



## Notes to Meeting of

**February 26, 2002**

**Meeting # 64**

### Westminster Neighborhood Association

#### A. Welcome/Introductions

We had twenty-two people attended our meeting, all of whom introduced themselves to their neighbors.

#### B. Review of Agenda

One matter was added to the agenda concerning the need for a project manager for the construction of the mural wall facing the Westminster Playground.

#### C. Treasurer's Report

##### Westminster Neighborhood Association Financial Statement for January 2002

Balance as of	January 1, 2002		\$ 977.29
	Receipts:		
	Dues	\$ 85.00	
			85.00
	Disbursements:		
	Service Charges	8.00	
	Party Supplies	32.52	
			40.52
Balance as of	February 15, 2002		<b>\$ 1,021.77</b>

## **D. Speaker -**

We were fortunate enough to have Steve Calcott, from the D.C. Historic Preservation Office speak to us about the renovating of houses in our historic area. He started off by informing us that the historic preservation (HP) regulations only apply to the exterior of our houses. What you can see from the street is the main concern. In fact, for the part that one sees from the alley, only a quick review is given and an owner has pretty wide latitude in what can be changed or added. For instance, many homeowners are now converting their porches to living areas, which is generally not a problem.

While you need the HP Office to sign off on your plans, this can often be accomplished by the HP staff, without the need to have the HP Board consider your application. In fact, this is the procedure most often used and applies to all usual or minor changes. The HP staff approval is often obtained the same day that you submit your plans. Mr. Calcott suggested that the staff approval route is easier if you can bring a photo of what the house element looks like at the time you present your proposed improvement.

The HP Office's main goal at this time is to be an information source to assist homeowners in making repairs and improvements to their home. They are often an excellent source of technical information on how your improvement should be accomplished so that you don't run into significant problems either during the construction or years down the road, when the improvement itself proves of limited lasting value. Given their experience with many of the contractors, products, and companies that work in our area, they can often give recommendations as to who can do the type of work you need done and their reputation in their field.

If you are considering installing security bars or storm windows, you do not need to have them approved by the HP Office. However, you may want to visit them to get their free expertise in these areas. Interestingly, you do need HP approval if you want to repoint your brick and Mr. Calcott strongly urged that you obtain good technical information before you allow anyone to re-point your house. Such work is often irreversible and can permanently damage your exterior. With house prices where they are now, and especially if they keep rising in years to come, the savings you might get from using a poor repointing person or using the wrong material can be the most expensive savings you will ever have when you try to resell your home.

Mr. Calcott presented some good literature on various aspects of home repairs and improvements and some technical information on how best to make these changes. Much of this information is available on their website and he urged us all to use it. It is at [www.Planning.DC.Gov](http://www.Planning.DC.Gov).

When a proposed change does come to the HP Office that the Office believes would adversely affect the other houses in the community, it is often referred to the HP Board for a decision. There is an opportunity for the person asking for the change to argue the reasons as to why the change is either desirable or necessary. If the Board decides that the change should not be made, the person is not able to obtain a building permit to do this work. Many such proposed changes come from investors and contractors working in our area who need to be as concerned about their budget as about how the final product will look and/or affect the neighborhood.

The question was raised to Mr. Calcott about those folks who will attempt to make an exterior change to their house without obtaining either HP approval or a building permit. His answer is that the HP Office can only be as effective as the neighbors want them to be. If the neighbors don't care, it is difficult for the HP Office to monitor and contest such changes. It is only

when the neighbors complain about such action to the HP Office that they can be really effective.

If someone has made an exterior change without HP approval, the HP Office will get involved and can deny any subsequent plan that may have to be submitted to finish whatever construction may be remaining. However, due process requirements are heavy here and the person that made the change has many avenues of appeal of the HP Office's denial. The person does not have to change it back until he or she has completed the various appeals.

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## E. Committee Updates

### *Playground - Mural:*

Our new agenda item concerned the need for a project director to oversee the repair needed to the wall facing the Westminster Playground and on which the mural will be painted. As many of you know, WNA has been working with the artist and the DC Commission on Arts and Humanities to determine what needs to be done to this wall to make it secure for the mural. Everyone involved in this project has now requested that a project manager be found to ensure that the wall repair be completed as needed and in a timely manner. While it appears that the Arts Commission

You can reach Steve Calcott directly by email at [SCalcott@AOL.com](mailto:SCalcott@AOL.com). You should also be aware that if you have a complaint about what you believe to be an improper or unauthorized exterior change in your neighborhood, that your name does not become part of the complaint.



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will generously pay the cost (now estimated in the \$13,000 range), they have asked WNA to step forward and either pay for a project manager or appoint a knowledgeable WNA member for this task.

We are pleased to report that our own local architect, Ronnie McGhee, has agreed to take on this project for WNA. Patricia offered to assist with on-site review during the construction (her son, Dakota, will also be watching them). Ronnie will be working with the contractor, the artist, and the Arts Commission. It is anticipated that the wall will be prepared by mid-May. At that time the artist will begin her work and hopes to be completed by the end of June.

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## F. Police Matters

Officers Brown and Barnes came to our meeting to give us an update on our area. They reported that we, and our surrounding neighbors, have experienced a lot of burglaries lately. The burglars often have been

entering our homes from the rear. Making sure that all doors, windows, and other access areas in the rear of your homes are secure is especially important right now. The officers suggested that keeping the rear lit up at night could also be helpful.

## G. Committee Signup

The WNA has eight committees that you can sign up for to help make the neighborhood the best it can be. The committees include:

- Public Safety (police/fire/disaster-emergency preparedness)
- Community Enrichment (community survey, vacant property renovation, historic preservation)
- Streetscape (trees, tree boxes, tree trimming, signage, call-boxes, U St. Streetscape, Park Service property)
- Playground (mural/alcoves/maintenance);
- Refuse (garbage removal/rat abatement/abandoned cars)
- New Member Packet (about WNA/where to shop, etc./work with 9<sup>th</sup> Street Business Assoc.)
- WNA House Tour Fundraiser
- Membership (recruitment)

When you sign up for a committee you are making a commitment to work on that committee for only the rest of the calendar year. Throughout the year, the WNA will have additional opportunities for those of you who cannot make that one year commitment to participate in short-term projects such as tree planting, bowling, clean-up day, etc.

If you are interested in signing up for a committee or working on a specific short-term project, please contact Tania Shand (at 588-8060). Please remember that we all need to stay involved if WNA is to continue making progress improving our neighborhood.

## J. Other Matters

### *House Renovations –*

Andrea Scott-Simmons from North Capitol Development reported on the status of the houses they are doing on 9<sup>th</sup> Street. They now

have a contract on the one they completed on the east side of 9<sup>th</sup> Street. For those of you that did not take the opportunity to view it during the open house, it looks very nice on the inside. The design was both pleasing and functional and work was of high quality. Andrea said they are continuing with the actual construction of some of the houses on the west side of 9<sup>th</sup> Street and expect similar results.

### *Ninth Street Facades –*

The 9<sup>th</sup> Street Bus. Assn. has obtained a grant to use on the facades of the commercial buildings between T and U Streets. This should be a great improvement to our area. We are pleased that they have requested input from WNA. Ronnie McGee volunteered to work with them.

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## K. Good Neighbor

Special recognition this month goes to Margie Perko on Westminster Street. Margie has been visiting with and bringing food to Mrs. Oakley, also on Westminster Street, since Mrs. Oakley's return from a stay at the hospital. In helping Mrs. Oakley, Margie also contributes to the community by setting an example for us all to follow. Thanks Margie for being a caring neighbor!

Many thanks to the "mystery" good neighbor who is responsible for composting the trees on 10<sup>th</sup> Street between S and Westminster.

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## L. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be on the fourth Tuesday in March 2002 (the 26th) at 7 PM at 922 Westminster Street. If the weather is nice we will hold the meeting in the playground. If

you want to put anything on the agenda,  
please call Tania at 588-8060.

## WNA Membership List

Please take a moment to find your name on the following list. If you do not find your name it means that you have forgotten to pay us for this year's dues. Get that checkbook out and make out a check (\$15 per household or \$5 if senior citizen) payable to "WNA." You may mail it or just drop it in the mailbox for Margie Perko at 924 Westminster. Get *your name* published.

2002		
Chuck Baxter	Lamont O. Hames	Susan Ousley
Emmanuel Blackwell	Loretta Johnson	Margie Perko
Hershel Bagley	Lynn Johnson	Tania Shand
Philip Fornaci & Michael Geller	David & Michelle Laird	Tim Shannon & Page Van Wirt
Sophia Frimpomaah	Tim & Patsy Mack	Michael & Denise Wardlaw
Emily & Stephen Henn		

