

ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION 2F

Minutes of Regular Public Meeting

January 4, 2006, 7:00 PM

Washington Plaza Hotel, 10 Thomas Circle, NW

Submitted by: Chris Kohatsu, Executive Director, ANC2F

Present: **Chairman Charles Reed (2F01), Jim Brandon (2F02), Chris Dyer (2F03), Bob Ellison (2F04), Sandra Biasillo (2F05), Mike Nelson (2F06)**

Absent: **None**

Community Forum

(Announcements and Reports)

Chairman Reed noted that a quorum was present, called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM and directed that a copy of the notice of the meeting be filed with the minutes.

This meeting being the first meeting of the New Year, pursuant to the procedures set forth in with Article IV of the Bylaws, the following officers were duly elected to serve for 2006:

Chairman: Charles Reed
Vice-Chairman: Jim Brandon
Secretary: Bob Ellison
Treasurer: Sandra Biasillo

Commissioner Announcements

Chris Kohatsu announced that the Logan Circle Community Association will hold on January 18, 2006, a Public Safety Forum featuring a panel made up of Police Chief Charles Ramsey, Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice Ed Reiskin, and Director Michael Latessa from the Office of Unified Communications.

PSA 307 Report – Sgt. Stuart Emerman

There is a 51% crime increase. 255% increase in theft from autos. Most of the vehicles were from out of town (holiday visitors). 11% decrease in crime for the whole year. Officers have made more arrests almost 1/3 more than last year.

Emerman then introduced Asst. U.S. Attorney Community Prosecutor **Eddie O'Connell**. 202-514-5156 (office) – 202-253-4724 (mobile). His counterpart is **Roger Kemp**. The five big quality of life crimes affecting our community is theft from auto, destruction of property, robberies, burglaries, and prostitution.

Nelson asked about the results from the drug-free zone established over the weekend. Emerman said that 13-14 individuals were stopped and identified. There was one arrest in the zone, but not for a drug offense.

Nelson then asked about a recent article in the Post about a rise in crime. He asked why the reports keep indicating that crime is down. Emerman answered that the entire region is down, even though parts of our district is up. He stated that those numbers quoted in the Post were taken from numbers city-wide. Reed noted that statistics and public perception vary greatly, and that could also be why the confusion exists.

Business Forum

Approval of Agenda

Nelson added an update to ABC matters. Kohatsu indicated that three additions were to also be made as well. As amended, the agenda was unanimously adopted.

Approval of December Minutes

Nelson said that on page 6 – the discussion of Vegetate should be modified to reflect Jan. 11, 2006 for a fact-finding hearing at ABRA. The minutes were then moved for approval by Brandon with Dyer seconding. As amended, the minutes were unanimously adopted. Reed directed that a copy be posted on the ANC2F website.

CPSC Report

Co-chairs Mike Sheaffer and Jennifer Trock reported.

1. Minutes of the committee December meeting are posted on the website. The next meeting is scheduled on January 23.
2. On the DC city-services web page, an ANC account has been established to track agency response to the committee's request for improved street lighting, trash pickup, and graffiti removal.
3. Letters have been issued to the DC Housing Authority which responded that they are taking action on the recommendations.
4. A letter to Councilmember Mendelsohn over Chairman Reed's signature supporting the anti-prostitution vehicle impoundment act and urging expeditious committee action on it was sent. The letter was presented to the commission for ratification by the ANC. Reed moved approval and **Biasillo** seconded, whereupon, following further discussion, it was,

RESOLVED, That in furtherance of paragraph 7 of the Commission's resolution adopted October 5, 2005, establishing the Crime and Public Safety Committee (CPSC), the Commission hereby ratifies and confirms the letter presented to the Commission urging support and expeditious

action by Councilmember Mehdelsohn the pending anti-prostitution car impoundment bill.

VOTE: unanimous (6-0).

Tenants Working to Avoid Displacement

Martha Davis, from Manna DC appeared on behalf of the tenants attempting to avoid displacement from two affordable housing apartment buildings that are at risk of being lost. Manna is working with the tenant associations in order to keep these buildings and maintain the current residents. **Manuel Velasquez** appeared for 1236 11th Street, The Plymouth Apartments. He asks for ANC2F support in the purchase of the building, as the residents' goals include staying in the building, stopping crime, and cleaning the building.

Nelson and Biasillo jointly moved and Dyer seconded a motion in support of the projects presented to the meeting; and further discussion, the following motion was adopted:

WHEREAS, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2F is an agency of the District of Columbia Government established by law (D.C. Code § 1-309, et seq. (2003)) consisting of elected Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners from Single Member Districts ANC-2F-01 through 06, with statutory powers to advise the Mayor, City Council and all other agencies of the District of Columbia government; and

WHEREAS, ANC 2F in the exercise of its statutory duties is concerned with issues of health and public safety and has determined that tenant participation in the ownership of rental buildings will reduce crime and nuisance behavior, increase efficiency of building upkeep and maintenance, and improve the quality of life for the tenants and the surrounding community overall; and

WHEREAS, the revival of Shaw in recent years has benefited some of its long-term residents and its many new arrivals; but has also been accompanied by a inexorable loss of its employment base and affordable housing stock, and the displacement of its low and moderate income wage earners and residents;

WHEREAS, a majority of those who have already been displaced or are at risk of such displacement are mostly long-term African-American residents and immigrants (predominately Latino, but also of Chinese and Ethiopian origin) who have contributed immeasurably to the unique and positive identity of Logan Circle/Shaw;

WHEREAS, ANC 2F believes that the spirit and soul of our community reside in the ethnic, racial and economic diversity that has existed here

from the very beginning of the area in the 1870s, and that it is not only desirable but critical that such diversity be nurtured and ANC2F places the highest priority on fostering and retaining such diversity;

WHEREAS, ANC 2F supports workforce housing, and finds that the tenants of 1107 11th Street NW Apartments (the “Project”) are an established community of low and moderate income mostly Ethiopian immigrant workers, many of whom work in the hotel/restaurant and other service industries, and in construction, in Shaw and downtown; and

WHEREAS, ANC2F finds that the current absentee landlord’s neglect has not only caused many hardships for the tenants but has additionally created environmental nuisances and hazards for the entire immediate neighborhood, which the tenants association has been working to correct; and

WHEREAS, HUD has initiated foreclosure proceedings against the landlord for repeated failure to pass its inspections of the property; and such foreclosure would result in the immediate displacement of all of the tenants and a permanent loss of both the Section 236 HUD Mortgage and the project based Section 8 contract (which subsidizes payment of rents); and

WHEREAS, ANC2F finds that the plans presented to ANC2F for the purchase of the Project by its tenants in accordance with D.C. law will further the stated aims of ANC2F to foster and retain the diversity described herein;

NOW THEREFORE, be it,

RESOLVED, That ANC 2F reaffirms its policy to counteract the displacement of low and moderate income people from Logan Circle/Shaw generally, and particularly from ANC 2F; and to preserve and increase our affordable housing stock and living wage job base; and it is

AND FURTHER RESOLVED, That ANC 2F deems that tenant ownership of 1107 11th Street NW is in the best interests of the community and in furtherance of the aforementioned policy; and, therefore, ANC2F approves and supports the proposal put before our Commission that the 1107 11th Street Tenants Association, in partnership with Manna Community Development Corporation and National Housing Trust acquire the Project; and it is,

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the appropriate officers of ANC2F be and are hereby authorized and directed to give such assistance and take such actions as may be appropriate to implement the foregoing resolutions.

VOTE: unanimous (6-0)

Cherry Tree Planting

Kohatsu detailed the LCCA's application for a grant of three cherry trees from DC Greenworks to coincide with the National Cherry Blossom Festival. The purpose of applying for the grant is to further LCCA's neighborhood beautification projects, and to have Logan Circle listed as an official participant in the festivities. She asked for the commission to support the LCCA bid.

Dyer moved for approval of the application and Brandon seconded and it was

RESOLVED, That ANC2F supports the community beautification efforts of the LCCA, and determines to advise DC Greenworks that it approve the pending LCCA request for a grant of cherry trees for planting in the community.

VOTE: unanimous (6-0)

Brandon suggested that the trees be planted along Vermont Avenue.

Church Parking Discussion

Traffic problems focused upon parking near area churches was discussed in a general discussion. Reed indicated that representatives from both residents adversely impacted by the parking and from churches in the community were present by invitation.

Todd Lovinger, and **Frank Mobilio** indicated that they would like to speak on behalf of residents affected by church-goer double parking.

Rev. Shannon (John Wesley AME Zion), **Pastor A.C. Durant**, **Cornelius Wheeler**, (Vermont Avenue Baptist) **Dr. H. Beecher Hicks** (Metropolitan Baptist), and **Leroy Gilbert**, (Mount Gilead Baptist) were present to represent their respective churches.

Lovinger (202-299-9881) authored a letter on behalf of 50 residents who responded to a parking problem in the area. There are at least 5 churches around Vermont Street. None of the churches have parking lots, yet they have congregants who drive in to attend Sunday services and daily services. Double parking (the blocking in of a legally parked car), and illegal parking (in front of bus stops, crosswalks, and fire hydrants) happen during these events.

Lovinger stated that they are in no way trying to interfere with church activities. The issue that they raise stems from safety and convenience standpoints. Double parking is defined as blocking in a legally parked car and/or blocking access to a street or driveway.

This is not just a Sunday problem, it happens in the weekday evenings. He gave an example of a car that blocked him in tonight prior to the meeting while seven other legal parking spaces within a block were open.

Residents that are blocked-in have missed airplane flights, had children stuck at events, and missed meetings. Last month, a fire truck and ambulance was required at one of the churches. Vermont Avenue had double parking on both sides, but the emergency vehicles only had one lane available – and the street had to be closed down. All fire hydrants were blocked.

Lovinger has spoken with city officials and DC Code specifically states that double parking is illegal and there are no exemptions at anytime or to any organization.

Lovinger has six proposed solutions:

1. Churches should encourage members to take Metro or carpool, or arrive early enough to find parking.
2. Churches can approach Howard University to use their parking lot on U Street for Sunday services. The churches can provide shuttle services, and this is a practice performed by schools and other businesses.
3. Churches should work with the city to use the parking lots of public schools in the community.
4. Church goers with true disabilities and/or the elderly should have valet service provided by the churches.
5. Churches should begin looking for long-term solutions to this problem. Development and more residents have arrived in the neighborhood and churches need to recognize this.

They recommend that MPD and DC Agencies enforce parking laws at all times, including evenings and weekends.

Lovinger is asking the ANC to write a letter or pass resolution supporting their letter and demanding city officials to respond to the letter. It is a matter of DC Code and agencies do not have the authority to override legislation.

Secondly, they are asking the ANC to assist them in demanding that DC agencies enforce parking laws. And finally, the ANC should support Logan Circle residents who want the churches to be good neighbors.

Reed stated that the ANC received the letter last month, and tonight's discussion is an initial ANC response.

Dr. Hicks, responded for the churches. He said that in the spirit of cooperation we are here tonight for constructive dialogue. He speaks for all churches here and also, those not in the Logan Circle community.

He encourages and invites the residents to come to church.

He said that he is concerned that in this issue there has been no interest or effort for collaboration. The letter did not find it's way to his desk. There has been no effort that he is aware of to sit down with clergy before coming to the anc to resolve a community problem before going to the mayor.

Tonight is the first time he read the letter.

His interest is to be a good neighbor. He wants to respect local citizens, and to encourage people to abide by the laws of this community. He has entrusted his congregation to abide by public laws continually.

He said that this is not a new problem, but a serious problem of long standing. Metropolitan AME is in its 141st year – our community began long before many churches arrived. He said that churches came into the community to clean it up that we reside (alleys, driveways, and lots). His church turned a prostitute into a Sunday school teacher.

There is a serious need for collaboration. On any given Sunday morning, at the 11 o'clock hour, 10,000 people descend trying to find their way into houses of worship. This need existed when new residents moved in. People move into the community knowing that certain liabilities exist when they move in. There is no new land. And the suggestion that they find new land is ludicrous.

On churches can't have it both ways – his agrees – but neither can the community. In 1999, and 25-30 years previously, Metropolitan parked on the Garrison Elementary schoolyard. They supported the school activities and paid fees for the parking.

Metropolitan preserved the church. In 1999 new residents objected to parking on the schoolyard because the children were deprived a place to play on Sundays. So a loss of 250 spaces occurred. It's not just the Garrison school lot but the Shaw Junior High School lot.

This is not a Logan Circle problem. It is a Washington, DC problem. To think that the problem is confined to Logan Circle is to miss the entire point. What we are dealing with is not just public safety, but an issue of supporting institutions that provide community services.

Residents and institutions must be able to live together as brothers and sisters or we will perish together.

In response to number 5, new condominiums provide underground parking that does not exist now. Reed asked if the church was a participant, Hicks answered that the church was a minor participant.

Rev. Vernon Shannon said that he concurs with all that the previous pastor said. He said that he wished that Lovinger has asked that we all get together. The John Wesley church has been around for 155 years. He hopes that this is not an attitudinal problem.

Recently, a meeting was had at the church, and a police officer was outside ticketing. He told the church goers, and no one moved. The offending car belonged to a visitor to a neighboring resident.

Every Sunday, notices from ushers are given (in the middle of his sermon) that cars need to be moved. Everyone (residents) know that double parking happens on Sundays, yet residents continue to park around the church on Sunday mornings.

Rev. Shannon seeks a betterment of the community and wants everyone to work together.

Frank Mobilio of 1711 Vermont Avenue, said that he and his surrounding neighbors live on the triangle on Vermont. They are continuously blocked in, so much so, that the neighbors try to block each other in so that they can move their cars.

He is a regular gardener, and watches church-goers down all the town. He took down license plate numbers tonight and gave all the numbers to the police. He didn't understand why this was happening when there are open spaces available.

Illegal parking takes place at Vermont and R Streets. Buildings there were imploded, but on Palm Sunday, 2003, people started to park there. Mobilio took pictures and in one of them, an elderly woman is shown walking through rubble that was a dangerous path. All of these pictures were sent to DCRA and no one in the DC government seems to care.

He asks that all follow the Golden Rule.

Reed stated that all present should have heard a level of frustration from the residents. The ecclesiastical side has said there has to be a solution, and there can be a solution. Reed stated that Dr. Hicks was not correct in his notion that there have not been efforts or attempts made to come together – there has.

This particular meeting is not the place for such a discussion. The ANC could take the stance that the law is the law and that it needs to be applied. But such an approach probably won't solve the problem. Anecdotal experiences is not helpful. If you have specific suggestions, that would be helpful.

Lovinger stated that for clarification purposes, but the letter was originally written with regard to the problem at the Vermont Avenue Church because that church continues to illegally park on weeknights when there are available legal spaces. He and his neighbors attempted several times to reach out to the church, and their attempts went in vain.

Finally, in terms of coming here tonight, the fact of the matter is that the residents have not received any response from anyone until they went to the media. The role of this body is to represent and support the residents.

Jerry Schultz suggested that the community should contact larger churches who don't have this problem and how they have found solutions to accommodate the parking problem.

Leroy Gilbert, from Mount Gilead, said that it is apparent that we are all suffering. This problem cannot be solved by dictatorial matters and strict enforcement of the law. Gilbert mentioned that during a funeral, especially during an African-American funeral (which lasts several hours) and to have residents call the police on them is extremely hurtful.

When people come to bible study, then leave with a ticket, no longer want to participate in church events. White people deal with problems very differently from the African-American community. Todd wrote a long letter, and the churches would rather have a dialogue.

He does not want enforcement of the law without heart put into it. He wants to teach people to work together. Rules and regulations would be detrimental to people who rely on the churches for their livelihood.

Lovinger answered that funerals could be an exception, but for daily bible study, it's not unreasonable for people

Alan Reeve said that he finds it odd that the ANC supports action for prostitution, but not for parking. It should be blind for color, religion, creed, etc. 25 years of a problem is long enough to find a solution. If the law was enforced, these problems would exist.

Reed answered that the worse place in the world to resolve problems is in a court of law. The law simply doesn't work when it does not operate by consensus. You cannot enforce a law that a community is not willing to accept. You must find solutions to work together. We've got to allocate our limited resources to meet the needs of most of the community.

We can ban together to pressure the city to create a community parking lot. We can coalesce to create that pressure.

A.C. Durant (10th Street Church) said that his church has endeavored over the years to resolve the issue. It is a long standing issue, it has just recently become a problem. His church issues stickers with numbers and a database to identify vehicles. Had the church received the letter or been notified of the resident's concerns they would have acted to resolve it.

Congregants feel attacked by the residents. A dialogue that could have quickly resolved, is now going to take more time. Residents have talked about how they have been treated

by the churches. And this Sunday he came out to speak to the residents, and he was accosted. A car that was blocking a resident was not from his church as it did not have a sticker.

He doesn't believe playing the race card is a bad idea, because the issue is not racism – but a cultural differences. African-American persons know to go to church on Sundays, white residents may not feel the same. The new residents may or may not want the churches present, at least the feeling that they don't is the perception of the congregants.

Biasillo said that she wanted to thank everyone for being present and that she could relate to all sides. There is no one single solution. Enforcing the law is not the right approach. She parks illegally and takes the risk. We should explore partnerships with parking lots, diagonal parking, and continuing relationships with school parking lots.

Brandon said that his church has been around for a long time too. 73 years ago, St. Thomas Church had a president elected to the United States. They purchased their own parking spaces.

Dyer said that Church Street on 17th Street has a no parking except for Sunday. Perhaps there is a way that the ANC could help turn other streets into parking spaces.

Reed stated that he would like to establish an ad-hoc committee to continue tonight's dialogue.

Reed moves for approval of the establishment of an ad-hoc committee consisting of 2-3 members of the churches, Todd Lovinger, Schultz, Dyer, and Reed to explore the issue of church goer parking to report back to this commission next month on possible solutions that can be taken to resolve this problem.

The ANC will consider at their next meeting the report of the committee.

Hicks stated that he was concerned about the direction of this committee. The city has an arbitration service that can be used. If not within the city, then perhaps there is a non-profit agency that assists communities in transition. Expert advice and leadership is needed.

Dyer seconded.

Nelson said that **Ramona Burns** from DDOT should offer some comments and that this ad hoc committee should take into consideration the issue of non-church parking.

Reed stated that the ANC is a part of the District government and we should try to find resolve. If we cannot solve the problems, we then go for outside arbitration.

Jennifer Trock stated that LCCA would be happy to serve on this committee. She would appoint Chris Kohatsu to represent the association in this matter.

Alex Padro, (from ANC2C) said there was a similar issue around the convention center years ago, and Councilmember Evans stepped in to aid all involved. There have been previous efforts to establish a church parking committee that did not materialize.

Cornelius Wheeler, A.C. Durant will represent the churches. Rev. Shannon would like to also participate.

VOTE: unanimous.

Traffic Issues on R Street – tabled for next meeting.

Treasurer's Report

The following expenditures were presented and approved for disbursement:

- D.C. Treasurer - \$5.50 (Kohatsu December 05 withholding)
- Chris Kohatsu - \$700.00 (December 05 wages)
- Chris Kohatsu - \$8.00 (taxi to ABRA hearing)
- DC DOES - \$40.10
- ANC Security Fund - \$25.00
- U.S. Treasury - \$443.46 (4th Quarter withholding)
- Verizon - \$62.61
- Sandra Biasillo - \$99.00 (reimbursement for ANC2F.org domain registration)
- Michael Nelson - \$23.63 (reimbursement for gavel purchase)

Dyer then moved ratification of a letter to the D.C. Auditor. Brandon seconded.

VOTE: unanimous.

Legal opinion from the OAG.

A letter was presented for commission ratification. As presented, the letter was unanimously adopted.

Adjournment

Nelson said that he was approached on if the ANC would be interested in supporting a community grant. Reed answered yes, and that Biasillo would review the statute on grants for the upcoming meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:34 PM.