because I'm already involved in planning the 45th Capitol Hill House and Garden Tour! Mark your calendars now for May 11th and 12th. The 2002 Tour promises to be better than ever—with a wonderful mix of homes, adaptive re-use buildings, and special events.

Michelle Pilliod Carroll has agreed to be the volunteer chair. She is a professional event planner with her own business and 20 years of experience in the field. The Carroll family moved to Capitol Hill from Alexandria VA in June of 1998. Their house at 1001 C St. SE was on the 1999 house tour, so Michelle has first-hand knowledge of what fun it is to participate in this worthwhile endeavor.

We are building on last year's successes and the enthusiastic response of so many ticket buyers and sponsors. We're asking CHRS members to step forward to volunteer, and to tip us off to those special houses we should consider for the 2002 tour.

Michelle recruited me, a CHRS Board member and a professional fundraising and marketing consultant, to assist in the overall planning. Veteran house tour volunteer Diane Shages is already hard at work leading the effort to identify the homes for the tour.

We would like members—new and not so new—to step forward to help us sell tickets, serve as hosts at the homes, help with the Saturday reception and Sunday tea, distribute posters, and take part in a wonderful and worthwhile endeavor.

Please contact Michelle at pilliodmp@aol.com or call her at (202) 544-5057 to find out more about how you can help! ✧

When Capitol Hill was “Redlined”

by Liz Cheely

“Why don't you kids buy a new house out in Wheaton?” This in 1956, from a vice-president of Union Trust, granddaddy of Washington banks. The “kid” was the friend of an old buddy of the VP, but no matter. Money was not to be had for a Victorian fixer-upper, six blocks east of the Capitol, nor for any other building between the Capitol and the Anacostia. The money for mortgages and improvements had dried up way back in 1938, when the Architect of the Capitol published plans for a mall that would run between B Street NE (now Constitution Ave) and B Street SE (now Independence Ave) all the way to the Anacostia.

The “redlining” of these areas of Capitol Hill by Washington lending institutions began the slow decline of a substantial middle-class neighborhood. Marguerite Kelly, whose husband Tom was born and raised in the 400 block of Constitution Avenue, remembers that Perpetual was the only lending institution that continued to talk to Hill residents. That's why you'll find so many Perpetual mortgages today on Hill properties.

Peter Glickert, another long-time Capitol Hill resident and activist, said he and his wife Betty were able to purchase their home on Philadelphia Row by buying its Perpetual contract.

As for me—the “kid” of thirty plus who was advised to buy a cracker box in the new suburb of Wheaton—my husband and I took over a mortgage that was almost as mature as the house itself. Some of my happiest memories are of the hours spent removing old wallpaper in the old bay-front in the 600 block of North Carolina Avenue. In the fall of '57 we attended what must have been the second meeting of the Restoration Society. There, in the historic Belmont House (now the Sewall-Belmont House), we exchanged ideas with most of the people who would make the new group a going concern, and we would spend countless hours on projects affecting the future of residential Capitol Hill. The first and most challenging was persuading Congress to bury plans for an East Mall.

We won our battle with Congress after four years of hard work and many discouraging setbacks. On January 7, 1961, the *Washington Post* reported: “National Capital Planning Commission staff's 35-year marriage to the East Capitol Street mall (sic) scheme ended yesterday in complete divorce.” There have been other threats and other battles with CHRS in the frontlines, but none with so much to lose as that particular one.

Congress subsequently passed legislation that substantially outlawed “redlining.” It was a tremendous victory for urban pioneers everywhere, and one for which we can also take credit. ✧

Getting a Permit? Might be Quicker Now

by Nancy Metzger

The Historic Preservation Office has appointed Ginger Carter to be the staff person who will take the first look at all historic preservation permit applications. She will be able to approve many of them immediately, though others will require revision to meet historic preservation standards. Although the process remains the same as before, approvals for simpler cases may be granted more quickly because they will be Ms. Carter's chief concern. She also plans to develop a resource library to assist historic district property owners and a more user-friendly tracking system for permits granted.

Ms. Carter worked for ten years with the National Park Service in both the Historic American Buildings Survey and the American Battlefield Protections Program. She can be contacted at virginia.carter@dc.gov or at 442-8827.

Projects referred to the Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB) will be handled by T. Luke Young, the designated staff officer for Capitol Hill.

General information about the permit process is available in *The Hows, Whens, and Whys of Getting A Building Permit*, a CHRS guideline that has been updated to incorporate new addresses and phone numbers. Copies are available from the CHRS office (543-0425). ✧

Kentucky Courts Redevelopment

by Mark Anderson

Neighbors gathered at Payne School on September 20 to review revised site plans and designs for Kentucky Courts, the boarded-up buildings at C, 14th, and Kentucky Ave. SE that will soon be replaced by 38 condominium town homes and flats. The DC Housing Authority (DCHA) expects to gain HUD approval of the plan within the next six weeks and estimated that demolition will begin in December. Construction should start in the spring of 2002.

Since the last community meeting in February, the chosen developer, Innovative Development Solutions, Inc. (IDS), and the architectural firm of Sorg & Associates have greatly improved the façade detailing as well as the interior design of the townhouses and flats. The site plan also appears to be more functional: four visitor parking places have been added inside the compound, and the main driveway entry has been changed from 14th St (one-way) to C Street (two-way). The alley from Kentucky will also provide access, and each dwelling will have a rear parking space.

The number of new homes has been reduced to 38 from 40, including 12 affordable rental units (up from ten). Six flats and six homes will be rentals. Special programs will help to select potential tenants, who will be offered credit and debt counseling and other help.

With two exceptions, each of the three-story buildings will comprise an “English basement” flat at street level and a two-story “townhome” above. The exceptions are at the corner of Kentucky and C and the corner at C and 14th Streets, where the developer will build three-story townhouses and no flats below: one of these corner properties will have a garage.

The corner townhouses will be market priced at \$400,000 and up. The two-story stacked townhouses that are available for sale will start at \$250,000, while the flats will be priced from \$150,000. The builder is offering many upgrade options.

DCHA and IDS have made great progress; the reaction at the meeting was overwhelmingly favorable. Another community meeting will be scheduled in about in six weeks, when final drawings are completed. ✧



Kentucky Courts: September 2001. View from Kentucky Avenue.

Looking Back on Capitol Hill...

by Nancy Metzger, Chair,
Historic District Committee

Forbes Brown recalled how his mother supported the family after his father died in 1919. Forbes was then seven years old, and the fourth of five children. He grew up in the Capitol Hill area of 3rd and L Streets SE.

“My mom didn’t have too much formal education but she had a lot of know-how and she could do most anything—not only do things but do them well. She was an excellent cook. She did anything she could to make a dollar or fifty cents. She never did laundry. She did do some cooking for people. She was what you could sort of call a caterer. Mother would always say they were rich because they had a dollar or so more than we had. If they had company, people that they wanted to entertain, they would ask my mother to prepare the meal. She’d go to their home and prepare the meal. She’d get recommendations because the company the people had would ask, who prepared the meal? So they would introduce them to my mother and she’d get another customer. . . . We stayed in that neighborhood [1021 3rd Street SE] until I went to high school. By then my mother had saved enough of the quarters and fifty-cent pieces to buy a home so she bought a house at 2214 Q Street SE, which was near Naylor Road.”

If you know someone who should be included in the Capitol Hill oral history project, please contact Bernadette and Jim McMahan at 543-4544 or McMahons@his.com. ✧

Trees—After a Generation of Profound Neglect

Sally Boasberg, a longtime trees activist now advising the Casey Foundation, is the featured speaker at the Capitol Hill Garden Club’s upcoming meeting on Wednesday, October 17. The meeting, at 7:30 pm, will be held at Eastern Market Gallery 5, North Hall. All D.C. residents are welcome to attend.

Ms. Boasberg will discuss the current status of “The Trees of the District of Columbia,” illustrated with slides. She will include information about current activities and plans for the recent Betty Casey grant of \$50 million to restore Washington’s trees. Questions and answers will follow.

This program was originally scheduled for the Garden Club’s September 12th meeting, which was cancelled after the tragic events of Sept. 11. ✧

Preparing for the Worst

by Roxanne Walker

We were spared disaster in Capitol Hill on September 11, thanks to the apparent heroic actions of the passengers on United Airlines Flight 93. By forcing their hijackers to crash in rural Pennsylvania, it is believed that they saved the U.S. Capitol. Losing the Capitol building would have been devastating to America, but such an attack might also have done untold damage to our historic neighborhood. Let's take the opportunity to make sure we are all as prepared as possible for any future disasters. Here are a few suggestions:

- Make sure your gas and electrical services are in good repair. Locate your utility boxes for gas, electric, and water and learn how to shut each of them off. Place a flashlight or emergency light next to your breaker panel, a wrench in your water meter box, and attach a tool to your gas meter for turning off the gas.
- Keep fire extinguishers on each floor of your house and make sure everyone in your family knows how (and when) to use them. Purchase a collapsible ladder for each floor of your house that is above ground level.
- Make an emergency plan for your household, including escape routes from the house, the neighborhood, and the DC area.
- Designate a meeting place for your family to reunite after the disaster. Test the plan before emergency strikes. (Don't forget that bicycles came in very handy during the September 11 gridlock.)
- Assemble a disaster "survival" kit. This could include a 3-day supply of water and non-perishable food for each member of your household, maps, a battery-powered radio, flashlights and extra batteries, extra prescription medications, first aid supplies, spare clothes, some cash, photocopies of ID, and photos of friends and family in case they turn up missing.
- Get to know your neighbors. Exchange keys with trusted neighbors and discuss your emergency plans. Exchange lists of contact numbers. If you have disabled or elderly neighbors, ask them if they will need assistance shutting off utilities and evacuating.
- Don't forget your pets! Keep vaccination records accessible and up-to-date (many kennels require proof). Have a carrier or cage for each pet accessible and ready, along with food and any medications your pet needs. Consider posting a list of your pets on your door in case you are away when disaster strikes.

The internet contains a wealth of information about what citizens can do to prepare for disaster. Some comprehensive sites are: www.fema.gov, www.epc-pcc.gc.ca/publicinfo/self_help_ad/index.html, and www.knowledgehound.com/topics/survival.htm#tecnological. The LA Fire Department publishes a useful guide that you can download at www.lafd.org/disaster-prep.htm. ✧

Challenge: Organize a School Forum—by November!

by Bernadette McMahon

Two years ago, the Society organized an Education Forum to introduce parents to Capitol Hill's public, charter, and independent schools for grades pre-K through 8. Speakers offered advice about choosing a school to fit the personality and abilities of the child, including those with special needs. Local schools displayed information, and their representatives were available to talk with parents.

Because it proved to be such a benefit to the community, CHRS wants to repeat the Education Forum in November. That's where you can help! **We're looking for a volunteer to organize the program, and it needs to be done quickly.** November is the ideal month, since many schools accept applications and provide testing opportunities (if required) early in the new year.

Any takers? Please contact the CHRS office at (202) 543-0425 to volunteer. We'll put you in touch with persons who handled the Forum in the past, and we'll help you publicize it. ✧

Preservation Café: Re-connecting 8th Street

by Katie Miller

The Capitol Hill Restoration Society's popular Preservation Café will move its location for the October session to Barracks Row to celebrate "Re-connecting 8th Street." Jill Dowling, Executive Director of Barracks Row Main Street, will be the speaker at the session on Wednesday, October 10, 6:30 p.m., at Sheridan's, 713 8th Street SE.

The Café will feature information from two Main Street projects: an intensive architectural survey currently documenting 8th Street buildings, funded by the State Historic Preservation Office; and the development of the Barracks Row Heritage Trail, sponsored by the DC Heritage Tourism Coalition. The architectural survey will help formulate design guidelines for 8th Street rehabilitation, and the heritage trail will attract tourism. Historical research for the trail will also provide context for special events like October's Capitol Hill Heritage Days.

On November 13, the Preservation Café will return to Caffè Italiano, 1129 Pennsylvania Ave. SE for "Weatherproofing and Thermal Comfort in Your Old House," with Capitol Hill architect Robert Weinstein of architrave. The series will then take a holiday break and resume in February. Topics, speakers, and locations for the 2002 sessions will be announced in January. Suggestions from the audiences are always encouraged and, in the past, have provided some of the most stimulating evenings. ✧

Mark your Calendar!

OCTOBER

9 Tuesday, 6:30 p.m.

“Congressional Cemetery: Washington’s Forgotten Resting Place” lecture. Reservations requested. National Building Museum. Call 202-272-2448x3555.

10 Wednesday, 6:30 p.m.

Preservation Café: “Re-connecting 8th Street.” Sheridan’s Steak House, 713 Eighth Street SE.

13-14 Saturday–Sunday

Capitol Hill Festival. Includes House Tour to benefit Watkins School; tours of the Old Naval Hospital, Barracks Row Heritage Trail, and the neighborhood; Second Saturday Gallery Walk; historic bike tour from Christ Church to Congressional Cemetery.

16 Tuesday, 6:30 p.m.

CHRS Monthly Board Meeting. 921 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE.

17 Wednesday, 7:30 p.m.

Capitol Hill Garden Club meeting. Eastern Market Gallery 5, North Hall.

18 Thursday, 6:30 p.m.

“Breaking News in Archeology” lecture. Historical Society of Washington, DC. Reservations requested. Contact Katherine Joseph at 202-785-2068x100.

Boys Town Opponents Win ACLU Support; City Issues Permits

by Brian R. Furness

The First Amendment threat posed by the Boys Town suit against Capitol Hill community groups has attracted the support of the American Civil Liberties Union. The ACLU will defend the Southeast Citizens for Smart Development (SCSD), the group chaired by Will Hill, Vice Chair of ANC 6B, and Ellen Opper-Weiner, who have led the opposition to the Omaha-based non-profit’s plans to build an expensive facility for troubled youth on Pennsylvania Ave. SE (at Potomac Avenue). The SCSD’s defense will be assisted by the Center for Individual Rights, a local group involved in defending freedom of speech issues.

On September 7, the City approved the permits requested by Boys Town, but denied any connection between their issuance and the August 14 lawsuit, which included named City zoning, planning, and building officials. The suit also seeks unspecified monetary damages from PSA 112, and from Hill, Opper-Weiner, and Council Member Sharon Ambrose as individuals, who, the suit claims, have raised public concerns, organized the community, and petitioned government officials not to approve the project.

The SCSD is exploring a legal challenge to the City’s issuance of the permits. Its Legal Fund will support

this purpose as well as the cost of defending its leaders. Boys Town has promised to continue to press for damages, despite the issuance of the permits.

Even with *pro bono* legal representation, expenses could reach \$25,000. Fundraisers are planned for October.

Council Member Ambrose says she will introduce legislation to curtail such SLAPP suits (Strategic Lawsuit against Public Participation)—legal challenges that are designed primarily to stifle citizen or community organization activism by burdening them with costly and time-consuming legal defense.

The Restoration Society’s resolution condemning the suit was printed in the *Hill Rag* and posted on the website of the *Voice of the Hill*. CHAMPS and the Stanton Park Neighborhood Association have also expressed concerns. The Boys Town’s proposal and its suit have been picked up by other media, including *Roll Call*, *The Hill*, *The Washington Post* and the *Omaha World Herald*. ✧

SCSD Legal Fund

Contributions to the SCSD Legal Fund should be sent to its Director, Kathleen Donner, 18 3rd St. NE, Washington, DC 20002. For more information, call (202) 543-3063.

Capitol Hill Restoration Society

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