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May 2012

## Chair of Historic Preservation Review Board Addresses CHRS Members

By Beth Purcell and Shauna Holmes

On March 27, 2012, Catherine Buell, chair of the DC Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB), addressed the CHRS community forum at Maury Elementary School. Originally from Silver Spring, Maryland, Ms. Buell is now a DC resident who has lived in Logan Circle, Georgetown, and Historic Anacostia. She is an attorney and a trustee of the National Urban League.

Ms. Buell outlined DC's preservation law, the Historic Landmark and Historic District Protection Act, and the roles of the HBRB and DC's Historic Preservation Office (HPO), which serves as staff to HPRB and the Mayor's Agent. She explained that HPO also serves as DC's State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). HPRB and HPO

are part of DC's Office of Planning, which is under the Deputy Mayor for Economic Development. David Maloney is HPO's director, and his deputy director is Steve Callcott. HPO's staff handles project review, enforcement and administration. The HPRB is an advisory board to the Mayor's Agent Harriet Tregoning, director of OP; and Peter Byrne, a law professor at Georgetown University, is the Mayor's Agent Hearing Officer as a subcontractor to Ms. Tregoning.

Under the terms of the National Historic Preservation Act, the National Park Service requires that the members of the HPRB meet certain professional qualifications. The HPRB has a wealth of talent, both professional and volunteer, and Ms. Buell spoke at length about the

qualifications of individual members of the HPRB.

Ms. Buell also discussed some major HPRB initiatives, including sustainability. The city's first net-zero LEED project involving an historic home was approved on Capitol Hill, and HPRB's recently-issued

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### CHRS Elections in May 2012— Please Sign and Return Your Ballot

In May, members will receive their ballots to vote for CHRS officers and directors. The new DC Nonprofit Corporation Act requires that ballots for member voting have a signature line and that the member must sign his or her name. CHRS is complying with the new law. **When you receive your ballot, please vote for the candidates of your choice, and remember to sign and return your ballot before the deadline.**

### The 55th Annual House and Garden Tour

May 12–13, 2012

See page 7 for more details!

# President's Column: Defending Capitol Hill

By Beth Purcell

"Lawyering-up" is never the first choice, but sometimes it's the only choice to defend our neighborhood. CHRS was compelled to hire legal counsel in connection with adverse environmental effects from the 11th Street Bridges, and in 2010 CHRS settled the case, [CHRS v. LaHood](#), and gained significant benefits for Capitol Hill. (See *News* June 2010.) CHRS also hired counsel in the Mayor's Agent case involving 227 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE. This case is pending before the DC Court of Appeals. (See *News* March 2011.)

CHRS has also helped other Capitol Hill organizations when they needed legal counsel to defend the neighborhood.

In the early 2000s, Boys Town (the same organization as in the Spencer Tracy film) purchased the land at 14th Street/Pennsylvania Avenue/Potomac Avenue, opposite the Potomac Avenue Metro. Boys Town planned to build a facility there to house 40 at-risk youth. Neighbors strongly opposed the project. Southeast Citizens For Smart Development, a grassroots nonprofit organization, led the opposition. CHRS supported the neighbors by reporting on the case and on Southeast Citizens' fundraising efforts. CHRS encouraged members to contribute to Southeast Citizens' legal defense fund, and Southeast Citizens raised \$65,000 over a two-to-three year period. In the end, Boys Town sold the land to the developer who built Jenkins Row/Harris Teeter. It was a victory for the neighborhood.

In the late 1990s, many believed that the New Dragon carryout at 259 15th Street, SE was a major public safety problem. In 2000, the New Dragon's liquor license was up for renewal and neighbors decided to oppose renewal. Hill East, Inc., a

## CHRS Supports Neighborhood to Keep Stained Glass Windows in Historic Church

CHRS strongly opposes the permit request to remove the stained glass windows from the historic Epworth church that is prominently located at the corner of 7th and A Streets, NE. This church, which is a contributing structure in the Capitol Hill Historic District, was built in 1895, and a number of its architectural features exhibit characteristics of the Richardsonian Romanesque style that was popular at the time and is found throughout the historic district. These features include the stained glass windows, which are historically significant, character-defining architectural elements of the building. Neighbors who live near the church also oppose the request to remove the stained glass windows.

The World Mission Society Church of God bought the Epworth church in November 2011 and later filed a permit application to remove the stained glass from the windows and replace them with clear glass. DC's Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB) considered the permit application at its March 22 meeting. Following testimony from ANC Commissioners, CHRS, and neighbors, HPRB voted unanimously to advise the city's Mayor's Agent that granting the permit would not be consistent with the purposes of DC's preservation law or with the window standards included in the preservation regulations.

The Church of God has appealed HPRB's decision to the Mayor's Agent (an administrative appeal), and a Mayor's Agent hearing about the case has been scheduled for May 18, 2012. A group of neighbors near the historic church has hired legal counsel to represent it for the Mayor's Agent hearing. CHRS has offered to work with the neighbors to help raise funds to pay for legal expenses related to the Mayor's Agent case, and representatives of the neighbors have agreed.

### How to Contribute to the Neighbors' Legal Expenses Fund

If you wish to contribute, please send a check payable to CHRS, Inc. On the check's memo line, write "Legal fees for 700 A St. NE," and mail to:

CHRS  
P.O. Box 15264  
Washington, DC 20003-0264

neighborhood nonprofit corporation, raised funds to hire an attorney. CHRS also contributed. The ABRA report reads like a script for "Law and Order": outside the carryout were murder suspects and drug-dealing, and inside, drug-using. The neighbors prevailed when ABRA decided not to renew the liquor license. (The buildings at 257-259

15th Street were later demolished and replaced by a mixed use building.)

Today there is a new challenge. As reported in this issue of the *News*, neighbors near the historic church at 700 A Street, NE are fighting to save the church's stained glass windows, and CHRS is supporting their efforts by helping to raise funds for legal counsel. ★

## 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 50 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.

# Nominees for the CHRS Board of Directors for 2012–13

The Nominating Committee of Paul Cromwell, Gary Peterson, Elizabeth Nelson and Beth Purcell has nominated the following individuals to serve on the 2012–2013 CHRS Board. Ballots will be mailed to all CHRS members in good standing as of May 1, 2012. As noted in the box on the front page, *please sign your ballot before mailing it back.*

## Nominees



**Janet Quigley,  
President**  
(one-year term)

Janet has served on the CHRS Board for two years, first as an At Large member and then as Secretary. Her primary interests are historic preservation, land use and affordable home improvement. She participated in a successful effort of Stanton Park neighbors to rezone the Medlink hospital property in order to maintain the historic integrity and appropriate scale of the site. She has previously served as an Advisory Neighborhood (ANC) Commissioner, Stanton Park Neighborhood Association (SPNA) Land Use Committee member, and Capitol Hill Coalition for Sensible Development Chair. She works at the historic Washington Navy Yard and has lived on Capitol Hill for seventeen years.



**Michelle Pilliod  
Carroll, First  
Vice President**  
(one-year-term;  
returning)

Michelle was elected to the CHRS Board as an At Large Member in 2009 and has been Vice President since 2010.

Michelle has been active in CHRS for a number of years. She has chaired the House and Garden Tour twice and was the major force in organizing the past "teas," (now the "refreshment breaks") for the House Tours. Michelle originated the "Fun Fall Auction" for CHRS and now, after two successful auctions, hopes to make it an annual affair. Originally from New York, she came to DC to study at the Corcoran School of Art and George Washington University. She has owned and operated her own business, Pilliod Meeting Planning, for almost 20 years. She and her husband Dennis have lived on Capitol Hill since 1996.



**Monte Edwards,  
Second Vice  
President**  
(one-year term)

Monte began his professional career as an engineer and then as an attorney for Washington Gas. He is now retired. He has been a member of the Eastern Market Community Advisory Committee since its inception in 1999 and served as Vice Chair, Secretary and Chair of its Capital Improvements Committee. He served as a member of the Steering Committee and Co-Chair of the Land Use Committee of Stanton Park Neighborhood Association. He was a member of the 2001 ANC Redistricting Task Force for Ward 6. He currently serves as a trustee of the Committee of 100 on the Federal City. He has served as a board member of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society since 2006.

*Continued on page 6*

# Historic Preservation Briefs

By Shauna Holmes

Two Capitol Hill projects were reviewed by the CHRS Historic Preservation Committee in April.

## Hine School Project

The Stanton-EastBanc design team made a presentation at the Historic Preservation Committee's April 2 meeting. Architect Amy Weinstein walked the committee through the design changes that had been made in response to the Historic Preservation Review Board's (HPRB) August 2011 suggestions for additional study, refinement, or modification to earlier proposed conceptual plans. The changes have led to important improvements in design, visual perception, and to some extent massing for many of the project elements. However, the committee felt some major components and issues need revisiting and reconsideration,

Because the project was to be reviewed again by HPRB on April 26, CHRS wrote a letter to HPRB detailing its views regarding both improvements in the project and CHRS's concerns about certain design, height, and massing issues. In particular, CHRS continues to view the height and mass of the western portion of the development between C Street and Pennsylvania Avenue as too great to be considered compatible with the Capitol Hill Historic District, with too much heft relative to surrounding historic buildings and the scale of the historic district. We also expressed concerns regarding the office building on the corner of 7th and Pennsylvania, which is also not compatible with the historic district and surrounding neighborhood, and asked HPRB to please reconsider its earlier concept decisions regarding this building's design, scale, height,

and mass. The letter can be found on the CHRS website by clicking on the Hine School link on the home page and then clicking on the link, "Letter to HPRB April 18, 2012."

## Northeast Library

DC Public Libraries (DCPL) also presented plans for a major renovation of the Northeast Library that will primarily affect the interior but will also include a small exterior addition in the rear. This addition, which would be placed atop the ground-level rear structure that now encloses the garage, would provide a new 3-story glass and brick accessible entrance structure with stairs and elevator access. HPRB was to review the plans at its April 26 meeting, so after sending preliminary comments to DCPL and their architect, CHRS sent HPRB a letter expressing some reservations about the architectural expression of the addition and how it relates to the existing historic library building.

By April 23, the architect had made some design changes in response to comments from CHRS and others, but concerns remain regarding materials, design, visibility, and how the transition between the addition and the rear wall will be handled. Because this is a city agency's project and the interior is also considered historically significant, the DC Historic Preservation Office—along with CHRS, ANC 6C, Friends of the Northeast Library, and others in the community—will also be reviewing plans for the interior renovations and how they could affect historic character-defining features and spaces.

## Mayor's Agent Hearing on 700 A Street, NE

The World Mission Society Church of God has appealed the Historic Preservation Review Board's March 22, 2012 decision not to approve its permit application to remove character-defining stained glass windows from the historic 1895 Epworth Church (see April *CHRS News*, page 5, for details about the case). Consequently, there will be a Mayor's Agent hearing on May 18, 2012, at which the Mayor's Agent Hearing Officer, Peter Byrne, will hear testimony regarding the case and then make a ruling. A representative of CHRS will testify at the hearing in opposition to the permit request, and because the proposal has drawn strong opposition from the church's neighbors, a number of others will be testifying as well. (See the related story on page 2). ★

## Thank You CHRS Supporters

*We thank the following members, patrons and sponsors.*

### NEW MEMBERS

Steven Holtzman

### PATRONS

Diane Brockett  
Michael Halebian, Jr.  
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# Winning the War Without Having to Fight the Battle

By David Perry and Monte Edwards

Shortly after last month's column about the proposed Recreation Bridge over the Anacostia River, the DC Office of Planning website "Proposed Reuse of the 11th Street Bridge" posted this statement: "The District Government has decided to temporarily cancel demolition of the outmoded downstream bridge...."

This statement made no sense. The proposed "marrying" of the new local bridge to the old bridge could not occur in the manner depicted in the renderings provided by the Office of Planning. The new local bridge, which is within a few months of completion, and the old downstream bridge, are not in vertical alignment. That is, the old bridge is basically horizontal and the new local bridge is arched and the two ends of the old bridge are considerably higher above the Anacostia River than the new local bridge.

Additionally, the 11th Street Bridge contract includes the removal of the horizontal superstructures including the bridge decks of the old bridges by the contractor, Skanska. Funding for that demolition work is included and fully paid for in the current contract. If that work were cancelled, there would be a cost to renegotiate Skanska's contract.

Of greater concern is the issue of how the new local bridge would become operational. Completion of the approaches to the new local bridge requires demolition of the Navy Yard ramp to the old downstream bridge in order to connect the new local bridge to the road system. The 11th Street Bridges project underwent a lengthy review process that resulted in a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and included negotiated approvals from the U.S. Army Corps

of Engineers, Coast Guard, National Capitol Planning Commission, and other agencies. A change in the design would require going through this lengthy review process again.

Unable to get answers to these questions, we were able to meet with Councilmember Tommy Wells and his staff on March 27 and discussed these issues. The next day, March 28, the date of the Office of Planning public meeting, his staff communicated the issues to the Office of Planning prior to the public meeting.

Several aspects of the presentation we heard that night were obviously prepared at the last-minute in response to those questions, and the Office of Planning explained that:

- The decking and superstructure of the old bridge would be removed (as planned in the Skanska contract)

- Construction of the new local bridge would proceed on schedule, and the Recreation Bridge would be considered as a future project
- Demolition of the existing bridge approaches would not be delayed and thus would not delay completion of the new local bridge
- The overlooks on the two piers in the river would be constructed as designed and attached to the new local bridge.
- The on-shore piers would be converted to fishing piers.

We are back to where we should be. The 11th Street Bridges will be completed without interruption. ★

## Historic House Toolbox: Give Your House Some Love!

Hill Center at the Old Naval Hospital  
921 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE  
Saturday, June 9, 2012 · 10 am – 1 pm

Join the DC Preservation League and CHRS for the opportunity to receive FREE individualized attention from contractors and seasoned professionals who will answer your questions on a range of topics, including: working with architects and contractors, roofing, wood windows, ironwork, energy efficiency, and much more.

Two onsite learning sessions will focus on researching the history of your property and energy audits and greening your house without compromising its historic integrity.

FREE to the public!

To register, please visit:

<https://dcpres.wufoo.com/forms/historic-house-tool-box/>



**Sharon Ivy Weiss,**  
**Treasurer**  
(one-year term;  
returning)

Sharon Ivy Weiss is serving her fourth year as Treasurer of CHRS. After moving to the Hill in 2007 and becoming a CHRS member, she expressed a desire to get involved in an effort to meet neighbors and become an active part of the community. Sharon has been working as a financial consultant for over 20 years and currently works with the Council on Library and Information Resources, Gorongosa Restoration Project in Mozambique, Ethiopian Community Development Council, and several Native American Organizations.



**Doriann Fengler,**  
**Secretary**  
(one-year term)

Dori moved to Capitol Hill in 2001 from Long Island, New York after spending three years in Mannheim, Germany. She and her husband, Joseph, and their dog, Missy, enjoy living on the Hill. She has a strong background in event planning, corporate partnerships and community outreach, having worked for the US Army Morale, Welfare and Recreation Command for 12 years in this capacity. She has developed marketing materials, training guides, ads and promotional materials for Army Soldier and Family programs worldwide. She has worked on the House and Garden Tour for the past two years organizing the docents, and has provided support and advice on other community outreach events. She has hosted fundraisers for various community organizations and elected officials.



**Lisa Dale Jones,**  
**At Large**  
(two-year term)

Lisa and her husband Gary have lived on Capitol Hill since January 2010, when they moved to DC from Boston—where they also lived in a one hundred-year-old home. She has been co-editor of the CHRS newsletter since January 2011 and wrote a number of house descriptions for the House and Garden Tour brochure this year and last. Lisa has a background in journalism and for ten years was a radio producer for *The Christian Science Monitor*, winning the prestigious Gabriel Award. She now owns Speaking with Soul, a business assisting clients with their speech coaching, editing, and communications needs. As a speech coach, she has worked with clients in the US, Africa, and Europe, and she provides speech and print editing services to clients in the US and the UK.



**Maurice Walters,**  
**At Large**  
(two-year-term;  
returning)

Maurice is an architect with his office in Capitol Hill. He has over 25 years of experience in the design of residential, transit-oriented urban design, mixed-use and historic preservation projects in the US and abroad. On numerous occasions he has presented projects for approval to the DC Historic Preservation Review Board, the Board of Zoning Adjustment, and the Zoning Commission as well as many ANCs and local community groups. He has his undergraduate degree from the Georgia Institute of Technology and his Master of Architecture degree

from the University of Maryland at College Park. Maurice and his wife, Mary Jean Pajak, first lived in Capitol Hill from 1987–1992. In 2001 they returned to the Hill and undertook an extensive renovation of their home, which was part of the 2007 CHRS Home and Garden Tour.



**Lisa Wilson,**  
**At Large**  
(two-year term;  
returning)

Lisa Wilson moved to Capitol Hill with her husband in 2007 and joined CHRS the same year. She is an attorney in the Solicitor's Office at the Department of Labor, and walks to work from her home. Originally from Michigan, she has lived in DC since 2002. Lisa first joined the CHRS Board as Secretary in 2009 and served in that role for two years. During that time, she also had her first child who loves the playgrounds on the Hill. Lisa rejoined the Board in 2012 as an at large member, and has also been involved in the House and Garden Tour for the last few years. ★

# Join Us on the House and Garden Tour



317 A Street, NE.

IMAGE COURTESY JUDITH V. MAY

**T**he 55th Annual House and Garden Tour is scheduled for Saturday, May 12 (4–7 pm) and Sunday, May 13 (12–5 pm). There are thirteen homes and two front gardens. This walkable tour is approximately one mile in length. Tickets are \$25 per person through Friday, May 11, and \$30 on Tour weekend. Tickets are good for both days but only one entry per property. Children under five are free but must be carried. Tickets may be purchased at eight local businesses:

- Appalachian Spring, Union Station
- Art & Soul, 225 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE
- Coldwell Banker, 605 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE
- Riverby Books, 417 East Capitol Street, SE
- Groovy DC, 323 Seventh Street, SE
- Prudential Carruthers, 216 Seventh Street, SE
- Hill's Kitchen, 713 D Street, SE
- homebody, 715 Eighth Street, SE

Tickets also may be purchased at any house on the Tour during Tour hours. The Tour homes are:

- 317 A Street, NE
- 308 East Capitol Street, NE (Unit #1)
- 2 6th Street, NE
- 710 East Capitol, NE
- 9 & 11 9th Street, NE
- 906 East Capitol Street, NE
- 1020 East Capitol Street, NE
- 905 Massachusetts Avenue, NE
- 633 A Street, NE
- 621 Massachusetts Avenue, NE
- 514 Constitution Avenue, NE
- 100 5th Street, NE

The traditional House Tour refreshment break will be served on Sunday from 3–5 pm at the Lutheran Church of the Reformation Parish Hall, 212 East Capitol Street, NE. ★

Capitol Hill Restoration Society

## 55th Annual House & Garden TOUR

*Windows on our World*  
Mothers Day Weekend 2012  
**MAY 12–13, 2012**

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# Zoning Briefs

By Gary Peterson

**T**he CHRS Zoning Committee considered and unanimously voted to support two BZA cases at its April 12 meeting.

**BZA 18363.** This property, at 1116 I Street, SE, is a basic lot occupancy case. The semi-detached dwelling is allowed 40% lot occupancy and can go up to 70% if granted a special exception. The house currently occupies 42% of the lot and will cover 48% of the lot after construction.

**BZA 18346.** This case involves an application by Wagtime for a special exception and a variance to permit animal boarding and an animal shelter at 900 M Street, SE. The property is zoned industrial (C-M-1). It is bound by 9th Street on the west, Potomac

Avenue on the north, M Street on the South, and a parking lot on the east. Immediately to the north are some residential properties. The middle part of the structure facing M Street is leased to Domino's Pizza, and Wagtime is leasing the building on both sides of Domino's (Domino's has no objection to the proposed use). The west half will house animal boarding and the east half an animal shelter.

An animal shelter is allowed in a C-M-1 zone as a special exception. To receive the special exception the animal boarding use must be designed to create no objectionable conditions to adjacent properties; shall not abut a residential zone; and shall not have exterior yards. The applicant needs a variance to run an

animal shelter because it is within 200 feet from an existing residential use. The committee believes that Wagtime complies with the conditions and has satisfied the requirements of a variance. In addition, Wagtime has, at the behest of ANC Commissioner Oldenburg, agreed to seven conditions of operation. The committee approval requires that the operational conditions be made part of the final order approving the application.

The next meeting will be held on May 10, 2012. The Frager's Hardware case will be heard at this meeting. The application involving 717 8th Street, SE, will also be on the agenda. ★

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## CHRS Recommends Permit Improvements Within Historic Districts

By Drury Tallant

**T**he District's Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA) wants many homeowners to "Skip the Trip" and conduct the permit process for small scale and minor projects using an online, post card permit.

However, for properties within an historic district, post card permits are not currently allowed. That may soon change: CHRS has requested that the District's Historic Preservation Office work with DCRA to develop a mechanism to enable post card permits within historic districts. Once in place, this type of permit will be allowed for certain types of interior work. This effort will

reduce the regulatory burden, and will make the permit process very similar to that in non-designated neighborhoods.

Discussions thus far have been very positive and it is expected that later this year homeowners of historic properties will be able to complete the permit process online. The types of projects that can be accomplished with a post card permit can be viewed at DCRA's website: <http://dcra.dc.gov/DC/DCRA/Permits>. ★

# May 16 Preservation Café—Salacious True Stories by Robert Pohl, author of “Wicked Capitol Hill”

By Elizabeth Nelson

**A**s we all know, scandal is nothing new on Capitol Hill. But, for most of us, memory only goes back so far (in my case, to Fanne Foxe in the Tidal Basin with Wilbur Mills). If you would appreciate a raucous evening of sordid secrets and long-forgotten misdeeds, well-aged to improve their odor, you won't want to miss the May 16 Preservation Café, 6:30 pm at Ebenezers. Robert Pohl, Hill denizen, Maury parent, and professional tour guide, will regale us with naughty tales from his most recent book, “Wicked Capitol Hill.” His focus will be on sites familiar to most CHRS members. ★

Robert Pohl pointing out some of the wicked locations on Capitol Hill.



“And it happened right there”



“Monkey business on Capitol Hill”



“Knock before entering”

IMAGES COURTESY ELIZABETH NELSON



Catherine Buell at CHRS Community Forum.

window repair and replacement guidelines provided a needed preservation voice in achieving energy efficiency in existing infrastructure. The HPO website provides links on sustainability (see <https://preservation.dc.gov>). In addition, some recent cases before HPRB illustrate sustainability issues in historic structures, including a case involving a house roof with solar tiles and, in a large-scale context, the 2010 case of Third Church of Christ, Scientist. Energy efficiency was a big problem with the building (uninsulated concrete), and other structural deficiencies complicated the challenges of adapting the building to be energy efficient. She pointed out that there are many mid-20th century concrete buildings that are historic, such as the HUD building and the Hirschhorn, which could face similar challenges. Studies are ongoing regarding energy retrofitting and/or adaptive use.

HPRB is also reviewing master plans—including density, massing, and size—for St. Elizabeth's, Walter

Reed, and the McMillan Reservoir. HPO is working on its 2015 work plan, which among other matters will address surveys, mapping, and zoning. There is a steering committee working with HPO on the 2015 plan that includes the DC Preservation League, the Committee of 100 on the Federal City, Nancy Metzger, some developers, and representatives of undesignated historic areas.

Historic Homeowner Grants can help low and moderate income homeowners in historic districts repair the exterior of their homes (tax credits are not much help to these homeowners). The homeowner grants were funded at \$1.25 million on a pilot basis in 2008. Since then, the

grants have not been funded at the same level—there is \$125,000 available this year. Councilmembers Barry and Alexander introduced legislation a year ago for Economic Empowerment Zones, and buildings in these areas, both commercial and residential, would be eligible for incentives. The legislation is before Jack Evans' committee.

The Meads Row buildings on H Street, NE were a difficult case when they were proposed for landmarking. HPRB felt they would have been considered contributing buildings in an historic district, but didn't consider them eligible in their own right for landmarking. [See article on Meads Row in *News* February 2009.] "Conservation district" is an additional concept under consideration for neighborhoods that are not ready for historic district designation.

Other important issues of concern for HPRB include community outreach. For example, it would be helpful to have design guidelines for

all the city's historic districts. HPO staff prepared draft design guidelines for the proposed Barney Circle historic district, but others need them as well.

Ms. Buell responded to questions from members:

If a permit is denied and a property owner then goes ahead with construction or alterations without the required permit, the HPO enforcement staff will issue fines.

There is currently no requirement to disclose historic district status for non-residential buildings. HPO is working to get information on historic district status online. Due diligence is important for property owners and potential buyers. Next year all real property tax forms for residential properties will indicate whether the property is in an historic district. Ms. Buell would like to see a one-pager with information on historic properties included in the real property tax bill.

The HPRB advises the Mayor's Agent; HPRB is not quasi-judicial. HPRB addresses historic preservation issues only and cannot consider religious freedom issues. DC law provides a forum for addressing those issues. The Mayor's Agent decisions can be appealed to the DC courts.

Regarding the Hine project, a member of the audience stated that the HPRB's 2009 decision, which was made with only four members voting, was "slighting." Ms. Buell indicated that only four members were there to vote on that project due to major life issues and other reasons. Now, the HPRB is full size with nine members. City residents need to pressure elected officials to keep HPRB at the full number of nine. ★

# Churches on 15th Street, SE: Part 1, Baptist Churches

By Beth Purcell

On 15th Street, SE were several churches that once served the community, including Comer Memorial Baptist Church and Isle of Patmos Baptist Church. These two churches were located in commercial buildings on the west side of the 300 block of 15th Street, SE, where the Payne Recreation Center ball field is today.

From the 1920s to approximately 1950 the 300 block of 15th Street, SE looked very different than it does now. During that time, there were 16 buildings on the west side of the 300 block of 15th Street, SE (311–341). Three of these buildings were stores built in 1925: 311, 313 and 315. The building at the corner of 15th and D Streets, #341, was also a store. The rest were rowhouses.

Immediately to the north of the buildings on 15th Street, at the southwest corner of 15th and C Streets, was Payne Elementary School, named for Daniel A. Payne, President of Wilberforce University. Payne School was built in 1896 for African-American students. Public schools in Washington were segregated until the 1954 Supreme Court decision in *Bolling v. Sharpe*.<sup>1</sup> The old Payne School was a red brick building with a two-story hexagonal bay cap and dormers, resembling Pierce School at 1375 Maryland Avenue, NE. In 1983, the old Payne School burned; it was demolished and replaced by tennis courts.

As of 1948, the Baptist Churches held services at 311 and 313, and Alexander S. Pope, Sr. operated his funeral home at 315. These buildings had a storefront bay with glass windows on three sides. Mr. Pope later moved his funeral home to 414 15th Street, SE, and still later to 2617 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE.

## Isle of Patmos Baptist Church (311 15th Street, SE)

In 1941, Rev. Hilliard S. Simenton founded a mission with 27 members; the mission soon grew to 45. A council recognized the mission as Isle of Patmos Baptist Church. Rev. Simenton “proceeded to secure a place of worship: a small storefront at 311 15th Street, SE. He built the pews and pulpit furniture himself and continued to work diligently for the success of the church.” He died less than two years after the church’s founding. In 1947, Rev. George Bolden Rogers became pastor and served until his death in 1988. In 1947–1948, the church purchased a church building at 308 G Street, SW. Urban renewal forced the church to move again, to 1512 U Street, NW. The church burned its mortgage 1961. In 1966, with a growing congregation, the church moved again to a larger building at 1501 Rhode Island Avenue, NE. Rev. Tyrone P. Jones, III was pastor between 1990 and 1995 and Rev. Calvin L. Matthews became pastor in 1998. Today the church is at 1200 Rhode Island Avenue, NE. For more information on the church, visit: [www.isleofpatmosbc.org](http://www.isleofpatmosbc.org).

## Comer Memorial Baptist Church (313 15th Street, SE)

Comer Memorial Baptist Church occupied a store at #313 as of 1948. By 1964 the church had moved to 432 M Street, NW. In 1968, the church was renamed and reorganized as Mount Rona Missionary Baptist Church. The church moved to 3431 13th Street, NW in 1974. Please visit the church web site at: [www.mtronachurch.org](http://www.mtronachurch.org). ★

*This is one in a series of articles on Hill East history. Next in the series: Churches on 15th Street, SE: Part 2, 15th Street Christian Church.*

<sup>1</sup> 347 U.S. 497 (1954)



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

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## Mark Your Calendar!

### MAY

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

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

**12–13 Saturday and Sunday**  
55th Annual House and Garden Tour—Windows on Our World. Open Saturday, 4–7 pm; Sunday, 12–5 pm. More information available at: [www.chrs.org](http://www.chrs.org).

**Saturdays, April 21–November 17**  
9 am–noon (rain or shine)

H Street NE Freshfarm Market, located at library kiosk, 13th and H Street, NE. Fresh fruits and vegetables, pasture-raised meats, local dairy, baked goods, and more. [www.freshfarmmarkets.org](http://www.freshfarmmarkets.org)

**15 Tuesday, 6:30 pm**  
CHRS Board of Directors, Capitol Hill Townhomes, 750 6th Street, SE, second floor. Details: Beth Purcell, 622-4303.

**16 Wednesday, 6:30 pm**  
CHRS Preservation Café, “Wicked Capitol Hill,” salacious stories from Robert Pohl’s new book. Ebenezers Coffeehouse, 2nd & F Streets, NE, downstairs; free, open to the public, no reservations needed. Details: Elizabeth Nelson, 543-3512.

### JUNE

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

**4 Monday, 7:00 pm**  
Community Forum on Hine School Project, Hill Center, 921 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE. Details: [caphrs@aol.com](mailto:caphrs@aol.com). Doors open at 6:45 pm.

**9 Saturday, 10:00 am–1:00 pm**  
Historic House Toolbox. Free opportunity to talk with contractors and seasoned professionals about maintaining and repairing your historic house. Hill Center, 921 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE. Details: Shauna Holmes, 546-5211.

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

**19 Tuesday, 6:30 pm**  
CHRS Board of Directors, Capitol Hill Townhomes, 750 6th Street, SE, second floor. Details: Beth Purcell, 622-4303.