



GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Dupont Circle Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2B

Regular Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, October 14th, 2020; 7:00 p.m.
Online via Zoom

Call to Order

The regular October 2020 meeting of the Dupont Circle Advisory Neighborhood Commission (Commission or ANC 2B) was called to order by Vice Chair Kari Cunningham at 7:02 pm.

Introduction of Commissioners

The Commissioners identified their single member districts (SMDs). Present were: Matthew Sampson (2B01), Daniel Warwick (2B02), Aaron Landry (2B04), Randy Downs (2B05), Mike Silverstein (2B06), Kari Cunningham (2B07), Beverly Schwartz (2B08), and Ed Hanlon (2B09).

Announcements and Public Comments

Presentation by the District Department of Transportation Regarding the Connecticut Avenue Streetscape and Deck-Over Project

Mike Gifford, an RK&K Project Manager; Scott Crumley, an RK&K Director; Sarah Kamins, an RK&K Administrative Assistant; Wayne Wilson, a District Department of Transportation (DDOT) Project Manager; Huntae Kim, a DDOT Program Manager; and Andrew DeFrank, a DDOT Community Engagement Specialist, gave a presentation regarding the Connecticut Avenue Streetscape and Deck-Over Project.

Commissioner Announcements

There were not any commissioner announcements.

Other Public Announcements and General Comments or Future Agenda Items

Susan Volman, the Treasurer of the Dupont Circle Citizens Association (DCCA); Mary Cate Curley, a representative for the Ward 2 Mutual Aid team; Nick DelleDonne, the President of the Dupont East Civic Action Association (DECAA); Brian Romanowski, the Director of Constituent Services for Councilmember Brooke Pinto's Office; and a local resident gave other public announcements and general comments or future agenda items.

Alcoholic Beverage Control Board Agenda

Ankara – Application for a Substantial Change to the Establishment’s Retailer’s Class “C” Restaurant License at 1320 19th Street NW

Commissioner Silverstein moved to adopt a proposed resolution regarding the matter. Commissioner Downs seconded the motion, which was voted on and passed (VOTES: 8-0-0). The resolution reads as follows:

ANC 2B supports the request for a stipulated license as part of Ankara’s application for a substantial change to the establishment’s Retailer’s Class “C” Restaurant license at 1320 19th Street NW.

Public Space Committee Agenda

Public Space Application by the Embassy of the Russian Federation for the Installation of a Canopy over the Entrance to a Building at 1125 16th Street NW

Commissioner Downs moved to adopt a proposed resolution regarding the matter. Commissioner Schwartz seconded the motion, which was voted on and passed (VOTES: 8-0-0). The resolution reads as follows:

ANC 2B supports the installation of the proposed canopy at 1125 16th Street NW due to its minimal footprint and in recognition that canopies are customary at chancery locations.

General Agenda

Consideration of a Resolution Regarding Personnel Matters at the School Without Walls at Francis-Stevens

Commissioner Silverstein moved to adopt a proposed resolution regarding the matter. Commissioner Downs seconded the motion, which was voted on and passed (VOTES: 8-0-0). The resolution reads as follows:

WHEREAS, School Without Walls High School (SWW) and School Without Walls at Francis-Stevens (SWWFS) are both located in Ward 2, and the Francis-Stevens campus is located within the boundaries of ANC 2B,

WHEREAS, Richard Trogisch has served as principal of SWWHS, the highest performing high school in the District, since 2006. The school is ranked second in the region, among the top 75 high schools in the nation, according to U.S. News & World Report, and a two-time Blue Ribbon Schools award winner that is majority-minority with students from all eight wards,

WHEREAS, Richard Trogisch also took over leadership of Francis-Stevens Education Campus in 2012, when it was barely saved from closure, with only 190 students enrolled in a building with a capacity for 480 and failing test scores. He has since led the pre-K

through grade 8 school to a remarkable turnaround, with nearly 600 students now enrolled from all eight wards, a waiting list of up to 800, vastly improved test scores, and increased academic rigor,

WHEREAS, both schools, representing 1,200 DC families, boast a diverse enrollment; both are majority-minority; and in both schools the student body and parental involvement proudly have diverse leadership teams that should be the envy and goal of every school in America,

WHEREAS, on Monday, October 5th, 2020, the Mayor announced plans to re-open schools in the coming weeks, and, at a Chancellor's meeting, Principal Trogisch asked specifically what air quality standards were being set by the DC Public Schools (DCPS) and how such standards would be measured and enforced at all schools. After no specific answer to his question was given, he said he later told his staff and parents that he would not open School Without Walls at Francis-Stevens unless he was certain students, teachers, and all other school personnel would be safe,

WHEREAS, School Without Walls at Francis-Stevens is a 93-year old building with no HVAC system, window air conditioners in each classroom, and numerous maintenance issues that come with an old building slated for major renovation in less than two years,

WHEREAS, within the past week, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) revised its guidance to acknowledge that COVID-19 is spread not just by droplets, but in aerosolized form in closed indoor spaces with poor ventilation and that regular exchange of fresh air is imperative for such spaces to be safe, especially where people, such as students and teachers in classrooms, stay in those spaces for more than just a few minutes at a time,

WHEREAS, the student body at SWWFS includes students with disabilities, including students with respiratory problems such as asthma, and adult staff members at the school include personnel in the high risk category, with some up to the age of 70, and the health and safety of students and personnel must be the highest priority and that is non-negotiable,

WHEREAS, less than 48 hours after Principal Trogisch questioned whether the air quality and ventilation standards at SWWFS would allow the school to open safely, he was fired by DCPS with the pretext later given that there had been a student "enrollment anomaly" in a previous year,

WHEREAS, DCPS officials openly admitted to the school community that the firing of Principal Trogisch was "not in the best interests" of students and faculty,

WHEREAS, DCPS had knowledge of this "enrollment anomaly" prior to renegotiating the principal's contract for the 2020-2021 school year but appears to have chosen not to address it, and

WHEREAS, an action that did not prevent his contract renewal suddenly became a fireable offense two days after the principal expressed health and safety concerns about DCPS plans.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that ANC 2B joins a majority of DC councilmembers in demanding answers from Chancellor Ferebee to questions regarding the firing of an honored, respected, and beloved educator.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that ANC 2B demands to know what air quality standards and ventilation (air exchange) standards will be used by DCPS to determine whether schools and individual classrooms can reopen safely, and demands to know how those standards will be measured and enforced before schools are allowed to reopen.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that ANC 2B demands that DCPS immediately engages parents, students, and educators so as to ensure that all individuals have access to information on the metrics for reopening and safety measures being put in place so that parents and educators can make informed decisions as to how they wish to proceed with this school year. Given that DC has among the highest rates of asthma of major metropolitan areas in U.S. and that children from Wards 5,7, and 8 are impacted by respiratory illnesses at higher rates than other wards, understanding the state of the ventilation in every single DCPS building is critical to ensure that we do not put our children, especially children of color, who have already been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, at even further risk.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we urge the DC Council to hold hearings on remediation efforts conducted at every DC Public School facility as a step toward restoring public trust. Failure to do so will only add to fears of retaliation for whistleblowers and add to the fears of parents and teachers that our school buildings are not safe.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that ANC 2B demands that Principal Richard Trogisch be reinstated at once to his duties. The fact that he was willing to risk his career rather than put at risk the health and safety of his students, teachers, and staff is at the heart of this matter, and the manner in which he was terminated has created a chilling effect for anyone wanting to raise health and safety issues, even during a pandemic.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that ANC 2B demands that since SWW and SWWFS have five women associate and assistant principals, four of whom are women of color, with many years of experience with the School Without Walls community, the selection of any interim principal must come from within their ranks.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this resolution is a vote of no confidence in the way Chancellor Lewis Ferebee and all other DCPS officials directly involved have handled the firing of Richard Trogisch. The lack of transparent processes and procedures by DCPS leadership in this entire matter further diminishes parents' trust in our public schools and runs counter to the values of the citizens of the District of Columbia.

Consideration of a Resolution Regarding the District Department of Transportation's Notice of Intent for the Removal of Parking on the North Side of the 1800 block of M Street NW

Commissioner Silverstein moved to adopt a proposed resolution regarding the matter. Commissioner Downs seconded the motion, which was voted on and passed (VOTES: 8-0-0). The resolution reads as follows:

WHEREAS, the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) plans to remove the on-street parking on the north side of the 1800 block of M Street NW, modifications that are proposed as part of DDOT's sidewalk extension program in response to the COVID-19 public health emergency,

WHEREAS, the sidewalk extension program responds to requests from ANC commissioners, as well as business improvement districts (BIDs), community improvement districts (CIDs), and main street organization representatives, to temporarily extend sidewalks near grocery stores and other essential retailers to allow pedestrians enough space to practice physical distancing,

WHEREAS, there are portions of the sidewalk on the north side of the 1800 block of M Street NW that are only four feet wide, making social distancing impossible,

WHEREAS, the extreme narrowness of the sidewalk currently leads to the dangerous situation where pedestrians currently often step into the protected bicycle lane, and

WHEREAS, loading and deliveries for the restaurants and stores located on the north side of the 1800 block of M Street NW must be done from the street because the alley system behind those stores is small and already seriously overworked.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that ANC 2B supports the temporary removal of parking on the north side of the 1800 block of M Street NW and a widening of the pedestrian passageway onto the street during the public health emergency, to allow the free flow of pedestrians and social distancing.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that ANC 2B urges DDOT to monitor this block during the public health emergency to ensure that deliveries and loading can be done safely and efficiently, without forcing delivery persons to cross the busy street to make their deliveries.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that ANC 2B urges DDOT to consider the public health emergency to be a test period for this sidewalk extension, and consider making the extension permanent at the end of the emergency if the program is deemed a success, or to make any modification at that time if modifications are needed in order to accommodate deliveries and loading.

Consideration of a Resolution Regarding DC Council Bill B23-0952 – the “John Lewis Way Designation Act of 2020”

Chair Warwick moved to adopt a proposed resolution regarding the matter. Commissioner Downs seconded the motion, which was voted on and passed (VOTES: 8-0-0). The resolution reads as follows:

ANC 2B supports the ceremonial designation of the 1500 and 1600 blocks of H Street NW as John Lewis Way.

Administrative Matters

Approval of the ANC’s Regular September 2020 Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Landry moved to approve the ANC’s regular September 2020 meeting minutes. Commissioner Silverstein seconded the motion, which was voted on and passed (VOTE: 8-0-0).

Approval of the ANC’s FY 2020 Quarter 4 Financial Report

Commissioner Silverstein moved to approve the ANC’s FY 2020 Quarter 4 financial report. Commissioner Landry seconded the motion, which was voted on and passed (VOTES: 8-0-0).

Approval of the ANC’s FY 2021 Budget

Commissioner Silverstein moved to approve the ANC’s FY 2021 budget. Commissioner Landry seconded the motion, which was voted on and passed (VOTES: 8-0-0).

Adjournment

Chair Warwick adjourned the meeting at 9:16 pm.