

**COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE  
COMMITTEE REPORT**

1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20004

DRAFT

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**TO:** All Councilmembers

**FROM:** Chairman Phil Mendelson  
Committee of the Whole

**DATE:** June 30, 2015

**SUBJECT:** Report on Bill 21-174, the “Margaret Peters and Roumania Peters Walker Tennis Courts Designation Act of 2015”

The Committee of the Whole, to which Bill 21-174, the “Ruby Whitfield Way Designation Act of 2015” was referred, reports favorably thereon and recommends approval by the Council.

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**I. BACKGROUND AND NEED**

On April 14, 2015, Bill 21-174, the “Margaret Peters and Roumania Peters Walker Tennis Courts Designation Act of 2015,” was introduced by Councilmember Jack Evans with co-sponsors from Councilmembers Yvette Alexander, Mary Cheh, Elissa Silverman, Anita Bonds, and David Grosso, to designate the tennis courts at Rose Park located at 2600 O Street, N.W., in Ward 2, as the Margaret Peters and Roumania Peters Walker Tennis Courts.

Before there was the Williams Sisters, there were the Peters Sisters. Margaret Peters and Matilda Roumania Peters were both born in Georgetown in 1915 and 1917, respectively, growing up at 2710 O Street, N.W., just a few blocks away from the Rose Park playground at 26<sup>th</sup> & O Streets, N.W. Raised in a time of segregation in the District, Rose Park was one of the few spots where African-Americans could play sports such as basketball, volleyball, and, as the

Peters sisters took up, tennis.<sup>1</sup> As young children, the Peters sisters were drawn to the sport of tennis, sneaking out of their mother's house every day to squeeze in a couple of matches before returning home.

By 1936, the Peters sisters had refined their tennis skills to the point that they were drawing considerable attention and were invited to the black-organized American Tennis Association (ATA) tournament at Wilberforce University in Xenia, Ohio. Although Roumania lost in the finals, the sisters' performance was noted by several athletic directors in attendance and the tennis tag-team were recruited by Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, offering both sisters full scholarships to attend in 1937 where they further mastered their talents.<sup>2</sup>

After graduating in 1941 with degrees in physical education, the duo continued to dominate the tennis world with their signature slice serves, crackerjack chop shots, and battering backhands, winning several ATA doubles championships. Their talents earned them numerous accolades and fame, including an opportunity to play in front of the British Royal family during a trip to the Caribbean and matches with Gene Kelly whenever he was in the District.<sup>3</sup> In total, the serving sisters won 14 ATA doubles championships between the periods of 1938-1941 and 1944-1953, a record which still stands to this day.<sup>4</sup> In addition, Roumania, the younger of the two, won ATA national singles titles in 1944 and 1946, including defeating the legendary Althea Gibson in her latter championship, the only African-American woman to have done so.<sup>5</sup>

After retiring from their professional careers, the Peters sisters returned home to the District to begin teaching careers; Margaret became a special education teacher while Roumania taught physical education at Howard University in the 1950's and Dunbar High School from 1964 through 1981, while simultaneously serving as Dunbar's tennis coach and a stint as the girls basketball coach. Roumania also served as director of the tennis camp at Rose Park for approximately 20 years for the Department of Parks and Recreation. Though retired from the sport, the two sisters still never gave up on their passion for tennis, teaching the game and giving lessons to friends, family, and any others interested in the sport.

The Peters sisters were inducted into the Tuskegee Hall of Fame in 1977 and the Mid-Atlantic Hall of Fame for the United States Tennis Association, an organization that had formerly barred the Peters sisters and other African-Americans from playing, in 2003. Soon after their induction in the USTA Hall of Fame, Roumania Walker passed away in 2003 and Margaret passed shortly later in 2004.

The Peters sisters' accomplishments may not have ever been known had it not been for the work of several dedicated individuals, including Christopher Matthews of the blog *The*

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<sup>1</sup> Steven J. Niven, *Before Venus and Serena, There Were the Peters Sisters*, THE ROOT, March 4, 2015, [http://www.theroot.com/articles/history/2015/03/before\\_venus\\_and\\_serena\\_there\\_were\\_the\\_peters\\_sisters.html](http://www.theroot.com/articles/history/2015/03/before_venus_and_serena_there_were_the_peters_sisters.html) (last visited June 24, 2015).

<sup>2</sup> Id.

<sup>3</sup> Id.

<sup>4</sup> Davis Kennedy and Chris Kain, *A Rose for the Peters Sisters*, THE NORTHWEST CURRENT, June 10, 2015, at 8.

<sup>5</sup> Merlisa Lawrence Corbett, *Remembering the First Pair of African-American Sisters to Take Tennis by Storm*, BLEACHER REPORT, Feb. 9, 2015, <http://bleacherreport.com/articles/2353528-remembering-the-first-pair-of-african-american-sisters-to-take-tennis-by-storm> (last visited June 24, 2015).

*Georgetown Metropolitan*, who published an article in February of this year about the Peters sisters, drawing the attention from Friends of Rose Park and ANC 2E. After the ANC passed their resolution in favor of renaming the courts, Councilmember Jack Evans introduced the bill to officially rename the courts in tribute to the Peters sisters, ensuring their proud history and talents are remembered by all that visit the Rose Park courts.

The Committee applauds the work of all those that helped bring this issue to the Committee's attention, including Friends of Rose Park, ANC 2E, Fannie Walker Weekes and James Walker. The tennis courts where the Peters sisters honed their talents still serve the community to this day and renaming them in honor of "Pete and Repeat" is a fitting tribute to both District and African-American history. The Committee of the Whole recommends the approval of Bill 21-174, the "Margaret Peters and Roumania Peters Walker Tennis Courts Designation Act of 2015."

## II. LEGISLATIVE CHRONOLOGY

April 14, 2015	B21-174, the "Margaret Peters and Roumania Peters Walker Tennis Courts Designation Act of 2015" was introduced by Councilmember Jack Evans.
April 24, 2015	Notice of intent to Act on Bill 21-174 was published in the <i>DC Register</i> .
May 8, 2015	Notice of Public Hearing on Bill 21-174 is published in the <i>DC Register</i> .
June 3, 2015	A Public Hearing was held on Bill 21-174 by the Committee of the Whole.
June 30, 2015	The Committee of the Whole marks up Bill 21-174.

## III. POSITION OF THE EXECUTIVE

Jason Yuckenberg, Chief of Staff of the District Department of Parks and Recreation, testified on behalf of the Executive in support of Bill 21-174.

## IV. COMMENTS OF ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSIONS

Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) 2E, in which the proposed designation is located, voted to pass a resolution at its March 2, 2015 meeting stating "ANC 2E is pleased to support the efforts of the Friends of Rose Park to place a plaque at the Rose Park tennis courts honoring the Peters sisters".

## V. SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY

The Committee of the Whole held a public hearing on Bill 21-174 on Wednesday, June 3, 2015. The testimony summarized below is from that hearing. Copies of written testimony are attached to this report.

*David Abrams, Sr., Friends of Rose Park*, expressed support for the bill, testifying on behalf of Friends of Rose Park about the Peters sisters lives in the District and their storied tennis career that started on the Rose Park tennis courts, thanking the many individuals that helped bring the issue to the ANC's attention.

*Tom Birch, ANC 2E06 Commissioner*, testified about the history of Rose Park's tennis courts and its connections to African-American residents of Georgetown along with descriptions of the ANC's efforts to rename the courts after the Peters sisters.

*Monica Roache, ANC 2E07 Commissioner*, testified on behalf of her ANC expressing support for the bill while mentioning the personal relationship she had with Margaret and Roumania Peters both on and off the court, describing the tennis lessons she took as a young child from Roumania Peters Walker at Rose Park and worshipping together with the sisters at Epiphany Catholic Church in Georgetown.

*Fannie Walker Weekes, Daughter of Roumania Peters Walker*, expressed support for the bill and testified about her mother and aunt's early lives and playing careers, along with their post-tennis careers, when both sisters returned to the District to begin teaching careers; Roumania taught physical education at Dunbar High School and was their tennis coach as well as director of the tennis camp at Rose Park for the Department of Parks and Recreation for 20 years, while Margaret taught special education.

*James Walker, Son of Roumania Peters Walker*, testified in support of the bill, describing their lives in the District and their impressive careers, garnering several mentions in publications regarding African-American history in the District and in the sport of tennis.

*Jason Yuckenberg, Chief of Staff, Department of Parks and Recreation*, testified that the Executive supports Bill 21-174 and gave a summary of the Peters sisters' careers and discrimination they faced while playing.

## VI. IMPACT ON EXISTING LAW

Bill 21-174 has no impact on existing law. D.C. Official Code § 9-204.01 authorizes the Council to designate a name for any public space or commemorative work on public space, notwithstanding § 9-204.07 of the Act.

## VII. FISCAL IMPACT

Funds are sufficient in the fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2018 budget and financial plan to implement the provisions of the proposed legislation. The cost to the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) is minimal as the commemorative plaque has been donated by the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security and neighborhood resident Jeh Johnson and several pictures have been donated by the Abrams family of Friends of Rose Park. DPR will submit all forms for donations as required by law.

## VIII. SECTION-BY-SECTION ANALYSIS

<u>Section 1</u>	States the short title of the Bill 21-174.
<u>Section 2</u>	Designates the tennis courts at Rose Park, located at 2600 O Street, N.W., in Ward 2, as the “Margaret Peters and Roumania Peters Walker Tennis Courts.”
<u>Section 3</u>	Directs the Secretary of the Council to transmit a copy of this act to the Department of Parks and Recreation.
<u>Section 4</u>	Adopts the Fiscal Impact Statement
<u>Section 5</u>	Establishes the effective date by stating the standard 30-day Congressional review language.

## IX. COMMITTEE ACTION

## X. ATTACHMENTS

1. Bill 21-174 as introduced.
2. Written testimony, resolution from ANC 2E, and an editorial from *The Northwest Current*.
3. Fiscal Impact Statement.
4. Legal Sufficiency Review.

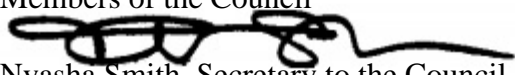
5. Committee Print for Bill 21-174.

**COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**  
**1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.**  
**Washington D.C. 20004**

Memorandum

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To : Members of the Council

From :   
Nyasha Smith, Secretary to the Council

Date : April 20, 2015

Subject : Referral of Proposed Legislation

Notice is given that the attached proposed legislation was introduced in the Legislative Meeting on Tuesday, April 14, 2015. Copies are available in Room 10, the Legislative Services Division.

TITLE: "Margaret Peters and Roumania Peters Walker Tennis Courts Designation Act of 2015", B21-0174

INTRODUCED BY: Councilmember Evans

CO-SPONSORED BY: Councilmembers Alexander, Cheh, Silverman, Bonds, and Grosso

The Chairman is referring this legislation to the Committee of the Whole.

Attachment

cc: General Counsel  
Budget Director  
Legislative Services

1  
2  
3  
4 A PROPOSED RESOLUTION  
5  
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7

8 IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
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11

12 To designate the tennis courts at Rose Park, located at 2600 O Street, N.W., in Ward 2, as the  
13 Margaret Peters and Roumania Peters Walker Tennis Courts.  
14

15 BE IT ENACTED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this  
16 act may be cited as the “Margaret Peters and Roumania Peters Walker Tennis Courts  
17 Designation Act of 2015”.

18 Sec. 2. Pursuant to section 401 of the Street and Alley Closing and Acquisition  
19 Procedures Act of 1982, effective March 10, 1983 (D.C. Law 4-201; D.C. Official Code § 9-  
20 204.01) (“Act”), and notwithstanding the requirements of section 407 (D.C. Official Code § 9-  
21 204.07) of the Act, the Council designates the tennis courts at Rose Park, located at 2600 O  
22 Street, N.W., in Ward 2, as the “Margaret Peters and Roumania Peters Walker Tennis Courts”.

23 Sec. 3. Transmittal.

24 The Secretary to the Council shall transmit a copy of this act, after it becomes effective,  
25 to the Department of Parks and Recreation.

26 Sec. 4. Fiscal impact statement.

27 The Council adopts the fiscal impact statement in the committee report as the fiscal  
28 impact statement required by section 602(c)(3) of the District of Columbia Home Rule Act,  
29 approved December 24, 1973 (87 Stat. 813; D.C. Official Code §1-206.02(c)(3)).  
30



1           Sec. 5. Effective date.

2           This act shall take effect following approval by the Mayor (or in the event of veto by the  
3 Mayor, action by the Council to override the veto), a 30-day period of congressional review as  
4 provided in section 602(c)(1) of the District of Columbia Home Rule Act, approved December  
5 24, 1973 (87 Stat. 813; D.C. Official Code §1-206.02(c)(1)), and publication in the District of  
6 Columbia Register.

**Testimony Of David Abrams,  
On Behalf Of Friends of Rose Park, Inc., In Support Of  
The “Margaret Peters and Roumania Peters Walker  
Tennis Courts Designation Act of 2015”, June 3, 2015**

Good afternoon. My name is David Abrams and I am here today on behalf of Friends of Rose Park to thank you all for providing the opportunity for us to present some information about Margaret Peters and Roumania Peters Walker, two African-American women who “wowed” the national, and international, courts of tennis back in the 1940s and 1950s. They also continuously “wowed” their family, their neighbors, their students and their friends throughout their lives.

Friends of Rose Park is honored to initiate this request to the City to name our Rose Park tennis courts in honor of these two remarkable women. Friends of Rose Park was organized 20 years ago to maintain and improve our park. We are a 501(c)(3) organization and have raised over \$500,000.00 over the past 20 years, all of which has been put back into the park to enhance its features.

The Peters Sisters grew up on O Street, NW in Georgetown during the early part of the last century. They learned to play tennis on the Rose Park tennis courts and perfected their skills throughout their teen years to the point where they were invited to attend Tuskegee Institute (now University) on full scholarships. Margaret, the older sister, waited for two years to accept the invitation so that both she and Roumania could attend at the same time.

These women were amazing – beginning in the 1940s they were the doubles champions of the American Tennis Association for 14 years straight. They have often been called the Venus and Serena Williams of their time. But, in truth, Venus and Serena Williams should be proud and honored to be called the Peters Sisters of *their* time!

After their tours on the tennis circuits, both sisters went on to teach in the DC Public School system. Margaret taught special education and Roumania taught PE at Dunbar High School.

For the Peters Sisters, I think the game of tennis was not just a game, but a simile for life. Roumania Peters is quoted in a Year Book from Dunbar High School as saying, and I hope I have this correct, "Give to the world the best that you have and in return it shall come back to you." Both sisters were known for their humility.

They practiced "process oriented" coaching, not "result oriented" coaching. They cared – genuinely cared – about the kids they were coaching. And they did not just "coach" – they "mentored" -- and those kids – and our community -- were the richer for their time, their energy, their teaching expertise and their love.

In closing, I want to thank Mrs. Fannie Walker Weeks and Mr. James Walker for being here to honor their mother and Aunt. I also want to thank Council Member Evans for all he has done to move this naming project along, and Christopher Matthews – Mr. Matthews is a lawyer who lives in Georgetown and who is very active in the Citizens Association of Georgetown. He writes a blog called "The Georgetown Metropolitan" and one day last February he published an article about the Peters Sisters and posed the question as to having the Rose Park tennis courts named in their honor. He was the initial catalyst for this journey. I also want to thank our local ANC2E Commissioners Tom Birch and Monica Roache' for their invaluable support and Pamla Moore and the Citizens Association of Georgetown for their whole-hearted support of this project. Thanks also need to be extended to U.S. Department of Homeland Security Cabinet Sectary Jeh Johnson and his wife, Susan DiMarco Johnson, who live across the street from our tennis courts and play on the courts. They are donating the plaque which will be installed at the courts honoring the Peters Sisters. Finally, we have been involved in a terrific relationship with the Department of Parks & Recreation for 20 years now and I want to thank Director Anderson and his staff for all the hard work they do for our City and its green spaces.

Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,

David L. Abrams, Friends of Rose Park  
1410 26<sup>th</sup> Street, NW, No. 1  
Washington, DC 20007  
(202) 351-9921 (C)

Testimony of Tom Birch  
Commissioner, ANC 2E-06  
Before the Committee of the Whole  
Council of the District of Columbia  
Wednesday, June 3, 2015  
John A. Wilson Building  
Washington, DC 20004

RE: Bill 21-174,  
Margaret Peters and Roumania Peters Walker Tennis Courts Designation Act of 2015

Mr. Chairman, my name is Tom Birch, ANC 2E Commissioner in Georgetown. I want to express our appreciation for your leadership in introducing the legislation before us here, and our thanks to you for holding this hearing to move that legislation forward.

I am delighted to be here today to speak about Rose Park, part of the district I represent on the ANC, and in particular about the important history of the park and its tennis courts with the African American residents of Georgetown.

Earlier this year, the Friends of Rose Park brought to the ANC a request to name the park's tennis courts after Margaret and Roumania Peters who were born and raised in Georgetown and gained fame nationally as athletes playing tennis which they learned on the courts near their home in Rose Park. As has been noted by many, the Peters sisters were the original Williams sisters, Venus and Serena, except that Margaret and Roumania played in an era when black athletes were confined to their own league in tennis.

Georgetown is a community soaked in history, yet most of us know very little about the facts of Georgetown's past. Those who were born and grew here and brought honor to the rhythm of life in our community are the foundation of that history. The Peters sisters are a piece of that past we are humbled to recognize and honor, for the fact is that there is no Georgetown history without African American history.

Last March, ANC 2E unanimously adopted a resolution to support an effort to name the Rose Park tennis courts after the Peters sisters, who grew up in Georgetown playing on the courts before they went on to highly successful professional careers.

Here is the resolution passed by the ANC:

"ANC 2E is proud to recognize the achievement of two Georgetown residents, the Peters sisters, Margaret and Roumania Peters, who distinguished themselves in the world of tennis, and started their careers in professional tennis playing as teenagers in the 1930s on the tennis courts at Rose Park near their home in Georgetown.

From the tennis courts of Rose Park, the Peters sisters went on to gain national recognition, first at Tuskegee Institute where the sisters were recruited to play on the tennis team and consistently won in the Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference, and later playing and winning their

matches in the American Tennis Association, a league formed for African-Americans to play competitive tennis when national tennis competitions were segregated by race.

Acknowledging the significance of Rose Park in the history of the Georgetown and in recognition of the history of our community enriched by the lives and achievements of Margaret and Roumania Peters, ANC 2E is pleased to support the efforts of the Friends of Rose Park to place a plaque at the Rose Park tennis courts honoring the Peters sisters.”

Thank you again for this hearing. We look forward to the expeditious passage of this legislation.

Testimony from ANC 2E Commissioner Monica L. Roache'  
Fifth Generation Georgetowner

ROSE PARK TENNIS COURTS: HONORING MARGARET AND ROUMANIA PETERS

**CHAIRMAN PHIL MENDELSON  
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

Good afternoon Councilmembers:

My name is Monica Roache. Today I am here to testify not only as ANC Commissioner for 2E07 but also as a resident and fifth generation Georgetowner. I am proud to say that I knew Margaret and Roumania Peters personally as close family friends. As a child I have wonderful memories of taking tennis lessons with Mrs. Roumania Peters Walker at the Rose Park Playground in Georgetown. Rose Park played a significant role in my upbringing and for my family living during the time of segregation. It was the only park in Georgetown that African Americans were allowed to enjoy. The Peters sisters were not only talented athletes and legends in Georgetown and throughout Washington they also gained national recognition for their remarkable athletic abilities. The Peter sisters left crowds speechless with their doubles play in the 1930, 40s, and 50s. Mrs. Roumania Peters Walker was also one of only two women who were able to beat the world renowned Althea Gibson in the singles championship held at Wilberforce University in 1946.

As a child growing up I was able to enjoy time with the Peters family off the tennis courts each Sunday as we worshiped at Epiphany Catholic Church in Georgetown. As parishioners they were actively involved in various services projects supporting the community. They were also key historians in recounting facts about the strong history and influence of African Americans in Georgetown. They contributed and were featured in the book Black Georgetown Remembered.

As a former tennis student, fellow parishioner, and family friend I strongly recommend that we recognize the achievement of the Peters sisters, Margaret and Roumania Peters who distinguished themselves in the world of tennis as African Americans.

Let's not forget that before Venus and Serena there were the dynamic, talented, athletically gifted Peters sisters. It is finally time to give them the recognition they deserve.

June 3, 2015

To: The Honorable Phil Mendelson, D.C. Council Chairman,  
Members of D.C. Council

From: Fannie Walker Weekes

Re: COW Public Hearing on B21-9, Ruby Whitfield Way Designation Act of 2015 and B21-174, Margaret Peters and Roumania Peters Walker Tennis Courts Designation Act of 2015 (6/3/15 at 12:00 pm)

Good afternoon, my name is Fannie Walker Weekes. I am the daughter of Roumania Peters Walker and niece of Margaret Peters. I would like to thank you for allowing me this opportunity to speak on behalf of my mother and aunt. I would also like to thank everyone who has been instrumental in this endeavor to rename the tennis courts after them.

My mother and aunt grew up at 2710 O Street, N.W., across from the tennis courts and taught themselves how to play tennis. My mother told me many stories of how my grandmother would tell them to stay on the porch and they would sneak off and go to the tennis court. My grandmother eventually stopped telling them to stay on the porch. Their ability in tennis earned them scholarships to Tuskegee Institute (now known as Tuskegee University). Tennis opened up a new world to them. They traveled with the tennis team at Tuskegee and played the American Tennis Association Tournament circuit. Their tennis prowess gained them the opportunity to play before the King and Queen of England. My mother Roumania, defeated Althea Gibson in 1946 in the finals of the American Tennis Association's Nationals and my mother and aunt won the Women's Doubles Title 14 times, ten of those were in a row from 1944 through 1953. This record has never been matched by any professional doubles team. They taught for several years at Tuskegee Institute, but eventually returned to Washington, D.C.

Roumania and Margaret returned to Washington, D.C. and began teaching careers here. Margaret became a special education teacher and my mother taught physical education at Dunbar High School in the city and was the tennis coach. She was also the girl's basketball coach for a few years at Dunbar. Roumania Peters Walker was also the Director of the tennis camp for approximately 20 years at Rose Park Playground for the D. C. Department of Recreation. My mother and aunt lived for tennis. It was part of their daily lives. In the summer, tennis camp ended at 4p.m., and it was then time for the adults to play. That meant that my mother would play at that time. After teaching children all day my mother still enjoyed playing. My aunt would also come in the evening to play. Their love of tennis did not stop with teaching children. They also taught adults that wanted to learn and they helped others that frequented the tennis courts

to improve their game. Thousands of children learned how to play tennis from my mother in the school system and at the tennis camp. As a child, I learned to share my mother not only with my brother but also with the many students that grew to love her and learned how to play tennis from her. They became family members. Not only did my mother teach them how to play, but also entered them in competitions and paid their entry fees and whatever was needed. As a family, we played tennis on a daily basis. It was our weekend activity too.

My mother Roumania Peters Walker and my aunt Margaret Peters were very humble. They would be honored that the members of the community feel that they are worthy of this honor. We have always been so very proud of them. It is a great honor to be recognized by the city. Thank you.

Sincerely,  
Fannie Walker Weekes



June 3, 2015

To: The Honorable Phil Mendelson, D.C. Council Chairman,  
Members of D.C. Council

From: James George Walker

Re: COW Public Hearing on B21-9, Ruby Whitfield Way Designation Act of 2015 and B21-174, Margaret Peters and Roumania Peters Walker Tennis Courts Designation Act of 2015 (6/3/15 at 12:00 pm)

Good afternoon, my name is James George Walker. I am the son of Roumania Peters Walker and nephew of Margaret Peters. I would like to thank you for allowing me this opportunity to speak on behalf of my mother and aunt. I would also like to thank everyone who has been instrumental in this endeavor to rename the tennis courts after them.

My mother Roumania Peters Walker defeated Althea Gibson in 1946 in the finals of the American Tennis Association's National Championship. She won the first title in 1944. In winning the title in 1946, she became one of only two Black women to defeat Althea Gibson. My mother and aunt have been written about in several books including, Althea Gibson's discussion of her defeat to my mother in her book I Always Wanted to Be Somebody. My mother and aunt are mentioned in Black Georgetown Remembered, A Hard Road to Glory by Arthur Ash and in The Negro Sports by Warren E. Henderson and The Negro in Sports by Arna Bontemps. They were featured in the February/March 2002 issue of the United States Tennis Association (USTA)/Pacific Northwest Section of the Tennis Times, and Camille Moseley featured them in her book Outside The Line. My mother and aunt were inducted into the Middle Atlantic Tennis Hall of Fame in 2003 and they were inducted into the Tuskegee University Athletic Hall of Fame.

My mother and aunt were very close and did everything together. They are products of the D.C. Public School System. My aunt graduated from Dunbar High School and my mother graduated from Armstrong High School. My aunt was three years older than my mother and she waited to attend college at Tuskegee University until my mother graduated from high school and they could attend together. They were raised in Georgetown and loved their community. After teaching themselves how to play tennis at Rose Park, it was only natural for my mother to conduct the tennis camp and teach children the sport she loved. And for my aunt to continue playing there. I thank you for naming the tennis courts that they learned to play tennis on after them. They would be so happy and honored to know that the community felt they are worthy of this honor. We have always been so very proud of them. It is a great honor to be recognized by the city. Thank you.

Sincerely,  
James George Walker

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

**Department of Parks and Recreation**



Margaret Peters and Romania Peters Walker  
Tennis Courts Designation Act of 2015  
Bill 21-174

Testimony of  
Jason Yuckenberg  
Acting Chief of Staff

Before the  
Committee of the Whole  
Council of the District of Columbia

June 3, 2015  
Council Chamber  
John A. Wilson Building  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20004

Good morning Chairman Mendelson and members of the Committee. I am Jason Yuckenberg, Acting Chief of Staff at the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR). I am pleased to testify before you today on behalf of Director Keith Anderson (DPR) and Mayor Muriel Bowser in support of Bill 21-174 to designate the tennis courts at Rose Park in honor of Margaret Peters and Roumania Peters Walker.

On March 19, 2015, DPR, along with Mayor Bowser, received a letter from the Friends of Rose Park asking for support to rename the Rose Park tennis courts in honor of homegrown heroes, Margaret and Matilda Roumania Peters-- two sisters from Georgetown who excelled in doubles tennis play in the 1930s, 40s and 50s. Upon receipt of the letter, Mayor Bowser immediately reached out to DPR to express her support for this endeavor.

Being a lifetime resident of the District and a history enthusiast, Director Anderson was excited to read the biography of the Peters sisters, affectionately nicknamed "Pete" and "Re-Pete", and was blown away by their remarkable story and athletic accomplishments.

The Peters sisters stand for excellence, determination, and professionalism in tennis--- some of the same values we strive to embody everyday at DPR. Known for their slice serves and powerful backhands, the sisters could often be spotted at the Rose Park tennis courts practicing their skills. In 1935 the sisters made their way into the American Tennis Association (ATA), a league formed to give African-Americans a chance to play competitive tennis at a national level. Founded in 1916 here in the District, the ATA is the oldest black sports organization in the U.S. In 1937, both sisters were recruited to play for Tuskegee University on full scholarship.

In the 1940s, another tennis star, Althea Gibson, younger than the Peters sisters by nearly a decade, moved quickly up the ranks of the ATA tour. She won the national championship in 1944 and 1945. In 1946, Gibson suffered a loss in the finals before winning another 10 straight titles. That loss was to Matilda Roumania "Re-Pete" Peters, the younger Peters sister.

Overall, the Peters sisters dominated during their time on the ATA tour, winning 14 doubles championships, a record that still remains today. Additionally, Matilda won two ATA singles titles.

The sisters were inducted into the USTA's Mid-Atlantic Section Hall of Fame in November 2003 and into the Black Tennis Hall of Fame in 2012.

At a time when segregation and discrimination often forced the ATA to hold most tournaments at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), tournaments became social events for many affluent African Americans. The annual national championships were highly anticipated by many and included parties, formal dances and fashion shows. The Peters sisters were often asked to pose for publicity shots and sign autographs. Crowds of blacks and whites alike traveled to watch them play, which was unusual given the racial and socio-economic divide at the time.

In 2003, the USTA, the same organization that denied African-Americans a chance to compete during most of the sisters' careers, honored the Peters duo with an Achievement Award during the Fed Cup quarterfinals here in Washington, DC.

The Peters sisters also paved the way for other women athletes. Long before Venus and Serena Williams took the tennis world by storm, the Peters sisters preceded Althea Gibson, Lori McNeil, Chanda Rubin and Zina Garrison –all professional powerhouses and all better off because of the accomplishments of the Peters sisters. By the time color lines began to be broken, the sisters were in their 30s, about the age Venus and Serena Williams are now. As you can see, for tennis history, African American history, Women’s history, and DC and American history, the Peters sisters were truly game changers.

While the sisters were prohibited from playing in the USTA, we believe their experiences were the foundation and origin of our strong tennis facilities and programs leading DPR to achieve four awards from the USTA, including the best DC Tennis Organization, Coach, overall Excellence and the Mid-Atlantic Tennis Organization of the Year award. . The designation of *the Margaret Peters and Romania Peters Walker Tennis Courts* ensures that the honor and tradition of world class tennis carries on at DPR. DPR is dedicated to supporting the sport of tennis for all residents, those from our past and present, and for those who dare to dream of great accomplishments or for those who just enjoying a lesson or game for fun.

We would like to thank the Friends of Rose Park for their generosity in investing substantial time, talent and resources in caring for and improving Rose Park for over twenty years. We would like to thank the Southeast Tennis Learning Center and DPR’s Sports, Health and Fitness Division for providing outstanding leadership in the sport of tennis at DPR.

In closing, DPR aspires to carry on the honor and tradition of the Peters sisters in its demonstration of excellence, determination, and professionalism in tennis. And we fully support the efforts to designate the Rose Park tennis courts as the *Margaret Peters and Romania Peters Walker Tennis Courts* to ensure the legacy of the Peters sisters lives on at DPR and throughout the District. Thank you.

# THE NORTHWEST CURRENT

Davis Kennedy/Publisher & Editor

Chris Kain/Managing Editor

## A rose for the Peters sisters

In the 1930s, a pair of teenage sisters taught themselves to play tennis at Georgetown's Rose Park. It wasn't a "fancy venue," the elder sister later told the author of "Black Georgetown Remembered." The courts were covered with "sand, dirt, rocks" that Margaret and Roumania Peters had to remove before they could practice.

But the location was convenient, just steps from their O Street home. It was also one of the few D.C. courts where African-Americans could play at the time. Reflecting the surrounding community, Rose Park was primarily a black gathering spot, where "many of the neighborhood's black youth congregated for games and fun," according to the 1991 book "Black Georgetown Remembered."

The national tennis scene was segregated during this period, too. So as the Peters sisters played their way to fame, it was in the black-organized American Tennis Association, rather than the white United States Lawn Tennis Association (now the integrated USTA). The pair won 14 doubles tournaments in the league from the 1930s through the 1950s, becoming local heroes. They were inducted into multiple halls of fame, and even the USTA honored them during a local event in the early 2000s.

But their story isn't widely known. Though now often compared with today's Williams sisters — a headline on [theroot.com](http://theroot.com) reads, "Before Venus and Serena, There Were the Peters Sisters" — Margaret and Roumania aren't exactly household names. We suspect most of Rose Park's present-day racket wielders have never had of them.

That last part, at least, should change soon: The group Friends of Rose Park has proposed naming the courts after the Peters pair, and the idea has gotten traction. Ward 2 D.C. Council member Jack Evans proposed legislation authorizing the dedication, and a hearing last week drew nothing but support.

We would like to join in the chorus of proponents. The sisters' remarkable athletic achievements warrant local recognition, particularly in a neighborhood known more for its beautiful homes than its history as an African-American community. The Peters sisters also created admirable post-tennis careers: Both taught at D.C. schools, and Roumania and her husband ran a beloved tennis camp at the park. Their story both inspires and illuminates, and we thank the Friends of Rose Park for bringing it to the city's attention.

## ROSE PARK TENNIS COURTS: HONORING MARGARET AND ROUMANIA PETERS

ANC 2E is proud to recognize the achievement of two Georgetown residents, the Peters sisters, Margaret and Roumania Peters, who distinguished themselves in the world of tennis, and started their careers in professional tennis playing as teenagers in the 1930s on the tennis courts at Rose Park near their home in Georgetown. Rose Park is an important piece of the history of the African American residents of Georgetown; according to *Black Georgetown Remembered*, published in 1991 by Georgetown University, Rose Park was one of the few early integrated playgrounds in the District of Columbia.

From the tennis courts of Rose Park, the Peters sisters went on to gain national recognition, first at Tuskegee Institute where the sisters were recruited to play on the tennis team and consistently won in the Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference, and later playing and winning their matches in the American Tennis Association, a league formed to give African-Americans a chance to play competitive tennis at the national level.

Acknowledging the significance of Rose Park in the history of the Georgetown and in recognition of the history of our community enriched by the lives and achievements of Margaret and Roumania Peters, ANC 2E is pleased to support the efforts of the Friends of Rose Park to place a plaque at the Rose Park tennis courts honoring the Peters sisters.



Government of the District of Columbia  
Office of the Chief Financial Officer



Jeffrey S. DeWitt  
Chief Financial Officer

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** The Honorable Phil Mendelson  
Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia

**FROM:** Jeffrey S. DeWitt  
Chief Financial Officer

**DATE:** June 18, 2015

**SUBJECT:** Fiscal Impact Statement -Margaret Peters and Roumania Peters  
Walker Tennis Courts Designation Act of 2015

**REFERENCE:** Bill 21-174, as introduced

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**Conclusion**

Funds are sufficient in the FY 2015 budget and the proposed FY 2016 through FY 2019 budget and financial plan to implement the bill.

**Background**

The bill symbolically designates the tennis courts at Rose Park, located at 2600 O St., N.W. as "Margaret Peters and Roumania Peters Walker Tennis Courts."

**Financial Plan Impact**

Funds are sufficient in FY 2015 budget and the proposed FY 2016 through FY 2019 budget and financial plan. The signage costs are minor and can be absorbed in the District's budget.



OFFICE OF THE GENERAL COUNSEL

Council of the District of Columbia  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Suite 4  
Washington, DC 20004  
(202) 724-8026

MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Chairman Phil Mendelson

**FROM:** Ellen Efros, General Counsel *EAE*

**DATE:** June 19, 2015

**RE:** Legal sufficiency determination for Bill 21-174, the  
Margaret Peters and Roumania Peters Walker Tennis  
Courts Designation Act of 2015

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The measure is legally and technically sufficient for Council consideration.

The proposed bill would designate the tennis courts at Rose Park, located at 2600 O Street, N.W., as the "Margaret Peters and Roumania Peters Walker Tennis Courts," pursuant to section 401, and notwithstanding section 407, of the Street and Alley Closing Acquisition Procedures Act of 1982, effective March 10, 1983 (D.C. Law 4-201; D.C. Official Code §§ 9-204.01 and 9-204.07).

I am available if you have any questions.

1 **DRAFT COMMITTEE PRINT**

2 Committee of the Whole

3 June 30, 2015

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A BILL

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21-174

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IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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To designate the tennis courts at Rose Park, located at 2600 O Street, N.W., in Ward 2, as the Margaret Peters and Roumania Peters Walker Tennis Courts.

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BE IT ENACTED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this

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act may be cited as the “Margaret Peters and Roumania Peters Walker Tennis Courts

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Designation Act of 2015.”

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Sec. 2. Pursuant to sections 401 of the Street and Alley Closing and Acquisition

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Procedures Act of 1982, effective March 10, 1983 (D.C. Law 4-201; D.C. Official Code §§ 9-

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204.01) (“Act”), and notwithstanding the requirements of section 407 (D.C. Official Code 9-

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204.07) of the Act, the Council designates the tennis courts at Rose Park, located at 2600 O

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Street, N.W., in Ward 2, as the “Margaret Peters and Roumania Peters Walker Tennis Courts”.

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Sec. 3. Transmittal.

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The Chairman of the Council shall transmit a copy of this act, upon its effective date, to

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the Director of the District Department of Transportation.

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Sec. 4. Fiscal impact statement.

35           The Council adopts the fiscal impact statement provided in the committee report as the  
36 fiscal impact statement required by section 602(c)(3) of the District of Columbia Home Rule  
37 Act, approved December 24, 1973 (87 Stat. 813; D.C. Official Code §1-206.02(c)(3)).

38           Sec. 5. Effective date.

39           This act shall take effect following approval by the Mayor (or in the event of veto by the  
40 Mayor, action by the Council to override the veto), a 30-day period of congressional review as  
41 provided in section 602(c)(1) of the District of Columbia Home Rule Act, approved December  
42 24, 1973 (87 Stat. 813; D.C. Official Code §1-206.02(c)(1)), and publication in the District of  
43 Columbia Register.