

ANC 2E Meeting Minutes February 1, 2016

Minutes for the Meeting of Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2E
February 1, 2016
Georgetown Visitation School, 35th and Volta Place, NW. Cafeteria

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Commissioner Lewis, Chair. Commissioners Lewis, Solomon, Jones, Starrels, Birch, Clausen, Roaché and Howard, were present, constituting a quorum.

Administrative

Approval of February 1, 2016 ANC 2E Public Meeting Agenda

Commissioner Lewis moved to approve the agenda of the February 1, 2016 ANC 2E public meeting. The motion was seconded and carried 8-0.

Financial Report

Commissioner Jones reported that ANC 2E finances are secure.

Public Safety Report

Environmental Report

Community Comment

Commissioner Roaché announced a public event “Black Georgetown Remembered” being held at Georgetown University February 24th.

Ruth Werner of Councilman Evans’ office announced that the council is releasing the Comprehensive financial Report. DC is in strong shape. Council hearing sessions are posted on the council website.

Candace Mosely of Georgetown university announced upcoming events on campus and in the community.

Pamla Moore of CAG announces the CAG Art Show on February 25th.

New Business

Commissioner Starrels made the following motion:

ANC 2E approves the Marine Corps marathon for October 30, 2016 as presented and we appreciate having the event here.

The motion was seconded and carries 8-0.

ABC:

Commissioner Starrels made the following motion with regard to GoBrands, Inc. t/a GoPuff-Rive, ABRA-101261, 3401 Water St., NW (online retailer):

ANC 2E protests the license for GoPuff for reasons of peace, order and quiet and traffic.

The motion was seconded and carried 8-0.

Commissioner Starrels made the following motion with regard to Dean & DeLuca, 3276 M St., NW:

ANC 2E recommends lifting the protest and accepting the settlement agreement.

The motion was seconded and carried 8-0.

Old Georgetown Board

Commissioner Solomon made the following motion:

With regard to OG 16-110 (HPA 16-182) 3800 Reservoir Rd., NW (MedStar/Georgetown University Hospital):

We reiterate our strong opposition to the proposed driveways, traffic and trenches in what ought to be a green and park-like setting at the north end of the site to the east of the proposed addition.

We believe the project creates an opportunity to create open, green, pedestrian-friendly space at the north end of the site where there is now a surface parking lot. However, the plans would instead locate garage driveways and ramps in trenches in the heart of what should be an uninterrupted lawn. We urge that access to the underground garage be moved elsewhere and not located in what should be a peaceful, open and welcoming green space. The motion was seconded and carried 8-0.

With regard to OG 16-108 (HPA 16-180), 1051-1055 29th Street, NW (West Heating Plant – demolition permit application):

Commissioner Birch made the following motion regarding the West Heating Plant demolition:

ANC 2E does not oppose the application for demolition of the West Heating Plant at 1051 29th Street, NW, provided that the permit to demolish be approved or disapproved only after findings by the relevant reviewing agencies, both federal and municipal, that the controlling tests have been met and the criteria satisfied to reach that conclusion.

In recognition of the special deed covenant attached to the sale of the property by the previous owner, the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA), which would apply federal rather than local criteria for examining demolition issues, ANC 2E advises that the federal standard provides that if it is feasible to rehabilitate the building for occupied use, the building should be rehabilitated. In this regard, the West Heating Plant is subject to technical issues regarding the feasibility of rehabilitation. Further, the historic and architectural design value as a contributing building in the Georgetown National Historic Landmark District may be considered in the evaluation of the proposal.

Under the federal standard, the quality of a replacement building is not relevant. Neither is the developer's offer of amenities.

The deed covenant provides that the D.C. State Historic Preservation Officer may waive the covenant. ANC 2E recognizes that the D.C. standard, if applied, also supports preservation when feasible, while allowing exemplary design of a replacement building and benefits to the community to be taken into account in the decision.

The motion was seconded.

Commissioner Lewis then made the following motion to adopt an amendment to the above motion in the nature of a substitute proposed resolution:

Overview

The review of a demolition-permit application for a building qualifying for historic preservation protection is never a simple matter.

This is particularly true in the case of the West Heating Plant, which is a contributing building in a National Historic Landmark District; is eligible in its own right to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places; is subject to a special deed covenant that would apply federal rather than local criteria for examining demolition issues; and is subject to technical issues regarding the feasibility of rehabilitation on which experts may disagree.

Rather than suggesting conclusions about these matters, we identify and outline the various issues and suggest a pathway for analysis by the reviewing authorities. In a separate resolution, we also identify various design-review issues regarding the two possible replacement buildings proposed by the applicant.

Demolition

The federal standard –

The federal standard regarding demolition applies because of a covenant placed in the deed by the previous owner, the U.S. General Services Administration.

The federal standard provides that if it is feasible to rehabilitate the building for occupied use, the building should be rehabilitated

The West Heating Plant (WHP) presents a consistent design from a distinctive period in American architectural history and is part of the industrial history of the Georgetown waterfront. The WHP has been determined by the applicable federal authorities to be eligible for listing on the National Register, and this can be taken into account as well as its status as a contributing building in the Georgetown National Historic Landmark District.

Under the federal standard, the quality of a replacement building is not relevant. Neither is the developer's offer of amenities.

Applying the federal standard –

The applicant's structural engineer and the independent peer-review structural engineer disagree about the feasibility of rehabilitation, principally disagreeing about the predicted extent of rust jacking and whether signs of this will be visible so that the condition can be addressed in a timely way.

The engineers also disagree about the percentage of original bricks that are likely to be saved if the building is restored.

The CFA staff summary of the engineers' positions is very helpful in understanding the matters considered by the engineers.

If environmental matters are raised as an issue, ANC 2E is on record as supporting an independent review, particularly of the possibilities for mitigation of the environmental issues and preservation of the building.

If other matters are raised involving specialized expertise, an independent review may also be a useful option.

The deed covenant provides that the D.C. State Historic Preservation Officer may waive the covenant –

GSA put the deed covenant in place to justify GSA itself not conducting the federal demolition/preservation review that otherwise would be required of GSA.

It would not have been legal for GSA to waive applying the federal historic preservation rules had GSA itself conducted the demolition/preservation review. Is it legal, or sound policy, to delegate the review to a SHPO and allow a waiver there of the federal HP rules?

The D.C. standard (if appropriate) –

The D.C. standard also supports preservation when feasible, while allowing exemplary design of a replacement building and benefits to the community to be taken into account in the decision.

Replacement building design –

Is the design of either of the proposed replacement buildings exceptional enough to justify demolition of the current building?

Relevant community benefits. –

Are there qualifying community benefits?

It is unlikely that luxury condominiums would be considered a qualifying community benefit.

The proposed park would be on land already designated under the D.C. Comprehensive Plan as open space, so it seems likely that any developer's plans for the property would be required to include a similar amenity. Under these circumstances, would the park count as a qualifying community benefit?

The motion in the nature of a substitute proposed resolution was seconded and carried 6-2, which placed the substitute resolution before the Commission.

Commissioner Lewis then moved that the substitute proposed resolution be adopted. The motion was seconded and carried 6-2.

Commissioner Birch made the following motion:

With regard to OG 16-107 (HPA 16-179) 1051 29th St., NW (West Heating Plant – design review):

This resolution addresses design issues in case demolition of the existing West Heating Plant building is ever approved. It does not address demolition issues, which are covered in a separate resolution.

ANC 2E appreciates the evolution of the design for the structure at 1051 29th Street, NW. We join with those who seek a design in the event demolition is approved that is both architecturally inspired and sympathetic to Georgetown's setting. While we look forward to the continuing review and development of the design at this property, we have some concerns we wish to draw to the attention of the Old Georgetown Board:

The massing of the building and the height of the structure are inappropriate to the location and out of scale with the historic district of Georgetown. We believe the building should be no taller than other residential condominium or residential apartment buildings or hotels in the neighborhood. The proposed scale and massing present an oversized structure dominating the Four Seasons Hotel to the north and looming over the structures to the west. We question whether monumental stone is an appropriate material.

The relationship of the new building to the canal to the north and Rock Creek to the east are important considerations in regard to appropriate setbacks, especially from the canal which is a National Historic Park and offers an intimate, contemplative experience to visitors.

Possible light pollution and glare from the extensive use of glass in the proposed plans remain a concern which needs to be addressed to maintain the quiet residential nature of the neighborhood on 29th Street.

ANC 2E welcomes the designs for a new park. Accessibility to the park is of great importance. At the same time, the design and scale of the elevation of the park above the street should be conscious of avoiding any negative impacts on the 29th Street neighbors.

The motion was seconded and carried 8-0.

Commissioner Solomon made the following motion:

With regard to Duke Ellington School of the Arts (Design Updates for HPRB):

ANC 2E has no objection to the changes as presented.

1. The new Media Center Lantern under the Portico roof has been eliminated and the reading room consolidated back into the original MC area.
2. The Education Terrace side walls which previously extended around and above it have been reduced to railing height.
3. The stepped Amphitheater portion of the front Portico Entrance, and the second curving walkways down to it, have been eliminated.
4. The Parking Garage ramp access has been moved from Reservoir to 36th Street per requirements of DDOT.
5. The small exterior parking lot previously proposed for the southern end of the west Rear Yard has been eliminated.
6. Some exterior finish selections and materials have been revised as described on elevations submitted.
7. DGS/DCPS has proposed certain locations and general descriptions for potential commissions from its Percent for Art Program.

The motion was seconded and carried 8-0.

Commissioner Birch chaired the meeting for the remaining items on the OGB agenda.

Commissioner Jones made the following motion:

With regard to OG 16-068 (HPA 16-114) 3420 P St., NW:

ANC 2E appreciates the applicant's response in modifying the design to the recommendations of both the ANC and the OGB and does not oppose the rear addition as proposed. Concerns still remain regarding the side porch changes in its historic character.

The motion was seconded and carried 8-0.

Commissioner Jones made the following motion:

With regard to OG 16-116 (HPA 16-188) 1525 Wisconsin Ave., NW:

ANC 2E believes that the massing, height and location of the rooftop mechanical unit damage the historic character of this building and disrupt the historic streetscape to the north of the building. We ask that OGB recommend that the mechanical unit and the ductwork be modified to reduce this impact.

The motion was seconded and carried 8-0.

Commissioner Starrels made the following motion:

With regard to OG 16-100 (HPA) 3222-3226 M St., NW:

ANC 2E has no objection to the new entrance and windows but does object to the blade sign.

The motion was seconded and carried 8-0.

Commissioner Starrels made the following motion:

With regard to OG 16-090 (HPA 16-138) 1075 Thomas Jefferson St., NW:

ANC 2E does not have an overall objection to the concept at 1075 Thomas Jefferson St., NW; however, we would like the Board to consider especially the sight lines from north toward M street and protect against an adverse visual impact when seen from the historic C & O Canal.

The motion was seconded and carried 8-0.

Commissioner Starrels made the following motion:

With regard to OG 16-118 (HPA 16-190) 3101 N St., NW:

ANC 2E has no objection to proposed paving of the alley behind 3101 N Street. This alley provides automobile access to three residences on N Street, as well as the church and the residence adjacent to the alley on 31st Street. For that reason, engineering details of the project, which are missing from the submitted plans, are crucial.

The alley has traditionally been covered in pea gravel, which has proven satisfactory. However, if paving is to take place, a concrete base is needed to ensure a secure driving surface which will not buckle or subside. Proper drainage and grading are essential to the project. Finally, a paving stone should be selected which will not turn slick or slippery in inclement weather.

According to adjacent neighbors on N Street, the applicant church's property at 3101 N is a square lot and does not include the entire alley. City property and tax records would indicate that adjacent properties include sections of the alley behind those houses. ANC 2E advises that whatever approvals are provided by the OGB accurately reflect alley ownership rights.

The motion was seconded and carried 8-0.

At 9:52 with no further business on the agenda Commissioner Lewis moved to adjourn. The motion was seconded and carried 8-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Leslie Maysak
ANC 2E