

THE NORTHWEST CURRENT

SUVs and hirings dog city officials

By **ELIZABETH WIENER**
Current Staff Writer

City officials scrambled Tuesday to limit the fallout from two mini-scandals that have rocked the Wilson Building in recent weeks — the apparently unauthorized leasing of luxury sport-utility vehicles for Council Chairman Kwame Brown, and Mayor Vincent Gray's placement of political allies or their relatives in high-paid government jobs.

The two issues appeared to threaten the popularity of both the newly elected mayor and council chairman. Other council members responded to the press furor in traditional ways, calling for oversight hearings and other investigations, as well as increased council control. Specific proposals would require the mayor to get council approval before his aides sign or renew any vehicle lease, and a review of the salaries and qualifications of political appointees.

On Tuesday, Ward 2 Council member Jack Evans and at-large Council member Sekou Biddle introduced legislation to require a list of all District-leased vehicles, as well as council approval of new leases and renewals. Evans said a See **Officials**/Page 13



Bill Petros/The Current
City officials including Mayor Vincent Gray, D.C. Public Library chief Ginie Cooper and Ward 4 D.C. Council member Muriel Bowser on Monday feted the completion of the renovation of the Petworth Neighborhood Library. See story, page 4.

Developer plans fix to Petworth grocery

■ **Safeway:** Project will include residences, parking

By **KATIE PEARCE**
Current Staff Writer

The redevelopment of the much-maligned Petworth Safeway is moving forward, according to project officials.

A 220-unit residential building above a 60,000-square-foot new Safeway will replace the existing store and parking lot at 3830 Georgia Ave., said Marc Dubick, principal of the Duball LLC firm.

The \$50 million-plus project, which will include two levels of underground parking, is slated to break ground in about 18 months, said Dubick, whose firm expects to file a zoning application this month.

Duball LLC has worked with Safeway in the past on the CityVista development in Mount Vernon Square. On the smaller Petworth site, Duball will take charge of the bulk of the development while Safeway will design the interior of its new store.

"When all is said and done, Safeway will own its store and its See **Safeway**/Page 7

Groups urge city to tax sales from food trucks

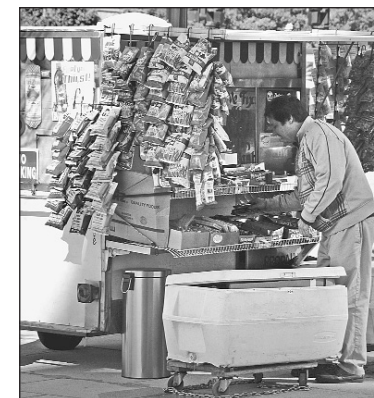
■ **Business:** Critics contend vendors' exemption is unfair

By **CAROL BUCKLEY**
Current Staff Writer

Though this week brought the welcome news that next year's budget gap is less dire than predicted, the remaining hole still leaves city officials scrambling to trim expenses and plug every fiscal leak. A few business and restaurant leaders are happy to help with a suggestion: Start charging sales tax on the lobster rolls, cupcakes and more offered by the trendy food trucks that have sprung up in recent years.

Now, mobile vendors pay a \$1,500 yearly sum in lieu of taxes. While that figure may have been reasonable for ice cream trucks, hot dog stands and the like when the payment was established in the 1990s, some say the city is leaving serious money on the table by not charging D.C.'s 10 percent prepared-food tax on the pricier fare now for sale.

Ward 7 Council member Yvette Alexander, who oversees the city



Bill Petros/The Current

All vendors now pay a \$1,500 annual fee to the District.

agency that regulates vending, said that once the city budget is put to bed she will consider a hearing this spring on the sales-tax matter and other issues that surround the popular new vendors.

"I think they're great," Alexander said. "But they're making a sizable amount of income. ... We want things to be fair" between the trucks and existing, brick-and-mortar restaurants.

"I don't know that [charging See **Vendors**/Page 18

Batter up: D.C. store makes for 'Cupcake Wars'

By **LINDA LOMBARDI**
Current Correspondent

Let's play word association: "Vegan" probably doesn't make you think "delicious," and "nutrition degree" doesn't naturally lead to "cupcakes."

But Doron Petersan might convince you otherwise at her Columbia Heights bakery, Sticky Fingers. And on March 8, you'll be able to watch her make the same case to the judges of "Cupcake Wars" on the Food Network.

Along with Jenny Webb, head baker at Sticky Fingers, Petersan will compete against three other teams



Bill Petros/The Current
Owner Doron Petersan is taking her cupcakes to the small screen.

in a four-round competition. The contestants choose flavors from a list and bake to a theme, showing off their decorating ability and teaming up with carpenters to build a display for a thousand cupcakes. The prize is \$10,000 and the opportunity to cater a high-profile event.

Petersan's bakery was briefly featured on a Food Network show a few years ago, but, she said, "We were told that the audience was not going to be interested in anything 'vegan,' so we couldn't say the v-word." She's particularly pleased there was no such restriction this time around.

See **Cupcakes**/Page 20

NEWS

- **Earth, Wind & Fire raises \$500,000 for Ellington School.** Page 3
- **Parents push Zoo to reverse decision to close Kids' Farm.** Page 2



SPORTS

- **Shorthanded Gonzaga loses to DeMatha in WCAC finals.** Page 11
- **St. John's, Sidwell and Roosevelt capture titles.** Page 11



EVENTS

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- **Howard University students stage 'All Night Strut.'** Page 25



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FORUM

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has gotten less play outside of Georgetown. Alcoholic Beverage Control Board chair Charles Brodsky has appeared before advisory neighborhood commissions, which evaluate liquor licenses, in his role as head of a firm that stages sporting events that also need commission buy-in. At one Georgetown meeting, Brodsky donned both caps in the same evening, leading some to complain of conflicting interests.

Brodsky has since recused himself from hearings for liquor licensees discussed at that meeting. But that wasn't enough for some candidates last week. Patterson called for Brodsky's resignation, and Bryan Weaver agreed unofficially — via a wink at the audience.

Candidates also carried favor with the Georgetown crowd by criticizing the local university's campus plan, which, neighbors complain, does nothing to lower the number of undergraduates living in the residential neighborhood.

With the city in a fiscal crunch, each candidate sought to style himself as the budget hawk that the council needs. All but one opposed the further use of tax abatements, development incentives often requested by builders for projects across the city.

Such incentives are the “wrong direction” for the city, said Joshua Lopez, a young former Adrian Fenty aide and Ward 4 advisory neighborhood commissioner. Former Ward 5 Council member Vincent Orange echoed that flat rejection: “Retailers have discovered there's disposable income in D.C. They will come.”

Patterson and Biddle said that if the city does give out abatements, they should spur construction in less-developed areas such as those east of the Anacostia River. “There are still neighborhoods that need these investments if we do them,” Biddle said.

Weaver, who as an Adams Morgan advisory neighborhood commissioner helped hammer out a deal to benefit the developer for a local hotel in exchange for “claw-back agreements,” argued for strong contracts no matter the project's location. If the hotel developer — who was at the forum — does not hire a certain number of D.C. residents, provide office space for local nonprofits and more, then he loses the tax breaks, Weaver said.

But candidates were less predictable when asked to name a favorite sitting council member. Nearly every panelist named fiery independent David Catania.

Biddle, who has won the endorsement of a half-dozen council members, though not Catania's, praised the often-prickly at-large member's expertise. He is “so different than I am,” said Biddle, but “I learn from him every day.”

Weaver branched out, naming both Catania and Ward 2's Jack Evans, whom Orange also tagged for his “financial expertise.”

SAFeway

From Page 1

level of parking, and we will own our level of parking and the residences above it,” Dubick said.

The housing units are planned as efficiencies and one- and two-bedroom, but it's unclear now whether they will be apartments or condos. “We'll see where the marketplace goes by the time we deliver,” Dubick said.

The two levels of parking will offer about 85 spaces for Safeway

customers and 135 for residents. Both levels will have their own entrance at the corner of Georgia Avenue and Randolph Street.

Joseph Vaughan, the chair of the Petworth advisory neighborhood commission, predicted that his group will support the project if the developer can address concerns about traffic and density.

“The community has waited a long time for a new Safeway there,” he said, but neighbors are also worried about impacts from the overwhelming influx of new development on Georgia Avenue.

Dubick said the Safeway development, one block from the Petworth Metro station, is “all about smart growth,” though a consultant will be studying traffic changes.

The project, which will take over most of the corner site, is proceeding as a planned-unit development, which gives the developer some flexibility with zoning in exchange for community amenities.

Dubick said it should take about 18 months to get zoning approval and building permits. The new Safeway will replace a 21,000-square-foot, 50-year-old store that

has often been referenced as “stinky” or “sketchy.” Ward 4 D.C. Council member Muriel Bowser has said she fields frequent complaints about the store, and she identified its redevelopment as a key goal during her 2008 re-election.

Safeway spokesperson Craig Muckle said the new grocery will be one of the chain's “Lifestyle” stores, like the one recently built in Georgetown. The store will feature floral and home-goods departments, a full-service pharmacy, a dry cleaner and potentially a Starbucks coffee bar, Muckle said.



News And Events

GOING GREEN

St. Patrick's Day has everyone thinking green and American University is on a fast track to become one of the greenest universities in the country. AU's five green roofs will grow to seven this spring. AU will soon install the largest solar panel project in the Washington, DC metropolitan area. AU's dedication to the environment and sustainability is visible in myriad ways in our community including our green building program; the commitment to being carbon neutral by 2020; and an environmental studies class that recently worked with McLean Gardens' neighbors to help manage storm water runoff.

CAMPUS PLAN UPDATE

AU released a draft 2011 Campus Plan to the community in January and anticipates filing the plan with the DC Zoning Commission in March. View the draft plan online at american.edu/finance/fas/2011-Campus-Plan.cfm. Copies of the draft plan are available at the new Tenleytown-Friendship Public Library and at AU's Bender Library.

ANTICA NEAPOLITAN PIZZERIA TO OPEN AT 3201 NEW MEXICO AVENUE

AU has signed a lease with Palisades' resident and local restaurateur Hakan Ihlán to open a new restaurant in the former Balducci's space at 3201 New Mexico Ave. The restaurant will offer pasta dishes and Neapolitan pizza from wood-burning ovens. A fall opening is anticipated.

SCREENING OF WAITING FOR SUPERMAN AND DISCUSSION WITH MICHELLE RHEE

March 2, 6:30 p.m. – 9 p.m., Ward Circle Building, Room 1
The AU chapter of the Roosevelt Institute hosts a screening of the film *Waiting for Superman*, followed by a discussion about education reform with former Chancellor of DC Public Schools Michelle Rhee. Free and open to the public. Free parking at the Nebraska parking lot.

BEETHOVEN SONATAS FOR PIANO

March 19, 8 p.m., Katzen Arts Center – Abramson Family Recital Hall
AU musician-in-residence and internationally acclaimed pianist Yuliya Gorenman performs the final concert in her series of eight programs devoted to playing all 32 of Ludwig van Beethoven's sonatas. Tickets: \$25 regular admission. For tickets or more information, call 202-885-ARTS or visit american.edu/auarts.

MEASURE FOR MEASURE

March 24 – 26 at 8 p.m., and March 26 at 2 p.m., Harold and Sylvia Greenberg Theatre
William Shakespeare's classic “problem play” is performed in a provocative contemporary setting and directed by AU's Calleen Sinnette Jennings. Tickets: \$15 regular admission, \$10 seniors. For more information call 202-885-ARTS or visit american.edu/auarts.

To sign up for the monthly electronic newsletter or for a full listing of events, please visit www.american.edu/neighbors.

Event Highlights

2 BOOK TALK: OCEANS: THE THREATS TO OUR SEAS AND WHAT YOU CAN DO TO TURN THE TIDE

8 p.m., Bender Library – Mud Box Café, Lower Level.
AU alumni Jon Bowermaster—author, filmmaker, and activist—talks about his new anthology of essays by experts and activists involved in ocean work and what people can do to make an environmental impact. The book is the companion to the Jacques Perrin and Disney Nature film *OCEANS*. Free and open to the public.

15 CONCERT PREVIEW LECTURE WITH PIANIST YULIYA GORENMAN

10 a.m., Temple Baptist Church – Room 6/Lecture Hall.
As part of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) Tuesday Speaker Series, internationally renowned pianist Yuliya Gorenman performs a personal preview of her March 19 recital at the Katzen Arts Center and discusses her journey through eight concerts to play all of Beethoven's piano sonatas. Free and open to the public.

15 FILM SCREENING OF COUNTDOWN TO ZERO

6 p.m., School of International Service, Founder's Room
Come see Academy Award-winning producer Lawrence Bender's stunning documentary about the escalating global nuclear arms crisis that won rave reviews at the Sundance Film Festival. Free and open to the public.

25 AU CHAMBER SINGERS: SPAIN AND PORTUGAL TOUR PREVIEW

8 p.m., Katzen Arts Center – Abramson Family Recital Hall
AU's Chamber Singers perform a repertoire based on the Spanish Diaspora including the Washington, DC premiere of the Baroque Mass *Missa Ego flos campi*, created by 17th century Spanish-born composer Juan Gutierrez de Padilla. Tickets: \$10 regular admission, \$5 seniors. For tickets, call 202-885-ARTS or visit american.edu/auarts.

27 WIND ENSEMBLE PRESENTS: SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW

8 p.m., Katzen Arts Center – Abramson Family Recital Hall
AU's spring Wind Ensemble concert features both classic and newer original works for the symphonic band directed by Marc Boensel. Tickets: \$10 regular admission, \$5 seniors. For tickets, call 202-885-ARTS or visit american.edu/auarts.

WOMEN'S LACROSSE HOME GAMES AT AU FIELD

9 Women's Lacrosse team plays Virginia Tech, 3 p.m.
12 Women's Lacrosse team plays Holy Cross, 1 p.m.
26 Women's Lacrosse team plays Bucknell, 1 p.m.

Welcome back – AU Farmers' Market returns to the quad on the AU campus on Wednesday, March 16 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

