

COUNCILMEMBER DAVID CATANIA IS KCA GUEST NOVEMBER 19

At-Large DC City Councilmember David Catania, Chairman of the Council Committee on Health, will be KCA’s guest speaker at our monthly membership meeting on Thursday, November 19. Councilmember Catania will be informing us of the work of the Health Committee. First elected in a special election in 1997 and re-elected to full 4 year terms in 1998, 2002 and 2006, Catania, once a Republican, is now an Independent. He is also a member of the Council Committees on Libraries, Parks and Recreation, and Finance and Revenue.

Also on the agenda will be discussion of the National Park Service Environmental Assessment for erosion problems on the west hillside of Rock Creek Park adjacent to Walter Pierce Park. Community Liaison to the Walter Pierce Park Archaeology Project, Mary Belcher will be recommending comments for the KCA to take up prior to the closing of the comment period. NPS’ proposal directly impacts the work of the archaeology team on the steep hillside where graves have been exposed by erosion. (Please see Mary’s article below.)

Where: Good Will Baptist Church, 1862 Kalorama Road

When: November 19th at 7:00 pm.

I hope to see you there.

-Denis James

SOIL EROSION PLAN EXCLUDES PIERCE EXPERTS FROM WORK AT CEMETERY SITE

KCA members are urged to comment on a draft plan by Rock Creek Park officials to perform

needed soil-erosion work on the hillside just west of Walter Pierce Park. But the plan envisions no role for Walter Pierce Park Archaeology Project experts or members of the African American and Quaker communities with ties to the 19th-Century cemetery site.

The draft plan, known as an environmental assessment, can be read and commented on at: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/rocr> The report is titled “Stabilization and Maintenance of Slope, Environmental Assessment/Assessment of Effect, Rock Creek Park, Washington, D.C.” It was prepared by the private archaeology firm, The Louis Berger Group Inc., under contract to Rock Creek Park. Public comments on the plan must be submitted by Tuesday, Nov. 24.



NPS fences off west hillside adjacent to Pierce Park
-photo: Mary Belcher

The plan describes a series of soil-erosion remediation measures on the west hillside just upstream from the Duke Ellington Bridge. The hillside, owned by the National Park Service (NPS), adjoins the city-owned Walter Pierce Park. The historic boundaries of the Colored Union Benevolent Association and Quaker cemeteries, where more than 8,441 people were buried throughout the 19th Century, includes city, NPS, and National Zoo land. NPS acquired 2.5 acres of the 7-acre cemetery

through condemnation proceedings in the early 1900s.

The hillside at issue is of special importance to those concerned with protecting the cemeteries because human remains have been washing out on the slope for years. A Howard University archaeology team led by Professor Mark Mack has worked alongside the concerned community at Walter Pierce since 2005, with KCA's full support. The archaeologists have found the exposed remains of at least nine individuals at the site. Also, team researchers have documented the names of 8,441 men, women and children buried in the cemeteries.

The Walter Pierce Park Archaeology Project's supporters include descendants of those buried in the African American and Quaker cemeteries, as well as historically connected church groups. Because graves have become exposed at the site, team members are consulting with theologians to determine the best way to re-bury and protect those graves.

But the newly released Rock Creek Park report appears to ignore NPS guidelines that protect sites of special importance to ethnic and cultural groups. Under written NPS guidelines, park managers are required to consult and collaborate in a significant way with ethnic and cultural groups. NPS guidelines state: "The collaborative and open character of park ethnography must be continually stressed to ensure that communities whose heritage resources and associated lifeways are being studied understand and participate in the studies as early and in as many ways as possible."



Pierce Park Archaeology team at work with ground penetrating radar

-photo: Mary Belcher

The National Park Service routinely collaborates with outside experts to protect ethnographically important sites. For example, NPS recently entered into a long-term agreement with Howard University and Professor Mark Mack to

continue curating skeletal remains for the African Burial Ground National Monument in New York.

The Rock Creek report fails to acknowledge that graves have already become exposed on the hillside. It contains factual inaccuracies about the history of the site. The report also mischaracterizes and minimizes the ongoing work of the Walter Pierce Park Archaeology Project team. But the most disturbing aspect of the report is its failure to include the concerned community as part of the planned soil-erosion work.

At its November 4th monthly meeting, the Adams Morgan Advisory Neighborhood Commission, ANC-1C, unanimously approved the soil-erosion plan on the condition that Professor Mack and the Walter Pierce Park Archaeology Project be consulted, involved and physically on site during any work on the hillside.

Please take time to review the report and comment on it before November 24.



Closure notice posted by NPS adjacent to Walter Pierce Park -photo, Mary Belcher

- Mary Belcher, KCA community liaison to the Walter Pierce Park Archaeology Project, maryjbelcher@comcast.net

KCA NEEDS YOUR RENEWALS!

As we race along to the finish line of another year, please allow me to ask you to pause for a moment and take the time to renew your membership in the KCA. We do everything we can to provide members with interesting and stimulating guests at our meetings. In the last year, they have included Mayor Adrian Fenty, Ward One Councilmember Jim Graham, At-Large Councilmember Michael Brown, 3rd District MPD Commander George Kucik, a detailed presentation on

the Walter Pierce Park Archaeology Project and a special "Going Green" forum with knowledgeable guests from government, non-profits and private industry.

In addition to our meetings, we publish this newsletter 10 times a year from September through June, and hold at least one, sometimes two, social gatherings at a local restaurant.

We continue to pay close attention to the many ABC-licensed establishments in the neighborhood and monitor zoning and historic preservation matters as well.

Please use the handy tear-off "Contributions and Dues" section on the back page of this newsletter. Your membership is due for a renewal if your address label includes the line "please remit 2009 dues".

Your continued support will be greatly appreciated!

-Denis James

DC COUNCIL PASSES ELECTION REFORM

The City Council's second and final vote on Tuesday, November 3, on Bill 18-345, the "Omnibus Election Reform Act of 2009", served as a major step forward for voting in the District of Columbia.

It will be remembered as the day when the City Council voted unanimously, with amendments, to make voting and registering to vote easier for D.C. residents. In addition, Bill 18-345 will hold the D.C. Board of Elections and Ethics (DCBOEE) more accountable for the administration of elections.

During the Council's November 3 deliberations on Bill 18-345, the bill was amended by: 1. Requiring a voter who uses the same-day registration process, which allows a District of Columbia resident to register and vote on election day to vote provisionally by casting a special ballot subject to the DCBOEE determination of eligibility before counting the ballot; and, 2. Retaining the provision in the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations, Title 3, Elections and Ethics, regarding certification that the circulator of a petition for an initiative or referendum "has not made any false statements regarding the initiative or referendum to anyone whose signature is appended to the petition."

I support these amendments and believe they strengthen the bill. To read more about Bill 18-345 see the September and October editions of the KCA

newsletter at:

<http://www.kaloramacitizens.org/newsletters>

-Bill O'Field, wofield@gmail.com, serves as KCA Treasurer and blogs about DC voting and elections at: <http://electioneducationinc.blogspot.com/>

HELP NEEDED TO PROVIDE HOLIDAY BASKETS FOR MARIE REED LEARNING CENTER FAMILIES

For some years now, the KCA has participated, along with other organizations, to ensure that families of schoolchildren at the Marie Reed Learning Center who otherwise might not be able to afford a special Thanksgiving or Christmas celebration, are given the means to do so. The staff at Reed have a careful and sensitive program in place to identify these families – it's up to us to help get them the supplies they need. So, please send in your check, in any amount, to KCA, PO Box 21311, Washington, DC 20009, with a notation that it's for "Holiday Baskets". Or use the convenient coupon on the last page of this newsletter.

-Denis James

MINUTES OF OCTOBER 15, 2009 KCA MEMBERSHIP MEETING

President **Denis James** called the meeting to order at 7:25 pm. The minutes of the September 24, 2009 meeting were approved.

Community Announcements

ANC 1C Chairman **Bryan Weaver** announced the Kalorama Park clean-up for Saturday, October 17 from 10 am-2pm. The rain date would be October 31.

Denis announced that Goodwill Baptist Church would have a bake sale, also on October 17, from 11am-2pm.

Lisa Duperier announced that there would be a meeting of the Fund for Kalorama Park on Monday, October 19, at 7:00 pm at the recreation center.

Resolution on Grand Central Restaurant, 2447 18th Street

Denis introduced a resolution to protest the

request of Grand Central to reduce its number of seated patrons inside from 214 to 66, 148 standing patrons would still be allowed under the application. **Mary Belcher** asked if this was a common move, to reduce the number of seated patrons in order to more easily meet a minimum food test. Denis said that this was a first but other restaurants would probably follow. Bryan Weaver noted that ANC 1C had supported the restaurant's request.

Denis explained that the resolution would give him the ability to work to amend KCA's existing voluntary agreement with Grand Central. In response to a question about whether the city enforces these food tests, Denis said that the ABC Board earlier this year revoked two licenses for failure to meet the minimum requirements. He suggested that revocation is not the only pathway to keeping restaurants as restaurants. There was discussion of actual seats vs. standing room, and what the Fire Marshall bases standing room counts upon. After the question was called and a vote of 10-2 to protest was held, Denis ascertained that the number of members voting constituted a quorum (1/30th of the membership) by checking the total number of members with KCA Treasurer, **Bill O'Field**. Bill confirmed that there was presently a total of 204 members, and that a quorum was present. Denis indicated that he would try to resolve the matter with a Voluntary Agreement and hold off filing the protest as long as possible to allow time for settlement.

Guest Speaker, Ward One Councilmember Jim Graham

Councilmember Graham said that the discussion about Grand Central Restaurant indicates just how complicated **ABC issues** can get. There is a determination by the ABC Board to enforce the restaurant minimum food requirements, although it is a complex undertaking. For the first time, there are now auditors to examine the businesses and get real information. There will be actual revocation of licenses now. There is a different attitude now at the ABC board.

Jim said there is progress on the **18th Street streetscape**. Funding is in place. He has encouraged DDOT to do the lower part of 18th Street, down by U Street, first, which timing would favor businesses, although this timing plan may fall by the wayside. Theoretically, work will begin in early 2010. **Champlain Street** will be opening shortly. There is a new Circulator stop at Ontario/Safeway.

He noted that it has been 90 days since the **Metro crash** and we still don't know the reason,

don't know what to fix. He blamed the NTSB, whose findings and recommendations we are still waiting for. Metro is about to secure \$300 million annually in capital funds. It is in the process of replacing old cars. Graham distributed some "Rail Safety Performance Indicators." He noted that WMATA employees are stunned by recent events.

Another issue to address is Metro-related **suicides**. Somehow this method of suicide must be made less attractive, which will be difficult. There was a brief discussion of the very low lighting in most metro stations, which may contribute to the appeal of metro suicides. The low lighting was thought to contribute to a cathedral quality at one time. Graham said they were working with suicide prevention experts, and Metro workers must be more aware of strange behavior. There is no pattern of places selected by suicides. It was suggested that the problem with Metro was track circuit problems, a very technical issue, not suicides. Graham reiterated his disappointment with NTSB, which first proposed cell phone use by operator and brake failure as the causes of the crash, and it was neither. In response to a question, Graham said there is no backup safety system on the Metro, but that audible or visual signals indicating problems were needed.

Jim also noted the union threat of a bus slowdown. For example, **bus drivers** have threatened to follow every rule, including no bus passing any other bus. He said this wasn't actually a rule. Metro bus drivers fail substance abuse tests at a higher rate than the national average. On the other hand, he noted that some drivers have driven a million miles without incident. Also, it used to be that a driver had to work for 6 months part-time before he/she could come on full-time. In response to a question, Jim said there were "secret riders" on the buses who checked on drivers' cell phone and seat belt use, among other things. Also, there are cameras on 30 - 40% of buses. Jim said that this is a difficult time to be Chairman of the Metro Board.

John Ver Steeg of the Wyoming said that now that the lighting of the **Oyster-Adams playground** is at an acceptable level, he hoped that a document memorializing the acceptable conditions could be created and preserved for future reference.

Councilmember Graham noted that the **Hilton construction** occurs within legal time limits, but the noise has spillover effects. He would like to have the hotel be a better neighbor.

Denis thanked Jim for his support of **Ximena Hartsock** on the recent Council vote that failed to

confirm her as Director of the DC Department of Recreation. Jim said he had enjoyed working with her. He noted that she was sacrificed in the battle between the Mayor and the Council. Graham noted that she worked very hard, but this was a political year. Hartsock had supporters among those present who noted that her confirmation hearing had racist overtones.

Jim raised the issue of the new **transfer tax on co-ops**, which was recently passed by the Council, to the surprise of some co-op owners. In the future, co-ops will be treated the same as condos. Jim said it will take a lobbying effort by co-ops to defeat this when it comes up again. The co-ops were not engaged this time.

Councilmember Graham indicated that the criminal charges brought against his **Chief of Staff, Ted Loza**, for taking money from those interested in cab regulation, were very shocking and upsetting to him. Loza was his highest paid staff member and did very fine work. He is now on administrative leave with full salary, because of the presumption of innocence. His office has been affected by this incident, with two staff members being subpoenaed (subpoenas later dropped for voluntary testimony). Jim suggested that this may be a case of entrapment, since the FBI used informants who had various criminal charges pending, in the offering of the bribe. Jim said neither he nor anybody else in the office was involved in any way. He said 37 people have been arrested in this case. He is letting events unfold. To a question from Denis, Jim replied that he had not had any inkling of the overall taxi scandal during his oversight of the Taxicab Commission.

Mary Belcher on Walter Pierce Park Archeology Project

Mary said that she will be participating in a panel discussion at the **Washington History Conference** on Saturday November 14, at 9:30 am at the Sumner School. The discussion is titled: "How Soon We Forget: The Walter Pierce Park Archaeological Project and Reviving a Lost Memory of Post-Civil War Washington."

Mary reported that members of the archaeological team have finished reviewing 75,000 DC death certificates for the period 1874 (when death certificates started being kept) to 1890, when the African American and Quaker cemeteries were forced to close. Data have also been assembled from interment records kept between 1855 and 1874.

Quaker records dating to 1807 have yet to be located. The total number of burials documented to date at the Walter Pierce cemeteries (known as Mt. Pleasant or Young Men's) is 8,441, not including Quaker burials before 1855:

She said there have been five major disruptions of the cemetery: 1) purchase by the National Zoo; 2) widening of Adams Mill Road; 3) construction of the Calvert Street Bridge; 4) excavation for an apartment building; and 5) creation of Walter Pierce Park in 1982.

There was a short discussion about how best to memorialize the cemeteries. Mary suggested the need to consult with clergy, particularly that of churches associated with the cemeteries, such as the 19th Street Baptist Church. She said any artifacts discovered there, such as coffin hardware, shells and human remains should be covered and preserved in place. There was agreement that the very popular park should continue being used as a park.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 pm.

-Linda Ingram, Secretary

UPCOMING KCA MEETING DATES

KCA meets the 3rd Thursday of each month, September through June. We usually have a social gathering at a neighborhood restaurant in December and June. Shown below are our meeting dates from now through June, 2010.

Thursday, November 19, 2009
Thursday, December 17, 2009
Thursday, January 21, 2010
Thursday, February 18, 2010
Thursday, March 18, 2010
Thursday, April 15, 2010
Thursday, May 20, 2010
Thursday, June 17, 2010

The KCA newsletter is published in print and electronically 10 times a year.

© 2009 Kalorama Citizens Association
All Rights Reserved
www.KaloramaCitizens.org

CONTRIBUTIONS AND DUES

Annual dues are now due. Contributions can be made by credit card or PayPal at: <http://www.kaloramacitizens.org/join>
Or use this convenient form and send your check to KCA, PO Box 21311, Washington, DC 20009. KCA is a 501(c)(3) organization and all dues and contributions are fully tax deductible to the extent provided by law.

- I wish to support the Walter Pierce Park Archeology Project with a contribution of \$ _____ .
 - For a minimum \$25.00 contribution to the Walter Pierce Park Archaeology Project, get an Adams Morgan T-shirt.
 - I wish to support Thanksgiving Baskets and the Christmas Program at Marie Reed Learning Center for families in need. KCA has supported this worthy program for many years \$_____.
 - Here's my \$25 dues for 2009.
 - Here's my \$50.00 dues payment for both 2009 and 2010. Save a stamp and envelope!
 - Here's my \$_____ contribution for plants and supplies for the Biltmore Triangle Garden.
-



Kalorama Station
PO Box 21311
Washington DC 20009
Return Service Requested

**THE NEXT KCA MEETING
THURSDAY NOV. 19, 7:00 PM
- GUEST SPEAKER
DAVID CATANIA
- ARCHAEOLOGY PROJECT
GOALS THREATENED
GOOD WILL BAPTIST CHURCH
1862 KALORAMA ROAD NW**