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Appoint representatives of the public to the Historic Preservation Review Board

Resolved, that ANC1D advises the Council of the District to fill at least one "public member" of the Historic Preservation Review Board with a true representative of the public, not a representative of the historic preservation community.

Why: No one on the Historic Preservation Review Board speaks for the homeowners who may be directly affected by the Board's decisions. The Board is, by law, supposed to "represent to the greatest practicable extent the composition of the adult population of the District of Columbia with regard to race, sex, geographic distribution and other demographic characteristics". The clear intent of the law is to have the Board represent all of the residents of the District, not just historic preservation advocates. But the practice has been to fill the "citizen member" seats with representatives of historic preservation advocacy groups, not representatives of the public at large. These members contribute to HPRB decisions which directly affect the public, not merely choosing which properties qualify as "historic" and which do not, but frequently imposing expensive and demanding maintenance and renovation requirements on residents of historic districts. Because these "citizen members" are drawn from the community of passionate historic preservation advocates, they are naturally aggressive in their decisions on the Board. They speak as preservationists, not as members of the public.

Federal law requires "public participation" in any state historic preservation program. The "citizen members" of the HPRB do not satisfy this requirement when they are drawn only from the community of historic preservation advocates, and never from the public at large.

ANC1D advises the District Council to choose a true member of the public, perhaps a homeowner in a historic district, familiar with historic preservation, but neutral on the topic, to give the public, and the homeowners affected by the Board's preservation decisions, a voice on this board.

Passed by 6 to 0 vote at the legally noticed, public meeting of ANC1D on January 17, 2012, with a quorum present. Voting "yes": Commissioners Romero-Castillo, Edwards, McKay, Wilson Phelan, Scott, Terrell.