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Minutes of the July 21, 2015 meeting of Advisory Neighborhood Commission 1-D

These minutes accepted at the September 22, 2015 meeting.

Call to order

[7:05 pm] Chair Agbro being absent, Vice Chair Rivas called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm. Present were four commissioners: Arturo Griffiths, Adam Hoey, Rosa Rivas, and Jack McKay, constituting a quorum.

Agenda

[7:06 pm] Jack showed the proposed meeting agenda. The “DDOT initiatives” topic was removed, no one from DDOT being in attendance. The commission proceeded with the agenda as revised.

Public discussion

[7:07 pm] The meeting was opened for public discussion.

Secretary's report

[7:33 pm] Jack asked if there were any corrections to the meeting minutes for the June meeting. None being offered, the minutes were declared accepted.

Treasurer's report

[7:33 pm] Jack asked if there were any concerns about the usual monthly expenditures, for the July meeting: check to Tony Grillo, \$50, postering for the meeting; HearSay Interpreting, \$100, interpreting at the meeting; Jazmín Rumbaut, \$100, interpreting at the meeting; Julio Lopez, \$30, for assistance at the meeting. No objections were raised.

As requested by the DC Auditor, Jack noted that we have been asked to “identify high-priority programs or activities that should be the subject of audits or program evaluations”.

Jack displayed the financial report for the third quarter of fiscal year 2015, April through June, and asked approval by the commission of the quarterly report. *Report approved, 4 to 0 vote.*

Community Clean-up Committee Report

[7:38 pm] Arturo and Adam reported on community clean-up activities.

Administrative Assistant report

[7:42 pm] Leila Corcoran being away from DC, Adam reported briefly on the Administrative Assistant status.

Unfinished business: Cease ticketing of parking by MPD officers

[7:43 pm] Jack re-read the motion of the June meeting:

Resolved, that ANC1D advises the Metropolitan Police Department to refrain from writing tickets for illegal parking, barring situations that compromise public safety.

Why: A recent effort by the MPD to assist DPW Parking Enforcement in this neighborhood has resulted in numerous improper parking tickets, issued to legally parked cars. This is more than a nuisance to residents, but also compromises the role of the MPD as the protector of the community.

MPD parking ticketing is inferior to that done by Parking Enforcement for three reasons.

* First, DPW takes photographs of ticketed vehicles and posts them on-line for confirmation of the violation; the MPD does not.

* Second, DPW tickets are produced by portable printers, and are clearly legible, whereas MPD tickets are hand-written and frequently illegible.

* Third, DPW Parking Enforcement personnel are familiar with the parking regulations, whereas the current incident in Mount Pleasant reveals that MPD officers are not. In late March and early April, at least nine tickets were written by MPD officers for legally parked cars, the officers being ill-informed about current parking laws.

This incident has not only harmed the reputation of the Metropolitan Police, but is contrary to the policy of Community Policing. MPD officers on patrol should be seen by residents as serving the community, protecting the residents of neighborhood from crime, rather than as policing the community, penalizing residents for minor parking violations.

Resolution passed, 4 to 0 vote.

Permit Bancroft demolition

[7:46 pm] Jack introduced this resolution:

Resolved, that ANC1D advises the Mayor's Agent to approve the demolition of the gymnasium/auditorium of Bancroft Elementary as "necessary to allow the construction of a project of special merit". "Special merit" is justified by "social or other benefits having a high priority for community services".

Why: Nothing is more important to a neighborhood than the quality of its neighborhood schools. The elementary school in Mount Pleasant, Bancroft Elementary, has long been a liability to the growth and development of this neighborhood, the facility being old (75-plus years) and haphazardly expanded through the years. For many years, even as Mount Pleasant has developed into an increasingly upscale neighborhood, it's been said that residents should leave the neighborhood as soon as their children reach school age, due to the inadequacy of Bancroft for the schooling of their children. A large number of Mount Pleasant children are ferried out of the neighborhood every morning, their parents taking them to schools on the west side of Rock Creek Park.

The designers of the modernized school were asked, by the Historic Preservation Office, to develop a design

that would avoid the demolition of the circa-1938 gymnasium. No suitable design was possible, and demolition of that 77-year-old structure is evidently essential for the modernization of the school. As the HPO report states, "no viable option appears to exist that could meet ADA requirements, reinforce the central entrance and address the critically important need to improve circulation" in the school. But modernization of this decrepit school is utterly indispensable to the development of Mount Pleasant as a neighborhood attractive to waves of incoming residents, new to the city, and wanting schools that are suitable for their children.

While there is more to a good school than attractive architecture, the modernization of Bancroft will be an essential step in the upgrading of our neighborhood school to meet the needs of the many young people moving into this neighborhood, and to end the flight from Mount Pleasant by residents discouraged by our neighborhood school. Not only the Historic Preservation Office, but Historic Mount Pleasant, and the Historic Preservation Review Board, have agreed that "razing the gymnasium/auditorium was the most logical course of action". Plainly this meets the definition of a project of "special merit", offering "benefits having a high priority for community services", as specified by the District's Historic Preservation Law.

Passed, 4 to 0 vote.

Concerning 1756 Kilbourne Place NW

[7:49 pm] Adam composed this resolution:

ANC1D advises the HPRB that it opposes the proposed project at 1756 Kilbourne Place NW based on the lack of compatibility and rhythm with surrounding structures and the negative impact on surrounding neighbors and the character of the Mount Pleasant Historic District.

Why: The proposed expansion of this property would severely compromise the historic integrity of the Mount Pleasant neighborhood, and negatively affect neighbors on Kilbourne Place, across the alley on Kenyon Street, and community wide. It has the potential to establish a negative design precedent and would be adverse to our historic community.

Because the property sits atop a hill and already has two floors plus an attic facing Kilbourne Place and two floors plus a walkout basement facing the alley, expanding the building size to a full three stories and to extend back to the alley would create a disproportionately large and looming presence.

The ANC opposes this proposed development and others like it that would damage the neighborhood feel and character.

Passed, 3 to 0 vote, with one abstention (Jack).

Give roadwork clearing towing higher priority

[8:01 pm] Jack introduced the following resolution:

Resolved, that ANC1D advises the District Department of Public Works (DPW) to give high priority to the towing of parked cars interfering with Department of Transportation (DDOT) projects.

Why: A DDOT slurry-seal project on Newton Street NW on July 10, 2015, suggests that DPW gives the towing of parked cars interfering with roadwork projects lower priority than other towing jobs, resulting in substantial increases in roadwork project costs, and increased inconvenience to residents.

A DPW tow truck went to work early on the morning of July 10, but had cleared only about half the length of the project before disappearing, without explanation. By midmorning the DDOT contracting crew had completed the slurry seal on the cleared blocks, but then had to stop and wait for another DPW crane to appear. An estimated three hours passed, the members of the work crew idling, the machinery halted, until finally another tow truck arrived.

That truck dealt with just two of the remaining parked cars, and then itself vanished, the driver evidently having been called to a higher priority job. Again, the DDOT crew worked the area that had been cleared of parked cars, then stopped, waiting for a DPW crane to come deal with the remaining parked cars.

No tow truck ever appeared. Eventually the crew decided to work around the remaining parked cars. This means that, besides the cost of the 8-hour roadwork job having been extended to a 12-hour job, the crew will have to return at some time in the future, and residents will again be faced with "emergency no parking" placards, to deal with the portions of the pavement that could not receive the slurry seal, due to the parked cars.

This is obviously expensive and inefficient, and presumably the District taxpayer will have to absorb some of the costs of this inefficiency. Furthermore, residents will again be inconvenienced by the temporary parking ban imposed to clear the pavement for treatment.

It appears to this Commission that DPW is giving this towing task very low priority. We do not know what tasks these tow-truck drivers were being called to that warranted their abandoning the roadwork clearing task. But it appears that the costs involved in giving roadwork clearing of parked cars are being underestimated, and that this DPW task warrants higher priority than it is now being given.

Passed, 4 to 0 vote.

Develop a license-plate database for DDOT use

[8:06 pm] Jack introduced the following resolution:

Resolved, that ANC1D advises the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) to develop, with the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), a database associating e-mail addresses and telephone numbers with DC license plate numbers, to facilitate contact with automobile owners as necessary for DDOT road work.

Why: The current methods for advising automobile owners that their cars must be moved to permit road work projects to proceed does not work well, failing to contact too many automobile owners, and forcing DDOT contractors to try to work around parked cars, or have them towed away.

A current example will illustrate the problem. A three-block-long slurry sealing job was held up for roughly three hours at the start, the crews waiting idly while a DPW tow truck hauled parked cars away. For reasons unknown, the DPW did not remove all of the parked cars, and at the end of the day, there was another two-hour wait for a tow truck to come remove cars on the third block. The DPW tow truck then removed only two of the four remaining cars, and in the end, the contractor simply worked around those last cars, leaving slabs of pavement unsealed. The contractor will have to return at a future date to deal with those missed portions of pavement.

This is plainly inefficient and costly. There was no way to contact the owners of the many cars that had been left parked on the street despite the standard "emergency no parking" placards, letters from DDOT to residents, and doorbell ringing by contractor personnel.

The 72-hour placard posting period is no longer effective for notifying automobile owners of the parking prohibition, since the time limit on curbside parking has been eliminated, and it is commonplace to see cars left in place for much longer than three days.

Notifying the nearby residents by mail or doorknob flyer is far from fully effective, because too many of these parked cars do not belong to residents of the pertinent blocks. Residents of nearby apartment houses on 16th Street have RPP privileges, but very little curbside parking space, so they park their cars back in the residential streets, blocks from home. Mailed notices and doorknob postings will not reach them.

What is needed is a way to contact the owner of any car directly, even if that owner lives blocks from the place where his car is parked. The DMV has the contact information, as part of the registration. Making that contact information available to the DDOT would permit DDOT to advise an owner by telephone, text, or e-

mail that his car was obstructing a road work project and needed to be moved. This would not only alleviate the project inefficiencies noted above, but would save the automobile owner the cost of the parking ticket, and perhaps towing fees.

Jack moved that this resolution be tabled until the September meeting. Motion to table passed, 4 to 0.

Adjournment

[8:14 pm] The meeting was adjourned at 8:14 pm.