

THE GEORGETOWN CURRENT

CUBS



Matt Petros/The Current

Georgetown Visitation junior Kate Gillespie has been one of the top players in the area this season, but on Sunday her squad fell to another local power, St. John's. See story, page 12.

Impasse holds on GU campus plan

■ **Town-gown:** Questions on traffic, hospital remain open

By **CAROL BUCKLEY**
Current Staff Writer

Georgetown University officials and neighborhood leaders squared off last week to reprise now-familiar arguments over the school's recently filed campus plan.

A crowd filed into the auditorium at Duke Ellington School of the Arts

Thursday evening to offer opinions to advisory neighborhood commissioners, who were flanked on the stage by university representatives and leaders of community associations in the Georgetown, Burleigh, Foxhall and Hillandale neighborhoods.

The neighborhood commission, which is accorded great weight in city processes, will take a position on the plan at its next meeting. Barring any huge surprises between now and then, all commissioners

save one — student representative Jake Sticka — are expected to oppose the document, which outlines the school's growth over the next decade.

Debate centered on the predictable hot topics: housing and student conduct. But the evening also revealed a surprising number of unanswered questions as the university and neighbors prepare for April's zoning hearing on the campus plan.

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Sensei fights bullying at Hardy Middle

By **JESSICA GOULD**
Current Staff Writer

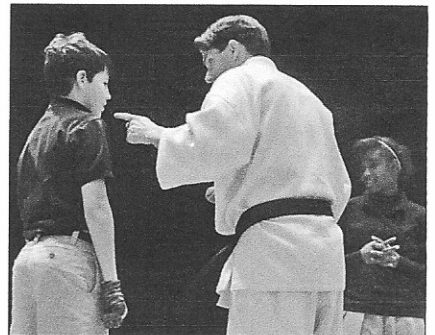
Sensei John Mirrione said it took years of mastering martial arts to learn that fists never settle a fight. "You can learn all the karate moves in the world, but you can't knock out anger," he said.

So, standing on the stage at Hardy Middle School in Georgetown yesterday, Mirrione instructed students to choose communication over combat when faced with a bully.

"Fighting is failed communication," he said. "There is always someone you can talk to when you feel the worst way — and you should."

Mirrione, who was bullied himself before channeling his experience into martial arts and motivational speaking, called on students to cultivate their inner strength. He then performed a one-arm, bare-knuckle push-up

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Matt Petros/The Current

John Mirrione, a martial arts expert known as a sensei, experienced bullying as a child.

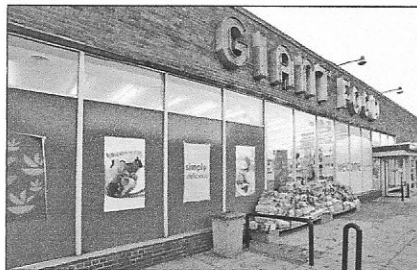
City prepares for Giant construction

By **TEKE WIGGIN**
Current Correspondent

As Cleveland Park residents continue to voice concerns over transportation issues raised by the impending Giant redevelopment, the D.C. Department of Transportation is making efforts to address their worries, especially those pertaining to truck activity and parking shortages.

"This development [team] knows that many eyes are watching them, so I'd expect them to take extra care," Transportation Department associate director Karina Ricks said of the "Cathedral Commons" project. The development will create a new, larger Giant supermarket, 72,850 square feet of additional retail, 138 apartments and eight town houses near McLean Gardens.

Residents, concerned that noisy vehicles going to



Bill Petros/The Current

City transportation officials last week responded to worries about the project's impact on area traffic.

and from the construction site will invade their neighborhood, took up a large portion of a recent meeting's question-and-answer session asking about the rules governing truck routes and how they are enforced.

They also pressed the department to explain how it intends to compensate for parking shortages that would

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Budget woes may impact voting for special election

■ **Council:** Officials debate how to open all 143 precincts

By **CAROL BUCKLEY**
Current Staff Writer

As candidates gather signatures for the April 26 election that will choose an at-large D.C. Council member, city officials are scrambling to figure out how to run the contest — and how to pay for it.

The special election has become an early victim of the city's struggling finances. The council budgeted \$590,000 for the event, but elec-

tions board executive director Rokei Suleman said at a recent oversight roundtable that he could not open all 143 voting precincts with that level of funding.

During the roundtable, Suleman said a full election would cost over \$1 million, but a memo distributed among council members yesterday announced an updated estimate of between \$768,000 and \$883,000.

"Discussions are currently underway to identify the necessary funding," reads the memo, sent from Ward 3 Council member Mary Cheh's office to her fellow legisla-

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ELECTION

From Page 1

tors. "If any constituents call your offices concerned about the effect of vote centers on their ability to vote, please let them know the District is favoring opening each local precinct."

Most speakers at last week's roundtable — including Suleman — said that the city should find a way to open all precincts. But, Suleman added, he felt the need to develop alternatives that could work within the council-imposed budget constraints.

"So we came up with the vote center" idea, he said to Cheh, whose committee oversees the Board of Elections and Ethics.

Under the voting center plan, which Suleman estimated would cost about \$700,000, including employee overtime, residents could cast a ballot at any of the 16 sites across the city — two in each ward — on April 23, 25 and 26.

But the proposed location of at least one ward's voting centers had some residents alarmed that a lack of access would drive down turnout for the special election. And the number of ballots is already expected to be low: Such contests traditionally attract between 7 and 13 percent of the electorate in the District.

A community group representing residents of Dupont and Logan circles has charged that the Ward 2 sites — School Without Walls in Foggy Bottom and the Duke Ellington School of the Arts in Georgetown — would disenfranchise the electorate in the eastern part of the ward.

The Metrorail-accessible Walls site makes sense, allowed Urban Neighborhood Alliance secretary and Dupont advisory neighborhood commissioner Jack Jacobson. But the Georgetown school has few options for access and, when considered with the Walls site, lies too far from the heart of the ward, he said.

If the city uses voting centers, one of Ward 2's should be located east of 15th Street, said Jacobson. Without it, "you've just got a huge hole in the middle of the city."

Ward 2 Council member Jack Evans said that both proposed Ward 2 centers should be changed: Foundry United Methodist Church at 16th and P streets and Kennedy Recreation Center at 7th and P streets would be far better, he said.

But Evans and Jacobson agreed with many from last week's oversight hearing that having limited polling places is a bad idea to begin with. "It's unfair to voters

in every ward," Jacobson said.

"Elections ... should be held sacrosanct," said Evans. Even with the ongoing budget crisis, he added, the city — whether the council, the mayor or the elections board — should find the money to open all voting precincts.

"They need to do whatever it takes to make it happen," said Evans, who chairs the council's Committee on Finance and Revenue.

"Scrub the proposal further" to find a way to open all precincts, urged D.C. Democratic State Committee officer Bill O'Field at the hearing — and he offered suggestions to do just that, such as eliminating early voting.

Not only will the April 26 election decide the at-large race, O'Field added, but also school board vacancies in wards 4 and 8 — making it even more crucial to ensure voter access.

And the city's recent history does not raise confidence in the Board of Elections and Ethics' abilities, said Columbia Heights advisory neighborhood commissioner Lenwood Johnson. With fresh memories of vote counting that extended far later than that of other jurisdictions, said Johnson, the "board needs to drastically improve before doing a special process" such as the voting centers.

Cheh, who convened last week's discussion because she was concerned that the voting center idea would lead to voter suppression, urged Suleman to revisit his budget and find a way to keep all precincts open.

The scramble to fund and run April's special election also drew criticism of the process's political implications. D.C. political strategist Chuck Thies said at the roundtable that disenfranchising low-income voters is one concern; another is the involvement of elected officials who have already weighed in on the election. Cheh and several other council members have come out for interim at-large Council member Sekou Biddle.

"It is not appropriate for officials endorsing Biddle to make decisions about how the election is run," Thies said.

Proposed voting centers in Ward 1 are the Banneker Community Center at 2500 Georgia Ave. NW and H.D. Cooke Elementary School at 2525 17th St. NW.

In Ward 3, residents would vote at the Chevy Chase Community Center at 5601 Connecticut Ave. NW and the Palisades Recreation Center at 5100 Sherier Place NW.

In Ward 4, proposed sites are the Fort Stevens Recreation Center at 1327 Van Buren St. NW and Sharpe Health School at 4300 13th St. NW.

HARDY

From Page 1

while meditating to illustrate his point. "My doing this one amazing thing ... is to encourage you to do one amazing thing with your life," he said.

Tuesday's talk came amid a crescendo of concern from parents who say they've seen a spike in fights and bullying since Hyde-Addison Elementary principal Dana Nerenberg added Hardy to her portfolio over the summer.

But not all parents believe there's a safety issue at Hardy, and school officials insisted that yesterday's event was part of an ongoing commitment to battle bullying.

"It's a nationwide issue," said assistant principal Sah Brown, calling the talk "one of many steps we're taking to make Hardy a bully-free school."

For example, said fellow assistant principal Rena Johnson, as part of national Anti-Bullying Week last fall, students took a pledge to stop bullying and voted for student government candidates based on their anti-bullying platforms.

Meanwhile, she said, the school has been holding counseling sessions and mediations to resolve the issues that arise between students. "We're trying to layer in a lot of

supports," she said.

But Candy Miles-Crocker, a parent who has been critical of the new administration, said the assembly struck her as irrelevant and ineffective.

"I just question how this has anything to do with anti-bullying," she said. "I don't get the connection between martial arts and anti-bullying. It seems like fighting to me."

Miles-Crocker continues to push for the return of longtime principal Patrick Pope to stop what she called the "downward spiral of the school."

"By returning him back to Hardy immediately, this will give the Chancellor and the Hardy community an opportunity to come together to determine the future of the school," she wrote in a Jan. 21 letter to Mayor Vincent Gray.

On Monday, Gray spokesperson Linda Wharton-Boyd responded that Gray "understands the gravity of the situation at Hardy and is in direct communications with Interim Chancellor [Kaya] Henderson and other school leaders."

Wharton-Boyd added that Gray does not intend to "micromanage" the school but expects a plan to be developed soon to "improve the learning environment and student achievement at Hardy."

She added that she is "confident" parents will be involved.

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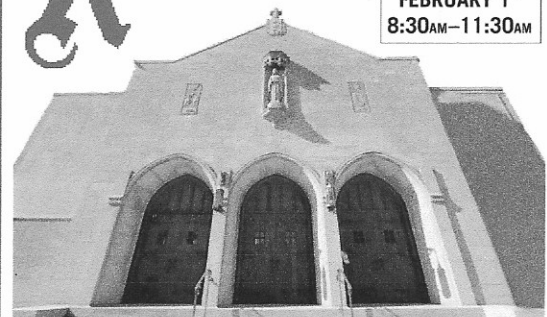
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