

TENLEYTOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

15 November 2006

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D.C. OFFICE OF ZONING

2003 NOV 15 PM 12: 12

Office of Planning

Att: Stephen J. Mordfin, Development Review Specialist

Re: Case # 06-37

In response to Mr. Mordfin's query to Tenleytown Historical Society (THS) regarding the property at 4023 Chesapeake Street, NW and the other lots included in the zoning proposal referenced above, we wish to advise you that we do have concerns.

For the reasons set forth below, we respectfully second the request of ANC3E Commissioner Lucy Eldridge, in whose SMD the property is located, that any hearing on zoning be delayed until the question of ownership can be more fully investigated and documented. This information is necessary in order to ensure the protection of the entire historic Fort Reno site.

When THS did its Historic Resources Survey of Tenleytown in 2003, the records available to us showed the properties in question as part of the Fort Reno reservation, # 470. This designation appears on Baist maps going back to 1954. We therefore believed that the house at the corner of Belt and Chesapeake and the other lots were included in the DC and National Register designations of Fort Reno as an historic site and thus protected from alteration unless reviewed by the Historic Preservation Office. We were further reinforced in this understanding when last summer we were granted brief access to the property by a National Park Service Ranger. As a result of our belief that this property had already been landmarked as a part of the Fort Reno designation, we did not place it on our survey list of sites to be considered for landmark status.

We have questions about DC's claim of ownership. The plat cited (Book 129/27), entitled "Closing of Public Highway and Public Alleys, also Transfer of Jurisdiction" appears to refer to small areas of land bordering Chesapeake, Fessenden and Howard Streets. Further, the DC real property database as of today shows no property in the relevant square, 1765. Square 1759 (on some maps covering the entire Fort Reno reservation) shows several DC properties, including Deal Jr. High School, and a property at 3903 Chesapeake Street. It does not show DC owning any property at 4023 Chesapeake Street. This raises again the question raised at the time of the THS survey about Fort Reno property being described variously as Reservation 470, Square 1765 and Square 1759. Additionally, a 1995 map of the Park System of the Nation's Capital and Environs, shows the lots in question as NPS property. Lastly, the 1999 Sanborn Building and Property Atlas, Book 3, Vol. 8 indicates square 1765, subdivided into lot 1, the balance undivided and with the notation "tennis courts."

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia

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The issue of ownership is one that needs to be clarified. If indeed DC owns the property, then there must be more substantiation than the 1957 plat. There is also the issue of ownership versus jurisdiction. We do not believe that this has been satisfactorily explained to date.

Fort Reno National Park is a green oasis in an increasingly built environment, but perhaps more importantly it commemorates a period in our history when 'liberty for all' was at risk. The fort itself may be gone but the importance of the Civil War in determining the future of the United States remains. Following the war, an integrated community, Reno City, occupied the area. Liberty was again at risk when that community was eradicated.

The building at the corner of Belt and Chesapeake represents a later period in Tenleytown history - when small businesses (in this case Amberger and Wolfarth Plumbing) occupied small buildings with apartments on the second floor.

THS feels strongly that the history of both the Fort Reno reservation and the building should be honored and preserved. It is of great concern to us that the ownership of the building - and additional lots - be thoroughly documented, that if owned by NPS and under the jurisdiction of DC, the rights of the various parties be clarified and transparent, and that the District make a commitment to maintain the current character and, with the exception of 4023 Chesapeake, unbuilt condition of the area.

We appreciate Mr. Mordfin's courtesy in contacting Tenleytown Historical Society about this issue and the time he has made available to us.

Thank you.

Very truly yours,

Tenleytown Historical Society Board of Directors.

Jean Pablo, President

Jason Hegy

Mary Alice Levine

Carolyn Long

Jane Waldmann



cc: DC Zoning Commission

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Tenleytown Historical Society

date: November 15, 2006

subject: Case # 06-37

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Please add the accompanying letter to the file on Case # 06-37. Thank you.