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Neighborhood News, March 10, 2024

1 message

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Sun, Mar 10, 2024 at 5:54 PM

Upcoming:
ANC 3/4G regular meeting Monday, March 11
DC meeting re Lafayette ballfield Wednesday, March 13

Neighborhood News ANC Single Member District 02 March 10, 2024

ANC passes resolutions re Civic Core and WMATA
OANC advises meeting with Civic Core bidders
ZC sets hearing on Conn Ave zoning changes
Maret Task Force addresses field issues
Community Zoom discusses Lafayette budget
School Boundary Study nears final recommendations
(In other news) Cat rescue frees "Friskies"
Plus:
Getting free trees

ANC 3/4G's special meeting on Monday (March 4) approved two resolutions, one to ask DMPED to amend the Civic Core RFP to specify a 60' height restriction and another to urge WMATA not to cut the M4 and other local bus lines. I sponsored both resolutions. The first reiterates the majority community voice in the recent survey: 70% of respondents were opposed to buildings taller than 60' at the Community Center and Library site. The Commission had asked DMPED (Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development) in December to include it in the RFP (Request for Proposals). They didn't do it. So, we'll ask them again. The RFP response deadline is April 18. The second resolution urges WMATA (Washington Metropolitan Transit Authority) not to cut the M4 and D31, D32, D33, and D34 bus lines if and as cuts are necessary to Metro bus service due to Fiscal Year 2025 budget shortfalls. DC, MD, and VA governments are all promising additional financial support for Metro. Nonetheless, expressing our concerns about the cuts is important. Losing the M4 would be devastating for the neighborhood, especially after losing the E6 (which the resolution also asks WMATA to consider restoring).

DC's Office of the Advisory Neighborhood Commissions (OANC) has advised ANC 3/4G to meet with bidders on the Civic Core project. Several Commissioners at the March 4 ANC meeting said they'd been approached by prospective bidders and asked if it was appropriate to meet with them. I said I'd get OANC's guidance. Here's what they told me: "the RFP ... not only encourages applicants to contact the ANC but states that success of the applicant will depend on incorporating what the community wants." They quoted the RFP: "Respondents are strongly encouraged to work with the applicable ANC(s), local community groups, and area residents to understand how the community's goals can be met in Respondents' Proposals." They went on to say, "The ANC could handle this in any of several ways. Have a panel of developers present to the ANC or have a Q & A with the ANC. Meet with the potential developers serially and have prepared questions or presentations for all of them. Meet with them without a set of questions." At the same time, the OANC issued "a few cautions." It recommended "that no commissioner meet alone with them ... for the commissioner's protection ..." And it added, "The key feature is to be open and transparent." So, it's now up to the Commission to decide to engage the bidders. I advise doing so – and including the public in the meeting(s). I'll make the case at tomorrow's meeting.

The Zoning Commission has now set the hearing date – April 29 – to consider the zoning amendments proposed by the Office of Planning (OP) for Connecticut Avenue from Livingston St. to Chevy Chase Circle. To review, OP's proposals are for two new "Neighborhood Mixed Use" Chevy Chase zones: "NMU-4/CC1 and NMU-4/CC2." The former is for everywhere on the Avenue but the Civic Core site (Community Center and Library) and would permit 70' buildings (including a 15' penthouse mechanical space) with 75% maximum lot coverage. The latter is specifically for the Civic Core site and would allow 80' buildings (including a 15' penthouse mechanical space) with

60% maximum lot coverage. Current zoning caps building height at 55' with no restriction on lot coverage. The [Chevy Chase Small Area Plan \(CCSAP\)](#), the District's blueprint for the redevelopment of the Avenue, did not specify building heights; it left that to OP. Illustrations on page 55, however, note "max 50 to 65 feet" (penthouses were not mentioned). Once the new zoning is set, development will be "by right," meaning developers will be able to build within the new codes without challenge by citizens or the ANC. Height allowances aside, the CCSAP also contains a host of design principles to ensure "cohesive and context-sensitive future development." Those include measures to ameliorate the visual impact of taller buildings. OP acknowledges, however, that "some of the CCSAP guidelines have not been incorporated into the proposed zoning text – this is typically because some of the guidelines are beyond the scope of what zoning can or typically does regulate ..." So, what's to ensure the guidelines are enforced? OP [has said](#) (pg. 19) it "anticipates additional discussions with the ANC and community about the proposal." The Commission's looking to have OP officials at the March 25 ANC meeting. Beyond knowing how the CCSAP guidelines will be adhered to, we need to know how residents will retain an effective voice as the long-term development plays out. The CCSAP build-out is a long-term proposition (15+ years) that will fundamentally change the main street of our neighborhood. Many neighbors feel they never had a voice in development of the CCSAP, in the first, as it took place during Covid. How will we ensure going forward that the District delivers what the CCSAP promises?

Maret School told the ANC's Field Task Force on Wednesday (March 6) that construction at ECC (Episcopal Center for Children) awaits approval of a Tree Preservation Plan (TPP) by DC's Urban Forestry and verification of sedimentary erosion controls along the perimeter of the job site. Also pending is an illegal construction inspection by the Department of Buildings. The tree preservation and erosion control are routine but further prompted by neighbor concerns about possible damage to trees and excessive stormwater runoff onto adjacent properties on 28th St. The inspection is due to encroachment on adjoining property by Maret's contractor. Maret officials owned the issues at the meeting and apologized for the encroachment. For general awareness: the task force exists to aid compliance by Maret with the terms and conditions of the [MOU](#) between the ANC and Maret for the field project. By DC statute, neither the task force nor the ANC itself has enforcement powers. When disputes arise, neighbors must engage relevant DC government agencies directly, often with my help. The task force agreed it's in everyone's interest to keep disputes to a minimum. (Neighbors on 28th St report this morning that last night's rain resulted in runoff from ECC, once again flooding their properties.)

Our community Zoom call on Tuesday (March 5) walked through the Lafayette budget situation with reference to the broader DCPS (District of Columbia Public Schools) and District budgets. In mid-February, Dr. Carrie Broquard, Lafayette's principal, [laid out](#) the school's \$2M, or 24%, budget shortfall for 2024-2025. On March 1, she [reported](#) Lafayette had won back \$319K but, barring much more substantial relief, would need to cut eight teacher and staff positions. She's [asked](#) families to reach out to their Councilmembers and Commissioners which several of you did in speaking to me – hence, the community call. **We were fortunate to be joined by Will Perkins, Committee Director of the Committee on Facilities and Family Services for Councilmember Janeese Lewis George.** Will, a former DCPS teacher himself, took neighbor questions – How'd this happen to Lafayette? Why didn't the District anticipate the shortfall? What's the process from here? – and provided a DCPS/District budget tutorial. **You can watch the one-hour recording [here](#), using passcode @G@Vkf4j.** You can also express your views by writing to CM Lewis George (jlewisgeorge@dccouncil.gov), Mayor Bowser (eom@dc.gov), DCPS Chancellor Ferree (chancellor@k12.dc.gov), Deputy Mayor for Education Kihn (paul.kihn@dc.gov), and your [State Board of Ed representative](#). Feel free to copy me and know you can also [submit comments](#) and concerns to ANC 3/4G as a whole. **Click [here](#) for a very helpful primer on the DCPS budgeting process.**

The School Boundary and Student Assignment Study nears issuing its final recommendations. To recall, the [study](#) is mandated by the DC Council to occur every ten years (the last was in 2013-2014) and led by the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME). It aims to ensure clear assignments to school of right, adequate school capacity, and equitable access to high-quality schools. We've understood from DME's interim reports and January 22 briefing to the ANC that Lafayette's slated to receive more at-risk, out-of-boundary students; Deal will get another building addition to boost capacity from 1279 currently to 1576; and Jackson-Reed is to see fewer out-of-boundary students while DCPS monitors the impact that the opening of [MacArthur High School](#) has on easing overcrowding. DME [previewed](#) the study's final recommendations at last week's concluding [Advisory Committee](#) meeting. It [clarified](#), regarding at-risk student set-asides, that for pre-K they'd only apply to in-boundary students, and there'd be no more lottery seats than schools were already planning – both to avoid overcrowding. With respect to Lafayette, its capacity grew from 873 in 2022 to 978 in 2023 in part by converting previously unused (basement) space to classrooms. How many lottery seats have already been planned for Lafayette is unclear. DCPS determines that. What we do know is that Lafayette continues to grow as, happily, young families move to the neighborhood. At some point, there's a limit to expanding its capacity and enrollment. The budget shortfall only compounds the school's challenges to serve more students with fewer resources. The completed Boundary Study is due for release at the end of this month.

Freeing "Friskies." In addition to other developments last week, on Sunday (March 3) we had a cat rescue. "Friskies," owned by Peni Critchell (31st St), had been missing for a week. Peni had put posters up around the neighborhood, but there'd been no response – until Sunday afternoon when Amy Joyce (31st Pl) alerted us that a cat matching the poster description was inside 2717 Tennyson (the big, unfinished green house near Oregon). I dashed over with my wife (Jane), meeting Peni at the property. At first, we could only hear meowing. But then, a cat appeared in a window at the

back of the house, and sure enough it was Friskies. Unfortunately, he couldn't hear us or was so disoriented he didn't know what to do. It was unlikely he'd be able to exit where he'd probably entered – through the hole in the plastic material covering the front door. So, we needed to go in. Problem was, there's a padlocked, six-foot perimeter fence around the house. It's also private property; we couldn't just break in. So, I reached out to DC Animal Care and Control and MPD. Officers from both came out quickly and were great. Bryan Yeary, the MPD officer, gave the approval to go in. But there was still the padlock – we didn't have the combination. Miraculously, next-door neighbor Bob Sheffield had arrived on the scene. Suspecting the former contractor for the 2717 construction would have the combination, Bob called him and, thankfully, he had it. We opened the gate, hurried into the house, searched up and down, and found Friskies crouched in a corner, scared to death. He was also starved. Enticed by a bit of food, he let Officer Yeary pick him up and tuck him into Peni's carrier. She was ecstatic, and we were all relieved – and grateful for the officers' help. (see pics attached). Now, we just need to get the Department of Buildings to fix the front door (and, yes, it would be nice if they could get the owner to complete the construction).

Notice

Getting free trees. With spring planting season upon us, remember you can get free trees from [Casey Trees](#). They'll [plant a tree](#) in your yard for free. In fact, they'll plant up to 25 (yes, 25!) trees on your property for free. Or you can [reserve a tree](#) now to pick up at their site (12th St NE) on April 5 or 6. Either way, it's an incredible deal to beautify your property and benefit the District's tree canopy.

Finally, [here's](#) the latest weekly newsletter from CM Lewis George's office.

As always, be in touch with any comments, questions, or requests for service (cat rescues included).

Best, Bruce

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3 attachments



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