

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

1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20004

DRAFT

TO: All Councilmembers

FROM: Chairman Phil Mendelson
Committee of the Whole

DATE: January 21, 2020

SUBJECT: Report on Bill 23-619, the “Lafayette-Pointer Recreation Complex Designation Act of 2020”

The Committee of the Whole, to which Bill 23-619, the “Lafayette-Pointer Recreation Complex Designation Act of 2020” was referred, reports favorably thereon with technical amendments, and recommends approval by the Council.

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I. BACKGROUND AND NEED

On January 21, 2020, Bill 23-619, the “Lafayette-Pointer Recreation Complex Designation Act of 2020,”¹ was introduced by Councilmember Brandon Todd to officially designate the park and recreation center located in Lot 806 in Square 2011 as Lafayette-Pointer Park and Lafayette-Pointer Recreation Center. An official naming of a public space typically enables installation of signage.

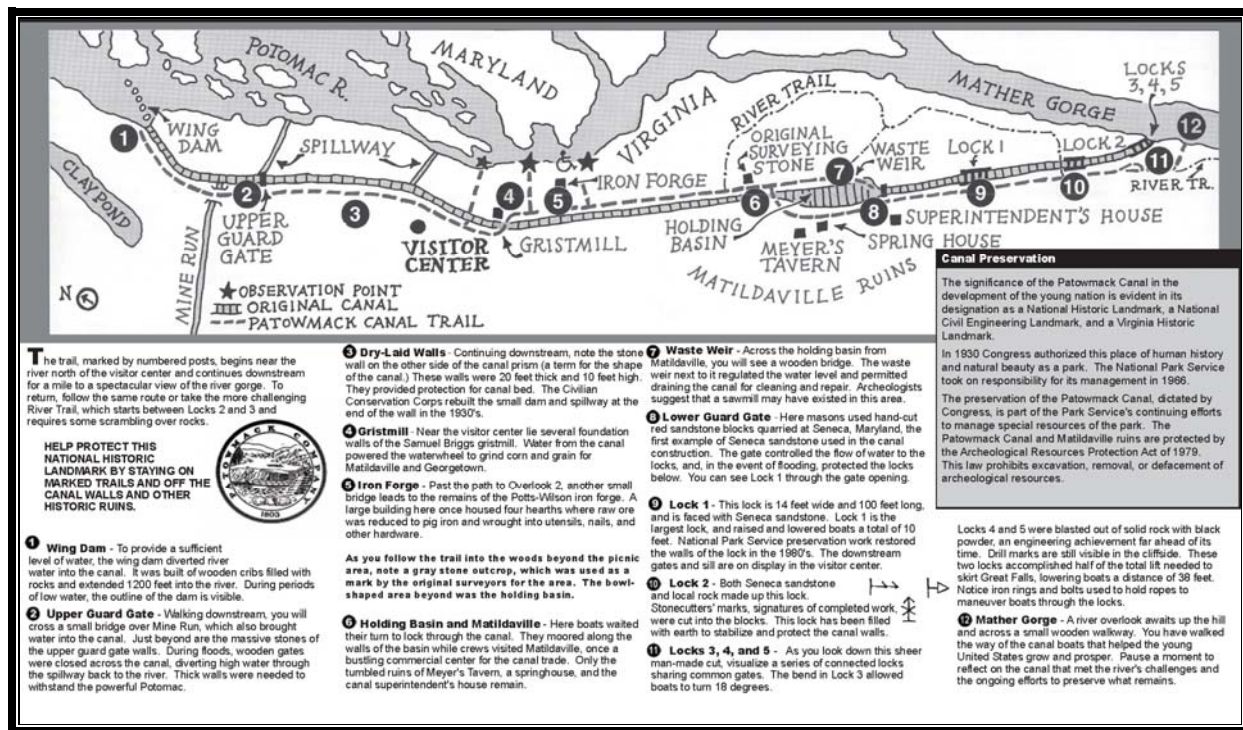
George Pointer was born into slavery in Frederick County, Maryland on October 11, 1773. By age 13, Pointer could read and write, despite his age, being a slave, and residing in a rural area. At the same time, he was “rented” to the Patowmack Company – an early venture of future President George Washington founded to make the Potomac River navigable around turbulent

¹ Originally introduced as the “Lafayette-Pointer Park and Lafayette-Pointer Recreation Center Designation Act of 2020.”

sections of the river from the just downstream of Great Falls all the way north to the Ohio River. Work on the canal system began in 1785.²

Mr. Pointer's first assignment at the Patowmack Company was guarding the black powder magazine that stored the gun powder used to build the canal. However, Mr. Pointer eagerly absorbed and quickly mastered various other skills related to engineering the canal. By 1788, Pointer, then 15 years old, was selected to accompany the Chief Engineer on a 218-mile surveying and mapping expedition upriver. Patowmack Company workers were paid monthly wages and daily rations, but as an enslaved person, Pointer's master only allowed him to keep a portion of these wages. After five years, Mr. Pointer saved enough to buy his own freedom for the sum of \$300 in 1793 at the age of 19.³

Map of Great Falls Segment of Patowmack Canal System



Source: National Park Service Trail Maps

At the time of his freedom (which was hardly free at the time for most former slaves), Mr. Pointer had become an invaluable asset to the Patowmack Company not as a laborer, but for his expertise. However, in the time after the Revolutionary War, freed slaves were required to leave the state in which they gained their freedom. Registering as a free man would have meant he could no longer work on the canal project which neither he nor his now-employer would have wanted. Therefore, he was never officially documented as free – an arrangement in this case benefiting his career and his employer. By this, Pointer had documented in a later letter that he had interacted on various occasions with Patowmack leadership, including then-President George Washington. His being known as an invaluable asset to the Company's leadership likely provided a layer of

² James Fisher *et al*, Captain George Pointer at 1 (attached). [hereinafter Fisher Paper]

³ *Id.*

protection from slave catchers that would have otherwise attempted to capture him and sell him back into slavery.⁴

Most of Mr. Pointer's work on the canal was focused on the area around Great Falls, Virginia. In 1796, 22-year old now-Captain Pointer was made a supervisor of five boats that transported stone blocks from quarries upstream to near the falls to build out the canal and its locks. Captain Pointer was so trusted by the Company that he was put in charge of clearing private boats out of the way of the canal project in the Great Falls basin. Such a position of trust was fairly unheard of at the time for a freed Black man, and the Company records even gave Pointer the title of "Mr." which was rarely bestowed on anyone but a white man. In 1795, the Patowmack Company hired a new Superintendent that was notoriously difficult to work with. Rather than work for such a man, Pointer bought his own river boat by 1802, left the company, and contracted with the company to provide his private services. Four years later, the Company fired that Superintendent, after which Captain Pointer was rehired.⁵

In 1807, as a result of the new canal system, the Potomac River was navigable for over 50 miles above Georgetown. The canal was making money up until the War of 1812, which drove canal traffic eastward as many feared that the British may take over the Potomac River canals. The resulting lost revenues along with a severe rain drought place the company in a difficult position. By 1816, then-Superintendent Josias Thompson was ready to resign, but asked Captain Pointer to accompany him to a meeting of the Company's Board of Directors. Mr. Thompson told the Board, which was reluctant to see him leave, that Captain Pointer had "experience enough to superintend any work on the Potomac." Such a suggestion at the time likely left the all-white Board silent. However, the Board followed the suggestion of Mr. Thompson and Captain George Pointer became Engineering Superintendent with responsibility over the Great Falls work and work upstream at the Seneca Canal. Pointer is one of the first Black men to ascend to the top of an American-owned company, and it has been written that Pointer, along with Benjamin Banneker and Philip Reid, were some of the most prominent Black men to contribute to the building of the Capital City. Despite Captain Pointer's contributions to the canal project, the Patowmack Company continued to face financial struggles. In 1828 the Board filed for bankruptcy. Captain Pointer was retained as a contractor to maintain the canal system until the system went defunct.

Shortly after buying his freedom, Captain Pointer married a free woman named Elizabeth Townsend who was most likely of Native American descent. They would go on to have three children. The Pointers lived in a cottage provided by the Company near Great Falls at what is now Lock 6 of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal (C&O Canal).⁶ Captain Pointer lived in the cabin for over 40 years. However, by 1829, his "modest little cabin" along the river was at risk of destruction due to its being in the planned path of the new C&O Canal. Captain Pointer wrote a letter to the Board of the C&O Canal Company protesting the canal's planned path. It was in this letter that he recounted the history of his life and of the Patowmack Canal Company – some of the only contemporaneous documentation of his incredible journey. Just a year earlier, President John Quincy Adams had travelled to a celebration for the groundbreaking of the C&O Canal that took

⁴ Fisher Paper at 2.

⁵ Fisher Paper at 4.

⁶ Anna-Lysa Gayle, *Man traces ancestry to former slave who bought his freedom at 19, became an engineer*, WJLA ABC 7, February 18, 2019 (<https://wjla.com/news/local/ancestry-former-slave-bought-freedom-engineer>).

place just yards from the Pointer cabin. In fact, George Pointer's granddaughter, Mary Ann Plummer, was the pilot of the boat that brought the President to the site from Georgetown.⁷ Captain George Pointer died in 1832.⁸

Pointer Family Descendants' Properties



Source: Baist's Real Estate Atlas of Surveys of Washington, DC (1919)

Mary Moten House



CANAL CHILD. Mary Moten, 73-year-old daughter of the Mary Harris who piloted President John Quincy Adams and his party up the old Potomac Canal to the ground breaking for the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal 100 years ago. She lives at 5803 Broad Branch road, Chevy Chase.

Source: The Washington Post, June 2, 1928

By 1840, Mary Ann Plummer (Captain Pointer's granddaughter) had married Thomas Harris. Around 1850 they acquired land Broad Branch Road in Northwest Washington, DC. According to census records, the Harris family and their descendants lived on the Broad Branch property for decades. In all, Mary Ann and Thomas had eight children.⁹ Two of their sons, John and Joseph Harris, enlisted in the Union army in July 1863 at Mason's Island (now Theodore Roosevelt Island) which was a training camp used by the 1st United States Colored Infantry and housed 1,200 formerly enslaved people under the authority of the Union army.¹⁰ The youngest daughter was named Mary Ann was born in 1858 and married Armsted Morton (Moten). They continued to live at the Broad Branch property and raised four children of their own there. Their oldest, John Armsted married Annie Taylor and who also stayed at the same property. From 1860 to 1890, the family divided the large property to form a compound of five or six houses, all occupied by family members and descendants.¹¹ However, in 1928, the National Capital Park and Planning Commission (now the National Capital Planning Commission) acquired the family's land

⁷ Fisher Paper at 5.

⁸ Neil Flanagan, *You Should Know About George Pointer*, Washington City Paper, July 19, 2018.

⁹ *Mary Ann Plummer Harris, granddaughter of George Pointer, Bought Land on Broad Branch Road*, HISTORIC CHEVY CHASE DC (<https://www.historicchevychasedc.org/lafayette-pointer-project/story-of-mary-ann-plummer-harris-great-granddaughter-of-george-pointer/>).

¹⁰ National Park Service, *Theodore Roosevelt Island*, HERITAGE DOCUMENTATION PROGRAMS, (November 20, 2020) <https://www.nps.gov/hdp/exhibits/african/roosevelt.htm>.

¹¹ Neil Flanagan, *You Should Know About George Pointer*, Washington City Paper, July 19, 2018.

through eminent domain transferring ownership of most of the land in then Parcel 48 (now square 2012) to the District of Columbia for the purpose of a new school to serve white residents.¹² Adjacent land in square 2011 became a park with a later recreation center added.

James Fisher, a seventh-generation descendant of Captain Pointer, conducted extensive genealogical research to establish his own familial connection to Pointer and his descendants. He eventually found, at the National Archives, the twelve-page letter that George Pointer wrote in 1829 urging that the C&O Canal not displace his home. In that letter, Pointer, in his own hand, had laid out his remarkable history. Working with local historians, he was able to tie his family's history to the Chevy Chase neighborhood. In 2015, a group of more than 100 descendants of George Pointer gathered for a family reunion picnic in Lafayette Park, near the land that their forebearers had lived on.¹³

Mr. Fisher then began a quest to bring the history of George Pointer and of the land that his ancestors had taken away. He found support amongst Chevy Chase residents that had come to grips with the history of deliberately segregating Northwest neighborhoods through displacement. Beginning in 2019, Mr. Fisher worked with Historic Chevy Chase DC to raise awareness of George Pointer by engaging the local Advisory Neighborhood Commission and the Council, resulting in the introduction of Bill 23-619 to add the Pointer name to the park and recreation center.¹⁴

Captain George Pointer was a remarkable individual who contributed to the founding of the District of Columbia and building out its infrastructure. His descendants established deep roots in Northwest DC only to be displaced to make way for an expanding white community. We now recognize the injustice of such acts, which were not limited to this family. Indeed, Reno City, a community north of Tenleytown made up of many former slaves was condemned in the 1950s to make way for open space and schools for white families.¹⁵ Woodrow Wilson High School, adjacent to the former Reno City, was named for who is now understood to be a racist former President. While these injustices cannot be undone, the District can and should do more to acknowledge this history and highlight those that were affected. Adding the Pointer name to Lafayette Park and Lafayette recreation center¹⁶ will help preserve the history of this important family and the land they called home.

Legal Background

The Street and Alley Closing and Acquisition Procedures Act of 1982, effective March 10, 1983 (D.C. Law 4-201; D.C. Official Code § 9-204.01 *et seq.*) (“Act”) establishes procedures for closing streets and alleys, opening new streets and alleys, and the naming of public spaces.

¹² See attached Deed transferring ownership of one of Mary Moten’s parcels to the District of Columbia.

¹³ *Pointer Descendants 2015 Reunion Picnic Held at Lafayette Park*, HISTORIC CHEVY CHASE DC (<https://www.historicchevychasedc.org/lafayette-pointer-project/pointer-descendants-family-2015-reunion-picnic-held-at-lafayette-park/>).

¹⁴ *Black Families Once Owned Part of Lafayette Park*, HISTORIC CHEVY CHASE DC (<https://www.historicchevychasedc.org/category/lafayette-pointer-project/>).

¹⁵ Michael Quender, Slavery revelations spark conversations about destroyed black community, WUSA 9, Apr. 11, 2018.

¹⁶ The park, recreation center, and adjacent school are all named for the Marquis de Lafayette, a white French military officer who fought in the Revolutionary War. Lafayette lived during the same time as Captain George Pointer and was widely known to support abolitionist causes.

Specifically, the Act authorizes the Council to designate or change the name of any public space in the District of Columbia.¹⁷ Public spaces include “any public street, alley, circle, bridge, building, park, other public place or property owned by or under the administrative control or jurisdiction of the District of Columbia.”¹⁸

The Act establishes a notice requirement for the official designation of public spaces; at least 30 days prior to the scheduled public hearing, the initiator of the proposed designation shall submit a copy of the legislation for review and comment to each Advisory Neighborhood Commission (“ANC”) in which the public space is located. Regarding Bill 23-619, ANC 3/4G was notified of the proposed name on August 6, 2020. The Committee received testimony and a resolution from ANC 3/4G expressing support for the Lafayette-Pointer designation.

The Act also promulgates requirements that the Mayor must meet prior to consideration of a public space designation by the Council. First, the Mayor shall provide the Council with comments on the proposed designation submitted by any District agency with jurisdiction over the public space to be designated.¹⁹ DPR, which will have jurisdiction over Oxon Run Park attended the November 26, 2019 hearing on Bill 23-619 and submitted supportive comments as part of its testimony, thus meeting this requirement. Second, prior to consideration of a designation by the Council, the Mayor shall provide to the Council a surveyor’s plat showing the public space to be designated, including any adjacent and abutting squares to the designation.²⁰ The Office of the Surveyor provided the Council with a plat of the designation prior to the hearing of the Committee of the Whole and subsequently provided an updated plat reflecting the park and recreation center facilities. That updated plat is attached to this report.

In addition, the Act requires that “No public space in the District of Columbia shall be given the same name as that given another public space in the District.” The square just north of the White House is designated by the Federal government as “Lafayette Square” for the same Marquis de Lafayette, however, that area is not under the District’s jurisdiction. In addition, DPR testified that the Lafayette Park and the recreation center in the park are considered a single complex. Accordingly, with the adoption of Bill 23-619 all aspects of the Lafayette Park and Recreation Center complex will be known as Lafayette-Pointer.

After the legislation becomes law and all conditions required by the Council and the Act have been satisfied, the Mayor will install signage denoting the public space name.²¹ The signage shall conform to the policies of the agency with jurisdiction over the public space, in this case DPR.²² Additionally, the Surveyor of the District of Columbia shall record a copy of the act and the Surveyor’s plat in the Office of the Surveyor.²³

¹⁷ See D.C. Official Code § 9-204.01 *et seq.*

¹⁸ D.C. Official Code § 9-204.11(2)(A).

¹⁹ D.C. Official Code § 9-204.22(b).

²⁰ D.C. Official Code § 9-204.22(c)(1)-(3).

²¹ D.C. Official Code § 9-204.24(b).

²² *Id.*

²³ D.C. Official Code § 9-204.24(c).

Conclusion

Officially designating this complex as Lafayette-Pointer Park and Lafayette Pointer Recreation Center will honor Captain George Pointer and his descendants' contributions to the District. Thus, the Committee of the Whole recommends the approval of Bill 23-619, the "Lafayette-Pointer Recreation Complex Designation Act of 2019."

II. LEGISLATIVE CHRONOLOGY

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| January 21, 2020 | Bill 23-619, the "Lafayette-Pointer Recreation Complex Designation Act of 2019" is introduced by Councilmember Todd. |
| January 31, 2020 | Notice of Intent to Act on Bill 23-619 is published in the <i>DC Register</i> . |
| February 4, 2020 | Bill 23-619 is "read" at a Legislative Meeting and the referral to the Committee of the Whole is official. |
| August 7, 2020 | Notice of Public Hearing on Bill 23-619 is published in the <i>DC Register</i> . |
| September 15, 2020 | A Public Hearing is held on Bill 23-619 by the Committee of the Whole. |
| December 1, 2020 | The Committee of the Whole marks up Bill 23-619. |

III. POSITION OF THE EXECUTIVE

Ella Faulkner, Deputy Director of Administrative Services, Department of Parks and Recreation, testified that the Executive supports the proposed designation. Her testimony is attached as well as summarized below.

IV. COMMENTS OF ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSIONS

Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3/4G provided a testimony on behalf of the entire ANC expressing community support for the proposed naming and provided a resolution adopted by the ANC in support by a vote of 4-0-0 which is attached.

V. SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY

The Committee of the Whole held a public hearing on several bills including Bill 23-619 on September 15, 2020. The testimony summarized below pertains to Bill 23-619. Copies of written testimony are attached to this report.

Carl Lankowski, President, Historic Chevy Chase DC, testified in support of the proposed designation.

James Fisher, Descendant of Captain George Pointer, testified in support of the proposed designation and discussed his family’s history and connection to the site.

Commissioner Randy Speck, ANC 3/4G, testified in support of the proposed designation on behalf of the ANC.

Clara Tiggy-Green and Barbara Torrey, Co-Authors, “Between Freedom and Equality, The History of an African-American Family in the District of Columbia”, testified in support of the proposed designation and discussed the historical synergy between Lafayette and Pointer.

Penelope Mason, 6th Grader, Alice Deal Middle School, testified in support of the proposed designation.

Marleigh McKay, 6th Grader, Alice Deal Middle School, testified in support of the proposed designation.

Ella Faulkner, Deputy Director for Administrative Services, Department of Parks and Recreation, testified that the Executive has no objection to Bill 23-619.

The Committee received no testimony or comments in opposition to Bill 23-619.

VI. IMPACT ON EXISTING LAW

Bill 23-619 has no impact on existing law. D.C. Official Code § 9-204.01 authorizes the Council to designate (i.e. name) any public space, including facilities.²⁴ Further, the Act generally provides that no public space shall be named in honor of any living person or in honor of any person who has been deceased less than two years.²⁵ Mr. Pointer passed away in 2013.

VII. FISCAL IMPACT

Funds are sufficient in the fiscal year 2020 through fiscal year 2023 budget and financial plan to implement the provisions of the proposed legislation. DPR testified that fabrication of signage for the new park can be absorbed, as noted in the Fiscal Impact Statement (attached).

VIII. SECTION-BY-SECTION ANALYSIS

Section 1 States the short title of Bill 23-619.

Section 2 Officially designates the park and recreation center located in Lot 806 in Square 2011 as Lafayette-Pointer Park and Lafayette-Pointer Recreation Center.

Section 3 Adopts the Fiscal Impact Statement.

²⁴ Street and Alley Closing and Acquisition Procedures Act of 1982, effective March 10, 1983 (D.C. Law 4-201).

²⁵ See D.C. Code § 9-204.05.

Section 4 Establishes the effective date by stating the standard 30-day congressional review language.

IX. COMMITTEE ACTION

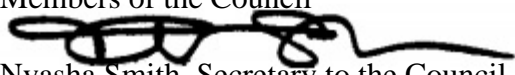
X. ATTACHMENTS

1. Bill 23-619 as introduced.
2. Written Testimony and supporting documents.
3. Surveyor's Plat.
4. Proof of Notice.
5. Fiscal Impact Statement for Bill 23-619.
6. Legal Sufficiency Determination for Bill 23-619.
7. Committee Print for Bill 23-619.

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

Memorandum

To : Members of the Council

From : 
Nyasha Smith, Secretary to the Council

Date : January 23, 2020

Subject : Referral of Proposed Legislation

Notice is given that the attached proposed legislation was introduced in the Office of the Secretary on Tuesday, January 21, 2020. Copies are available in Room 10, the Legislative Services Division.

TITLE: "Lafayette-Pointer Park and Lafayette-Pointer Recreation Center Designation Act of 2020", B23-0619

INTRODUCED BY: Councilmember Todd

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

Attachment

cc: General Counsel
Budget Director
Legislative Services

Z-T.F.M

Councilmember Brandon T. Todd

A BILL

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

To officially designate Lafayette Park located at 5900 33rd Street and Quesada Street NW as the Lafayette-Pointer Park and to designate the Lafayette Recreation Center as the Lafayette-Pointer Recreation Center.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this act may be cited as the "Lafayette-Pointer Park and Lafayette-Pointer Recreation Center Designation Act of 2020".

Sec. 3, Designations.

(a) Pursuant to sections 401 of the Street and Alley Closing and Acquisition Procedures Act of 1982, effective March 10, 1983 (D.C. Law 4-201; D.C. Official Code § 9-204.01, 9-204.03a, and 9-204.23), the Council officially designates Lafayette Park, located at 5900 33rd Street, N.W., and Quesada Street, N.W., in Ward 4, as the "Lafayette-Pointer Park".

(b) Pursuant to section 401 of the Street and Alley Closing and Acquisition Procedures Act of 1982, effective March 10, 1983 (D.C. Law 4-201; D.C. Official Code § 9-204.01), the

33 Council designates the Lafayette Recreation Center located at 5900 33rd Street, N.W., and
34 Quesada Street, N.W., in Ward 4, as the "Lafayette-Pointer Recreation Center".

35 Sec. 3. Transmittal.

36 The Council shall transmit a copy of this act, upon its effective date, to the Director of the
37 Department of Parks and Recreation.

38 Sec. 4. Fiscal impact statement.

39 The Council adopts the fiscal impact statement in the committee report as the fiscal
40 impact statement required by 4a of the General Legislative Procedures Act of 1975, approved
41 October 16, 2006 (120 Stat. 2038; D.C. Official Code § 1-301.47a).

42 Sec. 5. Effective Date.

43 This act shall take effect following approval by the Mayor (or in event of a veto by the
44 Mayor, action by the Council to override the veto), a 30-day period of congressional review as
45 provided on section 602(c)(1) of the District of Columbia Home Rule Act, approved December
46 24, 1973, (87 Stat. 813; D.C. Official Code §1-206.02(c)(1)), and publication in the District of
47 Columbia Register.

Council of the District of Columbia
Committee of the Whole, Hearing 15 September 2020
Bill 23-619 Lafayette-Pointer Park and Lafayette-Pointer Recreation Center
Designation

Testimony of James Fisher

Chairman Mendelson,

A self-educated man named George Pointer was born into slavery in 1773. He lived a proud and productive life, using savings he earned from being hired out to George Washington to buy his own freedom by age 19. He rose through the ranks of Washington's Patowmack Company to the position of Superintendent Engineer, something no other ex-slave had accomplished in a white-owned company. Because of his diligence, his daughter was born free, and her daughter later was free and able to buy a two-acre tract of land in what we know today as Chevy Chase DC.

His life story is extraordinary, but what is so amazing is that 247 years have passed with him being virtually unknown and yet the trail of his life accomplishments keep reaching out to be discovered. A true American story. A book is being published about him by a major university and now an entire college-level course curriculum is being crafted around the type of systemic racism that later split his family asunder.

I am Pointer's eighth-generation direct descendant. His family -- our family -- was fruitful in the 1800s, populating the small farm-village along Broad Branch Road in Chevy Chase DC with four generations of descendants. They were industrious, hard-working people and contributed to America in important ways, including fighting in the Civil War. Their homeland was a central gathering place for extended family, a place of strength and fortitude. A place that insured family stability, unity and future growth.

Then, in 1928, after owning the property for over 80 years, with little warning and no recourse, they were evicted from that land so that a school could be built for white children. The remuneration from eminent domain payments was not enough to replace what they had -- a family community. They scattered like glass shards, skittering to all parts of Washington, DC, and beyond.

This marked the destruction of the family. The undergirding of a strong, extended family was what was lost. When we gathered for a first family reunion in 2015 on the very land from which our ancestors had been evicted, most had no idea they were descended from such a man as George Pointer and his family, much less that they were related to the dozens of unfamiliar faces surrounding them.

I am now on the Board of Directors of Historic Chevy Chase DC and have told our family's story of racially motivated displacement numerous times. Children at Lafayette Elementary School could not fathom such a thing today when I told them how our family once farmed the land next to the school until we were kicked out because we were Black and not welcome there anymore.

The legacy of Black land loss and the fracturing it causes succeeding generations is difficult if not almost impossible to overcome. Having the opportunity to regain that "place called home" is a step towards regaining some of that. Renaming the park "Lafayette-Pointer Park" and the rec center "Lafayette-Pointer Recreation Center" will remind my family and I that this was our old "homeplace" every time we pass by. Historical signage about Pointer and his family, which I am also hoping will be placed, will tell anyone who walks by that this was OUR home and not an empty lot as many were told. My family and I will be able to walk on the grounds and imagine our great-grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins working, playing and growing there. It will be a beginning for our family's healing from an unimaginable loss.

James Fisher
fisherjames5@aol.com



**Government of the District of Columbia
ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION 3/4G**

CHEVY CHASE, BARNABY WOODS, HAWTHORNE

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**ANC 3/4G Testimony before the
Committee of the Whole on the
Naming of Lafayette-Pointer Park and
Lafayette-Pointer Recreation Center
September 15 2020**

Thank you Chairman Mendelson and Councilmembers for this opportunity to support Bill 23-619, Lafayette-Pointer Park and Lafayette-Pointer Recreation Center Designation Act of 2020. I am Randy Speck, Chair of ANC 3/4G, and I submit this testimony on behalf of our Commission, which approved the attached resolution supporting this bill at its July 8, 2019 meeting by a vote of 4 to 0 (a quorum being 4).

This recognition of the Black heritage in our neighborhood is long overdue. There were thriving Black communities along Broad Branch Road and in Reno City well into the Twentieth Century, but they were displaced to make way for schools and parks that would serve the remaining, overwhelmingly white community. Consequently, most residents today are oblivious to this history and its consequences. One step will be to change the name of this prominent park to honor Captain Pointer and his descendants.

Our ANC also recently asked the National Park Service to remove the name of racist Francis Newlands from the fountain at Chevy Chase Circle as one step to renounce past injustices. (See the July 27, 2020 resolution at <https://bit.ly/3jprjQ>.) Acknowledging that more needs to be done than simple name changes, the ANC created a Task Force on Racism to address the broader issues of racial bias as it affects education, health, housing, and our community. (See the task force charter and other materials at https://anc3g.org/task_forces/task-force-on-racism/.)

The name change for Lafayette-Pointer Park and Lafayette-Pointer Recreation Center should be an occasion for education. There are currently no funds available for signage to contextualize the story of the Pointer family and the racial history of this neighborhood. Such signage would provide an opportunity to inform current residents of past inequities and inspire them to make changes. We urge the Council to separately fund explanatory signage that can describe the importance of this name change.

Thank you.



**Government of the District of Columbia
ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION 3/4G**

CHEVY CHASE, BARNABY WOODS, HAWTHORNE

COMMISSIONERS

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3/4 G-02 - Chanda Tuck-Garfield, Treasurer
3/4 G-03 - Randy Speck, Chair
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**ANC 3/4G Resolution Supporting
Adding the Name of Captain George Pointer to
Lafayette Park and Lafayette Recreation Center**

1. The purpose of this resolution is to request that the D.C. Council enact legislation to add the name of Captain George Pointer to Lafayette Park and Lafayette Recreation Center so that they will be named “Lafayette-Pointer Park” and “Lafayette-Pointer Recreation Center.” These names will acknowledge the history and dispossession of the black community on Broad Branch Road, NW.
2. Recent scholarship has brought to light the history of the community of free black residents who lived on Broad Branch Road, NW from at least the 1830s until 1928, when their homes (comprising a total of approximately six acres) were taken by eminent domain to build Lafayette Elementary School and Lafayette Park. One of the affected families, the Moten/Harris family, was directly descended from Captain George Pointer.
3. Much is known about Captain George Pointer from his 11-page petition, dated September 5, 1829, to the Board of Directors of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company, in which he recounts his own history of being born enslaved in 1773 on a plantation near Rockville, his purchase of his own freedom at age 19, and his 40-plus-year employment, including as Supervising Engineer, by George Washington’s Patowmack Company. In March 2019, the National Park Service erected signage at its Great Falls Virginia Visitor Center to acknowledge Captain Pointer’s history, including a depiction of his 1829 letter. The signage states:

Who was George Pointer? Captain George Pointer is directly quoted in this audio exhibit, unlike the other characterizations displayed here. He was one of the first enslaved laborers rented to

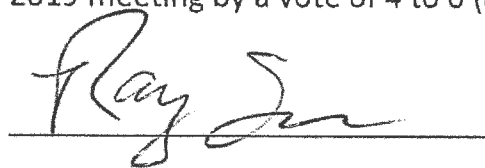
the Patowmack Company at age 13. He purchased his freedom at age 19, and continued to work on the canals for 40 years. He was mostly self-educated, and was the last superintendent of the Patowmack Company before its charter was transferred to the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal.

Great Falls Park staff is currently working with seventh generation descendants of George Pointer to reconcile this untold story. Ask a ranger to learn more about this ongoing project.

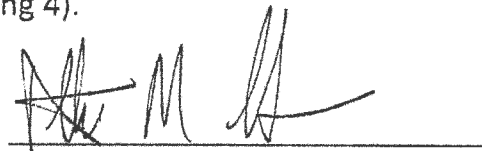
4. The history of Captain George Pointer's granddaughter, Mary Harris and her settlement with her family on Broad Branch Road in the 1840s was retold in considerable scholarly detail by Barbara Boyle Torrey and Clara Myrick Green, "Free Black People of Washington County: George Pointer and His Descendants," *Washington History* (Spring 2016). Torrey and Green explain the history of the Pointer descendants and their lives on Broad Branch Road, including their service in the Union Army during the Civil War, their education (including at the Reno School), and their struggles as African-Americans in the face of broad, daily-enforced racial strictures. All of that ended in 1928, however, with the forced evacuation and destruction of their small community, resulting from the same legislation that authorized the taking of homes in the nearby (and much larger) black community of Reno City, to build Alice Deal Junior High. The homes and property of the black residents comprised approximately six acres out of the 12-1/2 acre total footprint that is now Lafayette Elementary School and Park.
5. Considerable additional research and scholarship about the Broad Branch Road black community was also recently published by historian David S. Rotenstein, in his report "The River Road Moses Cemetery: A Historic Preservation Evaluation," September 2018 (see especially pp. 30-35), available at the Historic Chevy Chase D.C. website.
6. Seventh-generation Pointer descendant James Fisher and his partner, Tanya Hardy, are committed to educating the public about their ancestor and the Broad Branch Road community. They have worked with the National Park Service on the Great Falls Virginia exhibit, as well as with Historic Chevy Chase D.C., to support this resolution and its underlying grassroots education campaign. They also organized (with historical assistance by Torrey and Green) more than 50 Pointer descendants to come together at Lafayette Park in August 2015 for an extended "family reunion."
7. The D.C. Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) is currently planning to renovate the Lafayette Recreation Center. This presents a very timely opportunity to ensure that future users of the park and recreation center can appreciate its full history.

8. To more substantially acknowledge the history and dispossession of the Broad Branch Road black community, it has been proposed that ANC 3/4G consider and recommend to the D.C. Council that Captain George Pointer's name be added to the park and recreation center, so that the new names would be **"Lafayette-Pointer Park"** and **"Lafayette-Pointer Recreation Center."** It has been submitted that this combination would both honor the long-established presence of "Lafayette Park" in the minds and memories of the community, while at the same time acknowledging the contribution and history of the displaced black community on Broad Branch Road, N.W.
9. Historic Chevy Chase D.C. led a three-month grassroots education campaign and a petition drive in support of this resolution, and has submitted to ANC 3/4G 550 handwritten petition signatures of residents of Chevy Chase, D.C. In addition, letters supporting the new name have been submitted by the Friends of Lafayette Park and by the Chevy Chase Citizens Association.
10. Based on the foregoing, ANC 3/4G urges the D.C. Council to enact legislation to add the name of Captain George Pointer to Lafayette Park and Lafayette Recreation Center so that they will be named **"Lafayette-Pointer Park"** and **"Lafayette-Pointer Recreation Center,"** in order to acknowledge the history and dispossession of the black community on Broad Branch Road, NW. The Council should also consider appropriating funds for signage in the Park that explains the history and background of the former residents, and no funds currently appropriated for the Lafayette Recreation Center modernization or stormwater controls should be used for this signage.

Approved by ANC 3/4G after a discussion at its regularly scheduled and noticed July 8, 2019 meeting by a vote of 4 to 0 (a quorum being 4).



Randy Speck, Chair



Abe Clayman, Secretary

cc: Councilmember Brandon Todd
Councilmember Mary Cheh

Council of the District of Columbia
Committee of the Whole
Hearing (September 15, 2020) on Bill 23-619, Lafayette-Pointer Park and Lafayette-Pointer
Recreation Center Designation

Testimony of Penelope Mason

Chair Mendelson:

My name is Penelope Mason. I am a kid who cares about equality. Lafayette elementary, my former school, was built on land taken from black landowners in order to make an all-white neighborhood. I'm here to ask for you to rename Lafayette park, "Lafayette-Pointer park" in honor of Mary Harris and Mary Moten, who were George Pointer's grandchild and great grandchild. I also ask to put up historic signage so instead of ignoring our terrible, mistaken, and appalling past we address it and finally educate Lafayette students and the community on how the school came to be and why equality is something that you still need to fight for. I thank you for your time.

Council of the District of Columbia
Committee of the Whole
Hearing (September 15, 2020) on Bill 23-619, Lafayette-Pointer Park and Lafayette-Pointer
Recreation Center Designation

Testimony of Marleigh McKay

Chairman Mendelson:

The founding fathers built this country on land that wasn't theirs and on the backs of people that they owned. What happened to Captain George Pointer's family is just another example of this horrendous act. Captain Pointer and his family, who were descendants from enslavement, worked very hard to secure the land, but the government didn't care and took it as their own to make way for a white neighborhood and school. His family's name and work were disrespected and I think we should rename the Lafayette recreation center and park to honor this legacy that has been forgotten and ignored. As a former student at Lafayette Elementary School, I didn't always feel like minorities were well represented. This makes sense because of why the land was taken. Renaming the park and recreation center is not only the right thing to do to honor the history of the land, but the gesture will also help instill a sense of pride and belonging for all minorities at the school and in the neighborhood. With many people feeling upset by all of the racial injustices going on currently, this small thing can be part of something bigger. It can give us hope that despite our past, we can move forward together and be better. For these reasons, I ask that you rename the land as the Lafayette-Pointer Park and Lafayette-Pointer Recreation Center.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION**



Public Hearing
on

Bill 23-508, “Elaine M. Carter Community Center Designation Act of 2019”
Bill 23-619, “Lafayette-Pointer Park and Lafayette-Pointer Recreation Center
Designation Act of 2020,” and
Bill 23-840, “Ronald ‘Ron’ Austin Memorial Park Designation Act of 2020”

Testimony of
Ella Faulkner

Deputy Director of Administrative Services and Interim Chief of Staff

Before the
Committee of the Whole
Council of the District of Columbia
The Honorable Phil Mendelson, Chairperson

Virtual Meeting Platform
September 15, 2020
10:00 a.m.

Good morning, Chairperson Mendelson and members of the Council. I am Ella Faulkner, the Deputy Director of Administrative Services and Interim Chief of Staff at the D.C. Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR). I am pleased to testify today on behalf of DPR regarding three bills that would change the names of our parks and facilities. Bill 23-508 would change the name of the Douglass Community Center, presently named for civil rights giant Frederick Douglass who worked as an abolitionist, writer, editor, and orator, to improve the lives of Black Americans, to the Elaine M. Carter Community Center, in honor the late Mrs. Elaine M. Carter, affectionately known as Mrs. E., a community leader and activist, who devoted herself to the well-being of the Ward 8 community. Bill 23-629 would change the name of the Lafayette Park and Lafayette Recreation Center, presently named for Marquis de Lafayette, a military officer during the Revolutionary War who played an instrumental role in securing American victory at the Siege of Yorktown, to the Lafayette-Pointer Park and the Lafayette-Pointer Recreation Center, in honor of George Pointer and his descendants who were central figures in the vibrant African American community living along Broad Branch Road in the 1800's and early 1900's. Bill 23-840 would designate the presently unnamed green space at the 6100 block of North Dakota Avenue, N.W., between Quackenbos Street, N.W. and 2nd Street, N.W., as the Ronald "Ron" Austin Memorial Park, after Ron Austin, also known as "Mr. Constituent Services," who served as a Ward 4 ANC Commissioner, and worked for multiple Councilmembers, Mayor Muriel Bowser, and as a DPR employee for over 24 years.

Historically, DPR does not take a position on legislation to name or rename our parks and facilities. Rather, we defer to the Mayor and the Council of DC to make these decisions. As such, DPR takes a neutral position on the three bills before us today. However, DPR would like to call the Council's attention to the need for a consistent approach to the naming of public assets that

includes a clear set of criteria for evaluating prospective names, a robust community engagement effort, and gives agencies a role in the conversation.

The recent naming of Alethia Tanner Park and Swampoodle Park serve as models for this objective and community-driven approach. Both parks were named using quantifiable, broad-based community support. Over two-thirds of the more than 2,000 residents surveyed voted for the name “Alethia Tanner Park” in honor of Alethia Tanner. Ms. Tanner purchased her freedom in 1810 as well as the freedom of at least 18 others and went on to serve as a businesswoman, real estate owner, and supporter of educational and religious institutions for the free African American community. Similarly, two-thirds of the 1,500 community members surveyed voted for the name “Swampoodle,” reflecting the language used by working-class Irish immigrants used to describe the area in the mid-1800s.

Across the nation and in the District, we have begun the hard work to carefully examine our namesake legacies, after whom we name our streets, schools, and libraries, as well as our parks and recreation centers. I want to thank Mayor Muriel Bowser for her leadership in creating the District of Columbia Facilities and Commemorative Expressions (DCFACES) Working Group to evaluate the names of D.C. government-owned facilities, on which DPR’s Director Delano Hunter is proud to serve.

In its recent report, the DCFACES Working Group speaks directly to the importance of ensuring the names we choose for our parks and recreation facilities are reflective of contemporary DC values. DPR’s recreation and community centers are included in the report's number one priority group, “Learning, Living, and Leisure Environments.” DPR’s parks, fields, and playgrounds appear in the second-highest priority group: public spaces. Understanding the core

role of DPR parks and facilities in residents' lives, we at DPR wish to ensure intentionality and thought behind the naming and re-naming of our public assets.

Should the Council and the Mayor approve these three bills, DPR is equipped to implement the associated name changes. Bill 23-508 will require updated signage at the existing Douglass Recreation Center to reflect the new name, the Elaine M. Carter Community Center. We anticipate this will cost \$13,000. Bill 23-619 will require updated signage for both Lafayette Park and the Lafayette Recreation Center to reflect the new name, Lafayette-Pointer, and to include historical information. We anticipate this will cost \$18,000. Lastly, Bill 23-840 to create Ronald "Ron" Austin Memorial Park will require the installation of new triangle park signage, which we anticipate will cost \$2,500. DPR estimates it will cost \$33,500 in total for all new signage associated with these three bills. DPR anticipates the ability to absorb these costs within its current budget and has no objections to the proposed designations.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify this morning before the Committee of the Whole. I am happy to address any questions you may have.

Captain George Pointer

Every so often there is a story told, be it fact or fiction, that amazes and inspires. This is one such fact-based story about a unique man named Captain George Pointer. Had he not penned 12 pages of astonishing written artistry in 1829, his amazing story could not be shared. While his name has been known to American researchers and historians for centuries, his life story remained covered in dust. It does not begin with him as a man but as a 13-year-old boy who could mysteriously read and write in 1786 rural America. This is the year he started working for a company started by George Washington, The Patowmack Company, which was established a year earlier. Its purpose was to make the Potomac River safer to transport goods and materials...a water highway of sorts which was George Washington's life-long dream. This would also make it much easier to transport needed building materials to the newly forming Capital city. Pointer was given a cottage that was nestled on the banks of the Potomac River and first hired to guard a company black powder magazine located near the cottage. It was not long before his duties expanded to general laborer assisting the Engineer. Over the course of his career with the Company, he rose from this lowly position to become Chief Engineer-Superintendent directing and overseeing a multi-cultural workforce. His rise in the Company began some 70 years before the Civil War.

This is the story of a man born into slavery in 1773.

George Pointer, also called “yellow George”, was born a slave in Frederick County, MD on October 11, 1773.¹ His owner, William Wallace, rented him out to the Patowmack Company because they needed someone to watch over the black powder magazine that stored powder used to build the canals and loosen stone to transport to the capital. Gun powder was worth its weight in gold in those days and a target for thieves. While it’s believed watching over the powder magazine was his first primary duty, his eagerness and ability to quickly master various sets of skills surely must have amazed the first Engineer of the company as well as on-lookers. As a result, his duties quickly extended to general labor assisting the Engineer. In 1788, 15-year-old Pointer was selected to accompany Col. George Gilpin and the Company's Chief Engineer, James Smith on an expedition; 218 miles of the upper Potomac to complete the first survey and mapping of this area.² Since there were Native Americans living along the river during that time it’s quite possible that one or more could have served as guides on such an expedition and young Pointer could have learned a great deal from them. Before the canal this was an 8 to 10-day journey but after the canal was built the same trip could be safely completed in 3 to 5 days.

Workers for the Company were paid in monthly wages with daily rations of whisky. Food and cloth rations could also be received if it was credited from a worker's wages. George Pointer's master allowed him to keep a portion of his wages and at some point, offered him the opportunity to purchase his freedom for \$300 (an average price at the time and equivalent to

¹ Jane C. Sween. *Montgomery County: Two Centuries of Change* (Woodland Hills, CA: Windsor Publications, 1984). 25-29; “George Pointer Petition,” RG 79, NA.

² Robert J. Kapsch. *The Potomac Canal: George Washington and the Waterway West* (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press 2007) “George Pointer Petition,” RG 79, NA. 2.

about \$7000-\$8000 today).³ Imagine, receiving a few dollars a month, given only a portion of it per month and yet saving \$300 in 5 years. This required strong will and determination! In 1793 a 19-year-old George Pointer paid for his freedom!

For a slave to be set free, did not really mean being free. Life for free blacks in and around the Federal City did not offer any more protection under the law than living as a slave. If a slave was somehow able to earn his or her freedom there was still the constant fear of capture by slave catchers who would ignore freedom papers, kidnap them and then sell slaves to owners in the deep south.⁴ Moreover, the Law stated that any freed slave had to leave the state he/she was freed in or be sold back into slavery. The Law could only add to benefit slave-catchers who did not respect that law. There are no records of Pointer being registered to be freed or of receiving freedom papers and for good reason. Had he owned those documents he would have been forced to move to a different state. Pointer was a great asset to the company and it's highly likely that the board of the company and his owner agreed it would be best that he remained unrecord as freed. After all, he was solidly connected to a powerful company and under their unspoken protection. Moreover, even at the young age of 19, he was a known oddity and his name had surely been spreading like the currents of the river he worked up, down, around and in the Capital city as well. In his letter, Pointer spoke of George Washington and dignitaries' annual visits to the canal to view work progression. This suggests that he had exposure to them as well as their exposure to him. Who would question his freedom? For illegal slave catchers, he would be more trouble than he'd be worth. While a humble man, it's improbable that he held his head down in great fear as he travelled the river, canals and roads along the Potomac and in the Federal City because he was absent of freedom papers. He was a "magnificent oddity", a black man with outstanding river piloting skills, was highly literate, had a level of wealth and the respect of all who knew him, all of which made him nearly untouchable.

Captain Pointer's first tasks at Great Falls included the hard work hammering and digging to break down rocks and move soil to clear for the building of the lock system. In 1796 the Potomac Company made twenty-two-year old George Pointer a supervisor of five boats that transported chiseled stone blocks to Great Falls from the Seneca quarry, eight miles upriver.⁵ By 1798 the Potomac Company had not completed the locks, but they had built a temporary inclined plane that would be used to slide cargo from boats at the top of the Great Falls to the bottom while the empty boats with special pilots would descend the river. George Pointer was one of the pilots as he describes below in a letter he wrote to the C & O Canal Company:

In the meantime, a machine was got under way to lower the flour down for the boats to take it down as the Locks was not finished. Other produce came down so profusely, that the company thought it expedient that pilots should

³ "Patowmack Canal Company Employees, Great Falls, September 1797," reprint. *Annual Reports 1986-88 Great Falls Historical Society*, 10.

⁴ Leticia Woods Brown, *Free Negroes in the District of Columbia 1790 – 1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 64 - 97

⁵ "Potomac Company Proceedings," vol. A. May 11, 1802, entry 230, 380, and "Potomac Company Daybook," Dec. 10, 1804, entry 240, Records of the National Park Service, RG 79, National Archives.

*be chosen to carry the western boats down, four was chosen and among them was your petitioners humble Servant*⁶

The descending drop of the river at Great Falls was seventy-six feet, more than twice the descent at Little Falls. No American had ever built a canal and lock system this high. This made the work on the canal and locks around Great Falls extremely ambitious and as such has been called “America’s greatest eighteenth century engineering achievement”.⁷

George Pointer’s name appears many times in the records of the Potomac Company between 1796 and 1829. In January 1801 the Board of Directors ordered...

*“... Mr. Pointer [to] give notice to the Owners of Boats and Scows now lying at the Basin of the Great Falls.... [that] the owners immediately remove [them].”*⁸

This notation appears to be evidence of the level of trust and respect the directors had in this former slave. They also appeared to be very comfortable with asking him to order the white boat owners to get out of the company’s way. This is also the first time the formal title of “Mr. Pointer” was used in the company records. During these times a black man was rarely given the title of “Mr.” as this was reserved for the white man only.

Shortly after gaining freedom, he married a free woman named Elizabeth Townsend, “Betty” who most likely was Native American according to stories passed down by Pointer’s descendants. Additionally, in the 1820 DC census, Pointer and family are incorrectly listed as “white” a strong indication of mixed race. A year later they welcomed the first of 3 children.⁹ This was not the only changes occurring in George’s life during this period. In 1795 Leonard Harbaugh, a contractor from Georgetown became the new superintendent of the Patowmack Company. Harbaugh was a slave owner and apparently a difficult man; he constantly quarreled with the board of directors, rarely met his deadlines and never controlled cost. Presumably George Pointer also found him difficult and by 1802 Pointer had bought his own river boat, left the company and was contracting his labor and boat out to the Patowmack Company instead of staying under the direct supervision of Harbaugh. This proves that Pointer did not suffer fools on a long-term basis. Pointer also supplemented his income by farming and fishing near his cottage for transporting and selling at the Georgetown markets. Surely this was a family effort. In the same year as the 1802 Company Board meeting, Harbaugh, in retaliation for Pointer leaving the company, was the one likely to have demanded the repossession of the Company’s cottage where Pointer had been living for almost two decades. His reason given was to house workers. The outcome of the discussion about Pointer’s house was not recorded in the company proceedings

⁶ National Archives Record Group 79 (hereafter NA-RG 79) Entry 262. “Petition of Captain George Pointer to the President and Directors of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal” September 5, 1829, p. 3-4. Subsequent citations are referred to as George Pointer, “Petition”. George Pointer Petition.

⁷ Alexander Crosby Brown, *“The Patowmack Canal: America’s greatest eighteenth century engineering achievement”* The Virginia Cavalcade, Vol 12 (1963): 40 – 47.

⁸ NA-RG 79 Entry 230 Potomac Company Proceedings, Volume A, 290.

⁹ Charles Phillips, *Freedom’s Port* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 90; Registration No. 1636, “Manumission and Emancipation Records 1821-1862, Records of the U.S. District Courts,” in Dorothy S. Provine, *District of Columbia Free Negro Registers 1821-1861*, vol.3

but soon afterwards the company began paying Betty Pointer \$7 a month for "cooking and the lodging of six Negro men."¹⁰ The timing of the payments to her suggests that this may have been the board's resolution to his demand. At the end of 1806, the board fired Harbaugh replacing him with a Georgetown engineer, Josias Thompson and very soon afterwards Thompson rehired Captain George Pointer

In 1807 the Potomac River had become navigable for over fifty miles above Georgetown, an achievement that no other project had accomplished. The Patowmack Company's best year financially was 1811, just before the War of 1812 with England. However, by the end of the war half the trade on the Patowmack Canal had been diverted to Philadelphia and Baltimore; this was because of the British burning of Washington during the war and also fear that they would use the Patowmack River canal as a means of transport. Lost revenues from this war and economic panic, followed by several years of severe drought placed the company in a position it could not recover from.

In 1816 the Company was running major deficits and Mr. Thompson who had been with the Company for 10 years was about to resign. Knowing he would be met with great resistance from the board, he asked George Pointer to accompany him to the meeting. They met at the Union Tavern in Georgetown and in his letter, Pointer describes how it was to meet the board. He shares how Mr. Thompson told the board that it would be inexpedient to hire anyone else to be superintendent since Pointer had "experience enough to superintend any work on the Potomac". While the board members' respect, loyalty and confidence in Pointer's superior work seemingly never wavered, the thought of having a Negro in one of the highest positions representing the Patowmack Company must have been met with a silent pause. Mr. Thompson's plea, however, prevailed and Captain George Pointer was named the next Engineering Superintendent. He was immediately given responsibility over the Patowmack Company work at Great Falls and the Seneca Canal. Inarguably, Captain George Pointer was the first Negro to ascend to the top of an American owned company. Given the period and climate in American history, this is unimaginable. It's been written that there are only three named Negroes who are known to have significantly contributed to the building of the Capital City.... Benjamin Banneker, Philip Reid and Captain George Pointer. While the first two found their way into the history books and school history curriculums sadly the latter remained a ghost for hundreds of years. Captain George Pointer's story is an American treasure, to be discovered and embraced.

An indentured servant working on the canal stated that "canal work was the hardest work a man could do" before running away the next day. The company's records are littered with payments to disabled workers. In the Spring of 1819 Captain Pointer had a major accident while running free stone from Seneca to the little locks. He ran into a boat traffic jam and went around it, hit something downstream and was thrown...trapped in the water for four days with a broken leg which was often fatal in those days. Pointer managed to keep himself safe, extracting himself from the accident site, saving the cargo and making it back downstream to Little Falls, the destination, once again showcasing his skill to persevere and get a job done.¹¹ This Seneca experience is also mentioned in the June 1987 issue of National Geographic Magazine.

¹⁰ Petition, George Pointer Petition. 4-6

¹¹ Petition, George Pointer Petition. 5-7

When the Patowmack Company board met in 1819 surely the hot topic for discussion was their financial debt. The records only show, however, that there was payment made to George Pointer's account for 48 dollars and forty-two cents as well as pay to two other men.¹² It's unknown the exact purpose for this payment; perhaps a combination of his wages plus disability pay for the broken leg he suffered or additional services rendered. What can be said is that the payment was a substantial amount during that time. The company continued to experience financial difficulties however, and the Board eventually filed for bankruptcy in 1828 and then waited for the conclusion. Even then, however, they continued to contract with George Pointer for maintenance work and records show a final payment of \$13.00 in that same year.¹³

George Pointer spent over 40 years living along the Potomac River. In 1829 his "modest little cabin" along the River became at risk of destruction by the C & O Canal Company. The canal plans outlined a path that went straight through the property on which Pointer's home stood. On September 5th, 1829 he wrote a 12-page letter to the board members of the C & O Canal Company to protest the construction path of their canal. Though it was not his intention, the information he included in his letter would be a wonderfully articulated chronology of his life along the river and the people he met throughout his work there including General George Washington; Col. George Gilpin, close friend of Washington; Josias Thompson, an engineer from Georgetown and Col. John Fitzgerald, also a friend of Washington's who fought in the Revolutionary War. On July 4th, 1828 President John Quincy Adams traveled to the site of the ground-breaking of the C & O Canal. The celebration was within yards of Pointer's home. George Pointer's granddaughter, Mary Ann Plummer was the pilot of the boat that brought the president and his entourage down the river from Georgetown, having the opportunity to do so after her father made a bet that his daughter could "pilot a boat as well as any man." Certainly, Captain Pointer stood amongst the crowd and was filled with pride as his granddaughter guided the boat to shore and watched the President disembark.

In his letter Pointer begins by writing, "I pray you to read.... the humble petition of an old and obscure citizen..." from there he goes on to describe his life experiences from his birth on a slave plantation in Frederick, Maryland to his last days working for the Patowmack Canal Company. He makes an urgent plea to the C & O Canal Company to not construct their canal so close to the location of his cabin that he will lose his home of 43 years. He ends his letter with the closing, "your humble and very obedient servant, Captain George Pointer."

The original copy of this letter penned by George Pointer holds a wealth of information and is currently preserved and housed at the National Archives building in Maryland where the daybooks of the Patowmack Canal Company, as well as C & O Canal Company records are also stored. This letter has proven to be a very valuable document since it outlines in perfect chronological order the events of the development and daily operation of the Patowmack Canal Company. It is curious how a man who began life as a slave had preferable penmanship and grammar to most of his counterparts he worked with at the time. Moreover, George Pointer's is not the average example of a canal worker's life. This is supported by a wealth of evidence in the

¹² NA-RG 79, Entry 230, Potomac Company Proceedings, Vol. B, 380

¹³ NA-RG 79, Entry 250, Potomac Company Miscellaneous Accounts 1785-1828 (missing number on date) Box 3 Folder 1, July 22nd, 1828.

outstanding positions he held while working for the Patowmack Canal Company; most notably, Superintendent Engineer; supervising the building of the Wing Dam; landlord, boarding canal laborers at his own home property; and Captain of a fleet of boats, piloting them through the rapids of the Potomac when the cargo had to be placed on inclined planes and dropped from the top of the falls to the waiting boats below prior to finishing the locks, just to list a few. As Superintendent Pointer oversaw the construction of the wing dam the intake source of the Potomac for this section of the canal. The wing dam is one of the only consistently operational structures of the canal ruins at Great Falls Park today over 200 years later. During the years when the Company experienced low finances Pointer supplemented his income by building fish weirs and growing crops on his property to sell at market in Georgetown. He was an outstanding early American who practiced being a life-long learner and believed in hard, faithful work, love and support of his family and an unwavering belief in God.

Written by James Fisher

Contributing authors

Tanya Hardy

Barbara Torrey

Clara "Tiggy" Green

DEED

*Wm. W. King
City of Wash
D.C. 18-29
R.P.*

This Deed, made this 2d day of August in the year Nineteen hundred and twenty-eight, by and between Mary Moten, of the District of Columbia, party hereto of the first part; and United States of America, party hereto of the second part;

Witnesseth, that for and in consideration of the sum of Sixty-eight hundred and sixty-two and 50/100 Dollars the said party of the first part, do grant unto the said party of the second part, in fee simple, the following described land and premises, with the improvements, easements and appurtenances thereunto belonging, situate in the District of Columbia, namely: Part of the tract of land called "Dry Meadows", described by metes and bounds as follows:- Beginning for the same at a stake on the Easterly line of Broad Branch Road, distant Three hundred and forty-eight and eighty-two hundredths (348.82) feet and bearing South Nineteen (19) degrees twenty (20) minutes East from a stone planted at the intersection of the Easterly line of Broad Branch Road and the dividing line between the land formerly owned by Harris and the land of Horace Jones, and running thence with said Easterly line of Broad Branch Road, South Nineteen (19) degrees twenty (20) minutes East, Forty-one and twenty hundredths (41.20) feet to a stone at the Southwest corner of the land conveyed by Milburn to Harris by Deed recorded in Liber J.A.S. No. 191 folio 161 of the Land Records of the District of Columbia; thence North Eighty-four (84) degrees fifty-one (51) minutes East, Five hundred and thirty and four tenths (530.4) feet along the Southerly line of the land so conveyed, to a stone at the Eastern end of said dividing line; thence with said dividing line, North Sixty-four (64) degrees West, Seventy-seven and twenty-two hundredths (77.22) feet to an iron rod at the Southeast corner of land conveyed to Lorenzo Harris by Deed recorded in Liber 2348 folio 187 of the said Land Records; thence South Eighty-four (84) degrees fifty-one (51) minutes West, Four hundred and seventy-four and four tenths (474.4) feet with the Southerly line of said land conveyed to Lorenzo Harris, to said Easterly line of Broad Branch Road and the place of beginning; excepting therefrom the Thirty (30) foot strip taken by proceedings in District Court Case No. 1603 in the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia, as shown on plat recorded in Liber 78 folio 27 of the Records of the Office of the Surveyor of the District of Columbia.

Together with all right, title, interest and estate of the said party hereto of the first part, in and to all abutting and adjoining alleys and alley-ways.

At the date hereof the land hereby conveyed is known for purposes of assessment and taxation as parcel 43/46.

To have and to hold the same, unto and to the use of the said party hereto of the second part, in fee simple.

And the said party hereto of the first part does hereby covenant to warrant generally the property hereby conveyed and to execute such further assurances of said land as may be requisite.

Witness her hand and seal on the day and year first hereinbefore written.

Signed, sealed and delivered
in the presence of-
J. Francis Moore
Mary Elizabeth Brown

Mary Moten (Seal)

District of Columbia, To wit:

I, J. Francis Moore, a Notary Public in and for the said District, do hereby certify that Mary Moten, party to a certain Deed bearing date on the 2d day of August A. D. 1928, and hereto annexed, personally appeared before me in the said District, the said Mary Moten, being personally well known to me as the person who executed the said Deed, and acknowledged the same to be her act and deed.

Given under my hand and official seal this 2d day of August A. D. 1928.
(Notarial Seal)

J. Francis Moore
Notary Public

NAMING OF A PARK

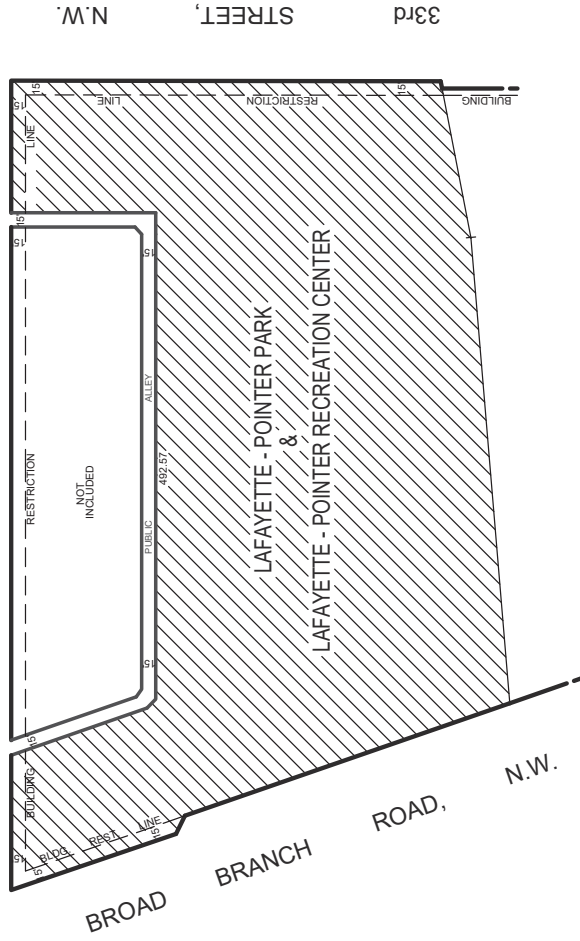
LAFAYETTE - POINTER PARK & RECREATION CENTER SQUARE 2011

PURSUANT TO D.C. LAW _____ EFFECTIVE _____,
THE AREA SHOWN THUS:  IS HEREBY DESIGNATED AS
"LAFAYETTE - POINTER PARK & RECREATION CENTER".

OFFICE OF THE SURVEYOR, D.C.
_____, 2020

I CERTIFY THAT THIS PLAT IS CORRECT AND IS RECORDED.

SURVEYOR, D.C.



SURVEYOR'S OFFICE, D.C.	
Made for: B-25-619	Checked by: <u>MB</u>
Drawn by: A.S.	Record and computations by: B. MYERS
Recorded at:	Recorded in Book _____ Page _____ SR-21-0000
Scale: 1 inch = 80 feet	File No. 21-11111

Committee of the Whole (Council)

From: Cash, Evan W. (Council)
Sent: Thursday, August 6, 2020 3:22 PM
To: ANC 3G Office (ANC 3G); Maydak, Rebecca (SMD 3G04)
Cc: Turner, Dolly (Council); Stephens, Samuel (Council)
Subject: Public Hearing on B23-619: Lafayette-Pointer Park/Rec. Center
Attachments: 9.15.20 Public Space Namings.pdf; B23-0619-Introduction.pdf

Dear Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3/4G:

Pursuant to D.C. Official Code § 9-204.22(b), this communication puts ANC 3/4G and its Commissioners on notice of an upcoming Committee of the Whole Public Hearing on Bill 23-619 the “Lafayette-Pointer Park and Lafayette-Pointer Recreation Center Designation Act of 2020.” The hearing is scheduled for **Tuesday, September 15, 2020 at 9:00 a.m.** on the virtual Zoom platform. The stated purpose of Bill 23-619 is to designate Lafayette Park located at 5900 33rd Street and Quesada Street NW as the Lafayette-Pointer Park and designates the Lafayette Recreation Center as the Lafayette-Pointer Recreation Center.

Attached, please find the hearing notice and a copy of the legislation as introduced. Let me know if you have any follow up questions.

Thank you,

Evan Cash

Committee and Legislative Director
Committee of the Whole
Chairman Phil Mendelson

John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Suite 410
Washington, DC 20004
Tel: (202) 724-7002

<http://www.chairmanmendelson.com/cow>



Subscribe to e-mail updates for news and notice of upcoming hearing at <http://chairmanmendelson.com/updates/>.


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: November 25, 2020

SUBJECT: Fiscal Impact Statement – Lafayette-Pointer Recreation Complex
Designation Act of 2020

REFERENCE: Bill 23-629, Committee Print provided to the Office of Revenue
Analysis on November 19, 2020

Conclusion

Funds are sufficient in the fiscal year 2021 through fiscal year 2024 budget and financial plan to implement the bill.

Background

The bill renames Lafayette Park and Lafayette Recreation Center¹, presently named for the Marquis de Lafayette², to the Lafayette-Pointer Park and the Lafayette-Pointer Recreation Center, in honor George Pointer³ and his descendants.

Financial Plan Impact

Funds are sufficient in the fiscal year 2021 through fiscal year 2024 budget and financial plan to implement the bill. The Department of Parks and Recreation estimates that updating signage at the park and recreation center will cost \$18,000 and indicates that the cost can be absorbed within its current resources.

¹ Both located at 5900 33rd Street, N.W., in Ward 4 and known for tax and assessment purposes as Lot 806 in Square 2011.

² <https://www.nps.gov/vafo/learn/historyculture/lafayette.htm>.

³ <https://www.nps.gov/grfa/learn/historyculture/captain-george-pointer.htm>.

1 **DRAFT COMMITTEE PRINT**
2 **Committee of the Whole**
3 **December 1, 2020**

4
5 A BILL

6
7
8 23-619
9

10
11 IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
12
13
14 _____

15 To officially designate the park and recreation center located in Lot 806 in Square 2011 as
16 Lafayette-Pointer Park and Lafayette-Pointer Recreation Center.

17 BE IT ENACTED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this
18 act may be cited as the “Lafayette-Pointer Recreation Complex Designation Act of 2020”.

19 Sec. 2. Pursuant to sections 401 and 422 of the Street and Alley Closing and Acquisition
20 Procedures Act of 1982, effective March 10, 1983 (D.C. Law 4-201; D.C. Official Code §§ 9-
21 204.01 and 9-204.22) (“Act”), the Council officially designates the park and recreation center
22 located in Lot 806 in Square 2011 as “Lafayette-Pointer Park” and “Lafayette-Pointer Recreation
23 Center.”

24 Sec. 3. Fiscal impact statement.

25 The Council adopts the fiscal impact statement in the committee report as the fiscal
26 impact statement required by section 4a of the General Legislative Procedures Act of 1975,
27 approved October 16, 2006 (120 Stat. 2038; D.C. Official Code § 1-301.47a).

28 Sec. 4. Effective date.

29 This act shall take effect following approval by the Mayor (or in the event of veto by the
30 Mayor, action by the Council to override the veto), a 30-day period of congressional review as
31 provided in section 602(c)(1) of the District of Columbia Home Rule Act, approved December
32 24, 1973 (87 Stat. 813; D.C. Official Code §1-206.02(c)(1)), and publication in the District of
33 Columbia Register.