

ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION 1B

Government of the District of Columbia

Minutes

Thursday, October 2, 2008, 7 PM, 1200 U Street NW

The regular monthly meeting of ANC1B was held on Thursday, October 2, 2008, at 7:00 pm in the True Reformer Building, Commissioner Smith being present as Chair, and Commissioner Nadeau present as Secretary. Other Commissioners present: Conklin, Hoerrner and Spalding.

Officers Reports

Commissioner Nadeau stated that the minutes from the July/August meeting are now revised and posted to reflect the lack of quorum at that meeting and to indicate how Commissioners voted despite the fact that none of the votes were valid. The September minutes have also been posted. She hopes that a quorum is attained so that the Commission can vote on both sets of revised minutes.

Treasurer's Report

Commissioner Spalding did not give a treasurer's report due to the lack of quorum at the meeting.

Events and Announcements

Commission

Commissioner Nadeau announced the following:

- A community meeting for the Mt. Pleasant Neighborhood Library will be held on Wednesday, October 22, 2008 at 6:30pm to involve community residents and library patrons in the plans to rebuild the library. The library is located at 3160 16th Street, NW.
- There is a notice of a public hearing for the Next Step Public Charter School's request to amend its charter. The hearing will be held on Monday, October 20, 2008 from 7:30pm-8:00pm at the District of Columbia Public Charter School Board at 3333 14th Street, NW on the second floor. If you wish to testify, you must call in advance. Commissioner Nadeau has other information for anyone who is interested.

Commissioner Spalding announced that he will be hosting a party for the ANC races. The party will be held at Solly's for all those interested in attending and tracking this year's ANC races.

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Community

Luella Johnson of CSOSA () announced an event occurring on October 23, 2008 at the District of Columbia Housing Finance Agency in honor of domestic violence month. The event will be from 6:30pm – 8:30pm and all residents are invited to attend.

Chairman Smith inquired about CSOSAs programs in the community. Ms. Johnson stated that a number of the people that the organization assists have to perform community service. CSOSA has been working with Commissioner Moss and other District organizations by providing community service. If there is anyone that need assistance with community service activities, please contact Ms. Johnson.

Presentations

Gary Martinez of Martinez and Johnson architects was present to discuss the renovations for the Howard Theatre. Commissioner Spalding asked Mr. Martinez if he was seeking a vote this evening, Mr. Martinez said yes. Chairman Smith stated that the presentation could be given, but he would have to wait for a vote because of the lack of quorum at the meeting. Mr. Martinez agreed and began his presentation.

The Howard Theatre is a registered landmark building. The architects plan to go before the Historic Preservation Review Board very soon. The theatre predates the Apollo Theater in New York City by a quarter of a century. The building began to undergo changes in the 50s, going from a neoclassical style to an art deco style. The marquee outside the theatre was removed during this change. The theatre changed from a mostly live entertainment venue to a movie venue. Mr. Martinez state that they have a few photographs of the original building, but they are looking for more. If anyone knows where to find more photographs, please pass the forward the information. They are also looking to create a building archive of historic data on the theatre.

The theatre is designed to have a seating capacity of 800. There will be a flexible seating style which will accommodate theatre seats, tables and chairs, or cabaret style seating. The building will have flexible use on the interior for all types of entertainment. The house will be active and open on most nights. If there is not a show coming into the city, the theatre will host local community shows or other community events and groups.

The building is a free standing structure. One aspect of the project is to remake the stage house areas and the back of the house areas so the theatre has more support space. A new loading station will be setup in the back at the southwest corner of the building. The buildings perimeter will be restored and any damage done over time will be repaired. Stucco will be removed from the building as well. The plan is to restore the exterior to the 1910 exterior of the building. The back of the building will receive a small addition, the sides will be restored, and the public face will be the front of the building. The main entrance to building would be off of T Street, NW. A reception area and stairwells will be added to the structure.

A key component in the reprogramming of the theatre is an education aspect. The Washington Jazz Arts Institute has been contacted to host a youth program at the theatre. They will have 5000-6000 square feet of space in the building. The space will be used as rehearsal rooms,

learning studios, listening studios, and a music library. Students will be able to learn about music and ultimately play on the stage at the theatre.

There really is not a basement level at the theatre, but space will be excavated under the orchestra floor for restrooms, dressing rooms, and food space (part of the original RFP). These facilities will be loaded through the back loading station causing no impact to T Street or Wiltberger Street. Chairman Smith asked how much impact the excavation will have on the street level. Mr. Martinez stated that the plan is to open up the back wall of the stage house to move any excavated materials out of the back of the building. The building will have to be scaffolded during the building of the back addition. Commissioner Conklin asked about the estimated time frame for the project. 2010 is the goal for the building because it is the 100th anniversary of the building. Commissioner Hoerrner inquired about the funding of the project. Mr. Martinez stated that city funds have been appropriated to start the project, preservation tax credits are available through the federal government because the building is a historic landmark, and private fundraising is being done.

Commissioner Nadeau asked if they would want a letter of support. Mr. Martinez stated that they would like a letter of support from the Commission. Commissioner Nadeau said that they could be added to the agenda in the future for a vote or he could have Commissioner Moss write a letter of support and explain why there was not a full vote on the matter. Chairman Smith reiterated that they would be invited back for a vote if a quorum was not reached tonight.

Chairman Smith then asked for comments or questions from the community. Clyde Howard provided information on possible sources of photographs and information on the theatre (Schirlock and Virginia Ali). Another community member Kamal _____ a saloon keeper on U Street inquired about the management search for the theatre. He voiced concerns about management possibly being like that of the Lincoln Theater. The _____ replied that the search for the manager will be a thorough one. The person must be someone who has significant experience running a venue like that of the Howard Theatre. The website for the Howard Theatre was also given, www.howardtheatre.org.

Steve Johnson, Chairman of the Events Taskforce and the Director of Cramton Auditorium of Howard, was present to discuss the plans for the Howard University Homecoming festivities. The Homecoming Parade is scheduled for Saturday, October 18, 2008. The Grand Marshall of the parade is Terrence Howard. Prior to the parade this year is the 5K Walk/Run that will begin at 7:30am. The sign-in for the walk/run will be at the corner of Fairmont Street and Georgia Avenue. The parade line up begins at 8:30am on the corners of 6th Street and Fairmont Street. The parade will begin at 10:00am. The parade will feature bands from around the country. They have received support from the Mayor's office. Howard University will be paying for various services that include, but are not limited to Metropolitan Police Department, ambulatory services, and Department of Public Works services. The Homecoming game will be at 1pm in Greene Stadium. Chairman Smith expressed that as an alumnus of Howard, he is looking forward to homecoming. He also stated that many business owners on the Georgia Avenue corridor are looking forward to homecoming because it brings a lot of business to the area. Commissioner Hoerrner expressed pleasure in the clean up after last year's homecoming.

BZA, HPRB, DDOT Applications

Commissioner Nadeau asked Commissioner Spalding if presentations should be given for any of the design review applications. Chairman Smith said he did not see a problem with allowing the presentations, and the missing Commissioners would have to read about the presentations in the minutes. He also noted that whatever Commissioner Spalding decided was acceptable because the applications are located in his single member district. Commissioner Spalding said that because a vote was not able to be taken and it was not appropriate for commissioners to read about the presentation in the minutes, the presentations would not be given. Chairman Smith and Commissioner Nadeau agreed with Commissioner Spalding's decision.

HPRB 08-XXX, JBG/U St. LLC, 1300 U Street (proposed hotel) was discussed. Mat Valentini and Brooks Blake were present from JBG Companies. Michael Schwartz with David M. Schwartz Architects was also present. The group met with members of the Cardozo Shaw Neighborhood Association last spring and met with residents of Wallach Place. The area in question is the Rite-Aid on the corner of 13th and U Streets, NW. One year ago negotiations began with the owner of the property to begin the development. They have signed a ground lease with the owner. The idea for the space is a large hotel with 200 rooms and retail space. The goal is to bring in very good design, hence the hiring of David M. Schwartz Architects.

A goal of JBG was to create a hotel that would be the focal point of the neighborhood. The building would invite people in to the area. The hotel will have a public lobby space. The neighborhood is a mix of 2 and 3 story buildings, but some are higher than that. The former Dunbar Hotel is a source of inspiration for this development.

The site is 250 feet long and _____ feet deep. The most of building would be slid out to U Street with setbacks. The setbacks would avoid a long building on one side. The recesses on the south side of the building would be much deeper. The exterior of the building would have a more traditional design with masonry and punched windows. The first floor will house the retail space. The main lobby spaces will be used as a public art gallery to feature local artists.

This would be a boutique hotel, not part of a chain. The proximity to metro and the active U Street corridor makes it an excellent location.

There were community concerns about the rear of the building creating more traffic in the 10 foot alley. The design was changed to move the ramp to the parking garage from the alley to 13th Street. The building dumpsters would be enclosed in the building out of plain sight.

Chairman Smith asked about the type of sound buffer that is being put up between the building and the residents to the south of the building to block sounds from the hotel or from trucks servicing the hotel. One of the representatives replied that the number of windows on that side of the building would be limited. Also, the size of trucks that service the hotel would remain the same or smaller than the trucks now servicing Rite-Aid. Commissioner Smith also asked about the size of the setbacks. There is a 3.5 foot projection on either side of the hotel entrance and they are in line with the rest of the façade going up and down U Street. He also discussed the lack of green space being provided by the hotel. The possibility of a green roof will be explored and the terrace areas will possibly have green space.

Commissioner Spalding asked when the group would be on the HPRB calendar and when and how they think they would get to zoning. Will they go to zoning as a PUD (Planned Unit Development) or as a list of BZA (Board of Zoning Adjustment) variances? They are on the HPRB calendar October 23, 2008. They hope to have a PUD by the middle of next year.

After questions from the Commission were answered, Chairman Smith asked the community for questions and comments. Dan Wittles, a resident of Wallach Place, stated that during the Wallach place meeting many suggestions were given and from the presentation only one was applied. He asked if all the other comments were ignored because the model and drawings do not reflect the input of the residents. A representative stated that this process takes a long time and they feel good about the design. Another resident, David Zahn, asked if the presentation to the ANC was the next step before going to HPRB, and voiced concerns with the size of the space for delivery trucks. Another resident focused on the size of the model versus the actually size of the building. She emphasized the size of the building against a row of houses and other buildings in the community. Also, there needs to be more discussion among community residents and the development and construction teams before any plans are finalized for the site. Mr. Howard discussed the size of the 10 foot alley and the fact that a truck will have to interrupt traffic at 13th and U Streets to back into the alley. He also stated that the building is too large for the space and the area.

Commissioner Spalding encouraged the developers to attend meetings of the Cardozo-Shaw Neighborhood Association. A community member inquired about the pick-up and drop-off point for a taxi line on U Street. One of the representatives responded that a taxi will pick up a guest when a guest called for one. Mr. Howard pointed out that DDOT will redo U Street between 9th and 18th Streets between now and September 30, 2009. One of the development representatives mentioned that they are in the preliminary phases with DDOT so nothing is finalized.

Community resident Scott Pomeroy inquired about the actual zoning for the building minus the variances and PUD. The current zoning for the space is 50 feet, but the Zoning Board has looked at the site, and they feel the site is suitable for the hotel's planned increased height. A Howard University student asked about the type of guest the hotel would attract. Representatives from the development company stated that the hotel is meant to attract city people as well as non-city people. Out of town travelers will seek out the hotel because of the neighborhood in which it is located. The hotel will be a boutique hotel and moderately priced. Brian Greenberg felt that the changes were tough to discern. He is concerned about the builders comfort in the design of the building. It seems as though no matter what the concerns of the community, the builders will move forward with the design. Mr. Greenberg is also concerned about the size of the building affecting the community. He feels that the hotel is not compatible with the neighborhood. Questions were raised about the hotel being built to the edge of the alley. Representatives stated that in the design, the hotel is slid as far away from the alley as they felt was a safe distance. The 2/3 of the hotel will be built to the alley. Chairman Smith recommended that more meetings with residents be set up, and the model of the hotel and drawing be drawn to show the hotel's relationship to the other buildings in the neighborhood.

A community resident voiced about the roof top noise and the number of people frequenting the hotel for any roof top parties. Other residents felt the hotel should be scaled to the community. Mr.

_____ a 30 year resident stressed that 13th and U Street is not downtown, but a community. A hotel of this size destroys the fabric of the neighborhood and he is not happy with the design. Thomas Presley a 52 year resident stated that he has seen so much happen so quickly in the area. He indicated that at one time the community was protected by the Zoning Board at one time, but now things have changed. There is a political movement that has taken place and things are not fair. He stressed the need for the community to organize in order to get the politicians to realize that people have power. Another community resident asked about the variance on parking. The representative stated that there will be 2 levels of parking, but zoning has given feedback and parking could be reduced. They are awaiting comments from HPRB on parking, and they plan on returning to the Commission.

Commissioner Nadeau thanked the developers for coming. She stated that she was excited for the hotel at first, but then shocked at the scale. She was hoping for something smaller that fits the fabric of U Street. She hopes that they consider an alternate plan. Chairman Smith strongly recommended that the developers meet with number of residents to further discuss the plans. He stated 99% of the time the Commission agrees with the residents. He emphasized that the developers make sure the plans are in accordance with the community plans.

ABRA Licenses

Commissioner Spalding gave an update on the liquor licenses in the Commission.

- BT (1909 9th Street, NW) is up for a show cause hearing because they were caught without a manager, exceeding capacity, and after-hours sales and service.
- Bouche (1905 9th Street, NW) a new establishment that has just opened.
- Queen Makeda's mediation with Commissioner Moss has not yet occurred. The next status hearing is October 8, 2008 and the full protest hearing is scheduled for early November.
- Towne had a show cause on underage intoxicated underage teens trying to enter the club.
- Duke's City is under repair at this time. There is word of a possible sale of the business. Commissioner Spalding is not sure if it will require a substantial change to the license. If there is a substantial change as determined by ABRA, they will have to come before the Commission for review of the changes.
- Mahogany has had a number of questions raised about the noise and sidewalk problems. This is still being investigated and Commissioner Spalding will have a report next month.
- Yenga had a show cause this past month. They were found guilty and will be serving a 3-day license suspension, plus pay a fine for after hour's sales, sales to a minor, and no manager on duty.
- Florida Liquors is up for a number of violations: illegal importing, sales after hours, drinking in the store, and other violations.
- Café Saint Ex had a show cause for closing their kitchen a half hour early. CR0 licensees must keep the kitchen open 2 hours- 30 minutes before closing.

Commissioner Spalding also discussed the Alcoholic Beverage Amendment Act of 2008. Fortunately, the advice of ANC1B has been followed and they may now require safety and security

plans for both CT and CR licenses where appropriate. R licenses are now authorized to permit the removal of one partially consumed bottle of wine. The restrictions on this one are very long, so this will not go into effect immediately. Class B licenses are now permitted to hold wine tastings. There is new language on size, design, and seated and standing occupancy in establishments. This has been a problem for the board because there was no definition on what it means when your license says you have capacity for one hundred people. There is a listing of required elements in security plans. The board has now listed a number of basic elements to be included in all security plans. There is a limitation on the leasing and using of promoters. The new language states that a business cannot relinquish control of the business or license when using a promoter.

Grant Applications

Grant applications could not be heard due to the lack of quorum at the meeting.

New Business

Commissioner Spalding discussed an e-mail about DC Voice's Ready Schools Project. This program goes into schools to take inventory of what is working and what is not. DC Voices would like the Commission to be one of one hundred organizations to endorse the Ready Schools Project. He then moved that ANC1B provide support to DC Voices for their Ready Schools Project 2008. Commissioner Conklin seconded the motion and the motion was adopted 6-1.

The meeting ended at 9:27pm.