

# LeDroit Park Civic Association

Meeting Date:	Meeting Location:	Distribution:	Attachments:
February 26, 2008	Florida Avenue Baptist Church	Website: <a href="http://www.ledroitparkdc.org">www.ledroitparkdc.org</a> LeDroit Park Market	Attendee List

7:00 PM

1. Moment of silence.
2. Reading of January 26, 2008 Meeting Minutes by Ms. Andrea Feniak.

**Motion:**

- To approve.

**Vote:**

- Unanimous, Yes.

**Motion Passed by Unanimous Vote.**

**3. Mary Church Terrell House Update:  
Report by Ms. Alice Aughtry and Ms. Maybelle Bennett, Howard University Community Liasion:**

- The historic restoration has finally begun! This is the first phase of restoration and the work on applying for additional funding grants is in progress.
- There will be focus meeting for strategic funding on March 15, 2008.
- Ms. Bennett summarized the funding that has been secured as follows for the project:
  - \$ 260,000 Save America's Treasures
  - \$ 230,000 US Department of Housing and Urban Development
  - \$ 10,000 DC Preservation Office
  - \$ 10,000 National Trust For Historic Preservation
  - \$ 10,000 Carr America
- The first phase of work will stabilize the west wall and will remove, repair and replace the original wood porches and balconies.
- The community's help is needed to help raise the additional funds for the restoration. It is estimated that an additional 1.5 million dollars is needed to complete the project.
- Towne Construction was the low bidder and was awarded the project

**4. Nuisance Property Update:  
Report by Mr. Robert Sullivan:**

- 605 Florida Avenue NW has been condemned.

**5. Memorial Trees Update  
Report by Ms. Andrea Feniak:**

- A grant application has been submitted to Washington Parks and People for a Mini-greening grant to plant trees at the new LeDroit Park entry portal.
- The first Memorial tree planting will be in memory of Mr. David Corry's wife, Carol Reed and son Rodney David.

**6. Citizen Milestones:  
Report by Ms. Andrea Feniak:**

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- No Milestones this month.
- The community is invited to make their announcements during this time or to submit information prior to the next meeting to Andrea Feniak at 1903 4<sup>th</sup> St. NW; Ph: 986.7680; email: [Feniak-Buchanan@att.net](mailto:Feniak-Buchanan@att.net)

## 7. Gage-Eckington School Closure – Part 1:

### Special Guests - Councilman Jim Graham and DCPS Representative Tracy Higgins:

- a. Update by Mr. Jeff Heron: After last month's Civic Association Meeting, an Ad-Hoc committee was formed and a statement on the committee's position on the Gage-Eckington School closure was submitted to Mayor Fenty. A summary of community concerns is as follows:
  - The community is concerned that if the school is closed, it could end up as a nuisance property subject to crime problems.
  - A public space for residents would be a welcome addition to the community
  - The community must be a vital part of the development process.
- b. Presentation by Ms Tracy Higgins, DCPS Director of Family and Community Engagement:
  - All schools slated for closure will remain in the city's inventory.
  - Gage-Eckington will not be sold to a developer.
  - Groups having first priority for school reuse are for educational purposes that may include charter schools, community colleges, adult literacy centers, child care, etc.
  - Other priority reuse includes DC agencies, government housing (senior, affordable) or any use that will support the community.
  - DCPS will engage the community to map what is the best use for the building and community at large.
  - The timeline for this process is unknown at this time.
- c. Commentary by Councilman Jim Graham:
  - We can not afford to have a huge vacant property in LeDroit Park.
  - LeDroit Park seniors and residents of Kelly Miller are very concerned about the school closing and the future of the property.
  - Reusing a school site is a complicated process and, for example, the contract to reuse the Armstrong School was awarded four to five years ago and the site is still vacant.
  - The Gage-Eckington building will be vacated in June 2008 with no plans for its future.
  - The Senator Landry Act stipulates that preference must be given to charter schools for the reuse of public school buildings.
  - Before a building can be considered for reuse as a charter school, a declaration of surplus is required.
  - A homeless shelter is not being considered for the site.
- d. Community Questions / Comments:
  - How is it determined where students will be relocated?
    - Response by Ms. Higgins: All students should have received a letter regarding their relocation and they can select and apply to the school of their choice. Students whose schools are closing will have priority for out-of-bounds slots or in a school where their siblings currently attend.
  - Low income and senior housing is needed in the community.
    - Response by ANC Commissioner Margot Hoerrner: The current plan is that the 200 block of W Street NW will be fully renovated for mixed income housing in the Fall of 2009.
  - Are there any plans for recreation?

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- Response by Councilman Graham: The community will be engaged in all decisions to reuse the site.
- Where will polling be relocated?
  - Response by Councilman Graham: There are no plans yet; voting is outside of the DCPS jurisdiction.

## **8. Gage-Eckington School Closure – Part 2 (7:45 PM): Special Guest - Mayor Adrian Fenty:**

- a. LeDroit Park Public Safety Committee Update by Ms. Dina Lewis:
  - An update on the progress of the community action plan since the Mayor last attended the Civic Association in July 2007 was summarized.
  - A meeting is scheduled for tomorrow, February 27, 2008 with MPD to implement MPD's oversight of the community-purchased and installed security camera at 4<sup>th</sup> and T Streets NW.
- b. Presentation of behalf of the Gage-Eckington School Closure Ad-hoc Committee by Mr. Jeff Herron:
  - He noted that the letter from the committee to the Mayor and Councilman Graham about the school closing is rooted in the community's public safety plan. The 3 acre site cannot become a nuisance property.
  - There is not yet a consensus in the community for the reuse of the building and site and the Civic Association will engage the DC Planning Office to facilitate the process of determining the best use for the building and site.
- c. Presentation by Ms. Andrea Verestrade who lives in LeDroit Park and is a parent of young children:
  - She gave a summary of the Ad-hoc Committee's discussions in support of developing a "Green-space" on the site.
  - Some possible uses include a Community Garden, a Public Park, a "Tot-Lot", a dog park, etc.
  - Consideration should be given for resident gatherings, activities, block parties, children, and families.
  - It was noted that there is no significant green space in LeDroit Park.
  - The committee is asking for the Mayor's support to ensure that the community's voice is heard regarding the development of the building and site. The size of the site could accommodate both a school and a community green space.
- d. Commentary by ANC Commissioner Myla Moss:
  - The community wants tangible, positive, beneficial and immediate responses to their questions regarding the reuse of the site.
  - The site needs to be well lit, clean and policed if it is to remain vacant for any length of time.
- e. Commentary by Councilman Jim Graham:
  - An abbreviated process for the development of the site is needed for this community.
- f. Commentary by Ms. Dana Bryson:
  - The committee has already started the process for planning the reuse of the site.
    - McKissock & McKissock Architects have been retained to provide pro-bono design services for master planning the site.
    - Washington Parks and People has expressed an interest in possibly funding a community garden on the site if the city approves the idea.
    - Casey Trees has been contacted about the possibility to plant trees
  - Before the school closes the community would like to have a commitment from the city for a short-term plan.

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- g. Commentary by Mayor Adrian Fenty:
- For the LeDroit Park community, there are four key issues regarding the Gage-Eckington School closure and potential reuse of the building and site:
    1. There are no preconceived notions about the future of the Gage-Eckington Building.
    2. The future of the building and site will be turned over to the DC Office of Planning who will provide oversight in working with the community to develop a plan for the future of the building.
    3. The community will be engaged in the entire process.
    4. The process needs to happen as fast as possible.
  - He noted that he would guarantee that the process will happen as fast as the community wants and the Community should take the lead in the process. He suggested that the community invite the DC Planning Office to the next Civic Association Meeting and the Committee should try and meet with them sooner to “fast-track” the project.
- h. Community Questions / Comments:
- What is the immediate plan for security?
    - Mayor Fenty response: More protection may be needed and will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.
  - A resident indicated that he is not in support of any proposal to demolish this school building as it is located in a historically African-American community and it has contributed greatly to the development of children. He would support the reuse of the building as an educational facility. The building would be perfect for a Lab School or Research Center.
    - Another resident noted that the building is not historically significant (it was built in the 1970s). The historical Gage-Eckington Building still exists at 2<sup>nd</sup> and Elm streets.
  - Commentary by ANC Commissioner Margot Hoerrner: The DC Office of Planning is backlogged for small area plans through 2009.
    - Mayor Fenty response: The Planning office will work on this project. They will analyze the site and will work with the community on devising the best complimentary uses.
  - Will the taxes for the adjacent property owners be modified because their values will go down being located to a large vacant property?
    - Mayor Fenty response: Real property values will not be affected by the school closure.
  - The original Gage-School Building was supposed to be converted to senior housing but, instead, it was developed into market rate condos that are vacant because they will not sell.
    - Mayor Fenty response: The DC Planning Office will analyze uses for the site and it is up to the community to propose and decide on the options. If senior or affordable housing on the site is wanted by the community then it should be proposed to the Planning Office as an option.
  - Will the school be open for voting in November 2008?
    - Mayor Fenty response: The mayor’s office will work with the Board of Elections to determine the polling location.
  - Comment by ANC Commissioner Myla Moss: There is a mural planned for the side of the building next to the school’s entrance and the DC Commission on Arts and Humanities may pull the funding because the school is closing.

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- Mayor Fenty response: The community has his support that the mural should move forward as originally planned.
- How is the city working to preserve historical fellowships such as the Elks and Odd Fellows?
  - Mayor Fenty Response: Contact the Mayor's Office on Aging to set up a meeting to discuss the matter.
- Who should the Civic Association contact to convey the community's ideas for the site and building?
  - Mayor Fenty response: Invite the Office of Planning Director to the next Civic Association Meeting.
- Resident commentary: LeDroit Park is an education-centric community and tearing down the building is not the right thing to do. It is a myth that a vacant building will attract vagrancy. We, as a community, should do everything possible to keep education in the community.
- A 30 year resident of the community asked what the process is for renovating historical properties.
  - Mayor Fenty response: Contact DCRA for the regulations.
- A resident who lives behind the school indicated that the original construction in the 1970s did damage to her home. This home has been in her family for its entire life span and any new construction may cause further damage to her property.

## 9. The next meeting is Tuesday, March 25, 2008

- Volunteers are needed for distributing flyers around the neighborhood in advance of meetings. Contact Civic Association President, Mr. Robert Sullivan at [rbsll@yahoo.com](mailto:rbsll@yahoo.com).

This memorandum represents our understanding of the events which transpired and the actions which were taken. If they do not conform to a recipient's understanding, prompt written notice must be communicated to the writer. If no corrections or objections are made, this memorandum will be relied upon as a factual interpretation of this meeting.

Submitted by,  
**LeDroit Park Civic Association**  
/s/  
Andrea Feniak, Secretary