



GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Dupont Circle Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2B

July 20, 2022

Mayor Muriel Bowser
Mayor
Government of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20004
muriel.bowser@dc.gov

Councilmember Brooke Pinto
Councilmember, Ward 2
Council of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Suite 106
Washington, DC 20004
bpinto@dccouncil.us

RE: Proposed Swann Street NW Dedication in Honor of William Dorsey Swann

Dear Mayor Bowser and Councilmember Pinto,

At its regular meeting on July 13, 2022, the Dupont Circle Advisory Neighborhood Commission (“ANC 2B” or “Commission”) considered the above-referenced matter. With 9 of 9 Commissioners in attendance, a quorum at a duly-noticed public meeting, the Commission approved the following resolution by a vote of (9-0-0):

WHEREAS, streets and avenues in the District of Columbia are typically named for states, geographic locations, famous Americans, flowers, trees, and other things,

WHEREAS, very few of our streets and avenues are named after people who actually lived here and contributed to the life of our city and the quality of life of our fellow citizens,

WHEREAS, ANC 2B has led in the honorary renaming of streets within the ANC in honor of Frank Kameny and Annie Kaylor,

WHEREAS, ANC 2B believes that the renaming of streets should reflect the rich diversity of those who have contributed to the life of our city in every way,

WHEREAS, Swann Street NW is located in ANC 2B, running from 14th Street NW to 19th Street NW, and is located in the Greater U Street, Sixteenth Street, Dupont Circle, and Strivers’ Section Historic Districts,

WHEREAS, William Dorsey Swann (1858-1925) was a Black, Queer Washingtonian who was a former slave and is believed to be the first “Drag Queen” and an early pioneer in the movement for LGBT rights,

WHEREAS, William Dorsey Swann, self-referred to as “The Queen of Drag,” ran a group known as the “House of Swann” and organized balls, largely attended by queer, formerly enslaved men who would gather to dance and crossdress,

WHEREAS, William Dorsey Swann was persecuted by the authorities and arrested multiple times for “impersonating a woman” and “keeping a disorderly house”, and eventually sought a pardon from President Grover Cleveland, making him the first American on record to pursue legal action in defense of LGBT rights,

WHEREAS, it is believed that Swann Street NW is currently named after Thomas Swann, a former Mayor of Baltimore, Governor of Maryland, proponent of white supremacy, and notorious slave owner, and

WHEREAS, rededicating Swann Street NW in honor of William Dorsey Swann would honor the history of the Strivers’ Section Historic District as a Black neighborhood and Dupont Circle’s history as the epicenter of Washington’s LGBT community.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that ANC 2B urges the Mayor and the DC Council to support, pass, and sign into law legislation to honor DC’s Black and Queer history and elevate the memory of an important historical figure by dedicating Swann Street NW in honor of William Dorsey Swann, the first Drag Queen.

Commissioners Matthew Holden (2B08@anc.dc.gov) and Meg Roggensack (2B01@anc.dc.gov) are the Commission’s representatives in this matter.

ON BEHALF OF THE COMMISSION.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Meg Roggensack", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Meg Roggensack
Chair