

Tom's Remarks to CHAP
3/1/2007

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Thank you for the opportunity to address the commission today. I want to begin by reading a statement to help the commission and the public better understanding what is occurring at the Senator Theatre. I also hope to learn more today about the practical ramifications of what CHAP is proposing regarding The Senator Theatre and the reasoning behind CHAP's proposed action.

I want to begin by saying that I appear today at this hearing with mixed emotions about this proposed action and its rushed circumstances. In the few short weeks since I learned of the pending CHAP proposal to impose municipal controls on The Senator I also had the unique privilege to be one of the recipients at the heart of an extraordinary outpouring of citizen concern over the sudden threat to The Senator Theatre's ownership and operation status.

In recent weeks it has become apparent just how near and dear Baltimore's beloved Senator Theatre is to the hearts of many thousands of historic movie house lovers in the region, around the nation, and beyond. The possibility that The Senator may have been sold at auction alarmed the citizens of Baltimore and the region and it triggered an astounding grass-roots outpouring of concern, financial contributions and public support.

The spontaneous outpouring of support took on a life of its own when awareness that The Senator Theatre was in peril spread rapidly across the nation. The citizens rose up and protected the irreplaceable Senator Theatre from closure and helped to preserve its unbroken 67-year chain of award winning family ownership and operation as well.

In the midst the crisis and the phenomenal response by the public that delivered us from auction, I have a fundamental question that relates to this hearing. Why is it that this particular subset of city government known as the CHAP commission appears to be genuinely concerned about the preservation of The Senator Theatre, when other factions of city government have acted overtly behind-the-scenes to trigger the very crisis that has led to this hearing to consider placing municipal controls on my historic movie house?

If I am going to participate under these trying circumstances and sort out what is take place at this special CHAP hearing it will be helpful to all concerned if I put a few issues on the record.

Except for the outspoken support for The Senator Theatre and its ownership and management by our two elected representatives that we have worked with over the years, Councilman Kenneth Harris, Sr. and State Senator Joan Carter Conway. All the other elected officials and city and state government representatives we repeatedly attempted to contact all went to ground and were mute months before the dramatic Senator Theatre cliffhanger began unfolding in the media.

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It was apparent to me that just like in the westerns I grew up watching in The Senator Theatre as a kid on Saturday's, the streets figuratively emptied during the lead in period to the crisis.

At that time I did not anticipate that a foreclosure action would ever take place because I had sufficient personal funds escrowed with our lender for the very purpose of keeping our loan current in order to prevent a default. When I became invisible to my city contacts and learned from my lender that "the city" was in support of denying me access to my cash contingency funds to cure the default, that's when I realized that there was something untoward taking place that I did not understand and still do not as I stand here today before the commission.

Over the years I had come to expect shabby treatment by the city's Baltimore Development Corporation. Just last year at a meeting with a BDC official, the agency's CFO told me and my business associate directly that is The Senator Theatre closed down permanently, it would be sad but it would ultimately not have any long-term negative impact on The Belvedere Square commercial district. In my experience an absurd assertion like that by a top BDC official indicates that the agency is woefully ill informed about Baltimore City's neighborhoods and commercial districts outside of the BDC's primary inner harbor purview.

It important to note that throughout the period that led up to the recent foreclosure action our lenders representatives were consistently available and communicative but unfortunately their hands were tied on a few key aspects of what ended up taking place due to "the cities" involvement and "the city's" wishes as to what should occur regarding The Senator Theatre.

With all that intrigue-taking place out of the public view, it then became apparent to me that as far as this hearing is concerned I was in all probability not expected to be the person standing before you representing the ownership of The Senator today. From my perspective this curious whirlwind of civic activity taking place around The Senator Theatre does not appear to be judicious action by the "City of Baltimore" to demonstrate consistent concern for the stability and preservation of The Senator Theater. Instead it appears to me, and to many confused citizens of Baltimore to be wilderness of mirrors.

The various actions and lack of action by different city agencies seem to be at cross-purposes for reasons I cannot yet fathom. Hopefully today's hearing will shed some sunlight on issues that clearly need to be illuminated.

So with all the machinations that are currently taking place around The Senator Theatre and it's ownership and future, I want to point out to the commission that I am an active lifelong preservationist, and as such I am simpatico and aligned with the preservation goals and values that CHAP espouses.



In the past 10 years my interactions with The City of Baltimore have been primarily through the BDC. The working relationship with the BDC became problematic very early on as the agency was then giving very short shrift to Baltimore's neighborhoods and the older commercial districts, particularly during the disastrous decade when the notorious commercial real estate developer, James Ward was first ignored and later coddled for extended periods of time by the BDC and other city agencies responsible for the economic development the city's commercial districts and residential communities.

Too many years of badly bungled dealings with ward and Belvedere Square by Baltimore City representatives almost destroyed The Senator Theatre and along with, it one of the city's key gateway commercial districts, a district that otherwise had enormous significance and great economic redevelopment potential in North Baltimore where The Senator Theatre is located.

Back then our legion of Senator Theatre patrons and area residents were very concerned and frustrated as well when the high-profile neighborhood amenity of Belvedere Square, our village commons, was terribly mismanaged by Jim Ward and his cohorts and then left fallow for over ten years. The citizens of the city, particularly in the North Baltimore neighborhoods witnessed the ball was being regularly dropped by the city agencies and it became an increasingly serious situation ignored for too long without progress or resolution.

It was during this trying period with no involvement or leadership coming out to our neighborhood from Baltimore City government that we kicked into overdrive at The Senator by necessity, and did whatever we could to fill in the then non-existent process of economic re-development of an almost empty and defunct Belvedere Square. By forming a strategic alliance with the Belvedere Improvement Association, Café Zen, Gregs Bagels, the Wise Penny and other businesses and residential groups we collectively created as much of an illusion of commerce in the York/Belvedere commercial district producing as we could, by hosting many special events, premieres, and concerts as possible to try and hold the business and residential community together during the extended period of crisis.

That decade was a huge setback for The Senator theatre that also negatively impacted the wonderful neighborhoods surrounding our commercial district. The whole fiasco City government neglect should never have been allowed to persist for so long by Baltimore's BDC and the other applicable city agencies. At the BDC they know that, I know that and nearly all concerned among the populace who were so let down by them know that, as well. Suffice to say that as a result our relationship with the BDC is not a good one for reasons that have a great deal to do with this difficult period.

Recently a few of our neighbors who lived through this difficult period along with us have remarked when they initially read false representations by BDC representatives about me and my debts to "the city", which were later retracted, that rather than The

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Senator Theatre needing new management, that its been quite clear to all concerned for years now that its actually the BDC that needs new leadership and management.

Prior to the situation becoming so highly charged and then descending towards an auction sale, BDC representatives had been overtly undermining my credibility and skills and began advocating to our lender to freeze my contingency cash account at the bank. The cash fund was 150K, which was more than sufficient to cure the existing default and prepay our commercial loan up through late summer.

It's appalling to me that a branch of city government can use these types of nefarious tactics with seeming impunity. It's one thing to publicly declare that a leg up will not be offered to The Senator's beleaguered owner, but what was actually occurring behind the scenes was an overt and effective effort to trip us up. Those back room machinations came entirely too close to summarily ending 67 of continuous operation of The Senator Theatre by my family, as well as devastating The Senator's tenacious long-term management staff. It should also be mentioned that Natty Boh and Nipper The Senators two border collies are workers that don't have any unemployment safety net at all.

Now before I move on with my remarks I want to acknowledge that I have taken a bold action and made derogatory statements about the BDC's role in what is still taking place surrounding The Senator Theatre. I have thought long and hard about what I was going to reveal today to inform the commission and a confused public about negative dynamic I have described.

In my past in dealings within the toxic environment I have encountered at BDC I have remained mostly silent about what takes place. In the past I felt that if I spoke the truth of what it's like to deal with the BDC that I may well lose my theatre and The Senator Theatre would be in great jeopardy as well. Recently that terrible possibility came within 12 hours of taking place, and if it were not for the wildfire response of thousands of everyday folks who sensed that something very wrong was about to take place I would be standing here as the owner of The Senator Theatre today. Since the citizens of the region quickly tuned into the heart of the matter and rallied to protect the Senator and me and my staff from a disastrous occurrence, I must be candid about what's going on in this three ring circus and let the chips fall where they may.

My comments are also intended to provide some candid and concrete reasons why I am wary of any action being taken by city regarding The Senator Theatre. My reticence to simply acquiesce to this CHAP commission action without better understanding the ramifications is directly related to my mistrust of what has taken place under the auspices of city government. The years of benign neglect regarding the York/Belvedere commercial district, and the recent actions behind the scenes by the Baltimore Development Corporation have served to threaten the uncertain future of The historic Senator Theatre.

During the years managing our difficult relationship with Baltimore City we have thankfully made steady progress in the national arena working closely with The National



Trust for historic preservation and the National Main Street Program, Cinema Treasures, Lucasfilm, and individuals and organizations to articulate trade issues affecting independent historic theatres. We have strong convictions about the opportunities ahead to be seized on behalf of The Senator and the nation's historic Main Street movie houses across the country.

As a result of these high-profile endeavors with The National Trust and other organizations struggling to improve the industry's treatment of independent exhibitors, we received many welcome accolades from across the nation. Our position within the industry is one of respect and reverence for what we have accomplished at The Senator over the years.

That reality has resonated to a much greater degree with the State of Maryland economic development representatives of the two prior State administrations than with the City of Baltimore. Next week we meet with some of the new personal at The State and look forward to establishing a good working relationship with them as well.

The Senator would not have been able to make sufficient progress under very difficult circumstances without past assistance from The State of Maryland. The State helped us to keep The Senator open and operating through Belvedere Square's defunct decade and during the years we have spent overcoming restrictive film clearances, while raising millions for scores of worthy area non-profit causes and showcasing Maryland's growing film production industry.

Now that Belvedere Square is solidly on its way back and the commercial district is in a growth mode, the vitality and stability of The Senator Theatre is more critical than ever, with 6 million dollars in public funds having been infused into the dynamic for-profit endeavors of the Belvedere Partners who own Belvedere Square. That substantial City and State investment of supplemental funds will only be validated by the continued economic and cultural growth of the area in which The Senator Theater plays such a key synergistic role.

In this light we anticipate that our positive interactions with the State's historic preservation and economic development representatives will continue. Although we are not seeking State funding, we do anticipate their taking a leadership role to help bring the various stakeholders in the Belvedere Square commercial district together, including the community associations, to engage in the first town meeting to be held at The Senator.

Now that the City and State are politically re-aligned, past impediments that stalled exploration of a more comprehensive vision for the area's future should no longer be an inhibiting factor. In particular, expanded uses and configurations for The Senator make the sense as we seek to develop the theatre's economic potential as a more flexible multi-purpose entertainment facility, while specializing in showcase feature film presentations.

One can only hope our difficult relationship with the city powers that be will now become a thing of the past if the city representatives become more open to looking at The

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Senator and Rotunda Cinematheque in a wholly different light as crucial community anchors that need to be better understood and nurtured as community assets. The Charles Theatre will also need some informed attention from the city and strategic planning to offset any negative impact by the arrival of Landmark Theatres at Inner Harbor East later this summer. All three of Baltimore's independent theatre locations are clearly precious civic treasures that should continue to serve the vital economic development and community building functions that are so crucial to the continued improvement and stability of the commercial city districts they anchor.

Hopefully this background information will foster a better understanding of the issues and we can proceed to examine in earnest the preservation and protection of The Senator Theatre. I would like to briefly make a few observations in that regard and highlight a few points about and what makes The Senator such a rare jewel in the nation's crown of renowned Main Street Movie Houses.

Protective future actions taken to preserve The Senator Theatre for the enjoyment of generations to come need to recognize and take into account the deep connection between the building's original purpose, operation and function, which should be enhanced and protected in a manner that is commensurate with the preservation efforts afforded the historic theatre structure. This is a fundamental key issue from our perspective that is not well understood outside of the insular film exhibition industry.

It's important to recognize that there are many beautiful theatres in our nation that have been brought back into operation after they have been shuttered or the original owners were forced to give them up for a variety of reasons.

Many of these reborn "friends of", non-profit theatre operations give these theaters a second life as a continued place of public assembly within the community, which is a far cry from horrid theatre conversions into drug stores, gyms, pools, and pool halls. It is however a motion picture theatre's second life, and something quite special is lost when they initially close down and no longer serve their original function.

There are hundreds of restored former independent first-run movie houses that have been resurrected in the nation. They are appreciated by their patrons but they are no longer legendary first-run big screen showcase theatres like The Senator. We learned a great deal in the last few weeks about the depth of The Senator's magic and appeal that goes to the heart and forms genuine, lasting bonds with a growing legion of Senator Theatre lovers nationwide.

Once that intangible force disperses, it's ir retrievable and something truly irreplaceable has been lost. A death occurs, the chain breaks, a realization of what has been lost sets in, sorrow enters into the picture and grieving takes place. The corpse can be reanimated, but something precious is lost when these theatres close and later become something different altogether.

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At The Senator we know full well that we are not struggling in support a lost cause but rather we understand from experience that The Senator Theatre is ideally positioned to achieve a glorious and sustainable future while still maintaining its primary function and style of operation.

The general public and the economic development agencies across the nation are also beginning to understand that what once was so detrimental to the survival these historic first run movie houses in a chain-dominated industry, their independent ownership and operation, has now ironically become the key factor in their reemergence as vital, community based assets. The independent foot traffic generating, first-run historic theatres that remain like The Senator, are unique economic engines that fuel the commercial revitalization, and growth of the communities in which they are centrally located.

To appreciate the context of The Senator's history when it first opened over 67 years ago and began functioning as a locally owned and family operated movie house anchoring the now vibrant commercial district that subsequently grew around the theatre facility once it opened its doors on Thursday, October 5th 1939.

On that inaugural night in 1939, Frank Durkee Sr., my grandfather stood on the stage of that beautiful new art deco jewel of a movie house and addressed the assembled. What he said that evening was preserved for posterity and I had the unique pleasure of repeating his remarks verbatim from The Senator's stage on Thursday October 5th, 1989, fifty years to the day. I would like to take this moment and read his brief remarks into the record today as part of the theatre's rich history to be preserved. My grandfather's remarks also put into perspective the entirety of what is precious and unique about the 67 year old Senator Theatre, which can often be overlooked in discussions about preserving The Senator and other historic theatre structures as well.

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"Architects and artists merged their knowledge in the development of this magnificent edifice. The artistry of these specialists is reflected in the beauty of the theatre. Completed The Senator is a monument of splendor dedicated to the people of Baltimore and the surrounding communities.

This masterpiece, this architectural wonder in which the builders have taken many complications, and have tied them in a homogeneous unit, is a modern palace of entertainment deserving in its place as one of America's finest theatres.

In this newest, most commodious and most magnificently appointed of all of Monumental City" palaces of the cinema, will be reflected in the highest aspirations of an exhibiting organization.

It will be the constant purpose of The Senator management to provide its patrons the utmost in entertainment and service.



Every effort has been put forth to make The Senator a theatre you will enjoy visiting and one which is destined to afford you many many hours of pleasurable entertainment and relaxation.

No small part of our own satisfaction and pleasure lies in the fact that to us has come the honor and privilege of providing Baltimore with this modern showplace.

Ours is a mission to make others happy. What a pleasure to be so engaged.

I stand here as third generation owner of the Senator Theatre who is aligned with those words and understand them even better now than I did 18 years standing before a packed house at the Senator's our 50th gala celebration with Barry Levinson as guest of honor. That glorious night The Senator was ceremonially listed on the National Register of Historic Places. We worked diligently for months with a small group of volunteers to insure that The Senator theatre official became a prestigious national landmark on its 50th anniversary.

That evening we also celebrated 50 years of collective memories of The Senator and since then it has become apparent that The Senator Theatre it isn't just appreciated and admired and frequented when we have the right film, it is in fact loved, it is deeply loved by thousands young old, rich and poor.

There is something in the combination of a stunning structure people love to visit that can roll back the years and take you on a journey inside a gorgeous cinematic time machine, where the fresh popcorn is topped with real butter, and the jujyfruits are out of this world. The magic happens as the footlights and kaleidoscopic overhead lights begin to dim, and a golden curtain parts to reveal a mystical portal to another dimension.

It's a wonderful experience and most importantly its the communal experience between the staff and the patrons that's the key ingredient that makes going to The Senator such a heartfelt pleasure.. That all important element does not come from the projector, or the real butter or the theatre's gorgeous marquee or it's large, comfortable auditorium, it comes from the people, the ones who come to see movies there, there the ones who work there serving the community of patrons and those who work on the place when most folks are sleeping. It's the kids packed into the free holiday shows, it's the neighborhood people stopping by with their dogs, and lots of others who regularly stop by our community center of a theatre to hang out and assemble with like minded others, in The Senator, the beating heart of the diverse communities that surround us.

So In this light and in light of what just happened with the recent series of events it is important for everyone who wants to help preserve The Senator for the enjoyment of generations to come is to recognize that it is the theatre's first run film policy, its vibe and its award winning independent ownership and family style of operation, offering the very

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latest in emerging technology that is what makes The Senator such a beloved and irreplaceable Baltimore institution.

-It has also become apparent of late that the outpouring of heartfelt concern and support for The Senator and its ownership is related to the fact that over 10,000 marvelous Main street movie houses like The Senator have disappeared en mass from our lives in towns and cities across the nation in past decades, often because of the arcane and little understood practice called film "clearance".

For many years of struggle to overcome these anticompetitive industry practices those of us who operate independent theaters across the nation have been trying to educate our patrons, the media, the governmental economic development agencies, [even the quasi ones], residential and business community leaders and elected officials and our colleagues in distribution that there needs to be a more broad understanding of the impediments faced by the independents, particularly in light of the many beneficial spin-offs and synergies that theaters like The Senator can generate.

Although great effort has been extended over the years in our ongoing quest to enlighten the economic development agencies as too the many positive benefits the Main Street movie houses provide, it has been an uphill battle to inform those who need to better understand this important dynamic, particularly in economic development circles Baltimore City.

What became obvious from the recent torrent of input that arrived from all directions is that the citizens intuitively understand this dynamic. They understand the importance of an historic movie house like The Senator, with its sense of place and tradition. The public clearly "gets" that beautiful neighborhood based places of assembly need to be preserved in the heart of a community, and that the Senator Theatre embodies that understanding in an exemplary fashion.

Many of those we are interacting and bringing their children and grandchildren to join The Senator family are seeking to pass on a touchstone from their childhood and remember when Baltimore had wonderful downtown palaces and marvelous system of neighborhood movie houses that once totaled over 175 anchoring Baltimore's many neighborhoods and commercial districts throughout the city.

The neighborhood movie houses were and remain a critical element in economic and cultural life of the communities in which they are located. In addition to attracting shoppers and hungry diners to commercial districts the theatres also provided employment within to the community, particularly to the youth who formed good work habits and learned important values working at the neighborhood house

while they weren't letting their friends in the side door.

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I have tried to engender a better understanding of the Senator Theatre itself and where it fits into the past present and future within a changing industry and a changing Baltimore. I would like to finish up my prepared remarks by reiterating my sense that Baltimore City government remains in a dangerously fragmented state when it comes to economic development matters and historic preservation. Too often over the years there has been an assumption that the vigilant protection of our built environment is somehow antithetical to commercial development and progress. That's nonsense of course; in fact in the larger view, the opposite is true.

In my lifetime Baltimore has lost thousands of its wonderful historic buildings including all but 4 of its movie theatres that once numbered in the hundreds.

What has occurred over the years with the destruction and conversion of so many beautiful movie houses that once graced and ennobled our beautiful city is a travesty. Arguably the most regrettable and senseless; theatre razing that ever occurred in Baltimore was the tragic 1971 razing of the legendary and renowned Royal Theatre on the 1300 block of Pennsylvania Avenue. What an awful miscalculation that was. The Royal was the key to the economic redevelopment of the area, was as prominent an African American as the Apollo in Harlem, the Howard in DC and regent in Philadelphia. That such an extraordinary source of pride and collective memory for African Americans in Baltimore was lost forever became apparent to all only after the theatre came down.

And we shouldn't make an assumption that "well who knew?", because there are always forward looking, tuned in preservationists community members trying to be heard and make a case for the preservation of historic structures and they are often ignored, or as is the case here in Baltimore, there is no overarching preservation board or organization that has sufficient purview and authority to do the job in a comprehensive manner

I have learned over the years, watching one historic worthwhile structure after another fall to pieces that there are always preservation voices of reason trying to be heard that are rarely heeded. We do not seem to learn from our mistakes. This ongoing madness is costing us our irreplaceable historic buildings and the collective memories embodied by those buildings. We are also destroying huge economic development opportunities as well.

Regarding CHAP, The Royal came down 36 years ago and it was a different era before CHAP came into being. I do take CHAP to task however for what occurred just three years ago when we lost East Baltimore's signature building. The extraordinary, 1200 seat Grand Theatre. The Grand Theatre was first built like a fortress in 1913 and remodeled by my family in 1928. It was the pride of Highlandtown when it still was a separate town from Baltimore. The Grand was tragically razed in January of 2004.

Did previous CHAP Commissioners take a stand for the Grand when the City of Baltimore took ownership of the landmark theatre and demolished this non-designated landmark for a new anchor Pratt library? It's not for nostalgia that I mourn the Grand, it

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was a key historic structure that was until it was foolishly allowed to be razed by the city in what had just been designated an arts and entertainment district.

It was as if the perfect storm of special interests blew The fabulous Grand Theatre to smithereens. It was madness really that received very little media attention at the time, although there was attention being paid and appeals made from the highest levels of historic preservation in the nation in the days leading up to the demolition. There were pleas to save the building pouring in from all over the country including from Richard Moe director of the National Trust who made a passionate case for a temporary reprieve for The Grand due to its significance and sound structure. There were many other high profile preservationist from around the country who wrote to the mayor. In fact one of the more eloquent voices pleading for the life of the Grand was Tyler Gearhart, the chair of this commission.

When one reads the collection of email correspondence regarding The Grand that went back and forth with ample time to protect and preserve the theatre, it's unfathomable that the Grand was not saved. As far as I can determine from having assembled documents that chronicle the last days of a doomed Grand Theatre, I have not come across any input on the subject of the Grand by CHAP.

I would also like to know what CHAP doing if anything to preserve the historic Mayfair Theatre, that's suffering demolition by neglect on Howard street although it is owned by the Mayor and City Council, or the historic Town Theatre, which the Mayor and City Council obtained and then turned over the property rights to the historic structure the Centerpoint Development?

And what about the unique Parkway Theatre on North Avenue that the City is trying to acquire over the objections of the owner who loves his theatre, has put considerable funds into the building to stabilize it but is getting harassed and even ridiculed by BDC. Or the Gayety Theatre just around the corner from the Benton Building where this hearing is being held?

Even the spectacular gilded Hippodrome, preserved primarily under the auspices of the State of Maryland, has never been designated at all by CHAP a Baltimore City Landmark.

What has CHAP and the City of Baltimore done to preserve the great legacy of movie theatres that is proudly documented in the book, Motion Picture Exhibition in Baltimore, by Robert Headley that displays the Senator Theatre on the cover.

The Senator Theatre website displays a section entitled "Protect the Irreplaceable." Noting the demise of the Royal Theatre, the Grand Theatre, Saint Stanislaus and the Rochambeau.

I see that recently CHAP is finally taking steps to advocate for preservation, even when other city agencies have capitulated to property owners bent on destroying our past along



with our built environment in Baltimore City. CHAP led a last minute effort to save the Rochambeau and the charming 1820s homes on Saint Paul Place. I applaud those efforts, but I am compelled to acknowledge that they were ineffective actions taken too late in the struggle.

I am hopeful that CHAP and the Senator Theatre may wind up in a committed alliance regarding the preservation and protection of the historic structure and its original function, but how can we encourage the Planning Department, Housing and Community Development, the Baltimore Development Corporation, the Baltimore City Council and the Mayor of Baltimore to really make the sincere commitment required to commit to historic preservation as enlightened public policy and not just give lip service when the truly difficult preservation issues come to the surface that pit the rights of unwilling property owners with the need to preserve our past.

The ownership of the Senator Theatre is committed to historic preservation. We agree with CHAP and thank them for pointing out something that everyone knows, The Senator is a National Register building, A source of pride and positive promotion for the State of Maryland and a Baltimore City Landmark.

I want to reassure CHAP and the citizens of Baltimore that I am sincere in my desire to see my building preserved in perpetuity long after I have left the building. The Senator never was about the past, it's always been about the future.

I also am encouraged by the progress I see taking place with the communication between preservation groups and individuals increasing and at CHAP it seems as if things are slowly moving in the right direction.

My commitment and the commitment of all of The Senator's long-term management staff to historic preservation is bona fide and well-documented. I take great pride and satisfaction in the two prestigious preservation awards I have received from the Baltimore Heritage Organization, I am also appreciative of my preservation award from the Baltimore City Chamber of Commerce, Preservation Citations from two mayors and two Governors, acknowledgment from the New York Times preservation writer as to the pivotal role The Senator Theatre played in saving scores of historic buildings on Baltimore's West Side by offering to run the short film "Baltimore's West Side Story" and by doing so raised the public's awareness to the importance of saving the West Side's historic structures from demolition.

I have also had the privilege to have served two terms on the board of the League of Historic American Theatres and played a role in that prestigious organization's move of its headquarters to Baltimore. I was one of the original founding members of the Baltimore Art Deco Society, and am the proud recipient of the 2003 National Main Street Leadership presented by the National Main Street Center of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

I recount those awards and such to support a request.

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I first suggest that at this point in time the action that is being considered by Chap regarding The Senator is something I am not comfortable supporting this time as the Senator's owner. I have valid reasons to hold that opinion, although I am not adamant on the subject and would like to better understand what CHAP can do over time to improve it's track record regarding historic preservation. I also want to do my part to help further the process of historic preservation and protection of historic structures by the CHAP and the CHAP commission.

To further my goals regarding CHAP I have written to Mayor Dixon and asked her to please consider my request to be appointed to the CHAP commission, to fill the mostly vacant seat for a Baltimore City business property owner in an historic district. I thank you for allowing me to appear before the commission and and I ask for your support of my request of mayor Dixon to be appointed to serve on the CHAP commission.