

MAYOR AND COUNCIL OF ROCKVILLE

ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

MEETING NO. 27-13

AGENDA ITEM NO. 11

PUBLIC HEARING ON SECTIONAL MAP AMENDMENT MAP
2013-00112 TO CHANGE ZONING FROM R-90 TO R-90
(HD) FOR THE HISTORIC DESIGNATION OF 628 GREAT
FALLS ROAD

Monday, September 30, 2013

1 PARTICIPANTS:

2 Board Members:

3 PHYLLIS MARCUCCIO, Mayor

4 JOHN BRITTON, Councilmember

5 PIOTR GAJEWSKI, Councilmember

6 BRIDGET DONNELL NEWTON, Councilmember

7 MARK PIERZCHALA, Councilmember

8 Staff:

9 BARBARA MATTHEWS, City Manager

10 DEBRA YERG DANIEL, City Attorney

11 DOUG BARBER, City Clerk

12 CYNTHIA WALTERS, Assistant City Attorney

13 DEANE MELLANDER, Deputy of Planning and
14 Development

15 ROBIN ZIEK, Historic Preservation Planner
with the City

16 Public Speakers:

17 NADIA AZUMI

18 SHARYN DUFFIN

19 JODY KLINE

20 PATRICIA WOODWARD

21 PATRICIA CASILLAS

22 PHILIP ROSENBERG

1 PARTICIPANTS (CONT'D):

2 EILEEN MCGUCKIAN

3 TIM RAMSBURG

4 ROBERT TERINGO

5 DAVID FRITZ

6 ROD ESCOBAR

7 BRUCE THORN

8 JOON CHONG CAGLE

9 CLIFTON KING

10 CATHY HSINMEI HSU

11 NICKI MYERS

12 NICOLE CARTER

13 MIKE COLLINS

14 JEFF FULLER

15 JOHN LYLES

16 ROBIN CORRIDON

17 MARY VAN BALGOOY

18 RON MARTIN

19 JACKSON JEMEZ

20 MARSHA DOUMA

21 SUSAN PRINCE

22 * * * * *

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Welcome back to the
3 continuation of Meeting No. 27-13 of the Mayor and
4 Council in Rockville, Maryland, September 30,
5 2013, and we are to embark upon our next public
6 hearing, which is on the Sectional Map Amendment,
7 Map, or M-a-p, 20-13-00112, to change zoning from
8 R90 to R90HD for the historic designation of 628
9 Great Falls Road, Mayor and Council, applicants.

10 Has this hearing been properly
11 advertised, Mr. Clerk?

12 MR. BARBER: Yes, Madam Mayor, it has.

13 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: All right, and then I
14 will repeat what I said a little late, but
15 nonetheless said it. For the group, we will allow
16 individuals to speak for three minutes. If you're
17 representing an organization or a group, you may
18 have five. And we ask you to try to stick with
19 the time limit, if you don't mind. You'll notice
20 that there is a timer in the front of the podium
21 here. So, kind of keep your eye on it as you're
22 speaking, and it will warn you that you've only

1 got 30 seconds left. So, kind of sum up when you
2 see that.

3 Thank you so very much. And I guess we
4 are going to have a presentation from our staff.

5 Okay, Robin, you're on.

6 MS. ZIEK: Yes, Madam Mayor. Thank you
7 so much. I'm Robin Ziek, Historic Presentation
8 Planner with the City, and, believe me, I will
9 make this brief. As you note, the Sectional
10 Zoning Map Amendment is a zoning action that's
11 proposed for this front-gable-and- wing building,
12 built in 1925, and it's located at the junction of
13 Great Falls Road and Maryland Avenue, and the
14 property is associated with a neighborhood, an
15 African- American kinship community, but the house
16 has been recommended for designation by the
17 Historic District Commission on the basis of three
18 criteria: That it exemplifies the early 20th
19 century development of Rockville -- that it is a
20 very good example of a front-gable-and-wings
21 vernacular house type -- and that it represents
22 essentially a gateway to Rockville for the

1 historic center of the city.

2 What I'm showing you right now is the
3 property at 628. It's the last property along
4 Great Falls and Maryland Avenue, but it is the
5 subject of a site plan amendment that's under
6 consideration now and will be coming to the
7 Planning Commission, and the property for the site
8 plan is 628 and 626 Great Falls. The house at 626
9 was evaluated by the Commission, not found
10 historic, and it will be demolished.

11 This is just an aerial view -- and the
12 house -- just to show you the pebble finish,
13 modest rear porch, and the house. And I just
14 wanted to point out that of course the process for
15 designation after the Historic District Commission
16 reviewed it and found that it met criteria for the
17 City and therefore it is a historic structure --
18 it went to the Planning Commission after the Mayor
19 and Council authorized filing to have a public
20 hearing, and after the HDC review but prior to the
21 Planning Commission review in July, there was some
22 information brought forward from the community. I

1 mean, that is one of the advantages of having a
2 public process, and the community gets involved,
3 and this is the area much extended of the
4 African-American kinship community. In the area
5 in blue is the area that we knew was an affiliated
6 area, but research has shown that it's much
7 broader.

8 So, the Planning Commission -- also you
9 have it as part of the Public Hearing date -- did
10 recommend that it met the relevant master plans
11 and that it met the purpose of the zone, so in
12 terms of that, both the HDC and the Planning
13 Commission recommend that it meets and should be
14 designated.

15 So, that's all I wanted to say. Thank
16 you.

17 MAYOR MARUCCIO: All right. So, I guess
18 at this point we will invite speakers to come to
19 the podium, and at this moment we have -- I'm not
20 absolutely certain, but we have about 25 to 30
21 that wish to speak that have signed up. I have a
22 feeling there are going to be a few of you who

1 didn't sign up who are going to want to speak, so
2 it's going to be quite a long evening here. So,
3 try to be brief and to the point.

4 The first individual -- just a moment.

5 COUNCILMAN MOORE: We have a (inaudible)

6 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Yes, as long as you
7 can hold your statements to something like a
8 minute or two.

9 COUNCILMAN MOORE: I do want to thank
10 everybody for coming out tonight. This is a big
11 decision that the Mayor and Council has to make.

12 Mayor and Council are the only ones who
13 can properly consider whether a property should be
14 designated over the objections of the owner. The
15 staff doesn't do that. The Historic District
16 Commission doesn't consider that. The Planning
17 Commission doesn't consider that. So, just to
18 give you a heads up, what I'm going to be looking
19 for tonight is, you know, is there enough
20 information? Does the impression exist that
21 justifies designating this over the owner's
22 objection? It's a much higher burden than if the

1 owner wants to.

2 So, thank you for coming out, and we
3 look forward to your testimony.

4 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Anyone else want to
5 make a minute or so? No? Okay.

6 All right, let's see. We have several.
7 I see a very well-known individual in the
8 community and the African- American history of the
9 city by the name of Sharyn Duffin here. I wonder
10 if you would do us the honor in going first.

11 MS. DUFFIN: Good evening. My name is
12 Sharyn Duffin. I'm here in support of the map
13 amendment. I live in Lincoln Park, which is a bit
14 remote from the subject area, but I have a
15 long-time interest in this area, because my
16 grandfather, Vernon Hill, was born in this
17 community in 1898.

18 We've known for a long time that his
19 grandmother's grandmother purchased an acre of
20 land in 1845 for \$25 -- an acre of land and a
21 house. Last spring, additional research into
22 historic documents revealed that the community was

1 actually 10 times larger and began 12 years
2 earlier when two persons -- three people purchased
3 land in 1832. So, this area became an enclave for
4 free people, and it was truly a kinship community,
5 as we see people whose relationships have not
6 quite untangled but they're living back and forth
7 in each other's houses, and we see them stay there
8 from as early as 1850 to -- well, my family was
9 very lucky. They managed to stay there until the
10 last person related to us who lived there died in
11 1977. So, that's about 125 years that this one
12 family lived on this one acre of land.

13 I'm going to let someone else read the
14 rest of my testimony that I could not memorize.

15 MS. TALLEY: I'm going to complete here
16 talk for Sharyn.

17 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Could you identify
18 yourself for us, ma'am? Tell us who you are.

19 MS. TALLEY: I'm Barbara Hale Talley.
20 I'm a great, great, great, granddaughter of Ann
21 Wilson, Sharyn's aunt.

22 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Thank you. We are

1 honored to have you.

2 MS. TALLEY: Thank you. "628 Great
3 Falls Road has significance because of its value
4 as an individual property. It along with 600,
5 602, 608, and 616 are the only historic structures
6 from the black kinship community. They are
7 examples of vernacular or folk-housing
8 characteristic of working-class residents of
9 Rockville at the turn of the 20th century.
10 Typically, these homes were renovated or replaced
11 as circumstances permitted.

12 "The house at 616 is located on the
13 Price land and likely evolved from a dwelling used
14 by Martha Graham, daughter of Thomas Price. The
15 Bessie Hill house at 602 dates from 1902 but has
16 older elements. The Johnson Clark house was built
17 in 1913 to replace a 19th century house. Census
18 and marriage records show descendants of the
19 original property owners continued to live here
20 into the 20th century. Ann Wilson's one acre
21 passed through several generations for more than
22 125 year. Emma Nugent, who died in 1977, was the

1 last relative to live in this enclave.

2 "Sadly, descendants of Thomas Price were
3 not so fortunate. In the space of two
4 generations, they were dispossessed of the land.
5 When Martha Graham died in 1903, she owed property
6 taxes. Neighbors purchased the land at a tax sale
7 in 1906.

8 "At some point before 1925, the subject
9 house was constructed. It was then that William
10 Trail sold it to William and Laura Bennett. The
11 1930 census records record them living there in
12 the 1930 census. This was a significant event,
13 marking the first time a white family actually
14 lived in the historic Great Falls kinship
15 community.

16 "This is another step in its evolution
17 and a precursor of social change that would take
18 more than 40 years to unfold. The remnants of
19 this community deserve recognition and
20 preservation. Many people I spoke to about this
21 hearing instantly recalled 628 Great Falls Road.
22 It is a familiar landmark reminiscent of a rapidly

1 vanishing past and one they would like to see
2 preserved. This is a story that can only add to
3 our knowledge of Rockville's development. It is a
4 source of pride to the many descendants of the
5 original owners, including the family who can
6 boast descent from two of the original settlers,
7 Thomas Price and Ann Wilson. The Historic
8 District Commission and the Planning Commission,
9 both, strongly recommend historic designation. I
10 urge you to give your approval.

11 "Sincerely, Sharyn Duffin."

12 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Thank you very much.
13 All right, we will move to the regular list that I
14 have here, and I'm going to make slight
15 adjustments, but not too many.

16 The very first person to sign up was
17 Jody Kline. So, Jody, will you please -- there
18 you are -- give us your testimony?

19 MR. KLINE: Good evening. My name is
20 Jody Kline. I'm an attorney at law for Miller,
21 Miller & Canby with offices across the street here
22 on Monroe Street, and I am the attorney for the

1 Rockville Congregation of the Jehovah's Witness
2 church. And I've really got very limited
3 comments.

4 I want to thank you for deferring your
5 public hearing to allow us an opportunity to make
6 a presentation to the Historic District
7 Commission. I know that was not without some
8 controversy when that was done, but, in fact, I
9 think it did give us an opportunity to speak for
10 the Historic District Commission and try and
11 understand kind of where they were going with what
12 our plans were.

13 Now, if you're familiar with what
14 happened, it didn't work out quite the way I
15 thought it was going to. I thought that we would
16 be closer to the Historic District Commission, and
17 it didn't prove to be that way. So, tonight the
18 representatives of the church will be testifying
19 against designation of the property. I had hoped
20 that we would be able to work something out where
21 we felt we'd close enough but that just the gap
22 was too much. And you'll hear from the testimony

1 why that's the case.

2 But, nevertheless, the opportunity to
3 have a candid dialog -- "dialog" is probably not
4 the right word -- a candid discussion with the
5 Historic District Commission allowed the
6 representatives of the church to focus their
7 comments, so they will each keep their time to two
8 minutes and 49 seconds each and we'll hopefully
9 get out of here quicker.

10 In anticipation of all those 25 people
11 you're going to hear from -- all right, let me
12 just tell you what isn't going to happen. I heard
13 the phrase, "You need to recognize the house, you
14 need to basically preserve the house." The house
15 is not going to be removed. And as you heard from
16 staff, there is a level 2 site plan application,
17 which in fact triggered all of this designation
18 process. It shows the house being preserved in
19 the exact location as it is today, and there's no
20 risk that you're going to lose it, that you have
21 to save it, that you have to preserve it. If you
22 want it recognized, I can promise you this church

1 will work like heck to try and give you the
2 recognition that the property deserves as they see
3 it needs to be deserved. But it isn't going away.
4 That's not the church's plan at all.

5 You have heard before -- or, for
6 instance, I guess there's correspondence in the
7 file -- and you may hear this evening that we
8 don't want to lose any more residential use of the
9 property. There is a missionary who lives in the
10 house today. He will continue to live in the
11 house today. The house will remain a residential
12 structure in the West End. There will be no
13 connection between the church and the house.
14 There will be a completely functioning residence,
15 and it doesn't delete or diminish the housing
16 stock by losing that house at all.

17 You may hear that the exterior of the
18 building will be inalterably changed. The three
19 facades of the building that represent the
20 historical aspects of the vision of what people
21 saw on that property from Great Falls Road, all
22 remain untouched and, in fact, enhanced as you see

1 today. So, the building itself, as it was viewed
2 historically and will be viewed in the future,
3 does not change at all.

4 And then, lastly, what I'd say is to
5 remind you that the property can be protected
6 without designation. The level 2 site plan review
7 will show the house where it is today, in the
8 condition it is in today; and all the plans that
9 we've shown will show the Planning Commission --
10 and we cannot change that without going back to
11 the Planning Commission, without getting their
12 permission to do something. So, the City does
13 control what happens on that property, so there's
14 no risk that a demolition permit or something is
15 going to happen without a public process.

16 Our problem, as you'll probably hear
17 tonight, is every time we've tried to adjust our
18 plan to address an issue, we have run into a
19 constraint, and we simply have a building envelope
20 that is too difficult to get what is, in essence,
21 a relatively small building on this property to
22 serve the needs of the church. We would like to

1 try and work out some kind of a compromise so that
2 we could build something. But, unfortunately, we
3 have to oppose designation today for the reasons
4 you'll hear this evening.

5 But, again, thank you for giving us the
6 opportunity for that deferral and hope you'll have
7 questions for us based on our presentation.

8 Thank you.

9 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Thank you. All right,
10 I know that you all want to go quickly.

11 Let me see how we can handle this the
12 best. Nadia Azumi is next. Then we will have
13 Patricia Woodward.

14 MS. AZUMI: Good evening again. I will
15 have five minutes.

16 Mayor and Council, my name is Nadia
17 Azumi. I reside at 6 Nocturne Court in Rose Hill
18 Falls. I'm the vice president of Rose Hill, and
19 I'm also block captain for the West End. I'm here
20 as a representative of Rose Hill Falls.

21 In June, our community came before you
22 and expressed our support for historic designation

1 of 628 Great Falls Road. Since that initial
2 meeting, the Planning Commission, after reviewing
3 the application and its compliance with the master
4 plan, has recommended historic designation. More
5 research has been done on the history of this
6 property and the historic community that
7 surrounded it. All of this adds to our conviction
8 that the historic designation is the right step
9 for our neighborhood and the city.

10 As Jim Coyle, our president, said in
11 June, there have been many incremental steps that
12 the City has taken to preserve the residential
13 character of this portion of the West End. In the
14 1980s, the Mayor and Council voted in favor of
15 residential development rather than an office
16 complex on the fields owned by the (inaudible).
17 That is where is our community stands today and
18 the house that I call home. Subsequently, land
19 was set aside to create Millennium Park across
20 from the house at 628 Great Falls Road.

21 While that (inaudible) to the
22 intersection, the Park also preserves a sense of

1 openness and the farms that stood here before the
2 I270 interchange was created. The house at 628
3 Great Falls Road is the capstone of this
4 preservation effort, one that is essential if we
5 are to maintain the residential character of the
6 neighborhood that we love. I, personally, and our
7 community strongly urge you to vote in favor of
8 historic designation.

9 And I would like to say that I have
10 nothing against Jehovah's Witness. I have a
11 Jehovah's Witness that lives with us. But I have
12 experienced a lot of things that have happened in
13 that intersection, and I strongly object to having
14 an expansion done there -- not because it's of a
15 church.

16 The other thing that I am concerned
17 about, and I just heard it now, is that Mr. Jody
18 said that he is going to try to save that house.
19 After listening to these beautiful ladies here of
20 their past, I as an Italian citizen cannot
21 understand why we have to destroy such a beauty of
22 history when every single block in Rome has

1 survived. Let's not destroy it. Let's not
2 destroy Rockville -- not because of something that
3 will be attached, to show just an appearance that
4 this is a historical house.

5 Thank you for your time, and have a good
6 evening.

7 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Thank you. Next we
8 have Patricia Woodward, to be followed by Patricia
9 Casillas.

10 MS. WOODWARD: Good evening. My name is
11 Patricia Woodward, and I live in the west end of
12 the city on North Van Buren Street. Tonight I am
13 here to testify for the West End Citizen's
14 Association, because our current president, Noreen
15 Bryan, sends her regrets that she cannot be here
16 tonight because of illness. And because I have
17 been an active member of the Executive Board for
18 over 20 years and a past president, she asked that
19 I present the feelings and the recommendations of
20 the West End.

21 In May, WECA Executive Board unanimously
22 adopted a motion supporting historic designation

1 of 628 Great Falls Road. Tonight I want to focus
2 on why preservation of this property is so
3 important to our neighborhood.

4 The previous steps of the historic
5 designation process conducted by the City staff,
6 HDC, and Planning Commission have made a very
7 clear and convincing case for the merits of
8 historic designation for the criteria established
9 in the City and State Codes.

10 The additional research conducted by the
11 residents of the West End has expanded the
12 knowledge and the history of this section of the
13 West End and shown that it is the home of a
14 vibrant black kinship community established by
15 three black men and women before the Civil War.
16 Eileen McGuckian certainly will go on and continue
17 the unfolding and developments of this community
18 that was started in 1832.

19 But back to the reason for my testimony.
20 Why does historic designation have much importance
21 for the West End? This house and property add
22 value to the community far beyond their size and

1 stature. It is the southwestern gateway to the
2 West End and the City. For those arriving at this
3 intersection, the house is an icon that bespeaks a
4 residential neighborhood, one molded by earlier
5 advance in history. The West End is an eclectic
6 residential neighborhood, which has housing and
7 structures that stand over two centuries from the
8 1800s to today. We go from the grand architecture
9 to the simple vernacular embodied by the house of
10 628 Falls Road.

11 We love this great mixing pot of
12 cultures and styles that our housing exemplifies.
13 We believe that the preservation of this house and
14 its setting is a key piece of our simpler history
15 and is an appropriate balance to the grandeur
16 entrance at West Montgomery Avenue. Our
17 neighborhood at this intersection of Great Falls
18 and Maryland Avenue is at the tipping point of
19 losing its residential character because of the
20 dominance of institutions. While all of these are
21 allowable in a residential neighborhood, when they
22 become dominant components, the residential

1 character of the neighborhood becomes overtaken in
2 loss. Because the residential character at this
3 location is so fragile, it is the utmost
4 importance to preserve the house at 628 in
5 perpetuity.

6 Now, the applicants' attorney has
7 suggested that they can preserve and will preserve
8 this property without having it designated as
9 historic. Now, we believe they speak with good
10 intents, but history has shown us that greater
11 protections are necessary. The owner of a
12 property has the right to sell his or her property
13 at any point in time. This particular property
14 could be sold, and in the next year the subsequent
15 owner may not be interested in preservation.

16 I'm going to give you an example of why
17 we need designation and proof -- you know, trust
18 but verify. The example is Chestnut Lodge. When
19 it was decided that the development of Rose Hill
20 Falls and then people began to feel that the main
21 building needed to be in the trust, the historic
22 trust, that was taken advantage of. And then they

1 decided the land that was from the main building
2 to West Montgomery Avenue would be historic in
3 perpetuity. There would be no question about it.
4 And so that's why what has happened to this crown
5 jewel has been plucked because of fire. However,
6 if we did not have the historic designation, we
7 would then now have Rose Hill Falls, Rose Hill
8 One, and probably Rose Hill Two right up to West
9 Montgomery Avenue.

10 So, please -- please listen to all the
11 commissions and the people. Yes, it needs to be
12 designated.

13 Thank you.

14 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Thank you. Patricia
15 Castillis?

16 MS. CASILLAS: Good evening, once again
17 I am Patricia Casillas, and I'm here representing
18 Rose Hill. My husband is president of the Rose
19 Hill Home Owners Association, and I'm on several
20 of the committees.

21 I wanted to state as previously
22 testified, our community supports the historic

1 designation of the property at 628 Great Falls
2 Road. For us it's not just a house. The house is
3 a beautiful house, and it really is the right type
4 of house for that particular property. But we see
5 the entire gateway into the community and how it
6 impacts our community as well as needing
7 preservation, and that's what that house
8 represents to us.

9 It's definitely the gateway into
10 Rockville. It's the gateway into a residential
11 area. We know we have Julius West Middle School.
12 We know we have a temple already there. We know
13 we have some other buildings that are not quite
14 residential. But losing that one is just going to
15 cause our entire community to be something other
16 than the residential, beautiful area that it is,
17 and maintaining the historic value of this home is
18 extremely important to Rose Hill.

19 We already have a historic house our
20 grounds, as you all know. We have the Rose Hill
21 mansion. And we are very careful that that house
22 stays the way it is. We used our HCC guidelines

1 with them to preserve that house as well. So, we
2 would love for this house to also have that
3 historic designation to protect us.

4 Thank you.

5 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Okay. Now, I will
6 deviate slightly and ask that Phil and Jean
7 Rosenberg, who were on the wrong list at the wrong
8 place, take the audience next.

9 MR. ROSENBERG: I appreciate your
10 consideration and want to compliment the board
11 members -- the councilmembers for your latter
12 control and tenacity tonight for putting this long
13 night together.

14 I'm Philip Rosenberg. I live at 1101
15 Prospect Hill Place, which is just behind the
16 property that we're talking about, the courtyard
17 of homes there.

18 My only concern and what I want to
19 express to you is that I'm very concerned about
20 the traffic patterns that will be created if this
21 larger church facility is created. And,
22 specifically, the exit off of 270 onto Falls Road

1 and Maryland Avenue is already a very difficult
2 intersection where people really don't like
3 stopping on 270 before they merge onto Maryland
4 Avenue, and they've already cordoned off a portion
5 of the left-hand turn to get onto Great Falls Road
6 to do that. So, I'm just very concerned about
7 what the extra traffic is going to mean in terms
8 of backing up onto 270 and then people who are
9 trying to get off, going in, coming out of the
10 church area -- how that's going to affect the
11 traffic.

12 So, that's what I wanted to express
13 tonight, and I want to thank you all for your time
14 and consideration.

15 Thank you very much.

16 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Thank you. All right,
17 now we will turn to Eileen McGuckian, who has four
18 speakers that are sort of in a row here, but I
19 have a feeling that Eileen is going to be speaking
20 pretty much for each of them. Is this correct?

21 MS. MCGUCKIAN: Yes, yes. I needed
22 extra time and I hope your indulgence and I hope

1 you'll find it worthwhile.

2 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: All right, Jim Coyle,
3 Danny Gruitz, Rose Sharkey, and Steve Freed here?
4 Are any of them here?

5 MS. MCGUCKIAN: I don't believe any of
6 them are here, but they've ceded their time and
7 written to the city clerk to ask that.

8 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: All right.

9 MS. MCGUCKIAN: Mr. Coyle and Ms.
10 Sharkey are out of town.

11 COUNCILMEMBER MOORE: For the record,
12 the idea of people ceding time to work here -- I
13 have a little trouble with that. But as I said in
14 communications back and forth, as Ms. McGuckian
15 kind of has a special place as our city's
16 historian -- and I want to hear everything she has
17 to say -- I prefer that we grant her the time she
18 needs rather than doing the ceding time of people
19 who aren't here.

20 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Whatever.

21 MS. MCGUCKIAN: I didn't request
22 anything special. I asked if this were a

1 possibility, and apparently your rules do not
2 govern that one way or the other.

3 COUNCILMEMBER MOORE: We don't usually
4 do it. You wouldn't want somebody to show up and
5 talk for an hour because, you know, 15 people
6 means 15 bodies.

7 MS. MCGUCKIAN: That's correct, but
8 there's no prohibition, and I checked that before
9 I even developed my testimony.

10 COUNCILMEMBER MOORE: Okay.

11 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: All right.

12 SPEAKER: I'm on the list and I want to
13 speak --

14 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Okay, very good.

15 MS. MCGUCKIAN: I don't -- I'm going to
16 try to keep it short.

17 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Please proceed.

18 MS. MCGUCKIAN: But it won't seem short,
19 I'm sorry. I apologize.

20 So, I'm Eileen McGuckian, and I have
21 passionately pursued the preservation of Rockville
22 history for your grandchildren and my

1 grandchildren -- I'm continuing to do that -- and
2 628 Great Falls Road represents the remarkable
3 history of the free black community in Rockville.
4 Every parcel of land in the 600 block has
5 experienced at least six successive generations of
6 African-American kinship and residents. The house
7 at 628 by itself stands on its own and is an
8 anchor to a notable Rockville streetscape in a
9 kinship community. Constructed in the first
10 quarter of the 20th century, it maintains
11 agricultural integrity and meets several criteria
12 for designation as a Rockville historic district.

13 Like any building anywhere, 628 Great
14 Falls is part of a larger picture. This house was
15 built in a certain neighborhood, in a certain
16 style, by certain people, for a certain reason, at
17 a certain time. That is context, which depends
18 upon what happened before and the piece of
19 property, how it came to be, how it has fared over
20 the years, and what us there now.

21 This year, I had the privilege of
22 advising researchers as they delved into land

1 census, will, and other records and matched maps
2 with memories to learn the context of this
3 neighborhood and this house. Long ago, I
4 recognized Great Falls Road as one of four
5 substantial black historic neighborhoods in
6 Rockville, but this groundbreaking research opened
7 my eyes to this place in Rockville history, and I
8 want to share the findings with you this evening.

9 So, in the beginning there was
10 Rockville. To this colonial crossroads came
11 county government and shopkeepers and residents.
12 Farmers, younger sons, and investors purchased
13 land in all directions and on the road to the
14 Great Falls of the Potomac. Many landowners owned
15 slaves, but by the 1840s free people in this area
16 had settled on Samuel Martin's Lane, north of
17 town, in Rockville along Washington Street and
18 Middle Lane, and in this enclave along Great Falls
19 Road. The largest number of free blacks lived in
20 town. Martin's Lane and Great Falls Road were
21 close to the same acreage.

22 So, this slide shows the house of Jesse

1 Leach, who was a white settler, who published the
2 Rockville Newspaper. He helped found the Baptist
3 church in town. He lived in this house, which is
4 still standing on Great Falls Road, and he sold
5 five acres of land just down the road to Thomas
6 Price for \$175. We haven't yet found an earlier
7 relationship between Leach and Price, but Leach
8 was a slave owner who regularly took in young
9 apprentices, both white and black, to teach them
10 farming and saddlery.

11 In 1832, Thomas Price was a free black
12 man years of age. That same year, his name and
13 those of his wife, Tabbatha, and daughter, Martha,
14 were on the list of free African-Americans of
15 Maryland, created to determine how many former
16 slaves would relocate to Africa. The sheriff
17 ended his report, "There is none of the foregoing
18 list that is willing to go to Liberia."

19 Price intended to stay on Great Falls
20 Road. In 1853, he was assessed for an improved
21 lot \$200, household furniture \$30, and livestock
22 \$110. Three years later he purchased another two

1 and three-quarter acres with buildings for \$16.

2 At his death in 1858, most of Thomas Price's land
3 went to his daughter, Martha, who had married a
4 slave named Tilghman Graham.

5 In 1833 -- here we go, you've seen this
6 map -- in 1883, Leach sold one acre just north of
7 the Price homestead to Sarah Hopkins and in 1845
8 another acre further north with a house on it to
9 Ann Wilson. Those are the two parcels at the very
10 top of the map there. With the two sales to
11 Thomas Price, these four transactions created a
12 nine and three-quarter-acre enclave of free black
13 families on land that is now the 600 block of
14 Great Falls Road down to the corner of what is now
15 Maryland Avenue. Ann Wilson signed her deed with
16 an "X" and was one of some 1300 free blacks in
17 Montgomery County. She married a Mr. Davis, and
18 in 1879 she willed featherbed quilts and dresses
19 to her daughter-in-law, grandchildren, and great
20 granddaughter and her house to her stepson.

21 On this 1865 map, it shows five
22 buildings. Okay, there are five buildings, and

1 they are in the middle of the map and they say
2 "Cold" -- C-o-l-d -- which is a contraction for
3 "colored." So, it shows the five black families
4 who were living here in 1865. No doubt these
5 families watched 3500 Confederates ride past their
6 homes in June of 1863, and of the 12 black
7 landowners in Rockville recorded in the 1867
8 Freedman's Bureau records, five held held parcels
9 along the Great Falls Road.

10 Martha and Tilghman Graham continued to
11 live here through the remainder of the 19th
12 century. They saved money to reacquire the three
13 acres of her father's land from the Executor of
14 his will.

15 And the next map will show the 1879
16 configuration. On here, you can see names. T.
17 Graham, George Blair, and B. Davis are the three
18 black names that are identifiable, but you can see
19 the number of squares over there.

20 So, into the 20th century, the pattern
21 continued. Each generation lived where they had
22 been raised. They invited other family members to

1 the community. They lived in multi-generational
2 households, and they built new homes nearby around
3 the site of earlier structures. Ann Wilson's
4 stepchildren added homes of their own. Her
5 granddaughter, Eliza Johnson, replaced Ann
6 Wilson's old house at 600 Great Falls Road in 1913
7 with what has been the home of Nina Clark for
8 almost 70 years. And this next slide shows 600
9 Great Falls Road. Mrs. Clark is a respected
10 educator in the segregated and integrated
11 Montgomery County schools and an award-winning
12 author.

13 The next slide shows Eliza and her
14 husband, William Johnson, when they sold a quarter
15 of an acre to their daughter, Elizabeth -- Bessie
16 -- and husband, Vernon Hill, who are pictured
17 here, so they could build No. 602, which was
18 designated by you in 2010. Vernon was the son of
19 a slave of the stone streets and a laborer who
20 gardened for several local families. Bessie
21 worked as a laundress and was the organist at
22 Jerusalem M.E. Church. Both literate, they knew

1 the value of education.

2 In addition to these close family ties,
3 black families here retained relationships with
4 their white neighbors. Small pieces of land
5 nearby became part of Rockville Heights, a
6 railroad-inspired subdivision that stretched from
7 near City Hall along Maryland Avenue to the back
8 lots of the kinship parcels. You can see
9 Rockville Heights on the left and an 1894 map,
10 again with more squares, on the right. By 1894,
11 this community in Rockville Heights was clearly
12 delineated. After Martha Graham died in 1903,
13 taxes were not paid on her property, and it was
14 acquired via tax sale by nearby farmers, Hezekiah
15 and Elizabeth Trail, who conveyed it to their son,
16 William, in 1906. We believe that Martha Graham's
17 house, used as a rental by Trail, is No. 616 Great
18 Falls.

19 The men and women of Great Falls Road
20 earned enough to support their families in the
21 occupations that were open to them. The men who
22 worked as carpenters, laborers, drivers, and farm

1 hands by day became after-hours leaders in
2 Rockville. The strong women who preserved the
3 land for their families worked outside the home as
4 domestic servants, housemaids, cooks, and
5 laundresses and took time to be active at
6 Jerusalem and Clinton churches.

7 Immediately after emancipation black
8 parents champion public education for their
9 children. They recognize the importance of
10 literacy and fluency with numbers. From the two
11 Great Falls Road parents who petitioned the
12 Freedman's Bureau requesting a school for colored
13 children to purchase of land in Rockville for the
14 school to trusteeship positions during a century
15 of segregated schools, these people stepped up to
16 leadership roles.

17 By 1856, the one-acre parcel that Leach
18 sold to Sarah Hopkins was owned by Daniel Brogden
19 and his wife, Lydia. The Brogdens, along with
20 Thomas Price, were members of Rockville M.E.
21 church. After emancipation, when Jerusalem formed
22 its own congregation, Brogden became a preacher,

1 and Tilghman Graham served as a trustee. Brogden
2 officiated at the 1870 marriage of two people
3 within the community whose descendants have lived
4 on Great Falls for decades. As owners and
5 renters, the Brogden family members were here
6 through the 1920s.

7 After the turn of the century, Great
8 Falls Road filled in with more residences and
9 outbuildings to be used by more people while
10 around them the town was expanding. This 1917
11 real estate atlas shows black land owners Eliza
12 Johnson, granddaughter of Ann Wilson; Elizabeth
13 Hill, Wilson's great granddaughter; F. Nugent, who
14 was Wilson's great grandson; and Jane Brogden with
15 white men William Trail and W. R. Pumpfry owning
16 adjacent land. Ferdinand and Emma Nugent and
17 often her siblings lived in the bungalow at 608
18 Great Falls, and the small dwellings of Sam Green
19 and Asbury Johnson stood behind that where a
20 successor house is now No. 610.

21 While most of the Rockville Heights
22 subdivision remained vacant until well into the

1 20th century, the town's population swelled to
2 more than 1100. Near the Trails lived the Heperin
3 family, one of whom opened a printing business
4 before moving the press into Rockville in the
5 1940s. Around this time, the current house at 628
6 was constructed. The land was part of the 1832
7 sale from Jesse Leach to Thomas Price, and it
8 conveyed to Martha Graham, Price's daughter,
9 following his death in 1858. There may have been
10 a previous house here, but we're not sure of that.

11 This house was built under the ownership
12 of William Trail, a doctor and unmarried, who
13 lived with his parents on the west side of Falls
14 Road. Trail bought the property from his parents,
15 who had obtained it from the estate of Martha
16 Graham. Trail owned it from 1906 to 1925, likely
17 building this house for rental to members of the
18 black communities that he knew as neighbors. The
19 house was designed in the vernacular of the
20 period, probably by a local builder who followed
21 tradition with a gable front and wing style,
22 popular from 1880 through the 1930s. And when

1 Trail sold in 1925, the deed noted a building on
2 the property. So, this house can safely be dated
3 to no earlier than 1907 and no later than 1924.
4 Robin Ziek's estimate of 1923 is close enough.

5 So, here is, at the top left, 628, and
6 here are other front-gable-and-wing houses in
7 various places around Rockville. So, you can see
8 how popular and how representative this house is.

9 From the start, the Trail house served
10 as the Gateway to Rockville via Great Falls Road.
11 It's location also signaled entrance into this
12 longstanding kinship community. The tradition of
13 preserving ownership in family lands in the
14 kinship community remained vibrant through the
15 first three decades of the 20th century and into
16 the 1970s. The great grandchildren of Thomas and
17 Tabitha Price lived in houses here. Eliza Johnson
18 left her property to her daughters. Lillian
19 Hairston, the youngest of them, bought her
20 sister's shares out in 1928, thus bringing
21 five-eighths of Ann Wilson's original purchase
22 under one owner. Lill spent summers here in the

1 country and in 1956 sold to the Masons to build
2 the Masonic Temple at 612. Family members lived
3 in the northern parcels at least until 1977 when
4 Emma Nugent died.

5 This is the 1949 Klinge atlas showing
6 six structures on this 9.75 acres. By this point,
7 most residents were still pumping water from their
8 wells. Behind their houses were woods, and
9 cornstalks filled the fields between here and
10 Rockville. That year, this neighborhood was
11 annexed into the town along with more than 2200
12 acres, including Martin's Lane, Lincoln Park, and
13 Twinbrook and land north and west of town.

14 Segregation was still in practice in
15 most aspects of life in Maryland, Montgomery
16 County, and Rockville. Interestingly, white
17 families took over ownership of 628, and some
18 lived there: William and Laura Bennett from 1925
19 to '31; Andrew and Margaret Freeburger for 1931 to
20 '40; and Gail and Paul Kelly starting in 1940.
21 The Bennetts were probably the first white family
22 to actually live on Thomas Price's land.

1 Not for another 20 years following civil
2 rights rulings and legislation of the 1950s and
3 '60s, particularly the Fair Housing Law of 1967,
4 would most black and white people live in the same
5 Rockville neighborhood, attend the same schools,
6 and patronize the same restaurants. As barriers
7 fell and opportunities arose, the old patterns
8 began to change. At the end of the 1960s, more
9 white families were buying homes here to live in,
10 not only to rent out to blacks. The Masons and
11 Jehovah's Witnesses bought properties on which to
12 build new facilities. The interstate highway was
13 completed, then widened, and the construction of
14 the interchange took land from Great Falls and
15 Maryland Avenues. Although 628 lost some of its
16 land, it continued to serve as the gateway into
17 this block, and Gail Kelley sold No. 628 to the
18 church in 2008.

19 Today, the Great Falls black kinship
20 community remains a nice place to live and a
21 reminder of its 180-year- old-history. One can
22 trace all parcels on this block within the

1 original acreage through six or more successive
2 generations. The tradition of preserving
3 ownership of family lands resulted in the serial
4 division through generations of property acquired
5 by a particularly industrious or fortunate
6 relative. The existing homes on Great Falls Road
7 form a notable Rockville streetscape of
8 small-scale vernacular housing with successor and
9 additional houses as families improved their
10 circumstances and increased their descendants.
11 These resources and their setting reflect that
12 continuity and tell a story that should be
13 preserved for future generations.

14 628 stands both on its own and as part
15 of this kinship community. It has aged well,
16 maintaining quite good integrity through its style
17 and plan, window setting, and gateway site. It
18 meets multiple criteria for designation as the
19 Rockville historic district. I suggest 1C, 2A and
20 E and that the environmental setting include the
21 entire parcel. Both the Historic District
22 Commission and the Planning Commission strongly

1 recommend historic designation, and so do I.

2 Thank you.

3 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Thank you very much.

4 COUNCILMEMBER MOORE: Madam Mayor.

5 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: All right, now we will

6 return to the --

7 Yes.

8 COUNCILMEMBER MOORE: May I ask a

9 question.

10 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Sure.

11 COUNCILMEMBER MOORE: Thank you. Ms.

12 McGuckian, I have a question for you. Thank you

13 for that. That was terrific. Throughout this

14 entire application process, I've been delighted by

15 the amount of historical information about this

16 community that's come forward.

17 MS. MCGUCKIAN: Me, too.

18 COUNCILMEMBER MOORE: And regardless of

19 how this turns out, Rockville is better off for

20 knowing all that.

21 MS. MCGUCKIAN: Mm-hmm.

22 COUNCILMEMBER MOORE: One thing that

1 troubles me is that we're here to designate a
2 house, and it seems that everything to do with the
3 kinship community has to do with the land, that
4 the connection was broken between the kinship
5 community and this land before the house was ever
6 built. As far as I know --

7 MS. MCGUCKIAN: Broken? How?

8 COUNCILMEMBER MOORE: Say?

9 MS. MCGUCKIAN: Broken how?

10 COUNCILMEMBER MOORE: It was sold to
11 white folks in 1906, and then the house was built
12 in 1921 --

13 MS. MCGUCKIAN: Somewhere between 1907
14 and 1924, yeah.

15 COUNCILMEMBER MOORE: And --

16 MS. MCGUCKIAN: It's a continuity -- the
17 land has the continuity of successive houses on
18 it. The white entry into this at that point I
19 think just enriches it, and today you don't think
20 twice about kinship communities like Martins Lane
21 having black and white residents. This is, you
22 know, pretty notable. But I think it does still

1 continue the continuity and its land. It's the
2 buildings on the land, and there are still five
3 distinct structures on that nine and
4 three-quarters acres. And like they've been doing
5 for the last 180 years, successive housing has
6 continued to go along.

7 COUNCILMEMBER MOORE: Okay, but as far
8 as we know, no African-American has owned that
9 land or that house while it's been on that land.

10 MS. MCGUCKIAN: They have certainly
11 owned that land since the 1830s, but the house --
12 we could not find a black person in the census
13 owning that land. Living on it perhaps but
14 renting it as was frequent, but not owning it.

15 COUNCILMEMBER MOORE: Okay. If there
16 were --

17 MS. MCGUCKIAN: Which doesn't bother me
18 in the least.

19 COUNCILMEMBER MOORE: Okay. If there
20 were a brand new house on that parcel --

21 MS. MCGUCKIAN: Mm-hmm.

22 COUNCILMEMBER MOORE: -- would that

1 brand new house have the same connection to the
2 kinship community because it's on that land that
3 was in the kinship community?

4 MS. MCGUCKIAN: In terms of a successor
5 house, I would think so.

6 COUNCILMEMBER MOORE: Okay.

7 MS. MCGUCKIAN: Yeah. And that's a part
8 of the pattern. That's a traditional pattern.
9 When you got enough money, when you had more
10 descendants, when people wanted to move into their
11 households on your same land, you've made room for
12 them in one way or another.

13 COUNCILMEMBER MOORE: Okay, thank you.

14 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: All right, we will
15 return now to a long list of individuals here who
16 wish to speak. Tim Ramsburg, to be followed by
17 Robert Teringo. Tim is first and then Robert.

18 MR. RAMSBURG: Madam Mayor,
19 councilmembers, appreciate the opportunity to
20 speak with you. Ms. Newton, nice to see you.

21 My name is Ramsburg. I live at 1233
22 Simmons Drive.

1 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Can you speak a little
2 closer to the mic.

3 MR. RAMSBURG: I have a little -- yes.

4 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Yeah, that's good.
5 Just lift it up a little. It might help.

6 MR. RAMSBURG: And the Kingdom Hall on
7 624 Great Falls Road was built in 1973. I
8 actually participated in that building project as
9 a teenager, and I have attended that Kingdom Hall
10 for 40 years. And of course the property at 628
11 that was owned by the Kelley family from the 1940s
12 through 2008, and that's when we purchased the
13 property from them.

14 Now, at the time that we purchased it,
15 it had been sitting abandoned for well over a
16 year, and all during that time no one seemed to
17 care anything about this property and whether it
18 should be historic or not. It just sat empty.
19 So, we then purchased that with the thought of
20 perhaps expanding in the future. In the meantime,
21 we repaired the house. There was rotted wood from
22 termites. There was mold. We had mold

1 remediation done. There was rodent infestation
2 within that house. We had all of that taken care
3 of. We repaired everything that was wrong so that
4 we could at least have the house livable until we
5 were able to do something as far as expansion.
6 And we've had a missionary couple living there for
7 the last year or two.

8 But we really do need to expand our
9 place of worship. As far as Jehovah's Witnesses
10 are concerned, the way that it works worldwide is
11 we keep our congregation small, about 150 or less,
12 so that we can give them support and care. At
13 this point at our place in Rockville, we have five
14 congregations that meet there. We have two
15 meetings each week. So, as you can see, it's a
16 very, very used facility. And Rockville is
17 expanding. It's growing. The population is
18 growing. The school systems are growing. We're
19 growing. So, we need further facilities so that
20 we can do our worship.

21 Now, while we were planning to make an
22 expansion, we did meet with resistance. We met

1 with resistance from some of the homeowners
2 associations and a few others, and each time an
3 objection was raised we tried to work with that
4 objection, and on several occasions we redesigned
5 the plans so that they would meet what the
6 homeowners associations asked for. And then
7 finally it got to to the point where the house
8 became the issue. So, we said okay, we will not
9 move to tear the house down. We will incorporate
10 the house within the design of the Kingdom Hall
11 that we want to build there, trying to keep it
12 without changing any of the appearance from Falls
13 Road that it has now.

14 So, that's why we're asking not to
15 designate this historic. We've tried to have good
16 will. We've tried to redesign and work with the
17 community, but at this point we've done everything
18 that we know to do. And we're not talking about a
19 huge structure. We're talking about something
20 about 3700 square feet, which is not much bigger
21 than most people's homes and seating capacity of
22 135. So, what we're asking is that if you could

1 consider that, recognize that we would like to use
2 this property for worship, and it does fit the
3 zoning that is required.

4 So, thank you very much for allowing me
5 to speak.

6 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Thank you.

7 COUNCILMAN PIERZCHALA: Thank you very
8 much, Mr. Ramsburg. What if we do designate it
9 historic? How would that impact your ability to
10 still go ahead and build your house of worship?

11 MR. RAMSBURG: It depends on -- if there
12 are certain parts of that that we are able to move
13 it just a little bit, it's possible we could still
14 build a church within the requirements. But there
15 would have to be a compromise. Perhaps the porch,
16 which was an add-on to the house, would have to be
17 removed, but perhaps we could work something with
18 the Historic Society if that were the case. So, I
19 don't know. So.

20 COUNCILMEMBER PIERZCHALA: Thank you.

21 MR. RAMSBURG: Okay.

22 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: All right, Mr.

1 Teringo, to be followed by David Fritz.

2 MR. TERINGO: Madam Mayor and
3 councilmembers. First of all I'd like to express
4 gratitude for being granted that courtesy meeting
5 with representatives of the Historical Commission
6 last Thursday. As our attorney, Jody Kline,
7 stated then, we really did this to try to get
8 feedback from the Commission to really see that if
9 architecturally what we've done to join the
10 Kingdom Hall and the house would meet their
11 necessary expectations in the event that the house
12 got designated historically. Well, we were happy
13 to go to great lengths to cooperate with the
14 neighbors' wishes, and we were hoping to hear from
15 the Commission that we'd gone above and beyond
16 what was necessary by first preserving the entire
17 house and then by impacting only the back so that
18 those three sides that really show the design of
19 the house would not be affected. And of course
20 the back really has no period significance,
21 because that wasn't even seen until Maryland
22 Avenue was cut through in the 1970s.

1 Instead, what we heard loud and clear
2 was that if this house was designated historic,
3 then they would want us to separate the Kingdom
4 Hall from the house. And our concern was that if
5 that separation took place, it wouldn't be able to
6 fit within the property setbacks. So, to keep the
7 house, we really feel obligated to be able to have
8 that Hall in close proximity to the house.

9 Their response was that then you'd just
10 have to build a smaller hall and take the area
11 that's designated for parking and have less
12 parking. Well, this declaration really leaves us
13 no choice but to oppose the historic designation.

14 First of all, as was already stated,
15 3700 square feet is a very small church, and it's
16 the minimum to meet our requirements for our
17 worship. Secondly, it's important to have
18 adequate parking, and that's something that the
19 neighbors have been concerned about from the
20 beginning of this project. So, we tried to
21 include as much parking as possible.

22 So, we saved the house. We've

1 redesigned the Kingdom Hall to keep in with the
2 historical aspect of the property. So, please
3 demonstrate reasonableness in this case, and
4 please oppose this historic designation.

5 Thank you.

6 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: David. David Fritz to
7 be followed Rod Escobar.

8 MR. FRITZ: Madam Mayor and
9 councilmembers, thanks for the opportunity to be
10 here and to approach and to speak on behalf of
11 Jehovah's Witnesses in this case.

12 My name is David Fritz. I live at 13127
13 Ardennes, Rockville. I, along with my wife and
14 three children, attend the Spanish carnation of
15 Jehovah's Witnesses in Rockville.

16 I'll reiterate the point that the house
17 at 628 Great Falls Road will not be torn down, and
18 I think it can be easily said now by the speakers
19 that have preceded me that we're making every
20 possible effort to please everyone present. One
21 of the speakers mentioned in the beginning that
22 there was Rockville. Really in the beginning, God

1 created the heavens and the earth and we're all
2 about teaching about God, helping our families to
3 learn about God, helping neighbors to learn also,
4 and we need a place of worship.

5 And I have to say this, because I think
6 many might have the question in their mind, and
7 many probably know the answer, but why at this
8 late time is this issue being brought up about
9 rendering this historic. Here in the 11th hour
10 after effort has been made to comply, to make
11 adjustments, to make everyone happy now this comes
12 up. But even this, even with this, we're making
13 every effort to comply, to leave the house in its
14 state as it is and build also what we need as far
15 as a place of worship. And I was thinking as some
16 of the speakers expressed their thoughts very
17 eloquently and very nicely regarding this historic
18 site, many other historic sites, and we also are
19 very interested in preserving it. And what would
20 the people who lived a hundred years ago say if
21 they could speak tonight? What would they really
22 want? Perhaps the home to be preserved, but I can

1 imagine then them also saying along with the house
2 a place of worship.

3 What is really a benefit to the
4 community? What truly benefits the community, a
5 rendering as a historic property or an opportunity
6 to build a place of worship? Who benefits more?
7 As was stated for a long time, this property
8 abandoned. It was in decay. There was very
9 little interest for it. We've shown interest.
10 We've upgraded it inasmuch as we've replaced
11 things that needed to be replaced and got rodents,
12 as was mentioned, and things of that nature. And
13 we are very interested in the home. We want to
14 preserve it. We're interested in the community.
15 We're interested in keeping people safe much more
16 so probably than anyone else here. And it's our
17 desire, it's our sincere plea with you to do the
18 right thing, do the honest thing: What would
19 those in the past like to see happen with it? How
20 can the community truly benefit from this property
21 today? And that's by not rendering it a historic
22 designation.

1 Thank you.

2 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Mr. Escobar to be
3 followed by Bruce Thorn.

4 MR. ESCOBAR: Good evening. Thank you
5 for the opportunity to express ourselves. My name
6 is Rod Escobar. My family has been attending this
7 Kingdom Hall for 40 years, and we've been part of
8 the community.

9 Many of the points that I was going to
10 make have already been said, so I'll be very
11 brief. I want to talk about the people living in
12 this house. We cannot forget about them. It's a
13 couple, and you drive by this house there have
14 been signs there for three years. We started this
15 process five years ago, and, like it was stated,
16 we have been flexible. We have tried to come up
17 with solutions. We started with a building that
18 was 5000 square feet. It was reduced to 4500
19 square feet; now we're down to 3700 square feet.
20 We compromised. We're flexible. We're asking the
21 Mayor and Council to also be flexible. And it
22 doesn't have to be all or nothing. We can find a

1 way where we can exercise our religious freedom to
2 worship and at the same time preserve a house that
3 we have been very interested in preserving when we
4 bought it. If anybody really cares about history
5 in Rockville, it's us. We were the ones, even
6 when the house was vacant, that were cutting the
7 grass. We were concerned about the appearance.
8 Nobody else in Rockville came with their lawnmower
9 to take care of that or chase the rats away. We
10 kept that house for over a year while it was on
11 the market. And then with our hard-earned
12 dollars, we bought it, spent over \$400,000 to date
13 in trying to make it into a decent home with an
14 additional place of worship. So, we feel that the
15 freedom and the rights of the current owners that
16 have been there are being violated. Pictures have
17 been taken of the house, of the window wells down
18 in the basement. That means people are coming
19 onto the property. There are people living there.
20 And this house looks like a circus with all these
21 signs and pipes coming out from different tests
22 that have been done. Five years in the making.

1 Please let us build our very modest place of
2 worship. The house will remain. We like the
3 house. We have no intention in taking it down.
4 It doesn't have to be all or nothing. We feel
5 that we can work with you all like we have for the
6 last five years.

7 Thank you for your time.

8 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Bruce Thorn to be
9 followed by Luanne Cogall.

10 MR. THORN: Well, good evening -- or
11 should I say goodnight, Madam Mayor,
12 councilmembers.

13 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Pretty soon it'll be
14 good morning. (Laughter)

15 MR. THORN: It could be morning, that's
16 right. My name is Bruce Thorn, and I am one of
17 the elders that serve at one of the congregations
18 there at 624 Great Falls Road. And first I just
19 want to thank you very much for allowing me to
20 speak to you this evening.

21 Really, what I'm asking you to do is not
22 to designate 628 Great Falls as historic but allow

1 us to serve our growing congregations that serve
2 Rockville.

3 I would like to address one of the
4 arguments that's been put forward for designating
5 our property as historic, and that it is that it
6 was once part of the Great Falls Road black
7 kinship community. In listening to Mr. Duffin and
8 I believe her name was Ms. Tate, the history is
9 quite impressive. It's undeniable. The land has
10 a lot of heritage. And I appreciate heritage. I
11 have a lot of heritage in my own family and my
12 wife's family, so we certainly would never want to
13 do anything to undermine that. But, as was
14 mentioned, all of this has come at the 11th hour,
15 and it's my honest belief that the reason for
16 bringing up this argument is really to introduce
17 race into the conversation and to further the
18 agenda of those who oppose our building at Kingdom
19 Hall.

20 So, you might say why do I say that.
21 Well, first of all, as you heard this evening, the
22 landholdings of the black kinship community were

1 extensive. It's now estimated that it was close
2 to 10 acres. So, why just single out our little
3 small parcel for historic designation based on
4 that it was part of the black kinship community?
5 In fact, according to our records, as Mr. Moore
6 asked the question earlier, the land was sold by
7 members of the community to a white family and
8 that the house that sits at 628 was built many,
9 many years after the black kinship community was
10 dissolved. So, if anything, the house that sits
11 there is really emblematic of the end of that
12 black kinship era. There is no evidence that that
13 house has any connection to the black kinship
14 community. And in fact when you look at all of
15 the properties that are there in those parcels
16 that were mentioned, really, all of the original
17 structures that existed when that community was
18 striving were gone. So, really, if you think
19 about the argument of those who oppose our
20 building, then, really, should they not designate
21 all of the properties that are there in the
22 parcels as historical because of the black kinship

1 community?

2 It was interesting in some of the
3 documents that actually have been presented to you
4 that the vision of the leaders of the black
5 kinship community was to foster the well-being and
6 improvement of their families by acquiring land
7 and building schools for their children and
8 churches as spiritual centers of the community.

9 So, we hope that you would agree that our building
10 a church on this property, which serves not only
11 blacks but serves whites, Hispanics, Chinese, and
12 other ethnic groups, would be honoring the vision
13 of the black kinship community.

14 You know, our opposers say that they
15 fear the changing face of the community, and they
16 cite as examples the Masonic Temple; the group
17 home, which serves at-risk black children; the
18 middle school; and our Kingdom Hall. Really,
19 would you say that this opposition is honoring the
20 memory of the black kinship community and the
21 black leaders who said that one of the main goals
22 for the community was to have places of worship,

1 centers of worship?

2 As I noted earlier, the property was
3 sold by a black family to a white family during
4 the time of segregation. Obviously, those people
5 saw the value of inclusion. So, shouldn't our
6 opposers be happy for an organization that
7 promotes unity among all human Rockville, that the
8 church is large enough to hold members of
9 Rockville's growing, diverse community worshipping
10 together? Really, I invite any of you to attend
11 one of our meetings and see what I'm talking
12 about.

13 So, again, we ask that you please see
14 this tactic for what it is, a roadblock intended
15 to discourage us from exercising our religious
16 freedom and building our place of worship.

17 COUNCILMEMBER PIERZCHALA: Sir?

18 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Mr. Thorn? Mr. Thorn?
19 I think we have a question for you.

20 COUNCILMEMBER PIERZCHALA: Thank you
21 very much for that testimony.

22 MR. THORN: Sure.

1 COUNCILMEMBER PIERZCHALA: Can you
2 explain to me this idea of separate congregations.
3 I think it's been mentioned that there are five
4 congregations.

5 MR. THORN: Yeah.

6 COUNCILMEMBER PIERZCHALA: Does that
7 mean there are different meeting times -- you
8 know, because at the church I have we have four
9 services on Sunday but it's so we don't consider
10 ourselves all one congregation, for example.

11 MR. THORN: Yes. Well, we have separate
12 congregations, and two congregations actually
13 serve the Spanish community, so the services are
14 principally in Spanish; one is for Chinese, so the
15 Chinese language is the principal language that's
16 spoken there; and two English. However, all of
17 the congregations have a diverse group, so it's
18 not just designated for Hispanics or Chinese.
19 Everybody can attend those meetings.

20 COUNCILMEMBER MOORE: Just to follow up
21 on that, the reason you would have two Spanish
22 congregations and two English congregations is to

1 keep the size down.

2 MR. THORN: As Tim Ramsburg mentioned
3 earlier, we like to keep the congregations to a
4 reasonable size so that we can serve them and
5 support them -- so, 150 or less. So, because we
6 continue to grow, that's the reason we have so
7 many congregations -- two English and two Spanish.

8 COUNCILMEMBER MOORE: Thank you.

9 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Gayune Gagle. Is it
10 "Cagle"? I'm not sure I'm saying that correctly,
11 sir.

12 MR. CAGLE: That's one of our handicaps.
13 (Laughter) Madam Mayor, councilmembers. Thank you
14 for allowing me to speak to you this evening. My
15 name is Joon Chong Cagle. I have a CP office here
16 in Rockville on Monroe Street. I'm also a member
17 of the congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses at 624
18 Great Falls Road. As an accountant I volunteer in
19 the congregation with the accountants.

20 Briefly I would like to highlight three
21 issues. First the fairness issue. We purchased
22 this property, known as 628 Great Falls house,

1 five years ago for \$330,000 as part of a plan to
2 build a new house of worship. To please our
3 neighbors, we had to reengineer our constructions
4 plans several times. We ended up spending extra,
5 up to \$60,000. So, still no new house of worship.
6 For a house that is designated as historic, close
7 to \$400,000 of value, be in a way blocked, become
8 idol on account of construction plans. We feel
9 that that's not fair. These funds come from
10 limited family budgets. This is truly hurting us.

11 Second, the priority issue. If our
12 neighbors are really concerned about the
13 historicity of the homes in our area, we feel like
14 the priority should go to other homes that have
15 more (inaudible). I have in mind particularly the
16 houses on West Montgomery Avenue and the side
17 streets. It's right around the corner from us.
18 Can't see why the interest is this humble house we
19 have in the corner. In my simple accountant mind,
20 somehow it does not add up.

21 Third, the property rights issue. If
22 our house is designated a historic, it would mean

1 that some neighbors or a committee is taking power
2 over our property against our charitable will.
3 This historic designation will be, in my judgment,
4 a major blow to the hopes of those individuals
5 like myself -- I'm a naturalized U.S. citizen --
6 those individuals like myself who came to this
7 country to, among other things, enjoy freedom of
8 worship.

9 So, please, I appeal to you to oppose
10 the historic designation for our house at 628
11 Great Falls Road.

12 Thank you for your kind consideration.

13 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Clifton King is next,
14 and then Hsinmei Hsu.

15 MR. KING: It is almost morning. Good
16 morning, Madam Mayor, councilmembers.

17 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Morning. Almost.

18 MR. KING: My name is Clifton King. My
19 family and I live in the West End neighborhood,
20 710 Carr Avenue. I have been a Jehovah's Witness
21 for over 40 years, and I have served in several
22 congregations in the Washington, D.C.

1 Metropolitan area.

2 For the last three years, my wife and I
3 have attended the Rockville Chinese congregation.
4 The congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses provides a
5 wonderful service for any community where they are
6 located. Currently, there are over 111,000
7 congregations worldwide in 239 lands. Locally, in
8 Rockville, there are many Chinese families that
9 welcome our visits with Bible literature in their
10 language. They often accept our invitation to
11 visit us and hear and participate in Bible
12 programs in their mother tongue. We need
13 additional space to provide for the spiritual
14 needs of the Chinese neighbors in our community.

15 Five years ago, as was mentioned, with
16 hard-earned donations, a property was bought to
17 provide that need. The zoning was correct for a
18 church. Not a mega-church. Oh, no. We don't
19 build mega-churches. A place of worship to seat
20 135 people is what is needed. So, what have we
21 done wrong? Nothing. For over 40 years, we have
22 been good neighbors. We will continue to be good

1 neighbors. We have listened to our neighbors. We
2 have tried to do everything they have asked of us.
3 For over 40 years, we have done the right thing.

4 Now, we ask you, please, do the right
5 thing. Oppose this historic designation so that
6 we can proceed with the building of a place of
7 worship that will serve the needs of the Rockville
8 community.

9 Thank you.

10 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Hsinmei Hsu. To be
11 followed by Nicki Myers.

12 MS. HSU: Good morning, Madam Mayor, and
13 the members of our city council. It's very hard
14 to follow Mr. King. (Laughter) My name is Cathy
15 Hsinmei Hsu, and I live at 406 Winding Rose Drive,
16 Rockville.

17 I'm not a baptized Jehovah's Witness,
18 but I like to attend the meetings. I have been to
19 the meetings every week for the past five years.
20 I am in walking distance to the church. Like many
21 other unbaptized Jehovah's Witnesses, I enjoy
22 going to the church very much. I just don't

1 understand why there are so many oppositions to
2 build a place of worship at the site of 628, a
3 land bought the congregation for that purpose.
4 How can the neighbors be allowed to try to force a
5 change of zoning on the site 628? Shouldn't it be
6 volunteered?

7 And church has always been a part of a
8 residential community. I have lived in Rockville
9 for the past 28 years. The first 24 years I lived
10 (inaudible) community, and then 4 years in the
11 Rose Hill Falls community. I enjoy living in
12 Rockville very much. (Inaudible) house at 628 was
13 never a concern to the neighbors before. Why, all
14 of a sudden, are the neighbors objecting to
15 building a nice place for worship?

16 There are many people like myself, as
17 you can see in this room, who like to go to the
18 church, listen to our mother-tongue language.
19 Yet, they could be adversely affected by this
20 rezoning decision. Is this house worth
21 designating as a historical house? I have passed
22 this house for 28 years. I have never noticed

1 that there is a small house behind the trees. It
2 is very hard -- maybe that's the reason why the
3 neighbors were never concerned about the house,
4 because it is blocked by fig trees and no one can
5 see it anyway.

6 I took some pictures of the house
7 yesterday, some intersection of the crossroads.
8 It's very different than what you have seen. This
9 is the picture I got. This is a picture both from
10 Great Falls Road and from Maryland Avenue. Can
11 anyone see the house? You can only see the house
12 when you walk by and see the features and the
13 design, et cetera. Would that house qualify as a
14 historical house? If people cannot see it when
15 they drive by, what's the value of being a
16 historical house?

17 There are many old houses in the
18 Rockville historical district along West
19 Montgomery Avenue. They have open views, very
20 pretty designs. Some houses even have a
21 (inaudible) around the yard. Why don't we choose
22 one of those houses and designate it a historical

1 house? That would be a much bigger value to
2 Rockville.

3 Thank you very much for your time.

4 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Nicki Myers to be
5 followed by Nicole Carter.

6 MS. MYERS: Good morning, Madam Mayor,
7 councilmembers. My name is Nicki Myers. I've
8 lived in Rockville for 31 years. I live at 12906
9 Ardennes Avenue in the Twinbrook area. I've
10 raised my family here. I have been attending,
11 with my children, that very same Kingdom Hall for
12 14+ years.

13 I don't understand, as a matter of fact,
14 the reason for all of this. As a matter of fact,
15 I'm quite offended that this latest development
16 from certain individuals to use the black kinship
17 community to impact the development of our house
18 at 628 for their own agenda. It seems that this
19 house really has no relevance anymore. The land
20 itself may have originally been part of that but
21 has since been cut off from that whole connection,
22 and the house really doesn't have anything to do

1 with it at all. The only house I know of that is
2 remotely related that would make sense as
3 historical designation is the Bessie Hill house at
4 602 Great Falls Road, which has been established
5 as having historic value, because her grandmother
6 was part of the original kinship community. I
7 completely understand that.

8 However, I am an African-American. I am
9 part of the black community and, more importantly,
10 part of the human race. We aren't segregated any
11 longer in this society, and we certainly aren't
12 separated in our congregations. It is more
13 diverse in our Kingdom Hall, in each congregation,
14 than it is anywhere else. It disturbs me to hear
15 people using this argument to further their agenda
16 of hindering our building project for the new
17 Kingdom Hall. I am not impugning bad motives to
18 any members of homeowners association at all. I
19 can't read hearts. I haven't been a part of their
20 closed-door meetings. I don't have anything to do
21 with that. All I can say is that when people
22 start being more concerned about winning than

1 anything else and exerting power or other people
2 and other people's property, it can become a
3 little intoxicating. So, other people's rights
4 wind up getting up trampled.

5 My request, my plea with you, is please
6 deny this historic designation.

7 Thank you.

8 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Nicole Carter, to be
9 followed by Mike Collins.

10 MS. CARTER: Good morning, Madam Mayor
11 and councilmembers. My name is Nicole Carter, and
12 I live at 1112 Parish Drive with my family.

13 I'd like to just briefly summarize. You
14 all have heard the timeline, that this has been a
15 five-year process for all these families. Also
16 you've listened to the progression of the
17 objections from the few opposers as that's
18 happened over the last five years. You also have
19 heard about our actions when those objections have
20 come up. And you've also been made aware of the
21 cost that it is to us. But emotionally how we're
22 feeling about it is that we have yield and yielded

1 time and again, and each objection that has been
2 brought to our attention we have tried to solve
3 for these -- so that everyone can be pleased with
4 the end project.

5 We are still members of the community,
6 and we still want to be a whole community. So we
7 thought, in meeting these objections singly, that
8 in the end we could make everyone happy. But I'm
9 starting to believe that that was a naïve thought
10 -- that everyone really would be happy.

11 It was brought to my attention that this
12 is very reminiscent of a very famous book, The
13 Giving Tree, which I'm sure you're aware of. It
14 tells a story of a tree and a boy and the fact
15 that the boy wants things and the tree is happy to
16 give first the leaves and then the branches to the
17 boy in an effort to try to make him happy. But in
18 the end these things just -- he takes the leaves,
19 he takes the apples, and then he takes the limbs.

20 They've taken all the concessions that
21 we've given them, especially this last concession
22 in keeping house, and now are using concession

1 against us. Emotionally it feels like these
2 concessions have now been set as a bonfire
3 underneath us, that we have no way out. So, we
4 are asking you to take that ability away from them
5 so they don't have the ability to take all the
6 things that we have given them and then use them
7 against us. So, we're asking you not to make
8 house a historic designation tonight.

9 Thank you.

10 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Mike Collins to be
11 followed by Jeff Fuller.

12 MR. COLLINS: Madam Mayor, members of
13 the council, thank you for this opportunity. My
14 name is Michael Collins, and I've been living at
15 11 Parish Drive in Rockville for the last 28
16 years.

17 I'm going to try not to prolong this,
18 because I agree with all the sentiments that my
19 fellow witnesses have voiced this evening, but I,
20 too, would like to say I'm very disturbed by the
21 progression of the opposition in this matter. As
22 good neighbors, we really have tried to

1 accommodate ever legitimate concern that's been
2 raised. But it's becoming obvious that there
3 really is some sort of agenda behind this that has
4 little to do with historical landmarks.

5 I think at some point we really have to
6 ask ourselves, am I really comfortable where this
7 is all heading? And, more importantly, is there
8 more harm than benefit to this action? The
9 reality is that by designating this property
10 historic, it will indeed harm hundreds of people's
11 ability to satisfy the requirements as to their
12 place of worship.

13 I truly believe there's a much larger
14 component to our historic heritage anyway, and
15 that's our country's historic heritage regarding
16 the rights of property owners and, more
17 importantly, freedom of worship.

18 That's about it. I would like to thank
19 you for this forum, because it does provide you an
20 opportunity to consider this representation of who
21 will be impacted by the decisions you're about to
22 make. So, thank you very much.

1 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Jeff Fuller to be
2 followed by John Lyles.

3 MR. FULLER: Good morning, Madam Mayor
4 and councilmembers. Appreciate the opportunity to
5 speak to you this evening. My name is Jeff
6 Fuller. I'm with D&T Architects. For the last 45
7 years I could say we were in Rockville. For the
8 last one month and one day we were down in
9 Gaithersburg. I'm here to speak on behalf of the
10 Jehovah's Witnesses and not to speak to you as the
11 architect of record or to talk to you about the
12 subjective aspects that you've been hearing from
13 the congregation but more to speak specifically to
14 the issues of preservation. And I bring the
15 perspective of having been on the Montgomery
16 County Historic Preservation Commission for six
17 years and serving as their chair for two.

18 So, what I'm going to talk about is this
19 is not an easy project. It's not an easy
20 designation. This is not a slam dunk. Yeah,
21 there's nothing of merit. But it's also not one
22 that has a lot of unique features to it. And so

1 it's in that gray area. So, what I want to really
2 do is address some of those gray areas and bring a
3 second perspective to that, because that's what
4 I'm really here to talk about tonight.

5 All right, the first criteria are those
6 of historical significance. From the staff
7 report, nobody believes there an event associated
8 with it. Nobody believes there's a person
9 associated with it. There is a proposal that is
10 part of a pattern of events. I believe that's a
11 weak argument. As Eileen noted earlier, all
12 buildings are part of a pattern. This building is
13 part of a pattern, yes. But that's -- all
14 buildings fit into some pattern or another.

15 So, what is unique about this one?
16 Okay, it is farmland. It was farmland that was
17 developed. Almost all of Rockville was farmland
18 that was redeveloped. So, what is the uniqueness
19 that we're talking about at the pattern of events?
20 There's been a lot of discussion -- I won't get
21 into a discussion of -- you don't have the clock
22 running on me, by the way, and I don't think we

1 want to keep going (laughter) -- the issue of
2 kinship community, and I won't talk about that.
3 But what I will talk about is that all of the
4 testimony basically says this property was
5 developed or this house was developed as a
6 speculative development. I've had 37 years
7 working for speculative developers. I have never
8 yet had anybody say they wanted to commemorate
9 speculative development. It is just something
10 that happens. Is that alone something to
11 designate?

12 We talk about the architectural
13 significance. Everybody says yes, that there are
14 some distinctive features. Yes, there are some.
15 It is a Gable-and-Wing house. But if you look at
16 Rockville's own literature on that, there are 20
17 houses identified as such. So, what is unique
18 about this house that makes it specific to go into
19 it? Is it a work of a master? No. Is it high
20 artistic value? No. Is it a significant,
21 distinguishable composition? No.

22 Does it present a familiar feature? On

1 that one I want to disagree with some of the
2 issues in the report. This house on this location
3 was actually a street-front house facing onto
4 Falls Road. It was actually part of a street
5 front. It was never a gateway standing alone as
6 you see it today. There were properties from the
7 tax maps shown at 636, 634, 630, further up the
8 street. This house was part of a sequence as you
9 entered the city of Rockville. So, the view
10 quarter of what this house was and what was
11 significant to it is significantly altered already
12 by the way Maryland Avenue was configured when
13 they widened 270 and added the interchange, and
14 they wrapped Maryland Avenue coming off of what
15 was Falls Road. So, the whole the vision of what
16 you see today is very different than what it was
17 even just before they started widening 270. So,
18 the house and the way it sits there really is not
19 in historic context of what it was to begin with.

20 What your primary view of the house is
21 now is the side and back of the property. That's
22 not where the significant features are. Very few

1 people take the time to drive down Falls Road and
2 look at it from the front side of the house. So,
3 it's very, very different.

4 So, from my perspective, you know, it's
5 you, the Mayor and Council, that have to make a
6 decision of designation. But I really think that
7 you need to look -- and I wanted to share some of
8 my experiences of what I've seen. This is not a
9 slam dunk. It's not an easy one that falls on
10 this side. It doesn't fall on that side
11 completely. It is definitely in that grey area.

12 The criteria that were used to propose
13 designation here, quite frankly, are criteria that
14 can basically be crafted for almost any single
15 property anywhere. They're very generic criteria.
16 It is not the unique features, it is not the
17 unique aspects of things.

18 So, from my perspective -- and I'll
19 close with one of the arguments that the
20 community's been bringing up -- if this house was
21 really so special that it needed to be designated,
22 why didn't they come before the plans for

1 development?

2 Thank you.

3 COUNCILMEMBER MOORE: Quick question.

4 Sir, in your opinion, what's the threshold between
5 designating a house that's just out there and
6 designating a house over the opposition of the
7 owner of the property?

8 MR. FULLER: Like I said, I'm lucky
9 tonight. I don't sit I your chair. I mean, when
10 I was on the Historic Preservation Commission in
11 Montgomery County, we had to make the
12 recommendations to the council, and we did have to
13 make that decision many times, and I'll say that
14 more time than no I recommended for designation.
15 There are a lot of different features that goes
16 into the thing. This one definitely is in the
17 grey area. But I truly believe that there's very
18 little unique about what this property is, and, as
19 I said, it's the Johnny-come-lately aspect that,
20 quite frankly, frequently when I was on the
21 commission that bothered me. When something comes
22 up and it wasn't being brought up from historic

1 purposes to begin with, it was being brought up to
2 stop development, the number of times that we had
3 people coming in, into Chevy Chase and some of the
4 more affluent communities, and historic
5 preservation was being used to stop development,
6 and that just didn't feel good to me.

7 COUNCILMEMBER MOORE: Thank you.

8 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Mr. Lyles to be
9 followed by Robin Corridon.

10 Mr. Lyles.

11 MR. LYLES: Good morning, Madam Mayor
12 and councilmembers. My name is John Lyles. I
13 live on 12906 Ardennes Avenue, and I am 19 years
14 old.

15 I would like to address the council
16 about the matter of the historic designation,
17 because I am personally hurt by this latest
18 development. This Kingdom Hall has contributed a
19 lot to raising me and teaching me to be a
20 responsible member of society and as a spiritual
21 person. The same things that are being taught to
22 me are being taught to others younger than me,

1 others my age, and others much older. Because of
2 this, the expansion that's needed for our hall is
3 great, and that's why the request for the 628
4 Great Falls Road house to be historic is so
5 upsetting.

6 This building project benefits many in
7 our community, young and old, of all races and
8 nationalities. The young ones in our congregation
9 benefit a lot from the teachings in our hall, but
10 both space and time are becoming is becoming more
11 and more limited.

12 I request sincerely that this request
13 for historic designation be halted. Because many
14 futures depend on this addition to our hall, my
15 heart is hurt to think of how negatively these
16 futures will be affected if this historic
17 designation is granted. A lot of the members in
18 our hall are being taught to be respectful members
19 of society. They actually help for the
20 preservation of the grounds of the Kingdom Hall
21 and have helped before in preserving the house at
22 628 Great Falls Road.

1 I speak for those who cannot presently
2 be there, the younger ones in the congregation,
3 and I feel that our futures are riding on this
4 opportunity. So, I request once again that you
5 please halt this designation order, and I thank
6 you very much for your time.

7 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Mr. Lyles, I am just
8 observing here that three of your speakers here --
9 Nicki Myers, Jeff Fuller, and yourself -- have the
10 same address. You all have 12906 Ardennes Avenue.

11 MR. LYLES: Well, actually, I can only
12 speak for one, Nicki Myers, because she's my
13 mother. And so --

14 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Okay (laughter). I
15 figured there might be a connection.

16 MR. LYLES: Yeah, just that, but I'm not
17 aware of Jeff Fuller being at that residence. I'm
18 sorry.

19 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Mr. Fuller, are you at
20 that address?

21 MR. FULLER: No.

22 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Oh, it must be just

1 recorded here wrong. Thank you so very much. I
2 was just curious.

3 All right, just a little something
4 different for us. This is Robin Corridon, again.
5 And I think -- is Steven Goble still here, or is
6 he connected to this hearing? Sound familiar to
7 anyone? Steven Goble? Okay. Thank you.

8 Please, proceed.

9 MS. CORRIDON: My name is Robin Pumphrey
10 Corridon. I'm a resident of the West End. Thank
11 you for this opportunity to testify in support of
12 the Historic District Commission's recommendation
13 to change the zoning designation of 628 Great
14 Falls Road from R90 to R90HD.

15 The residential approaches to Rockville
16 from West Montgomery Avenue and the intersections
17 of Falls Road and Great Falls Road have been
18 diminished, and it's imperative that this gateway
19 property to our neighborhoods be preserved and
20 protected and that this residence should be
21 designated as historic. This designation would
22 contribute to preserving historic resources in the

1 city and the residential integrity of the Monument
2 Triangle and West End neighborhoods.

3 The historic designation request is not
4 meant to prevent construction of a church but to
5 preserve a house that meets the criteria for
6 historic designation by the Historic District
7 Commission. Please follow the recommendation of
8 the Historic District Commission and the request
9 of the residents of the West End and designate
10 this property as historic to preserve the
11 integrity of the home and the West End.

12 Thank you.

13 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Thank you. We have
14 exhausted the list of individuals who have signed
15 up ahead of time. Is there anybody in the
16 audience that would like to address the Mayor and
17 Council at this public hearing that has not signed
18 up?

19 Yes, please, come up.

20 MS. VAN BALGOOY: Good morning. I'm
21 Mary van Balgooy, executive director of Peerless
22 Rockville Historic Preservation. I'm here on

1 behalf of Peerless to voice support for historic
2 district designation of 628 Great Falls Road.

3 As mentioned in a staff report, the
4 house is a good example of a gable-front-and-wing
5 form, a vernacular style that became popular in
6 the late 19th and early 20th centuries. There
7 have been questions about why this house is
8 significant and what "vernacular" means.

9 Vernacular architecture is at the other end of the
10 spectrum from "elite" or "academic" architecture.
11 Good preservation doesn't simply save houses of
12 the rich and famous. It also preserves the homes
13 of ordinary people to show diversity. And this
14 house is a good representation of the people
15 living in the Great Falls area in the early 20th
16 century. This house, the property, is also
17 located on one of the gateways into our city.

18 Now, Peerless does not like to designate
19 property when an owner is against it, but
20 sometimes you have to do that for the good of the
21 community. Again, designation doesn't prevent
22 changes to a building. It requires review by the

1 Historic District Commission. Because of the
2 foliage, you know, right now you might not be able
3 to see the house, but trees fall -- we've seen
4 that here in Rockville -- coming up on winter,
5 we'll see the leaves fall there, and you'll see
6 the house again. Also remember, in the future the
7 owner may have a late prune or possibly cut down
8 the trees so you see the new addition that this
9 particular owner wants to build.

10 So, if you don't designate this
11 property, even though it meets the criteria, then
12 I would like you to think about what is going to
13 replace it at one of the gateways to our city
14 since we have no design guidelines except for the
15 preservation ordinance. New doesn't necessarily
16 mean better.

17 Peerless urges that the Mayor and
18 Council designate 628 Great Falls Road as a local
19 historic district.

20 Thank you.

21 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: May I ask a question?

22 MS. VAN BALGOOY: Sure.

1 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: You think of those
2 trees. Who owns the tree property?

3 MS. VAN BALGOOY: Who owns the tree
4 property?

5 SPEAKER: The church.

6 MS. VAN BALGOOY: The church property?

7 MR. KLINE: The quick answer to your
8 question is that the trees that you see in the
9 photograph that one of the witnesses showed are
10 actually in the state right of way, so they're
11 owned by the state.

12 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: That's what I thought.
13 So, who would be taking care of the trees?

14 MS. VAN BALGOOY: I guess PEPCO could
15 come along, because I've seen them come along in
16 my neighborhood

17 (Laughter)

18 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: I know, but I just --
19 you know, one of the reasons for historic
20 designation is its visibility. It's been pointed
21 out, and I'm certainly very well aware as lots of
22 times, it is hard to see the house with trees and

1 their leaves. Who's going to take care of that
2 particular aspect?

3 MR. KLINE: The church would basically
4 take care of everything in the corner as they did
5 in the past when they cut the grass earlier.

6 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Well, yeah, but they
7 don't own that property -- that's what I just
8 heard you tell me, it belongs to the state.

9 MR. KLINE: Correct.

10 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Okay.

11 MR. KLINE: But they will do the
12 maintenance to make sure those trees remain where
13 they are.

14 COUNCILMEMBER MOORE: Who trims the
15 trees now?

16 MR. KLINE: Pardon me?

17 COUNCILMEMBER MOORE: Who trims the
18 trees now?

19 MR. KLINE: Well, I doubt that there's
20 any trimming done at all.

21 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: The state doesn't do
22 that.

1 MR. KLINE: The state did some work out
2 there recently. They didn't do any work on the
3 trees. If it's needed, we would do it though.

4 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Well, anyway. Go
5 ahead, you had a question?

6 COUNCILMEMBER MOORE: Yeah. Ms. Van
7 Balgooy, it was noted that we actually have 20
8 front-gable-and-wing houses in the city. What is
9 --

10 MS. VAN BALGOOY: I disagree with that.
11 I think there are only eight.

12 COUNCILMEMBER MOORE: All right. Okay,
13 that's helpful. Thank you.

14 My question is this. Is there a
15 threshold? I mean, if there were a hundred of
16 them would we not care so much about this one? If
17 there were three of them, would we care more? Is
18 there a rule of thumb on that?

19 MS. VAN BALGOOY: No, there's not,
20 because what we're looking at is when we look at
21 vernacular architecture we're looking, again, at a
22 broad spectrum and we need to have as many

1 examples, I would say, as possible so that you can
2 make that comparison within your own city or
3 community itself.

4 COUNCILMEMBER MOORE: Thank you.

5 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Mr. Pierzchala?

6 COUNCILMEMBER PIERZCHALA: Thank you,
7 Madam Mayor. The church has expressed the concern
8 that if it's designated historic they wouldn't be
9 able to build right up to the rear of the house.
10 Now, if it's built -- if it's designated historic,
11 do you see that as prohibiting them to build up to
12 the edge of the house?

13 MS. VAN BALGOOY: That would be up to
14 our Historic District Commission to make that -- I
15 have not exactly studied their plans, and I would
16 have to do that. But, again, you know, you can
17 put on an addition to a house. I've done it
18 myself. And it just needs to be tastefully done.
19 It needs to match the style. If it does not, then
20 there is an issue. I mean, that's why we have a
21 Historic District Commission reviewing, for
22 instance, any of the houses that are designated

1 historic. We want whatever addition or changes
2 that are made to be in tandem with that particular
3 house style or the neighborhood itself.

4 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Okay. All rightie,
5 anyone else in the audience who would like to
6 speak? Yes, sir.

7 MR. MARTIN: Morning, Madam Mayor and
8 fellow councilmen. I'm Ron Martin.

9 My wife and I are here tonight. We've
10 been attending the hall at Rockville for some
11 years now, and, really, in the area between
12 Northwest Washington, Rockville, and Gaithersburg,
13 we've basically been in attendance for the last 40
14 years or so. So, we've had a part in some of the
15 work that went on in Rockville and some of the
16 reconstruction. I just have two quick things to
17 say.

18 One, hypothetically, would be in the
19 1850s, the 1900s, the 1920s. If somebody slapped
20 historic designations on several of the blocks on
21 our map there, what would we have right now?
22 That's this one thing.

1 Second thing is that where we stand at
2 this time, would there be a problem having a
3 historic designation -- if we were to vacate the
4 property, could it not be under review at that
5 time for historical purposes? Assuming that we,
6 in good faith, carried out exactly what we said --
7 you know, our record would support, that we would
8 add on the church now of the 135 capacity. We
9 have that in place. If we were to move out, which
10 none of us anticipate doing, but for purpose of
11 record, could not historical review been done at
12 that point?

13 That's all I have. Thank you.

14 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Anyone else in the
15 group want to speak? Yes.

16 MR. JIMENEZ: Good morning, Madam
17 Speaker (sic) and councilmen. My name is Jackson
18 Jemez.

19 I'm one of the architects who have been
20 working on this project from the very beginning,
21 and I just want to mention why we -- well, you
22 have heard why we oppose not having it designated

1 as historic. But basically, I just want to
2 mention all the effort that we have done. I'm a
3 member of Jehovah's Witness, too, and for five
4 years we have had to compromise and compromise.
5 We have worked -- redesigned the project many
6 times, and we're still here and still willing to
7 compromise. But it seems like the object is to
8 oppose to whatever is there. And I heard that --
9 they mentioned if it is historic we still could
10 build. That's true. There are standards -- codes
11 we will follow, but what will that bring? Well,
12 that will probably reduce the parking space. Then
13 we will come back here, here are the neighbors
14 saying that is enough parking. Then if they say,
15 well, reduce a space or the capacity of the
16 building, of the church, of the Kingdom Hall.
17 What will happen? Well, we will not have enough
18 capacity for the congregation.

19 So, I know it's a hard decision for you
20 to decide which way to go. But just have in mind
21 that we have been doing this for five years, and
22 every time there's an issue we've been willing to

1 compromise. We have redesigned. We even made a
2 model, because -- we presented a 3-D of the place
3 and they couldn't understand it, so we did a
4 physical model to present it to them. So, we have
5 been willing to compromise all his time. Just
6 have that in mind. And I'm not an architect of
7 record. I have worked with the architect of
8 record on this record. But I just wanted to put
9 that into so so you have that in mind. That's why
10 I oppose to be designated as historic.

11 Thank you for that.

12 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Thank you. Is there
13 anyone else who wishes to address this public
14 hearing? Please.

15 MS. DOUMA: Good evening. Thank you all
16 for staying.

17 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Good morning.

18 MS. DOUMA: My name is Marsha Douma, and
19 I live at 616 Great Falls Road, and just to give
20 you some context, if I might (inaudible).

21 Now? Yeah, thank you very much. So, I
22 am right here. This is a house, which actually is

1 my immediate neighbor -- between the two of us.

2 It's an old house that people who have lived there
3 for a very short period time. I recently have
4 spoken with them. They don't plan to live there
5 much longer. Circumstances I could describe if
6 you're interested.

7 Prior to -- or around 2006, I was told
8 by the owners of -- the previous owners that the
9 Jehovah's Witness Kingdom Hall had asked for
10 rights of first refusal for that property. And,
11 again, they had already bought these properties,
12 so when that went up for sale it wasn't necessary
13 to buy it but it is going to be available sale
14 again shortly probably.

15 So, now I'd like to give the rest of my
16 testimony if I could, but I wanted to place myself
17 on the map, because it's critical to what I'm
18 going to say.

19 I'll just hold on to this now that
20 (inaudible).

21 Okay. So, I live really a stone's throw
22 from 628. So what happens here is not just an

1 academic interest to me. It will have an
2 immediate and lasting effect on me and my family
3 since the terms "historic" and "residential" only
4 have real meaning when these structures
5 predominate or at least have a strong enough
6 presence in the community.

7 To be more specific, not granting
8 historic designation will have the practical
9 effect, as you could see when I pointed it out on
10 the map, of isolating me, and if I could beg
11 everyone one more time -- right after me is the
12 Masonic Temple. So, here's an institution, here's
13 me, and here's everything else.

14 My house sits on an acre of land. It's
15 one of the few remaining large tracts of land
16 toward downtown Rockville, and it also has, as
17 you've heard previously in the testimony, a very
18 meaningful and direct association with the black
19 kinship community. I am impressed with its
20 history. I'm impressed with just the nature of my
21 property itself, that it has a lot of land, and I
22 would like to preserve many aspects of my

1 property. But I actually need your help in doing
2 this.

3 I am here this evening to ask you not to
4 reinvent public policy but to utilize the very
5 protections historic designation was designed to
6 provide you, to help you. I believe your
7 obligation as my elected officials, whether I is
8 historic designation or considering APFOs, is to
9 look beyond the needs of any one property owner to
10 the needs of the history and character of a
11 greater community. If you agree with me that
12 preserving the historical and residential
13 character of my community is important, granting
14 historic designation provides the only reliable
15 way to ensure that any new development that
16 happens on that site is built to a standard that
17 looks like it belongs there.

18 Very, very importantly, neither the
19 staff report nor the courtesy review by the HDC
20 told the applicant they could not build on the
21 site if historic designation was granted. They
22 can build there, merely that that they would have

1 to site the building and design a structure that
2 was compatible with and upheld the integrity and
3 the character of our historic community.

4 This small corner of Rockville has been
5 evolving slowly from open fields to an urban mix
6 that it is today for about two centuries. I have
7 lived there for 36 years. My house is at least
8 111 years old, and the barn that I use goes back
9 probably to the mid-19th century. While I realize
10 it may be inconvenient for the current owners of
11 628 to redesign their project to be compatible
12 with the community's history and residential
13 character, I don't think (inaudible) it is too
14 much to ask.

15 In summary, please grant historic
16 designation for 628 including the entire parcel as
17 the environmental setting. It is the only
18 mechanism we currently have to ensure that our
19 community can evolve with the times while
20 simultaneously maintaining and protecting its
21 unique, valuable history.

22 And if I could your indulgence on one

1 more thing -- I know you've been here forever and
2 we all want to go home -- I was very much struck
3 when I first saw the plans that there is a total
4 separation between the proposed new building --
5 the church -- and the house, and I just kind of
6 wondered about that. I don't know, I'm sure they
7 have very good reasons, and perhaps people here
8 can tell you why. But as an owner of an old house
9 who has in fact put a lot of additions on, there
10 are always, always issues that happen when you add
11 something new to something old, especially roof
12 lines. So, I would like to ask you what will
13 happen if they come back to you and they say, you
14 know, we really -- we built this brand new
15 building. We put all this money into this brand
16 new building. We can't get it to work. The roof
17 lines don't work. There are leaks, there's this,
18 there's that. I mean, the problems are endless
19 when you add a new structure to and old structure.
20 What's going to be the outcome? Whereas, if you
21 separate it, then there's -- we always have the
22 guarantee we have historic designation. That

1 house will stand. We'll have the residential
2 piece of our community.

3 Thank you very much.

4 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Thank you. Anyone
5 else wish to speak at this public hearing?

6 I see someone back there and then
7 another gentleman up here.

8 MS. PRINCE: I'm back. Hi. Susan
9 Prince, 206 Evan Street, and I am here to speak,
10 also, on the issue tonight before you regarding
11 the historic designation.

12 I have been listening to the testimony
13 for the past, I don't know, two hours, and one
14 thing that has really struck me is that there is a
15 difference of perception and that the owners of
16 the property perceive this as a place, a piece of
17 land, and a property with which to expand their
18 church. The residents see this as something
19 different. We view this as a crucial piece of our
20 community as a residential area, and in listening
21 to, you know, some of the points that have been
22 made, it's just struck me that -- I've been trying

1 to figure out how I can testify, and I did not
2 have prepared remarks tonight. I've been here for
3 a long time. I had prepared remarks from earlier.
4 And it struck me that the difference seems to be
5 that the owners of the property perceive this
6 strictly as a place for them to expand their
7 location. And they've invested a lot of money, of
8 course which is well within their rights.
9 However, we view this as something so much more.
10 We view this is as a residential piece of
11 property. And I've been involved with the
12 negotiations since 2005. I've been to all the
13 meetings. And I found it very interesting tonight
14 that there are a lot of people here I haven't
15 actually seen before, and so I was kind of
16 wondering about that. And actually I thought it
17 was kind of interesting that many of the people
18 who spoke -- the only ones who gave their address
19 were the ones who lived in Rockville, and I'm not
20 sure what bearing that plays on it, but I found
21 that to be interesting, too.

22 I've been involved in discussions with

1 the designs and the redesigns and the revisions,
2 and it really hit me that the problem is the
3 designs that have been coming forth in this are
4 not in keeping at all in a residential feeling.
5 It's a very commercial -- it's a very non-homey
6 kind of approach, and we view this as our
7 community. That's why you have residents out here
8 talking to you about this, because this is a
9 residential area. It's meant to be a residential
10 area, and that character has always been
11 residential, and I think that's what people are
12 wanting you to hear about. Your boards and
13 commission, the HDC, have -- this has clearly met
14 the criteria; it's clearly met -- it's clearly hit
15 the hurdles from that perspective. So, I think it
16 comes down to whether or not you have the same
17 idea of the perception that the residents do for
18 the members of the church.

19 So, thank you.

20 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Don't go away. Yes,
21 two questions.

22 COUNCILMEMBER PIERZCHALA: You know, if

1 you're going to do it here, you're going to do it
2 right. (Laughter) You know, churches all across
3 the land have been in residential communities.
4 They don't look anything like a house. They look
5 like churches. So, I'm just wondering why if the
6 Jehovah's Witnesses have a building that looks
7 like a church that's a problem.

8 MS. PRINCE: It's not the building per
9 se. It's the location. It's such a fragile
10 location. What's happening is if you look at the
11 map, it's a very short step between -- I think of
12 it as the domino theory. I don't mean not to
13 harken back to Vietnam, and I don't know all of
14 those polices there. I don't want to go there.
15 It's too late at night. But the problem is it's
16 not that particular -- the fact that it is a
17 church; it's a fact that at that location it's
18 such a fragile gateway location. Clearly, as you
19 come down Falls Road, you know you're entering a
20 residential neighborhood. It's clear. That house
21 indicates it; it designates it; it sets the stage
22 that you're entering a residential area. So, I

1 hope that answers your question.

2 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Mr. Moore.

3 MR. MOORE: Thank you. Thank you for
4 coming to testify this night. From what I've been
5 hearing tonight and what I've read, it sounds like
6 this congregation has been engaged with the
7 community for about five years. And to me, what
8 I've been hearing is it sounds like -- it's kind
9 of a game of whack-a-ball being played where one
10 problem comes up and gets addressed, then another
11 problem comes up and gets addressed, and another
12 one. Why is it that five years into this process
13 this is the first time that historic designation
14 has been raised?

15 MS. PRINCE: I can't answer that. I was
16 not responsible for bringing this forward from a
17 historical designation standpoint. But I can tell
18 you that I think the church has done a very good
19 job in trying to work with the community. I don't
20 have any objections from that perspective. I
21 think we've been respectful on, you know, both
22 sides. I can say that there have been long

1 periods of time where there's been no
2 communication from them whatsoever. So, for
3 instance, a proposal would come to us, we would
4 meet, we would give them feedback, and, like, a
5 year would go by and we wouldn't know what was
6 going on. So, I can't answer why this is just
7 coming out for historic designation now. I wasn't
8 involved in bringing that forward.

9 MR. MOORE: It almost seems like it's
10 four years of blocking a church and one year of
11 preserving a house.

12 MS. PRINCE: It may appear that way, but
13 in reality the time frame, if you go back and look
14 at the meetings we've had, there have been long
15 gaps where, you know, basically, they come to us
16 with something, we give them feedback, and, you
17 know, the one group that we were dealing with -- I
18 don't know where those people are. Those people
19 aren't here tonight. It's a different group.
20 They were out of the country. So, there was a
21 long period of time where we didn't hear anything
22 about what was going on. So, you know, anytime

1 they've come to us we've tried to be responsive.
2 We've invited them to the community. We've had
3 meetings. You know, people from the community
4 have come and taken a look at the proposal, and I
5 think it's respectful all the way around. I would
6 say in any way, shape, or form it's been anything
7 but.

8 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Can you -- maybe I
9 shouldn't ask you to characterize, but can you
10 kind of characterize what this new growth would
11 look like?

12 MS. PRINCE: Well, it's changed a couple
13 of times. I mean, the only thing I can say is it
14 doesn't look like a house. So, I mean, I don't
15 know how else, you know, to say that it looks like
16 a house now.

17 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Have the plans you've
18 seen been mostly that the house would be torn
19 down?

20 MS. PRINCE: No, not necessarily. I
21 mean, it's an addition onto the back of the
22 structure, and it is, you know -- and it's more of

1 a -- it doesn't look like that is all I can say.
2 I'm not an architect. I'm sorry, I'm not an
3 architect or anything from that perspective.

4 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Well, it's a curious
5 problem, because we've got two different issues
6 pushed together, one being historic designation,
7 which you could deal with pretty much on a
8 reasonable basis. But then there's the
9 undercurrent of the church wanting to expand and
10 increase its size, and I gather -- whether there
11 are other buildings involved or adding onto the
12 existing building or whatever, which are going to
13 be to such an extent that they're going to impact
14 this house. You know, you've got two issues. If
15 it were just historic designation, it might be
16 easier to deal with. But it seems to me like it's
17 connected to expansion.

18 MS. PRINCE: I think that was the
19 original intent when they purchased the property
20 -- was to expand. I mean, that was their original
21 idea, so, yes, I would agree with that.

22 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: And on the other side

1 of the property they own, there are two
2 homeowners? You know, I'm just thinking this
3 whole area is being impacted here. It's not just
4 this little house for historic designation.

5 MS. PRINCE: I think that's exactly the
6 point. I think the church sees it as why are we
7 making such a big deal about this particular
8 property? Why? Why are we making such a big deal
9 about one house?

10 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Because it's going to
11 change that whole area.

12 MS. PRINCE: That's exactly right.
13 That's exactly right. So, that's tough. It's a
14 very tough situation.

15 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: And they figure they
16 own it, they ought to be able to do what they want
17 with it. I mean, that's sort of the way it comes
18 across.

19 MS. PRINCE: Thank you.

20 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Thank you. Anyone
21 else wish to address the Mayor and Council in this
22 public hearing? Yes, sir. I see another one?

1 Yes.

2 SPEAKER: Thank you. Good evening. And
3 thank you for the opportunity to address the Mayor
4 and Council. My name is (inaudible). I live on
5 Evans Street in Rockville. I'm speaking on my own
6 behalf and not on behalf of any organization.

7 I've attended quite a number of the
8 meetings -- the Historic designation meeting, I
9 believe the Planning Board meeting, the courtesy
10 review, and I believe one of the development
11 meetings.

12 A couple of things. I guess in the
13 ordinance there are five criteria for the house,
14 as the Planning Board and the Historic Designation
15 Committee have all found. As Peerless Rockville
16 has testified, as we've heard testimony this
17 evening, it meets three of the criteria, so I
18 think that's fairly straightforward, you know, to
19 me in particular. It is a gateway because of its
20 position in the neighborhood. So it is a
21 community gateway, which is one of the criteria.

22 I'm concerned somewhat about the notion

1 that if the house is really well maintained or if
2 the house is poorly maintained, this somehow
3 relates to its eligibility for historic
4 designation, because I don't see that in the
5 ordinance. In fact, I would point out that
6 Williamsburg was quite dilapidated when the
7 Rockefellers stepped in to rehabilitate it. So, I
8 don't think whether your house is very well
9 maintained or poorly maintained relates to it. A
10 lot of Victorian houses fell out of favor and were
11 designated and restored or restored and
12 designated. So, I don't think that's particularly
13 relevant.

14 Likewise, I think ownership is not
15 particularly relevant to, or the position of the
16 owner, relative to the historic designation. The
17 merits of the historic designation are the merits.
18 It would be bizarre if hostile owners bought
19 historic properties and then opposed historic
20 designation and there was a higher bar that
21 precluded preservation and protection of those
22 properties and those properties were demolished.

1 If a property is historic, whether the owner was
2 the moving party, whether (inaudible) was the
3 moving party, the historic designation should
4 stand or fall on the merits of the historic
5 designation.

6 So, turning to the church, I attended
7 the courtesy review with the Historic Designation
8 Committee, and the word that kept coming out was,
9 "The sight is constrained," "the sight is
10 constrained," "the sight is constrained." Well,
11 no, duh. The sight is a peninsula. So, you've
12 got setbacks on three sides, and you've got sort
13 of two fronts to the house, because of fronts on
14 the two streets.

15 And that is the crux of the problem.
16 It's not that the church wants to put a little
17 church, a little chapel on the property. They
18 want to put a massive auditorium on the property,
19 and it's 10 pounds in a 5-pound bag. It's a
20 160-seat auditorium. The fire code rating for the
21 building is even higher than that. And that is
22 basically the problem. It's a 3700-foot addition

1 onto about a 1500-foot house. The numbers are in
2 the record, but that's the approximate scale.
3 That's the problem with the addition. The
4 addition is over twice the size of the house.
5 That's why they have to pack it right up against
6 the house. That's why they have to tear the porch
7 off the back of the house, so they can fit it on
8 -- so they can get into the constraints of the
9 setbacks around the rest of the property. It's
10 not what they want to do; it's the scale of what
11 they want to do. The property is just not
12 appropriate for what they're objectives and what
13 their intentions are. That's why they can't fit
14 it into the footprint of the lot; that's why they
15 can't fit it into the historic designation.

16 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: What are they doing
17 about parking?

18 SPEAKER: That's 160 pounds into a
19 32-pound bag. The property -- the auditorium has
20 135 seats. It goes up to over 160 if you count
21 the other seats in the building. Their proposal,
22 if you take the second lot, is to demolish the

1 house there, essentially -- almost clear-cut the
2 lot and turn it into a 32-car parking lot. Well,
3 do the math. 160 seats, 32 cars. That's five
4 people per car on average. Do five people pop out
5 of the cars at your church? No way. Two, three
6 people in a car. Okay, so where are the other
7 cars going to go? They're going to go across J.W.
8 over into the parking lot. You saw this weekend
9 the cars were already parked up on top of the
10 lawn. You have a massive jaywalking problem,
11 because they don't walk down to the light.
12 Already today, they parked over in the parking
13 lot. They displace the soccer and the other
14 tournaments that are over there that have rented
15 the school classrooms and the field, and it's just
16 going to push more parking into the neighbors.
17 That's the problem.

18 The development that they propose
19 doesn't fit the size of the lot, doesn't fit the
20 historic designation, and it negatively impacts
21 the neighbor, because it puts the traffic and the
22 scale -- pushes it off into the neighborhood and

1 takes the gateway away from the neighborhood.
2 What they want to do is too big for that site.
3 They should scale their plans for the site, or
4 they should do their plans on a site that is
5 scaled for their objectives.

6 Thank you.

7 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Thank you. Anyone
8 else wish to speak? Yes. Did she change her
9 mind? Okay, anyone else? Otherwise, we will
10 close this public hearing and hold the record
11 open, what is it, two weeks?

12 MS. ZIEK: We were suggesting till
13 October 7th and asking instruction.

14 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: October 7 would be one
15 week?

16 MS. ZIEK: Yeah.

17 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Is there a reason why
18 one week?

19 MS. ZIEK: We were just looking at the
20 entire schedule where you have to do D&I on the
21 14th. It's a very accelerated schedule.

22 MR. MOORE: Do we have anything else on

1 the 14th?

2 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Yes. Why the
3 accelerated? I just don't --

4 MS. ZIEK: We don't have to, of course.
5 If you want to keep it open for two weeks, we'll
6 move the calendar. That's your choice.

7 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: All right. Yes, Mr.
8 Pierzchala.

9 MR. PIERZCHALA: You know, this
10 particular issue has been going on for some time.
11 It's not quite like the previous hearing where a
12 substantial part of the proposal was new to
13 everyone. This one has -- you know, it's a well-
14 known landscape by now, so I'm wondering if it's
15 necessary to go past one week for the record.
16 What would we gain by doing two weeks?

17 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Are you asking me?

18 MR PIERZCHALA: Anyone who cares to
19 answer. I mean, I would rather it be one week. I
20 can go with two, but I think -- you know, I don't
21 see the value of doing two weeks instead of one
22 week. That's what I'm asking.

1 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: I don't have any
2 strong feelings one way or the other.

3 MR. MOORE: If we do one week, can we
4 address it on the -- can we do D&I on the 7th or
5 on -- can we do it that week?

6 MR. PIERZCHALA: (off mic)

7 MR. MOORE: Okay, okay, that's fine.

8 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: It's too late for me
9 to make any decisions.

10 MR. MOORE: So, you get your wish,
11 Robin.

12 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Whatever.

13 MS. ZIEK: I'm sorry. I'm sort of
14 trying to figure it out.

15 MR. PIERZCHALA: I think we just said
16 one week is fine.

17 MS. ZIEK: Right, and then we'll
18 schedule D&I on the 14th? Okay, thank you.

19 MAYOR MARCUCCIO: Okay. I hope someone
20 has this straight, because I could tell you I am
21 tired.

22 All right, well, thank you all very much

1 for coming and for your willingness to stay with
2 us till one o'clock in the morning. Fantastic.

3 (Whereupon, the HEARING was
4 adjourned.)

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