

*Corrected 9/14/89*

MINUTES OF THE  
SEPTEMBER 13, 1989 MEETING  
OF ANC 2B (THE DUPONT CIRCLE ANC)

A regularly scheduled meeting of the Dupont Circle ANC was held on Wednesday, September 13, 1989 at 7:30 p.m. at St. Thomas Church. Commissioners Evans, Maggi, Moses, Grandis, Bass and Rieffel and Staff Director Nancy Melville were present; Commissioner Gaugler was absent.

1. Mr. Bass moved, and Mr. Maggi seconded, a motion that the minutes of the July 19, 1989 meeting of the ANC be approved. The motion was approved unanimously.

2. Mr. Grandis raised concerns about the condition of trees in the neighborhood: female ginko trees have not been sprayed and many elm trees have died. The ANC will request a representative from the city to attend a future meeting.

3. Mr. Maggi raised concerns about the P.U.D. request at 23rd and N Streets, N.W. He noted that the earlier proposal to swap property with the Park Service has been cancelled, and requested a letter and authorization to represent the ANC before the Fine Arts Commission to comment on a new proposal. Commissioners expressed distress that the ANC had received no notice of the scheduling of the Fine Arts hearing from the developer or the Fine Arts Commission, although an attorney for the developer had objected to the consideration by the ANC of this matter at this ANC meeting because she had not been provided notice of it. The ANC learned of the Fine Arts hearing from George Wheeler, a member of the community, who stated that he received notice from the attorney for the developer only after Councilmember Wilson refused to meet with the developer until the developer apprised the ANC and other groups of the new plan. Mr. Maggi noted that the Zoning Commission will decide next month whether to docket this case for a hearing. [See the motion on this matter, infra.]

4. Mr. Evans announced that the Zoning Commission has voted 3:2 to support the Brookings project. He also announced that representatives of the ANC had testified recently in opposition to the request of Buckley's Grill for a new liquor license at 17th and Q Streets, N.W.

5. Ms. Rieffel presented a letter from the Statehood Commission and requested that the screening of a video on statehood be placed on the agenda of a meeting in the near future.

6. Mr. Diego D'Ambrosio and Mr. Richard Hubert presented a request for the ANC's support for a change in the signs in front of Hollywood Hairstylists from "Loading Zone to "Reserved--8 a.m. to 6 p.m." The earlier request for a curb cut has been withdrawn. Ms. Moses moved, and Mr. Maggi seconded, a motion to support this request. All commissioners present voted in favor except Mrs. Rieffel, who abstained.

7. Mr. Guy McCloskey presented a request on behalf of Nichiren Shoshu Soka Gakkai of America (NSA) that the ANC support their request to purchase the Jewish Community Center property at 16th and Q. Mr. McCloskey is the Executive Director for D.C. of that group.

Mr. McCloskey presented the statement attached as Appendix A, and in response to questions raised, made the following statements. NSA would remove existing athletic facilities. The building would be open to the public. Activities therein would be related to NSA "to encourage people to carry out Buddhism". It would be a community center in that it would serve the community of people who belong to NSA. NSA is a religious group that proselytizes. The NSA is ready to write a check now, will not tear down the structure, and their presence in the neighborhood would be an asset to the community. The NSA would use the building as their regional NSA headquarters. Mr. McCloskey was accompanied by six (or more) residents of the ANC who are members of NSA.

Members of the public present made the following comments. Sheldon Rutter stated that as a resident it sounds like he will get nothing from the NSA's proposed use because he has no interest in their religion. Zelda Zeldin expressed concern that the focus of the NSA was on NSA activities and NSA youth, and that it would not be a community center. Irene Rozzo stated that she would prefer the Jewish Community Center as purchasers because she is interested neither in Buddhism nor Judaism, but the JCC would offer her more non-religious activities. Mary Ann Hammon objected to the NSA because they are "distorting the community center concept." She stated that while she has no objection to this group in the neighborhood, what this group proposes is not a community center but office and religious use.

Jack Kendall of 1513 Q street noted that while he is not Jewish he has enjoyed participating in a number of community center types of activities at another JCC location. He has worked 2-1/2 years to get JCC back into this community. He is concerned that the NSA proselytizes and would only provide opportunities for persons interested in the Buddhist faith.

Kay Eckles stated that she lived across the street from the JCC at 16th and Q Streets from 1954 to 1973 and that it was "always open, a haven" and that they were "good neighbors."

Mary Beth Bowen stated her opposition to this group and submitted photocopies of an entry in a reference book on religions in the United States to document her statement that the NSA has a "reputation for aggressive recruitment." Joel Rosenberg stated that he objected not to the group but to the use of the building since it won't benefit the neighborhood. Mr. Don Jackson stated that he wants to see the nine "Conditions for Sale" strictly enforced, and noted that the neighborhood already has crowded parking.

Madeleine Lane of 1506 Q Street expressed dissatisfaction with the D.C. government and stated that she wouldn't gain anything from the presence of the NSA and hopes that the government "won't go along for a few extra million." Craig Pascal stated that he has worked to support the JCC for 4 years and over the course of the 4 years the neighborhood input had been consistently support of the JCC. He encouraged the government to resolve the remaining points which are minor.

No members of the public spoke in support of the NSA or of any purchaser other than JCC.

Mr. Bass moved, and Mrs. Rieffel seconded, a motion that the ANC reiterates its support of the D.C. Jewish Community Center as the purchaser of the building based on 1) the public services the D.C. JCC will provide to the community, 2) the athletic and recreational facilities to be provided by the D.C. JCC, 3) the fact that the D.C. JCC has agreed in principle to the nine conditions requested by ANC 2B, and 4) that the legislative history of Act 8-57 makes clear the intent of the Council to convey this building to the D.C. JCC.

In discussing the motion, commissioners made the following statements:

Mr. Grandis expressed concern that the city would trade money for long term gain, that the Council legislation was badly drafted and encouraged the JCC to give the city a check to consummate the deal as quickly as possible.

Mrs. Rieffel stated that it appears the city may have "changed the rules." The quid pro quo of legislation authorizing the sale of the property on a non-competitive basis (i.e. at below fair market price) was that the purchaser would provide non-monetary public gain to city residents. If the city is now going to base its decision on the highest purchase price offered rather than benefits to city residents, then the process should be reopened to ensure that the highest bid possible is accepted. However, she stated that she hopes this doesn't happen, because there is a critical need for additional recreational facilities in the neighborhood. Stead Recreational Center is "woefully inadequate" while membership in the YMCA at 17th and Rhode Island is not open to young people and provides access to no athletic activities in the afternoons after school.

Mr. Maggi stated that in his opinion the best use would be that proposed by the JCC.

The motion was passed unanimously.

8. A representative of Food for Thought presented a request that the ANC approve designs for a fence to be installed in the rear of that establishment. This is the only remaining item prior to compliance with the agreement worked out with the community in conjunction to the restaurants application for a renewed liquor license. Ms. Moses moved and Mr. Maggi seconded a motion that the ANC approve the design submitted by Food for Thought if it is not located in a historic district, noting that a representative of the community was present and found the design acceptable. The motion was approved unanimously.

9. Mr. Bernard Demczuk made a presentation on the activities of Housing Now! This organization has scheduled a number of activities, including a march to the Capitol on October 7, a walk across Washington and rally in Anacostia on September 30.

10. Returning to the matter of the P.U.D. at 22nd and N Streets, N.W. Mr. Maggi made and Mrs. Rieffel seconded a motion that the ANC transmit to the Fine Arts Commission the letter attached as Attachment B, adding thereto the phrase "as stated in your letter to John Wilson dated August 8, 1989." The motion was passed unanimously.