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Minutes of the April 25, 2016 meeting of Advisory Neighborhood Commission 1-D

These minutes accepted at the May 24, 2016 meeting.

Meeting

[7:04 pm] At 7:04 pm, Chairperson Rosa Rivas called the meeting to order, noting the presence of Commissioners Adam Hoey, Jack McKay, and Arturo Griffiths, constituting a quorum. Commissioner Frank Agbro arrived two minutes later.

Councilmember Nadeau

[7:06] Councilmember Nadeau arrived as the meeting began, and was invited to address the audience.

Public discussion

[7:12 pm] The meeting proceeded with Public Discussion.

Secretary's report

[7:52 pm] Jack asked if there were corrections to be made to the minutes of the March meeting. No corrections were noted, so the minutes were deemed accepted.

Treasurer's report

[7:53 pm] Jack noted the following routine expenditures: HearSay Interpreting, \$100, and Jazmin Rumbaut, \$100, interpreting at the April meeting; Julio Lopez, \$30, for assistance at the April meeting. The commission had no objection to these expenditures.

Jack displayed the quarterly report to the Auditor for the second quarter of FY2016. *Report approved, 5 to 0 vote.*

Adam moved that the ANC approve a budget of \$1500 for web site enhancement. *Approved, 5 to 0 vote.*

Community Clean-up Committee Report

[8:07 pm] Adam reported on progress with the “gum-buster” project.

BZA for 1716 Hobart Street

[8:12 pm] Arturo presented this resolution:

Resolved, that ANC1D advises the Board of Zoning Adjustment that with respect to BZA Application No. 19256 the requested zoning relief should not be granted for 1716 Hobart St. NW

Why:

1. A variance is required for any addition to this property because the house, garage and deck together currently occupy 74% of the lot, whereas the maximum allowable lot occupancy in this neighborhood is 60%. The variance may only be issued if the applicant has demonstrated that there are extraordinary conditions inherent in the property that present exceptional practical difficulties. The public interest must also not be impaired.
2. The circumstances cited by the Applicant (steep topography, location in a historic district, presence of a large tree, non-conforming structures) are not unique to the property in question. Rather, these circumstances are common to most of the properties on the south side of Hobart St NW, and much of Mount Pleasant generally.
3. In addition, many of the members of the community have submitted a petition to ANC1D opposing the requested variance on the grounds that it would invite the proliferation of additions that they perceive would (i) not be in the character of the neighborhood and (ii) and diminish the right in some cases of residents to enjoy air, light and privacy.

Passed, 4 to 1 vote (Jack voting "no").

Unfinished business: Bicycle lanes for Adams Mill Road

[8:17 pm] This resolution was brought up as unfinished business:

Resolved, that ANC1D advises the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) to proceed with its proposal to add bicycle lanes to Adams Mill Road, between the Kenyon Street and Klinge Road intersections.

Why: Recreational bicycling, and bicycle commuting, are activities to be supported in the District, especially in close proximity to Rock Creek Park. Bicycle lanes on Adams Mill Road will enhance bicycle access to the Rock Creek Park bike path, either via Klinge Road, or via Adams Mill Road with a loop through the Zoo. That in turn provides a safe bicycling route into downtown DC.

The addition of bicycle lanes will reduce the southbound lanes on Adams Mill Road from two to one. This will have little effect on traffic, which is not heavy enough on Adams Mill Road to warrant two southbound lanes. There will be some congestion slowing at the Walbridge Place intersection, with one lane instead of the present two. But road throughput is limited in practice by the traffic lights at Kenyon Street (25 seconds green, 55 seconds red), and at the Zoo exit (60 seconds green, 35 red), together adding up to just under one lane of traffic flow capacity. Hence, the single southbound lane on Adams Mill Road will not significantly impair overall traffic flow.

Given the ample width of Adams Mill Road, the connections at either end to Rock Creek Park and the RCP bike path, the desire to promote bicycling, for recreation and for commuting, and the minimal effect on automobile traffic, bicycle lanes for Adams Mill Road are well justified.

Passed, 5 to 0 vote.

By general consent, the "Change to ANC1D by-laws" and "Restore curbside parking on 18th Street" topics were tabled until the May meeting.

Renew Mount Pleasant Restaurant Liquor Licenses

[8:20 pm] Franko moved the following resolution:

Resolved, that ANC1D advises the Alcoholic Beverage Regulation Administration to approve renewals of the following CR licensees in Mount Pleasant:

Beau Thai, ABRA-090308

Corado's, ABRA-015941

Don Juan, ABRA-015934

Marleny's, ABRA-077454

Purple Patch, ABRA-098066

Radius, ABRA-090797

Why: These establishments have served the Mount Pleasant neighborhood well, and this commission wants to see them continue to do so.

Passed, 5 to 0 vote.

Terminate Corado's Restaurant Settlement Agreement

[8:21 pm] Jack moved the following resolution:

Resolved, that ANC1D advises the Alcoholic Beverage Regulation Administration to approve the petition by Corado's Restaurant, 3217 Mount Pleasant Street NW, License ABRA-015941, for termination of its Settlement Agreement.

Why: Many of these agreements in Mount Pleasant have been terminated in recent years, with no ill effects observed. It is evident that these decade-old agreements are obsolete and unnecessary. This Commission is confident that any problems that may arise can be resolved by direct negotiation with Mr. Corado, the proprietor of the restaurant.

Passed, 5 to 0 vote.

Retain bus stops on 16th Street NW at Newton and Lamont

[8:23 pm] Franko moved the following resolution:

Resolved, that ANC1D advises the District Department of Transportation to retain the existing bus stops on 16th Street NW at Newton Street, and at Lamont Street.

Why: This commission recognizes that the reasoning behind the proposed removal of these bus stops is to expedite bus travel, and hence encourage more bus use. However, because the people boarding buses at these stops would presumably simply walk to the Park Road bus stop and board there, it seems that there would be little net benefit to the pace of bus transit. It should be noted that this stretch of Park Road, from Spring Road to Irving Street, consists principally of large apartment houses, and has the highest density of residents everywhere along the 16th Street bus routes, so numerous bus stops along this area are warranted. Requiring these residents to walk an additional block or two to reach the closest bus stops is likely to discourage bus transit, an outcome contrary to the purpose of these bus transit improvements, which is essentially to encourage the use of buses in the city. Furthermore, some residents would be unable to walk that additional distance, and would be deterred from taking the bus altogether.

Passed, 5 to 0 vote.

BZA application for 3240 19th St

[8:25 pm] Jack moved the following resolution:

Resolved, that ANC1D advises the Board of Zoning Adjustment to grant the lot occupancy special exception requested, BZA No. 19260, in order to permit the construction of a rear deck at 3240 19th Street Northwest.

Why: Being the end of a row, this house is limited to 40% lot coverage, whereas its neighbors along the row are permitted 60% lot coverage. This is presumably to compel end-of-row houses to be similar in dimensions to its neighbors, despite the added area of a side yard. In other situations, increased lot coverage for an end-of-row house has led to unfortunate "pop-back" constructions.

That is not the case here. The existing house roughly matches the dimensions of its single neighbor. The addition of a deck closely matches the existing deck on the neighboring house. This will not be a grotesque "pop-back" construction.

Because the proposed deck matches the deck already built on its only neighbor, granting this special exception will not tend to affect adversely the use of the neighboring property.

Denial of the permit would be a hardship in the sense that rear decks are very common in Mount Pleasant, existing, for example, on the row house adjacent to this building, and it would be unfair to deny this homeowner the rear deck that is allowed everyone else.

Passed, 5 to 0 vote.

BZA application for 3636 16th Street

[8:27 pm] Adam moved the following resolution:

Resolved, that ANC1D advises the Board of Zoning Adjustment to grant the special exception relief, and the area variance, for 3636 16th Street Northwest, Case No. 19270.

Why: The special exception to permit a new gym/fitness center is, in our judgment, "in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations", and "will not tend to affect adversely the use of neighboring property". This very large apartment house is virtually a self-contained community, and the fitness center will provide a welcome service to its over 1000 residents. The nearest commercial district is a half-mile walk distant, so the residents of this apartment house, and its neighbors, will be best served by a facility within this building. Patronage of this fitness center will have no discernible effect on the adjacent properties.

The variance to permit an external sign would enhance the value of this fitness center to the residents of the apartment houses nearby, indicating its availability to all. Because this apartment house is very large, signage would not contradict its primary role as a residential area, and is not inconsistent with the Zoning Regulations.

Passed, 5 to 0 vote.

Restore the DCRA Permit Application Tracking Database

[8:29 pm] Jack introduced the following resolution:

Resolved, that ANC1D advises the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA) to restore the Online Building Permit Application Tracking database to its publicly accessible website as soon as possible.

Why: The information provided by DCRA in its "permits applied" and "permits issued" spreadsheets is sparse, frequently providing only the sketchiest descriptions of work planned, limited essentially to the contents of a single Excel spreadsheet cell. The OBPAT database was a vital tool for ANC commissioners to

learn the actual details of work planned in their commission areas.

This Commission does not understand why the contents of the DCRA's database were, as the DCRA website says, “too often unreliable and resulted in misinformation to constituents”. This should be fixable with appropriate instruction to the database managers, and the database restored to public access forthwith. “Eventually”, as promised by the DCRA website, is not good enough.

Passed, 5 to 0 vote.

“Meet the neighbors” event

[8:31 pm] Franko introduced the following resolution:

Resolved, ANC1d will pay for the cost of flyers and posters for the Meet the neighbors event at Lamont Park on Sat. 30th, 3pm-7pm. Organized by Franko. Not to exceed \$200.

Why: This event is a gathering of Mt. Pleasant community leaders, organizations , businesses and residents. The purpose of this event is to improve familiarity amongst these essential neighborhood elements. All stakeholders that have been contacted so far have been overwhelmingly receptive and happy to volunteer and participate.

Passed, 4 to 0 vote (Jack abstaining).

Bike stands on Mt. Pleasant street

[8:39 pm] Franko introduced the following resolution:

Resolved, ANC1D advises DDOT to install bike stands/parking on Mt. Pleasant St.

Why: Many of the establishments on the main corridor such as The Raven, Purple Patch and Marx Cafe to name a few, are asking for more bike parking spaces to accommodate patronizing bicycle customers (residents and other from other neighborhoods) who would rather bike than drive. The old tree guards used to fill that void although they were not meant for that purpose.

Jack moved that this be tabled until the May meeting. Motion to table passed, 5 to 0.

Adjournment

[8:45 pm] The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 pm.