

ANC 6C

Progress on Parking Lot, New Residential Development in the Mount Vernon Triangle

BY HUNTER L. GORINSON

Two months after the Office of the Deputy Mayor of Planning and Economic Development controversially converted their development site at Fifth and I streets NW into a parking lot, Bill McLeod, executive director of the Mount Vernon Triangle Community Improvement District, came before Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6C for help in reclaiming the parcel for weekend use among residents of the neighborhood.

McLeod's organization is looking to host an outdoor summer movie night – similar to those already held in the neighborhood north of Massachusetts Avenue (NoMa) and the Capitol Riverfront – at the site but, as the second smallest business improvement group in the city, is unable to cover all the costs itself. To that end, McLeod submitted a \$1,500 grant request to the commission – a sum that would cover website design, marketing banners and fliers, as ANCs are precluded from directly financing entertainment.

McLeod projected that the cost of the series will come in at a “pretty lean” \$7,200 and is currently fundraising throughout the community. The summer-long event will showcase notable Asian films, in order to capitalize on the Mount Vernon Triangle's proximity to Chinatown. The commission as a whole was relieved to hear that at least some good would come of the much maligned parking lot snafu.

“It's my firm belief that the most wanton act of neglect that local government can do is that act of no transparency and no community engagement. Both issues were the case regarding this project at Fifth and I streets,” said Commis-

sioner Keith Silver. “On the other hand, I think... [we can] right this injustice by making this concession [to allow] the parking lot for community use on weekends.”

Commissioner Charley Docter introduced a motion to support the grant request, which was seconded by Commissioner Tony Richardson. McLeod said that he hopes to start the film series sometime in July and that he is still looking for an operator to host a possible farmer's market at the Fifth and I site.

Meanwhile, the ANC was relieved to hear word that another Mount Vernon Triangle development actually would be proceeding – Steuart and Paradigm Development's 14-story residential building at 444 New York Ave. NW. W. Clarke Ewart, executive vice president of Paradigm, came forward with a rare request to reduce the curb cuts currently on site.

“What we're putting in place is consistent with the operation of this 390-unit apartment building so that things run smoothly and safely because we'll segregate the loading from the delivery and drop-off areas, so that we don't have congestion every morning,” said Ewart.

Following the unanimous approval of Paradigm's request, the ANC's Planning, Zoning and Environment Committee chairman, Rob Amos, presented a brief, non-voting update on the status of the project. To the pleasure of many in attendance, it was announced that 444 New York is fully funded and currently scheduled to break ground this coming fall.

An Unexpected Resignation

In a surprise turn, Commissioner Anne Phelps relayed word that Commissioner Ryan Velasco was to resign his post as the representative of Single Member District (SMD) 6C07 effective immediately. Velasco, who was not attendance, cited an upcoming stretch of “extended business travel” and his intent to soon move outside his SMD as the motivating factors behind the decision in statement read aloud at the hearing.



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“Each of us should take pride in knowing that [the ANC] is now viewed as one of the more functional and responsible commissions in the city... For more than three years, it’s been an honor to work with you, [Ward 6] Councilmember [Tommy] Wells and his staff, and members of the community,” wrote Velasco.

Under city regulations, a replacement for the now vacant seat cannot be sought within such close proximity to the upcoming citywide elections, but Chairperson Karen Wirt stated that Velasco’s duties will be divided amongst the remaining commissioners and that constituents of 6C07 will still be represented by their panel.

ANC’s ‘Great Weight’ in Jeopardy?

Commissioner Tom Hamilton was charged to report that the Board of Zoning Adjustment (BZA) has seemingly ignored a January ANC recommendation that would allow the homeowner of 647 C St. NE to construct a second story arts studio on top of their existing garage. In addition to the affirmative ANC vote, Hamilton also wrote a personal letter in support of the project - only to watch neither be considered when the BZA voted down the measure 3-2.

“The BZA gave no thought to our recommendation when it voted to deny the application,” said Hamilton. “It seems to me that this is consistent with the modus operandi of this administration, and I suggest to all of my fellow the commissioners that notion that any ANC advice be taken with great weight ... may well be a thing of the past.”

Another Show of Support for Streetcars

Following a report from the ANC’s Transportation and Public Space Committee on the outcome of a June 3 meeting on streetcar construction, Commissioner Phelps proposed that the commission draft a letter to the city council in support of the Transportation Infrastructure Amendment Act of 2010 - a piece of legislation introduced by Ward 6 Councilmember Tommy Wells that would overturn 19th-century federal statutes barring the use of overhead wires in the District of Columbia. While the amendment would continue to proscribe their use, it would return the authority to make exemptions to the council, thereby enabling streetcar construction to proceed unhampered.

“It’s important to return transportation planning and authority to the municipality,” said Phelps.

“This body has supported the streetcar

project since its inception as a way to create a neighborhood transportation system within the District but also as a way to spur economic development.”

Phelps went on to explain her belief that in the coming years “battery technology should have advanced so that we can move off of the overhead wires,” but that, at present, they remain vital to the streetcars’ immediate implementation.

Following a second from Commissioner Silver, the commission voted unanimously in support of the motion. Commissioner Richardson will appear on behalf of the ANC at an upcoming council hearing regarding the Amendment Act.

ANC 6C meets the second Wednesday of the month at 7 p.m. at the Heritage Foundation, 214 Massachusetts Ave. NE. Call 202-547-7168 or visit www.anc6c.org for more information and meeting agenda. ★

ANC 6D

*Another Capper/Carrollsbury
Hope VI Delay*

BY ROBERTA WEINER

The DC Housing Authority (DCHA) and EYA, its private development partner in the long-term Hope VI project that is slowly coming into being in Southeast, have asked Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6D for support before the Zoning Commission of a two year extension of its Planned Unit Development (PUD) for the construction of the community center that is a key part of the project. The delay would require that construction begin in 2012.

The original PUD for the project was filed in early 2003, and the building permit application for the center was scheduled to be filed by July 1. The sole reason for the delay, according to project manager Dan McCabe is that there is an inability in the current real estate market to obtain sufficient financing for the project.

Commission Chair Ron McBee reflected