

**ANC 2B DUPONT CIRCLE ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING,
Tuesday, September 11, 2007 Jewish Community Center**

The September Regular Meeting of the Dupont Circle Advisory Neighborhood Commission (Commission or ANC 2B) was called to order by Chair Ramon Estrada at 7:00 pm. The Commissioners identified their Single Member Districts (SMDs). Present were: Commissioners Curtis Farrar (2B01), William Hewitt (2B02), Bob Meehan (2B03), Ryan Butler (2B04), Mike Silverstein (2B06), Phil Carney (2B07), Will Stephens (2B08) and Ramon Estrada (2B09). Mark Bjorge (2B05) resigned from the Commission. The chair noted the presence of a quorum.

PUBLIC TESTIMONY AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner Estrada announced Mark Bjorge's resignation from Commissioner of 2B05. He thanked Mark Bjorge for his service to the ANC. Mark Bjorge will serve as the Outreach and Services Specialist for Ward 2 in the Mayor's Office of Community Relations and Service, Executive Office of the Mayor. He can be contacted at mark.bjorge@dc.gov or at 202-297-6566.

Commissioner Estrada announced the 2B05 vacancy. Two possible candidates expressed interest in running for the vacancy.

Commissioner Silverstein announced a celebration for the P Street Streetscape project on September 12th at 9:00 AM at Hotel Palomar. Mayor Fenty and Councilmember Jack Evans will attend the celebration.

Commissioner Hewitt announced a mini-walk in support of Charlie's Place to help the Homeless. A representative of Charlie's Place announced that the mini-walk would take place on Sunday, September 16th at 1:15 PM at the Dupont Circle's Farmers Market. The registration fee is \$25 for adults and \$15 for students. All proceeds will go to Charlie's Place to help the homeless. Interested residents can contact Tom for more information at 202-355-1017.

Representatives of the Cairo Apartment Club announced that they plan to make a presentation to the ANC and community regarding its plans to repoint the bricks on the Cairo. They have just initiated the permitting process.

Christopher Ziemann, Transportation Management Specialist, Ward 2, DDOT, announced the 14th Street Streetscape Design and Transportation Study's 2nd public meeting to develop and discuss transportation and streetscape options. The meeting will take place on Tuesday, September 25th from 7 – 9:00 PM at the National City Christian Church (5 Thomas Circle, NW). More information can be found at www.14thstreetstudy.com.

Rob Halligan, President, Dupont Circle Citizens Association (DCCA) announced that the annual Dupont Circle House Tour would take place on October 21st. He requested any interested residents to contact him regarding volunteering. Residents can contact him at president@dupont-circle.com.

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

Commissioner Butler discussed the recent daytime residential burglaries in a number of apartment buildings. Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) officers provided advice to residents. They asked residents to refuse access to unknown persons attempting to enter apartment buildings in addition to not propping open building doors. MPD noted that they arrested a suspect using video footage from one of the apartment buildings.

Rob Halligan, President, Dupont Circle Citizens Association, announced that the Dupont Circle Public Safety Committee meets every third Tuesday of the month at 7:00 PM at the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) station at 1620 V Street NW.

GENERAL AGENDA

The Commission considered a motion regarding the Ross School playground restrictions (2B03). Commissioner Meehan introduced Sandra Gonzalez, the new Principal of Ross School. She requested members of the community to only use the Ross Playground on weekends and holidays. She noted that her facilities manager would also be installing a screen over the security lighting in the playground in order to alleviate any problems with the neighbors. She stated that the gates to the playground would not be locked on weekends.

A resident from 1733 R Street NW expressed his concern over the security lights and presented data regarding light trespassing. He noted that the security lights have been turned off since December 2006 and that they were briefly turned on in August 2007. He noted that the lights were recently turned back on. He requested Ross School to turn off the security lighting. Principal Gonzalez stated that she prefers to use the security lighting. She noted that they would install screen to limit the light trespassing onto neighbor's properties. Commissioner Meehan offered to follow up on this matter. Principal Gonzalez stated she would turn off the security lighting until Commissioner Meehan followed up on this issue.

Scott Anderson, resident of 1727 R Street NW expressed concern over the hours of weekend use of the playground. He requested a restriction on playground use on the weekends. A resident of 1717 R Street NW stated that residents should expect noise in a city. A number of residents expressed support for the current weekend use of the playground.

Commissioner Silverstein asked Principal Gonzalez what would be a reasonable hour for use of the playground on weekends. She stated that 8:00 AM is a reasonable time.

Commissioner Meehan stated that the ANC was involved in this process because the school system originally did not want to help Ross School. He noted that the community and the ANC helped Ross School to build their playground, and that the ANC rules are still in effect. He noted the purpose of tonight's meeting is to determine how many rules can be lifted.

Commissioner Meehan made a motion that ANC 2B approve an interim hour of 9:00 AM on weekends and holidays for the following month while the community and school work out a permanent time for the playground to be open on weekends and holidays. Commissioner Estrada seconded the motion. The motion carried (7-0).

The Commission was scheduled to hear a presentation by the Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA) regarding a Car Free DC event taking place on September 18th and 22nd. No representative was present. Commissioner Silverstein made a motion to support WABA's aims, but oppose any traffic blockage during rush hour. Commissioner Carney seconded the motion. The motion carried (7-0).

Commissioner Hewitt removed from the agenda the consideration of a motion regarding traffic lights at the corner of Q and 20th Streets NW (2B02).

The Commission considered a motion regarding the vacant embassy of the Democratic Republic of the Congo at 1800 New Hampshire Avenue NW (2B01). Commissioner Farrar expressed concern over the deteriorating condition of the embassy. Windows were broken allowing access to vermin, and intruders have been observed entering the building. He asked the Commission to consider sending a letter to the government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo requesting the embassy to either proceed without delay with renovations of the building, or sell the building. Speaking for the Embassy, Mr. Yves Bashonga said that his government intended to repair and reoccupy the building, and was awaiting funding for that purpose. The Ambassador, presently in the Congo, was arranging for a government team to inspect the premises in October and make a decision about how to proceed.

Rob Halligan noted that similar promises had been made in the past, but not implemented. He recommended communicating with the State Department. He noted that parts of the building are falling off and that basement is flooded. A resident recommended contacting the Office of Foreign Missions.

Commissioner Farrar made the following motion:

WHEREAS the building which served as the Embassy of the Democratic Republic of Congo at 1800 New Hampshire Avenue NW has been vacant for almost four years, and is deteriorating progressively, and losing value, and;

WHEREAS that building occupies a prominent place in its neighborhood, and its condition influences the well being of neighboring residents;

ANC 2B directs its Chairman to send a letter to Her Excellency the Ambassador of the Democratic Republic of Congo, with a copy to the Office of Foreign Missions at the US Department of State, stating that the ANC would welcome the return of the Embassy to a refurbished building but that if work on repairs cannot start very shortly, the structure should be sold.

Commissioner Butler seconded the motion. The motion carried (7-0).

The Commission heard an update on BZA application no. 17678 for the planned construction at Blaine Mansion located at 2000 Massachusetts Avenue NW (2B02). Carolyn Brown, Attorney, Holland & Knight, appeared before the Commission. She requested a special exception to substitute existing nonconforming uses for a restaurant and bakery. Commissioner Estrada made a friendly amendment to clarify the intention of the proposal.

Commissioner Hewitt made a motion to support BZA Application No. 17678 by the owners of the Blaine Mansion (2000 Massachusetts Avenue NW) for a special exception request to replace existing C-1 uses with Pizzeria Paradiso and Le Pain Quotidien.

Commissioner Estrada seconded the motion. The motion carried (7-0).

The Commission heard a presentation by Rick Busch of the Dupont Circle Conservancy regarding its Zoning Reduction Proposal covering the Northeast corner of ANC 2B. The goals of the exercise were to bring existing zoning in the Northeast Dupont Area Neighborhood into conformance with actual use and with the 2006 DC Comprehensive Plan, retain the row house character of the neighborhood, protect the unique character of a one block street of semi-detached houses, and preserve green space, trees, light, and air. He noted that DCC had surveyed and photographed the area. He requested the ANC's co-sponsorship, in order to avoid the \$250 filing fee with the Zoning Commission and financial support for the presentation to the Zoning Commission. Commissioner Estrada requested a budget from DCC to facilitate consideration of these requests at the ANC's next meeting. Rob Halligan noted that DCCA is cosponsoring this project and has committed up to \$1000 toward the costs.

REGULATORY AGENDA

The Commission considered an ABC Board fact finding hearing to address a request for extended hours at Ruth's Chris 2017 S Street NW, and the issue of notice provided to ANC 2B concerning this request (2B01). Curtis Farrar stated that ABRA did not properly notify the ANC about Ruth's Chris' substantial change application, with the result that the ANC did not consider the application during the posting period. The ABC Board agreed to hold a fact-finding hearing as result of this mistake. He noted that the ANC was currently in negotiations with the applicant for a voluntary agreement on the hours issue. Maria Denton, General Manager, appeared before the Commission, to address Ruth's Chris' approach to extended hours for serving alcohol. She stated that the restaurant would continue its practice of taking dinner reservations for no later than 10:30 pm, with

limited walk-ins thereafter, and that the 2:00 am limit for alcoholic beverages would allow ample time for the last diners to enjoy their meals with appropriate beverages for each course. Commissioners Estrada and Farrar expressed great concern over ABRA procedures and noted that this case fitted into a pattern of problems.

Commissioner Farrar made a motion to seek authority to negotiate a voluntary agreement concerning service of alcoholic beverages. He stated the Commission would not object to the 2:00 AM extended hours for serving of alcohol. The motion carried (7-0). Commissioner Farrar agreed to look into parking issues raised by Commissioner Meehan.

The Commission considered Public Space Application No. 28784 requesting an increase in seating and planters for a sidewalk café at 1500 New Hampshire Avenue NW (2B07). A representative of Jury's Hotel appeared before the Commission. He noted that the Board of Zoning and Adjustments requested the owner of Dupont Grill and Bidly Mulligans to apply for a single permit representing the contiguous outdoor seating at both businesses.

Commissioner Carney made a motion to support the existing number of permitted seats for Dupont Grill and Bidly Mulligans to be combined in a single permit. Commissioner Silverstein seconded the motion. The motion carried (7-0).

UNFINISHED/NEW BUSINESS

Commissioner Estrada made a motion to approve the July and August regular meeting minutes as amended. Alfred E. Blicher, Jr. is empowered to make technical changes to the July and August meeting minutes. Commissioner Butler seconded the motion. The motion carried (7-0).

Commissioner Estrada noted that Andrew Kline requested the ABC board to dismiss a number of ANC motions. Gottlieb Simon, Executive Director of the Office of Advisory Neighborhood Commissions, stated that ANCs are only required to publish the meeting date and time in four different ways. The Logan Circle ANC requested the Commission to join them in filing an Amicus Brief. Commissioner Estrada made a motion to file an Amicus Brief in support of the Logan Circle ANC before the ABC Board. Commissioner Farrar seconded the motion. The motion carried (7-0).

Commissioners Silverstein and Hewitt finalized the Palm's voluntary agreement with the Commission's language.

Commissioner Silverstein authorized payment of \$93.27 for the following items:
Plaque for Mark Bjorge
Case of refreshments for the Francis School Beautification project

Commissioner Stephens seconded the motion. The motion carried (7-0).

The next regular meeting of ANC 2B will be held on Tuesday, October 10, 2007, 7:00

PM at the D.C. Jewish Community Center at 16th and Q Streets, NW.

At 9:30 PM, Commissioner Estrada moved to adjourn the meeting, which passed by acclimation.

Respectfully submitted,

Alfred E. Blicher, Jr.
Executive Director
Dupont Circle Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2B

ADOPTED: October 10, 2007