



THE RUTH ANN OVERBECK  
CAPITOL HILL HISTORY PROJECT

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**Interview with Peter Waldron**

**Interview Date:** June 15, 2009  
**Interviewer:** Dilshika Jayamaha  
**Transcriber:** Jack Womeldorf

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TAPE 1/SIDE 1

**JAYAMAHA:** ... Jayamaha; I'm interviewing a Mr. Peter Waldron, who is a writer at the *Hill Rag*, a newspaper, for the Overbeck Capitol Hill History Project. It's June 15, 2009. We are meeting at Coldwell Banker premises, at 605 Pennsylvania Avenue SE, Washington, DC.

Thanks, Mr. Waldron, for agreeing to be interviewed by us. First of all, maybe you can give us a little background in terms of your involvement with Eastern Market, how long you've been involved with the subject, and how long you've been writing about it as well.

**WALDRON:** Well, I was coming back from Chicago; my mother's funeral, when we got a phone call in the airport from a friend in Washington, and she said to me, "I have terrible news" and I said "That's what I'm supposed to tell you" meaning I was just coming back, and so I learned from my friend that the Eastern Market that Sunday night—Monday morning, April 30<sup>th</sup>, had burned, essentially, with its roof gone. And so I came back to Washington, and I'd been writing for the *Hill Rag* for a couple of years—it wasn't much longer that—and I've lived in the community since 1968, had been an ANC commissioner, and chair of the ANC 6B for four years out of my eight-year term. And so my editor, Andrew Lightman, was talking, and he just thought a story that I should take on, and I should say, immediately at this point, that I think, looking back at these two years, that the *Hill Rag* deserves enormous credit. I think Melissa Ashabranner and Andrew Lightman, both deserve credit, because they made a decision, and gave me the assignment, to follow the Eastern Market story, to report on what progress, or lack of progress there would be, and it was fully their sense, by reporting on the story, regularly, each month, and we've kept that commitment, that the renovations wouldn't go away, it would continue, that there'd be pressure just by the reporting. I think they deserve kudos for that. So I began to write a monthly piece, which I called "Eastern Market Watch". It covered a wide swath of events. It's turned out to be quite a saga, We're about twelve days away from the market reopening, and it's been quite a story!

**JAYAMAHA:** So, just to be clear, you started writing about the market after the fire took place; that's the first time?

**WALDRON:** Yes, I did. We agreed that I'd write a monthly column, called "Eastern Market Watch" and basically, I followed the market through the summer. The initial period after the fire of course, was devastation. It seems as though everyone on Capitol Hill, including me, walked over to the market—we'd taken it for granted for years. I'd been a customer for all the time I'd lived in Washington, especially Market Lunch: barbecue sandwich was my favorite, with cole slaw. And suddenly it was gone! The remarkable thing was, you know, there was a remarkable group of people, including Gary Peterson, from

the Capitol Hill Historic group, [Capitol Hill Restoration Society] and others who decided—Nicky Cymrot from the Capitol [Hill] Community Foundation, who stood (as I now understand it), stood there that morning and they decided that they were going to raise money, and they decided they were going to pull the community together. It's a pretty substantial community in terms of the kind of influence it has in the city. They made a decision the Market was going to come back from its ashes; and now we're twelve days away.

**JAYAMAHA:** That was a pretty remarkable effort. I think all of us in the neighborhood were certainly moved by the effort; everybody pulled their weight and helped in various ways. When you started covering the issue, could you talk a little bit, Mr. Waldron, about how you approached it, who you talked to first, and some of your thoughts and insights from that period, and if you could walk us through maybe, the next few months?

**WALDRON:** Yeah, I can. Maybe I can walk from the fire to the opening of the East Hall. First of all, you're repeating myself. The decision was made that I was perfect because I'd been around forever, and I knew an enormous number of people, and I'd already been writing for the *Hill Rag*. And so, I began to do reporting, contacted people in the government, contacted Council member Well's office, and by the way, Council Member Tommy Wells deserves enormous credit himself, because he was pulling the community together with meetings. He worked around the clock in those early days to make sure that the elements that would be required to move this thing forward were there. Politically, he was in a powerful position.

The Capitol Hill Community Foundation—I think of Nicky Cymrot and her husband Steve, and I think of Gary Peterson. Gary was a driving force, spent the next month raising money. Just looking at some notes I have, I think at one point, Home Depot—this was at the end of the summer—but at one point Home Depot as the merchants went back in the East Hall, gave out a \$30,000 credit to the merchants that they could use at Home Depot. The DC United soccer team wrote a check for \$50,000. The Capitol Hill [Association of Merchants and Professionals], the CHAMPS organization, which is the business organization on Capitol Hill, held a huge fundraiser and wrote another check for \$56,000. All in all, over that summer—and then there were the individual contributions that were made by people, and there was a booth set up across from the market every Saturday and Sunday. The grand total that they raised in those first three months was about \$450,000.

That money was used, initially, to pay, to give to people who were out of work, and there were about a hundred or so employees who lost their jobs. I think there were fourteen merchants in the building, and maybe 100 or 125 employees. So some of those people were given grants just to pay their rent; they used the money to buy equipment. I know that the Canales family, who owned the deli, were given money for

a refrigerated truck. So they distributed that money for equipment, and the wonderful thing was, there was no cost to it, no overhead, Gary Peterson seemed the Market money czar, and he just wrote checks whenever they were needed. But in the meantime, I began to report, and the first things that occurred were lots of community meetings, including a really large one, I believe was held May 18<sup>th</sup>; it was held at Hine [Junior High School]. It was so huge, it was held in both the auditorium and in a lower room where there was a stage. The decision was made, and announced, that—I don't know if it was made at that meeting—but on or about that time, Mayor Fenty, again to his credit, committed that the market would be rebuilt; and the roof began to be repaired, contracts were let, and Menkoff came in and did the work of cleaning up from the fire, and then they began to build the roof. I know I was in contact in the early days with the Menkoff people.

EMCAC [Eastern Market Community Advisory Committee] played a huge role in this, I'm giving lots of credit, but I now have been to 24 EMCAC meetings and after being an ANC commissioner for eight years, I sat through endlessly long three-hour meetings as the chair of ANC 6B, and I thought those days were over. And now, suddenly, I found myself sitting in on these EMCAC meetings, which, ordinarily, you just wouldn't want to be going and sitting in on these meetings. But I have to say, this group of people, who constituted this advisory body, did unbelievably good work in this period. They were mature, they weren't sidetracked, they pushed on, they pushed on. Donna Scheeder was their chair. She exhibited wonderful leadership skills. So I sat in lots of meetings over that time period while they wrestled with design problems and funding issues, and I don't remember, but sometime that summer, I believe, the commitment was made [by the city] to fund both the market and the Georgetown Library together, and I think the funding was for \$22 million. The Georgetown fire had occurred the same night.

**JAYAMAHA:** I'm just wondering, Mr. Waldron. In terms of this, you have a vast trove of knowledge in terms of what took place almost like a daily basis. Perhaps you could talk a little bit about maybe a few things, just to illustrate, in terms of what are the things in terms of the individual efforts, the group efforts, what things that really worked well for things to progress so far so quickly, and perhaps tell us what didn't work all that well, potentially. What could have worked better—if you could give us that perspective?

**WALDRON:** First of all, the community. It was a remarkable thing. I remember moving to Capitol Hill in 1968 and immediately—I'd grown up in Chicago—immediately, just liking it here. I recognized it was everything that my neighborhood in Chicago, which was Hyde Park, where our current president is from, a wonderful place—University of Chicago—but it didn't have a small town feel that Capitol Hill has always felt. Once you've lived here and learn who your neighbors are—that whole sense of “we live on Capitol Hill” just soared. People were willing—first of all, they just gave money—money was critical in

those early days. But they gave their time. I think the Mayor's commitment was a wonderful thing. I think there will be dividends paid for re-election. I think he will certainly, especially with the time, he has delivered in terms of this Market. In fact, when you think about the fire, you think that the building burned down in the East Hall, which was erected that summer, which was a temporary structure. It was erected, I think, in 99 days, which is remarkable for anyone who has lived in this city as long as I have, where it sometimes takes that long to get a driver's license, or it used to. Councilmember Wells did stellar work; I think EMCAC did wonderful work. Those were the driving forces.

Where there were some deficiencies, and I wrote about it regularly, were the management of Eastern Market, who initially funded a legislation that Sharon Ambrose, the previous Councilmember, had submitted and passed—the Eastern Market legislation of 1999 provided for a market manager. It's complicated how that group was chosen. It, in fact, ended what you might want to call the Market wars. I used to shake my head as a resident, all through the '80s and '90s and then as an ANC commissioner. I coined the term—"the Eastern Market is the black hole of Capitol Hill politics" because anyone who goes near its rim disappears forever. It's often been the case. The Eastern Market management group, called Eastern Market Ventures, had this contract, and it always struck me that, in the process of these two years it was renegotiated and now it has expired. It was renegotiated and they was bumped up from \$100,000 + to \$225,000. They were given a \$95,000 increase and they were remarkable in their unwillingness to commit to a management presence at the market on Saturdays and Sundays! And so, when the fire occurred, you might say they had some presence at the meetings, but they were being swept aside by community events, by the leadership of the Fenty administration and then the Office of Property Management and Tommy Wells' office, and the EMCAC people, who were on top of things, and moving constantly, and addressing the multitude of problems, from fire abatement, to the trash problems, to keeping these businesses alive, somehow, to the whole notion, all through the summer, which was profound that the fire had burned down, and there was no more Market.

If you talked to people around the city, there was a sense of "the Market burned down; it's closed". So people stopped coming, so there was that secondary economic impact, which were: the people who had survived: arts and crafts people, and the farmers, had a terrible summer, because everyone thought the Market had closed. But the Eastern Market Ventures management group just continued to astound me, and they eventually lost their contract in December of 2008. But all through that period, and I would call and interview their different management representatives—they just insisted that they were a property management group, and that they had nothing or little to do with operations. I think I was looking at the number this morning. They were collecting \$225,000 a year, \$18,000 a month, and their commitment was to have an hourly employee at the market on Saturdays from 8 until noon, Sundays from 8 until noon, and

that was it. I still shake my head; I would have thought that, if I were in their shoes, I would have hired someone, and said, “Go,” as there now is today—there is a young woman who is the assistant manager, and she’s there all day Saturday and all day Sunday, and she’s there to solve all the problems that occur when 20—30,000 people roll through a two-street area, peacefully, so that is some of what I observed.

**JAYAMAHA:** That’s very interesting. There is so much on-the-ground detail in just what you’ve said. I know you’ve talked a little about this, in the immediate aftermath of the fire. Could you talk a little bit about the planning process; what went into the planning process in terms of the refurbishment of the structure, and the streetscape? There is a lot that was discussed. My understanding is that there was some design planning prior to the fire, which was sort of an overall plan, but of course things had to be changed rapidly because the fire took place—maybe you could talk a little about that.

**WALDRON:** More than one person has said to me, and I would agree. I passed it along myself. The fire was the best thing that happened at the Eastern Market! In this perverse way. Because the Office of Property Management which was a huge portfolio, wasn’t particularly paying any attention to the Eastern Market. There was this advisory group, made up of citizens who worked hard, volunteered their time, no compensation, and were basically being ignored by both the city and the management group. They worked; I think of Monte Edwards, who is chair of Capital Improvements. He worked ... he’s an unsung hero here. He did so much work on the planning. Monte is a wonderful person, but sometimes it was almost tedious, the amount of work—the painstaking detail he put in. But it was necessary, and what happened was, they were working on a plan for the renovation of the market—I don’t know, it wasn’t going anywhere, because there wasn’t a political will to do it. There was a plan for \$1.5 million or \$1.7, in renovations to be made at the market, and this was on the heels of the redoing of the Farmers’ Shed which had been controversial. It had taken forever; it wasn’t quite done right. So what happened was, there was a plan in place, so when the Market burned, they didn’t have to particularly—I think the plan was, if I recall, 95% complete. There were some adjustments made, but by and large, they didn’t have to reinvent the wheel; the wheel was basically ready to be rolled out. That’s what went on with the planning. They were in a wonderful position to move. That’s the one benefit of the fire.

**JAYAMAHA:** In terms of things like the adjustments to the plan, are you privy to any of the things that changed dramatically from originally to the existing morphing form?

**WALDRON:** The things that stand out in my mind are ... the other thing that was parallel to this, and it’s been going on, I think, if I’m correct in remembering, Monte Edwards told me that he and Dan Tangherlini, who just recently left the city government as Deputy Mayor, had testified in 2001 about redoing the street, and this was again just this tedious process, and the money would appear in the budget,

then it wouldn't be used. The streetscape was never ... so there was this plan for the street to be redone to match the historic character of the market. So that was going on. The one other issue that does stand in my mind—sticks out from meetings is—that it was discovered, although no one was ever able to demonstrate it—but it was discovered that in the Adolf Cluss plans for the South Hall, that there was a skylight. There was no record that there ever was a skylight. So that became a somewhat contentious issue between various parties. I know, for example, Bill Glasgow, of Glasgow Meats, whose father ran the market. They've been there since, I think, the end of World War II, maybe earlier. I don't remember that time. The Glasgows, Eastern Market, and South Hall, are almost synonymous. There's a number of Glasgows who are merchants in there; Richard and his brother, who have the seafood place; Jenny, who runs the bakery. So Bill was—one of the issues was—I use the word “skunked”, but Bill was worried that there was going to be too much light coming through the skylights, and a side note is, they never had to worry about this in the old grungy building, because the windows were filthy, so they didn't have to worry about sunlight coming through, and now they were going to have freshly washed windows and a skylight, and Bill's concern was that the meat would become discolored, and apparently it would—it seems it would. So that became an issue for a while.

I know to the credit once again, and the patience of the people involved in the renovation work: the construction companies and OPM [DC Office of Property Management] and their coordinator, Curtis Clay, who's done a terrific job. They went back and forth, and they tested glass samples and tintings, and this is the kind of thing you sit in on in EMCAC meetings and you look at the clock, and look at the clock, and wonder when the discussion will end, but nevertheless, it is important. So they found resolutions; and they have a skylight; they have fans up there in the skylight ceiling to circulate air. They've found what they believe is the proper tint to the windows, so that even if they do wash them in the future, they won't have to worry too much about spoiling the color of food, anyway, if not the food.

**JAYAMAHA:** That was really fascinating, the little details. One of the other things, again. This is something I've heard, that the paint, the color, it's been matched with the original paint's color?

**WALDRON:** Yes. Again, all hats off. Kudos to Monte Edwards, a stickler for details unmatched. And takes what he does seriously. And plays an important role for that reason. Monte, and his Capitol Improvements Committee scratched away, chipped away at the multiple layers of the wall painting, and found the original color, the salmon color, which, I only have their word, I've been in the market, it looks beautiful. That apparently was the original color. It was not lightly dismissed; it was taken seriously. It's my sense that the officials of the city government at OPM; I think Derrick Smith was the original guy who sat in on the meetings and then he was replaced by Curtis Clay, who was the liaison for construction. I think at some point they began to know that this group of people, who met once a month, were serious

about these things, and that they weren't to be trifled with, and were to be taken seriously and so the sense of ignoring them disappeared.

I think there was another interesting thing that took place a year ago, in May, and that's that the EMCAC group, the Eastern Market Community Advisory Committee, is made up of a group of different community organizations, one of whom is the Mayor's Representative, and Fenty replaced the former chair and previous representative of the mayor, I think was Ellen Opper-Weiner. The chair had done a good job, but he had his own person to choose, and he placed the Deputy Mayor, Dan Tangherlini, on EMCAC. Although Dan didn't come to every meeting, he always had a representative there. There was this sense that was noticeable that his presence was now on that committee. So, when management gave their reports, there was a sudden stiffness; people didn't slump in their chairs any more; they sat up a little more stiffly, because the Deputy Mayor was very interested in what was going on, and that was a signal that the Market mattered a great deal. City agencies, that might have taken a month or two to get back to EMCAC on matters, were back immediately. So it was a real interesting combination of the mayor's choice, having Mr. Tangherlini.

END OF TAPE 1/SIDE 1

TAPE 1/SIDE 2

**JAYAMAHA:** Go ahead, Mr. Waldron.

**WALDRON:** One thing I wanted to add. You asked what worked and what hadn't worked. One of the solutions in the legislation that Sharon Ambrose—I think she deserves great credit for what she did in getting this legislation passed back in 1999. At that point, it solved problems, and then new problems began to surface, and one of the issues was the market management. I've talked a little bit about Eastern Market Ventures, and I don't want to beat them up too much. The problem that was left unresolved was that the North Hall had been managed by a man named John Harrod, a group called Market 5 Gallery. John Harrod, who surprisingly let his lease expire in December 2006, now he's out of the Market; basically he gets all the credit in the world for the flea market. He's the man, he's the guy that did it. His charge in the North Hall was to do a community center there in a sort of arts ... and he did those things in the early days. His health is pretty frail now, and I don't know how much energy he was able to give to arts and music, and community events, although there was a regular tango group that danced every Wednesday night there, in the winter, with earmuffs on, and gloves, and in the summer it was so hot in there, there was never a bathroom in there, so John had a number of his hands tied behind his back. There were no restroom facilities; there was no heat; there was no air-conditioning, there was just a space. Hopefully, under the renovation, they'll be able to use it in a more useful way, so John arrived to manage



the North Hall, and there was a management company managing the South Hall. Over in the Hines school yard, there was a group that Carol Wright has, with the Saturday Flea Market. They do a wonderful job. Tom Rall built up, in conjunction with John Harrod, the Sunday Flea Market.

So there was this disparate management group, although the legislation always called for one manager, and as a result, the market didn't run itself well. One of the really good, and surprising, things is, once all the different management entities were either—their leases expired or were pushed aside in some cases—once OPM stepped in, as they did in January, and appointed a market manager, and they now have unified market management, there's a couple of things happening. One, there's unified management; it's consistent. It certainly has its months. One of the things they've been able to do is collect the revenues that John Harrod collected. The revenues that belonged to Eastern Market are now going into the Enterprise Fund, which is the fund all revenues are supposed to go into, to make the market self-sustaining. It would be my guess that once the North Hall is open in a few weeks, once they get their feet under them and begin to use it for community events—for art exhibits, for theater. There's a stage, there's a dance floor, there's room for a few hundred people, for political fundraising. It would be my guess that the market will quickly be able to be self-sustaining for the first time in its existence.

**JAYAMAHA:** That's amazing, definitely. Speaking about that space, you obviously have taken a look at that space. I myself just saw the North Hall, the stage, and it seems markedly different from what it was before. Was that also part of that original pre-conceptual things in terms of the design, the plan that we talked about a little while ago? Was that also ...?

**WALDRON:** No, it wasn't, and the reason was, although as I said, the peace was bought with the 1999 legislation. It was a temporary peace, and there continued to be continuing, simmering problems. John Harrod and EMCAC, the DOD advisory body, for whatever reasons, did not seem to get along, and they ran, they headed in different directions. There was always tension. If you talked, as I did, with EMCAC people, they always felt like Harrod had walked away from the situation. If you talked to John Harrod, you could make a justifiable argument that he was shut out. So he just went his own way, and he collected his rents, and the North Hall was there. It certainly nurtured some wonderful arts and crafts, and between Mr. Harrod and Tom Rall, who was involved for about 25 years, they did a terrific job in building up the arts and crafts.

But the building itself, in the end, was simply one more place that you could put stalls. It was under-utilized, it was an embarrassment, I think John Harrod, rightly would argue that, you know, there were two porta-potties in there, that he paid for. I went over one night for one of the tango dances, to interview the guy that was running the tango. They had these space heaters on a winter night, so there's this

wonderful space that was under-utilized. Because there was no co-operation between Harrod and EMCAC during those years, and because the city wasn't really paying that much attention, everything languished. Except for the flea market outside, which did thrive; it's one of the three legs of the three-legged economic engine that makes the market go.

**JAYAMAHA:** I'd like to revisit the flea market in a little bit, but for the moment, in terms of things like the design; you did mention the pavers a little while ago. Whose idea was that in terms of the new pavers, which are actually very pretty, and the streetscape itself? What went into that?

**WALDRON:** The streetscape was something that was slowly, on slow, very slow, parallel tracks with the market renovation, which was also on a very slow track until the fire. Because of the fire, efforts were made to co-ordinate the re-opening and the streetscape, and I would suggest to you that having the Deputy Mayor as a member of EMCAC, pushed all the bureaucratic difficulties that would have heretofore, had prevented anything from moving forward, suddenly began to fall. I don't recall, other than ... there were plans always to re-brick the sidewalks; there were plans, constantly discussed, about the North Plaza, and historical lighting, and greenery.

The one issue, (I'll jump around a little bit), but the one issue on the street; the cobblestones themselves, basically were, at one of the EMCAC meetings, the construction people brought any number of samples. The community and Advisory Committee had to make a decision. I think they laid some of the concrete into the street itself, and made some efforts for community comment. The decision was made between two or three choices of how the street would look.

Which brings us to one of the political controversies, which is still, I think, going to continue, which is the street being closed or open. The street was open for vehicular traffic until the fire, and then by order of the mayor, it was closed. And that made a certain amount of sense, because they had to put construction fencing all around the market, so lots of the merchants ... well, the merchants were gone, but lots of the flea market people and the farmers were displaced from where they had traditionally been. And so, it made some sense. Today's issue is, whether or not the street will reopen. Now the mayor announced in May, when he announced the June 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> opening, than the street would remain closed. That's becoming controversial. Although to what extent, I just don't know. It would be my sense, that what is called the "bricks and mortars businesses" who are on the east side of Seventh Street, are generally not in favor of that, because they want the ability of their customers to be able to drive up to the few spaces that were there, and it's their sense that the street closing is hurting their business. They will argue that until the cows come home. The farmers wanted the street open because they had traditionally pulled their trucks up in, parked them diagonally to the farmers' shed, so that their product could be kept inside, in a

controlled environment. The merchants who were burned out, I think are, to a person, if you ask them, in favor of the street remaining open, not closed. They're in the difficult position of, if they begin to whine or complain about it, they've just been given a \$22 million building. How much more ... So they're in a really awkward spot. And that brings me back to the pavers, which are --- the minute you saw—I mean, it was very clear that the pavers weren't being placed down on that street so that there would be traffic rolling over it all the time. The pavers were clearly a signal that this street was going to have an historic look to it, and be a wonderful place to just stroll along.

**JAYAMAHA:** In your opinion ... it's interesting about the controversy in terms of how to resolve that. What would be a happy medium, if you'd care to give your opinion?

**WALDRON:** Yeah. I've always felt like the street, I think, especially when you look at the work that's been done. It seems to me, my opinion only, that the street is a wonderful place to stroll on. Our Council member talks about a liveable, walkable neighborhood, and he means it. And I will say this, the compromise that Barry Margeson and the Office of Property Management have come up with, looks to me to be the solution. I was there over the weekend, not having seen it, and they have the farmers back under the shed; they have the arts and crafts people back, who had spaces against the building, are back to their spaces, they have the trucks parallel parked, and now they have craft stalls, and the good part of it is that the criteria for being in one of those stalls, is you have to genuinely be an arts and crafts person. You just can't be selling 10,000 ties that were shipped in from China. My opinion is, leave the street closed, but solve the parking problem.

That's the difficulty, I think. And I don't know the solution to that, other than the Hines project, which is inextricably tied into it. If they find some parking, and it doesn't have to be much, for the community, I think they then will have solved it completely. The issue becomes, if I live in the Capitol Hill community, and I am going to support the market, as opposed to a tourist who isn't necessarily going to come and buy a steak and produce and take it home; if I'm in the new South Hall, once the honeymoon period ends, and I'm a Capitol Hill community member, I can go to the Safeway, and there's parking. I can go to the Harris Teeter, first-rate upscale store. There's parking. And the market is difficult. I'm all for the street being open, and for being a plaza for lots of activity, and there's a huge amount of people who go through there, but parking is the unresolved issue.

**JAYAMAHA:** Getting back to the question, as I mentioned, about the vendors. Could you talk a little bit, Mr. Waldron, about how, originally when you started writing about the market, or you previously, through your observations, how have things changed with the vendors; were there more? Is there a difference in terms of the types of arts and crafts? Any of those little types of observations, if you could

talk a little bit about that, and if you've seen a development or change, especially in the aftermath of the fire as well, to add to the question.

**WALDRON:** I'm going to respond in the broadest way. I'm going to respond to what I've been told, as opposed to, not necessarily my own observations. Early on, I [ know this]; early on the arts and crafts vendors, that whole collection of people who're there, suffered greatly that first summer. I think business bounced back with them, but I know they went through a pretty difficult time. Whether they were genuinely arts and crafts, and met the definition, which is inscribed in law, in the market legislation. Who exactly is a crafts-person? How that's defined? It's in the law. They struggled.

Then some of my reporting was that there were lots of people who were vending outside, who weren't craftspeople. They were just ... And they came from two sources; customers, people who lived in the [??] said that... would suggest that not everything had been handmade, or made according to the definition. They suggested that the quality of the merchandise was being lowered. And what really caught my attention was when the arts and crafts people who were genuinely making things, who were creating jewelry and paintings; they began to complain, because they were truly artisans, and artists, and that really caught my attention. All the while, the difficulty was, again, I think, in fairness to the Eastern Market Ventures; they had no real control over Market 5 Gallery and what John Harrod was doing. They simply moved people around, but Harrod did all the hiring, and basically... and so it seems, when you look at it, as though that area weakened. In the interest of just having 110 to 120 stalls each Saturday. By the way, this is different from the Saturday Flea Market, or the Sunday Flea Market, which were run by Mr. Rall and Carol Wright. It seems that the standards were lowered.

Interestingly, in the last few months, at the Eastern Market Community Advisory Committee meetings, they've begun to turn their attention, now that there's new management in place, that's actually accomplishing things. Every meeting, something new is reported that seems obvious, that should have been done in the past. They've begun, instead of fighting this rear-guard action with the previous management; they've begun to do some of the planning and advising they should have been doing all along. There's a movement afoot, there's a committee being formed, that will be a juried committee, which will be composed of some of the members of EMCAC and members of the arts and crafts community that will set standards for what's allowed to be sold at the market. I think that's a wonderful sign of progress.

**JAYAMAHA:** That's a good way to resolve some of these issues. Could you talk a little bit about the distinction between the flea market and the Saturday vendors? Is there a slightly different set of rules that govern them in terms of who is allowed to sell their wares?

**WALDRON:** Not any more. The answer is that the Saturday vendors on Seventh Street and on the North Plaza and in the North Hall were all managed by John Harrod and his Market 5 Gallery. John Harrod had a sub-lease arrangement with Tom Rall, who had a group called The Flea Market at Eastern Market. Tom I've known for many many years; they've worked hard and built the market very successfully. There were [the] Rall set of rules. And then, over in the Hine School, there was another entity; Carol Wright's group, Saturday Flea Market, and they leased that space from the District of Columbia Public School system. So there was yet another sub-management group that was totally independent. So there were these bifurcated management entities, all operating with rules—I know that Tom Rall's flea market has a wonderful web site. They work very hard to promote the business. They lost out, John Harrod and Tom Rall, in the end, for all their efforts ... they genuinely had built businesses. Mr. Harrod lost it because he allowed his lease to expire. It's unexplainable to me why he did that. Because he let his lease expire, his sublease with Tom Rall expired. So Tom Rall, who'd spent—if you asked Tom Rall, he'll tell you he spent hundreds of thousands of dollars advertising his flea market, so he ended up in a position where he was just out of luck. It was pretty unfortunate. So I think the answer to your question is; each seemed to have standards, but there were no consistent standards. At least, whether you agree with them or not, under the Office of Property Management and the market manager currently today, Barry Margeson, they've begun to put some rules in place and to enforce them in a positive way I think. There's consistency, which I think was totally lacking before.

**JAYAMAHA:** Moving on to the merchants inside the market, you talked a little bit about the windows and so on. Do you know anything about, Mr. Waldron, the maintenance of the market in the future? You were talking about cleaning the windows. I was just curious, thinking about ... Is there some plan in place in terms of how and who does that?

**WALDRON:** When I was preparing for this meeting, I was looking at some of the pieces I wrote in the first few months, in the summer. I'm going to back up a little bit, because the cause of the fire still remains undetermined. Interestingly, the Chief of Police [ed: Fire Chief] has deemed it electrical, and the EMCAC group had sent a report to the Office of Property Management a number of years previous to the fire, that there were electrical problems. So it's always struck me that it would have been far better to say, and I don't know why the Fire Chief insists it wasn't arson. It would have been far better to have decided it was arson, because then, it's arson; someone burned the building down, whereas if it's electrical, there's some liability on the part of the government. It's has always struck me—but over those next few months, after the fire ... I remember the market reopened—East Hall was up and running, albeit with lots of flies and hundred degree temperatures, because the air-conditioning equipment they bought didn't work.

Immediately, with the return of business, there was the return of trash, and there are many who suspect that the cardboard boxes, not broken down, sitting in the dumpsters, piled high in the dumpsters, was the cause of the fire. Any person who ever took a look at the wall and the melted dumpsters, had to know that the fire, and they needed somewhere, began and burned in its most fierce way somewhere in the general vicinity of the dumpsters. The walls were black there. So, sure enough, the [East Hall] market reopens in August, on August 25<sup>th</sup>, and very quickly, there's problems in the dumpster again, and they just continued on, and the management seemed to struggle with it, but it seemed to take so much longer, especially given the fact that everyone knew that if the fire didn't start in the dumpsters, that certainly the dumpsters fueled it. As far as the maintenance, it's my sense that the Office of Property Management, which manages the property and owns it, have their own people in there now. I don't really know much about how that's going to work. I think they've done a pretty good job in the East Hall. That's an indicator. When I've talked to the merchants, they will tell me... I remember an anecdote right in the beginning of the current management, which is the Office of Property Management. I remember one of the merchants telling me that they called on a Friday night about a toilet being broken, and by the time they got there the next morning, it was fixed; the toilet was fixed. So the maintenance pieces of it seem to be moving along more swiftly.

END OF TAPE 1/SIDE 2

TAPE 2/SIDE 1

**JAYAMAHA:** ... a bit about the challenges around, or some of the discussions around maintenance of the market. Perhaps you could segue a little bit into what you think the market will look like, given all the things that have been happening. I'm trying to get a picture or an idea from you about what you think about "the second life", of the market; your expectations, or what you think again from your experience would happen to the market.

**WALDRON:** I think that ... I've actually managed to wrangle a tour, over the Memorial Day weekend, when I was back in Washington for a few days. I've got my first sense, strong sense, of the interior of the South Hall. I think people are just going to be blown away. I think the expression "knocking your socks off" comes to mind. It's going to manage, it's going to capture two things. One, that the East Hall has, and, more importantly, that the old South Hall, and now the newly renovated South Hall will have; the old grungy South Hall is going to look clean and freshly painted, and yet it's going to retain this wonderful historic character. So they've managed to hit a home run here, I think. I think the community's response, and I think the area, I think the city, and the geographicness of the metropolitan area's response; there's going to be a surge in business. Everyone will flourish. There's plenty of work to be done yet, there

seems to be plenty of issues to work out. I know the leases are yet to even be presented today, as we're talking, but they'll get through that, I'm sure. It seems to me to have been well worth the money that was committed. I think the businesses inside will flourish. I think the street traffic will grow. I don't know what they're going to do to solve the parking problem. I just see the market taking off and going to a new level economically. I think the other piece of that is going to be the Hine project, which is going to, whether or not it makes Seventh Street and the Eastern Market with Barracks Row, whether that happens or not is only to be determined in the future. There's no doubt that the Hine project, when complete, will add to the commercial viability of the area. The market itself will always remain. It's historic. I only see all the problems in the future coming with success, in huge success.

**JAYAMAHA:** In terms of the leases (I think that's an interesting subject); to your knowledge, what are the rules governing the introduction of new produce, or cooked food? I've heard anecdotally from different people, and I'm trying to get a handle on; is there a licensing or a process that goes into that? (If they want to expand again)

**WALDRON:** In the South Hall, you have the different merchants. Each will sign leases for their space. I believe (I don't know that I've seen any of the leases) I have some knowledge of it. I think that certainly a merchant can sell his or her business. I don't know what the approval process is; whether EMCAC can veto that, or the Office of Property Management. Or, once there is a new market manager, which is still in the works, whether they would have veto. I think they have some say in it. As far as the outside, there's the pickle guy, there's the sorbet guy, Michael Sorbet. Any outside food would come in under the farmers' line provisions, and that gets a little tricky. I just don't know how closely the rules were followed under the previous management, Eastern Market Ventures, in terms of letting food people. There's a business that has crepes, and Market Lunch, which has thrived, is famous. I'm sure they don't want a crepes business right outside their doors. So it'll be all those problems. I think the answer is that you can sell your business. I don't know that you could sell it necessarily to a Starbucks, but we'll see.

**JAYAMAHA:** What I was trying to get at more is, let's say, an existing business. An existing merchant wants to sell a different type of produce or cooked food, where that merchant normally doesn't sell cooked food? Your response would be ...

**WALDRON:** If you're Glasgow's Meats and you suddenly want to have a Starbucks, a Glasgow's Coffees, there would be some difficulties. The only prepared foods is Market Lunch. I just am not as familiar with the lease provisions; I read the legislation a number of times, and I don't see a problem with selling a business, but changing the nature of your business may well become problematic. My sense is,

right now at least, with the Office of Property Management, they would just simply tell you no, and that would probably be sufficient.

**JAYAMAHA:** I'd like to talk a little bit about the "brick and mortar" merchants. Again, some of the discussion has been the impact on them. The fire has impacted them in different ways because of the reconstruction work. Could you talk a little bit about, the changes that have been taking place? Have you talked to any of them? A little about their own story? Perhaps you could tell us in relation Eastern Market?

**WALDRON:** I know that, in the six months after the fire, I remember going to ... I basically did my own survey. Not very scientific, but I went to every single business that's what's called a "brick and mortar" business. That is, a business that paid rent to a landlord, and paid taxes, and was either on the west side of Seventh Street from C Street down to Pennsylvania Avenue or the east side, across from the market. I did a couple of things; I asked them about their business. Every single business had been down since the market. I think one or two businesses closed: Uncle [Brutha's], who had a wonderful shop selling sauces. He closed down; in fact, he withdrew as a food vendor because of his unhappiness, he told me, with the market management. He took a double hit. And consistently, every single merchant said their business was off between 50 and 70%. Maybe better, at that point, six months later, but that they'd gone through a pretty brutal period of economic decline.

The reason for my survey was the whole issue of the closed street versus the open street. I don't believe there was one ... I don't believe, of the people I contacted, and I didn't contact everyone, but of the people I contacted I didn't find one person who was for keeping the street closed. Unless, there were one or two who would have favored the street being closed again if there were a parking solution. They went through another terrible period in March when there was a community meeting, when the Dept. of Transportation wanted to finish the streetscape and time it with the opening, and that was clearly political, so everything would look terrific, and that made sense. At the meeting, it was agreed that they would close the street, and it would be reopened in June, and there were a number of promises made that there would be signs posted, there would be parking made available, and the good news for the merchants, who suffered another bout of terrible business, because there was construction everywhere, was that the city did keep its word. June 1<sup>st</sup>, the work was finished. Another remarkable effort of our current city administration. The bad news was, the promised signings, the promised advertising just was haphazard and was insufficient; they were just promises that weren't kept. So they suffered again.

I know business owners tend to tell you that business is terrible. I will, for example ... every time I see Bill Glasgow, with people three deep at his counter; I'll say "how's business?" and he just shakes his



head as though he'll barely make it through the day. You can see he's thriving. I think the bricks and mortar people really have suffered the most. The arts and crafts people have bounced back. Again, for the bricks and mortar people: one, it was the initial sense that the street was closed, and so their regular customers, they lost them. And that was 10-20% of their sales in gross revenue, and that still mattered. Then, the second thing that impacted the bricks and mortar people was, because the street was closed and they moved the stalls out on the street, there was a terrible haphazard, and there were times when I walked over to the market, unlike today, and there were stalls and tents scattered here and there, and there were gaps ... It looked terrible. Tents were pressed up against their buildings, and their argument was, "no one can see that we're even here". I think there was some legitimacy to that. I think the third piece that's hurt them so badly was this last piece that was necessary but, unfortunately for them, they still had to endure it. I don't know. We'll just have to see which ones will survive.

**JAYAMAHA:** In terms of the survival, a quick last question, Mr. Waldron. What do you think ... Obviously, at some level, Eastern Market's survival and its growth obviously affects the brick and mortar businesses, very much so, and I think there is a sense of vice versa, as well, obviously people coming to their establishments would obviously patronize Eastern Market. Keeping that in mind from your conversations and again from what you've seen, do you think there are things that potentially the community or the management or even the businesses themselves, and the merchants could do to make sure that that sort of linkage and that complementarity is created? Are there any things from your point of view that you'd like to share?

**WALDRON:** I think some of the businesses: Marvelous Market, will thrive. The owner said ... It seems like he's very aggressive. He seems to very much be on top of his game. They offer a terrific product. Tunnickliff's is another food operation, and a bar of course. It's a place that has been in the neighborhood for years, so it has a terrific, loyal following. I know they were pretty upset about the street closing, but I don't know that they lost a customer. I think if you're a Tunnickliff's customer you're a Tunnickliff's customer. Some of the other businesses ... there's a small little gourmet carryout shop—I'm trying to think of the woman's name—I know she has struggled. It's my sense, and I have some sense of business ... I was in the restaurant business on the Hill for a number of years. My sense is that the future, if the current management continues on what appears to be a successful path, or if a new management group is chosen, and I say this based just on some experience in business and also, I have actually contacted other public markets, and I'm actually doing a piece on governance of other markets right now. So I've talked to markets all across the United States: in Cleveland, the Reading Market, which is famous, in Philadelphia, the Baltimore market, Chicago, Los Angeles, the Pike [Street] Market in Seattle, which is the most famous one, I think, in the United States, Union Square in New York. My sense is, just talking

with their management teams and what they're doing, everyone is marketing, and this is something that Eastern Market has ... Eastern Market has fallen, it's had its terrific years. It's oblivious, despite the fact that there's never been any real effort to market it, and my sense is, that whoever does eventually take hold of the management of the market, will begin, unlike the previous management group, to market it. I think that the customer counts will offset the loss of ... Yes, there have been regular customers that can't pull right up to a business on Eighth Street or Seventh Street now, but that will be offset by the successes that will come with the events that they plan. They just had ... They had a kid's restaurant week thing, all across the city. The Office of Property Management, under Barry Margeson, pulled part of the group into the market. They were in there Saturday and Sunday. All those little small steps add up to making the market a destination place for the wider metropolitan area and still at the same time, some place that people on the Hill will want to walk over to. They have to walk now.

I hope that answer makes some sense.

**JAYAMAHA:** Absolutely, it did. I do hope that people will think about those issues and work on them. Thank you very much, Mr. Waldron. Thanks so much for your time.

**WALDRON:** We're done? You didn't use any of my info.

**JAYAMAHA:** Yes.

END OF INTERVIEW