

**REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ZONING
COMMITTEE OF ANC 6A
May 22, 2007**

Present: Citizen Members: Drew Ronneberg, Jeff Fletcher, Linda Whitted
Commissioners: David Holmes, Stephanie Nixon, Nick Alberti

****Meeting was conducted without a quorum of voting members****

Drew Ronneberg chaired the meeting.

7:25 Call to Order

Community Comments

None

Status Reports

200H (Dreyfus Development). Drew Ronneberg reported that the Office of Planning proposed Mr. Lee Quill as mediator between Drefus and the community groups and that the groups were trying to find out more about Mr. Quill's background before agreeing to mediation.

Vacant Properties. Heather Scott was out of town but sent the following update, "Joint Vacant Property TaskForce ANC6a/ANC6c has been formed and will be holding regular meetings at the Argonaut. We will be working closely with Tommy Wells' staff on this project. We have documented approx. 180 vacant properties in both ANC areas to date. We are looking for a few ANC6a neighbors to join myself, Nick Alberti and Bill Schultheiss on the Taskforce."

Historic District Expansion/Creation. Drew Ronneberg reported that during the last ED&Z meeting, it was stated that properties which enter a historic district with vinyl windows could replace their existing windows with new vinyl windows (i.e. replacement-in-kind). This statement was incorrect. While properties with vinyl windows are not required to install wooden windows when they become part of a historic district, if the owner decides to install new windows after becoming part of the historic district, they must be made of wood. The third joint meeting between ANC 6A and ANC 6C on historic district creation/expansion will take place on May 23rd at the Sherwood recreation center.

Old Business

None

ZC 06-34 (1700 Block of E. Capitol St. SE, Comstock East Capitol LLC)

Mr. Mark Becket of Comstock East Capitol LLC presented a proposed Planned Unit Development (PUD) to construct a condominium building on the 1700 block of E. Capitol Street. Although this property resides in ANC 6B, it is within 200 feet of ANC 6A. ANC 6A has asked for a number of changes to the design of the building, greater community amenities and a plan to manage construction traffic.

Comstock proposes to demolish the existing building and construct a new condominium building on the site containing 133 units with 117 under-ground parking spaces. Of the 133 units, 40% will be 2 bedrooms, 40% one bedrooms and 20% will be studio units. Comstock is proposing 11 affordable housing units of which 5 units will be two bedrooms, 4 will be 1 bedrooms and 2 studio units. In addition to the upzoning and PUD density, Comstock is seeking variances for the rooftop structures and a reduction of the rear yard setback from 15 feet to 3 feet.

Mr. Becket talked at length about the PUD process and changes that had been made to the Comstock development to address community concerns. These changes include putting the AC units on the roof and changing the material at the rear of the building from vinyl siding to brick. Mr. Becket also presented changes that were made to enhance the rooftop cornices and reduce the visibility of the rooftop structures.

Design concerns expressed by ANC 6A

Mr. Becket presented revised drawings that included 6 design options for different brick colors. The consensus was that option G was the best design. Drew Ronneberg asked why Comstock proposed using a Hardy-board paneling material, instead of brick for the 4th floor. Mr. Becket said the reason was structural – that brick veneers needed to be self-supporting for frame construction and that the maximum height was approximately 30 ft or 3 stories. This assertion was confirmed by information available on the internet.

The committee also asked Mr. Becket to design balconies which appear supported, rather than just constructing a protruding concrete slab that is common in modern garden style apartments. Mr. Becket agreed to consider balcony designs provided by ANC 6A's designated representatives.

Proposed community amenities

Comstock proposes landscaping and planting trees (oak and cherry) in front and on three sides of the block, including the Drummond side of the building and the apartments belonging to Mt, Moriah. In addition, Comstock proposes installing new sidewalks, incorporating green elements to the roof of the building, incorporating a storm water management system, replacing the brick retaining wall, allocating 11 affordable housing units (meeting inclusionary zoning requirements), making a \$20k donation Eastern Market, contributing \$10k to Eastern High School Superleaders program, and restoring the basketball court at Eastern High School.

David Holmes expressed concern that the Comstock development didn't have any 3 bedroom units, which made it unlikely that the development would have any residents with children attending Eastern High School. Mr. Becket replied that Comstock's market assessment drove the decision to not include any 3 bedroom units. Brit Wykoff expressed concerns that construction traffic not be routed onto C St. NE and 17th St NE. Mr. Becket replied that they were willing to work with ANC 6A to come up with an acceptable construction traffic management plan.

The committee thought that Comstock had been responsive to ANC 6A's concerns and that, given the quickly approaching deadline for the ZC case, the designated representatives should have the authority to offer ANC 6A's support to the project, if the remaining concerns were addressed.

Recommendation: The committee unanimously recommends that the ANC allow the designated representative to support the Comstock project at the ZC hearing if the remaining concerns are addressed.

HPRB Case 07-XXX (816 E. Capitol St. NE)

John Murphey and Lael Taylor of Meditch Murphey Architects presented plans for renovations to 816 E. Capitol St. NE that require HPRB approval. The first change was to replace a chimney at the back of the property with an elevator of the same footprint.. This change was non-controversial. The second proposed change was to enclose the roof-top terrace at the rear of the property. The architects presented drawings which showed that the western wall as a party wall and thus would not have any windows. The eastern wall made liberal use of channel glass (a translucent glass that wouldn't contribute to bird deaths). This committee agreed to support the rear addition as long as channel glass was used and letters of support was obtained from both neighbors. The final proposed change was for the enclosure of the front portico with non-reflective glass in order to allow the owners to use the space during the winter months. The committee and residents thought that this change was out of character with the rest of buildings on East Capitol Street. The consensus was to oppose the enclosure of the front portico on the grounds it detracted from the character of the historic homes on East Capitol Street.

Recommendation: The committee unanimously recommends that the ANC support the replacement of the rear chimney with an elevator, conditionally support the enclosure of the rear patio if channel glass is used and letters of support are obtained from the adjacent neighbors, and oppose the enclosure of the front portico with glass.

Bill 17-0086, "Nuisance Properties Abatement Reform and Real Property Classification Amendment Act of 2007".

This bill is currently being considered by the City Council and is intended to 1) clear up ambiguities in the existing law 2) streamline the process of recording vacant properties and 3) reduce the number of exemptions to the current vacant property designation.

The committee found it difficult to understand the legislation but thought that the bill improved a number of shortcomings in the current law and hopes that it will help ANC 6A and 6C's joint effort to report vacant properties and have them taxed at Class 3 property rates. The committee was concerned with 2 issues:

1. That the law allowed the mayor or mayor's agent to grant an exemption from the regulations. Nick Alberti suggested that in these cases the Mayor's office should be required to notify the affected ANC of this action.
2. DCRA's reporting of vacant properties to the Office of Tax and Revenue was too infrequent. The proposed law says that this reporting has to be done semi-annually. The committee was concerned that this time lag would make it possible for a year to elapse between the time a vacant property was first reported to DCRA and when OTR sent a tax bill charging Class 3 rates. The committee thought that DCRA's vacant property reporting to OTR should be conducted quarterly.

Recommendation: The committee unanimously recommends that the ANC write a letter of support to the City Council for Bill 17-0086 and suggest that it be amended to require DCRA report vacant properties to OTR quarterly and the affected ANC be notified when the Mayor exempts a property from the vacant property rules.

Change of Venue for ED&Z Committee Meetings

Capitol Hill Towers has been the gracious host for ED&Z meetings for at least 5 years. CHT is also the host to a number of other groups and their common spaces are often booked solid. Drew

Ronneberg suggested that Sherwood Recreation Center might provide a better venue for ED&Z meetings because the facilities were more conducive to large meetings and the space was better air conditioned in the summer months.

Recommendation: The committee unanimously recommends that the ANC authorize the changing of the venue for the ED&Z meetings to Sherwood Recreation Center.

Community Comments

None

Next Scheduled ED&Z Committee Meeting:

Tuesday, June 26, 2007

7-9 PM

Venue: TBD