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1 message

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Reminder:
ANC 3/4G holds a special meeting tonight starting at 7 PM on Zoom only.
The Commission will further consider its response to the proposed zoning amendments
by DC's Office of Planning for upper Connecticut Avenue from Livingston St to Chevy Chase Circle.

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ANC prepares for the April 29 zoning hearing. On April 29 the DC Zoning Commission will hear the Mayor's case for the two new development zones for Conn Ave from Livingston St to the Circle. It's no exaggeration to say ZC's decision is for all the marbles since development will be "by right" if it's approved, meaning developers will be able to build to code with no community input. At the ANC's April 11 special meeting on the proposed zoning, attorneys from the Office of the Advisory Neighborhood Commissions and the Office of the Attorney General were present to help the Commission and community understand the ANC's possible role at the hearing and recourse for having been excluded from the November 9 "set down" hearing.

The November "set down" hearing was when ZC assessed whether OP's case was in order and ready for consideration at a future date TBD. ANCs are to be notified in advance of such hearings to be able to participate. ANC 3/4G was not notified of OP's set down hearing on November 9. ZC failed to comply with established procedure.

Nonetheless, at the hearing the Zoning Commission waived the requirement that the ANC be notified. ZC Chair Anthony Hood said, "Well, let, let me just say this. I'm going to move that we waive our rules, 11 Z DCMR 304.11 and 500.7, because whether they were noticed or not ... one thing that I've always made sure of, there is engagement and input from the community."

I had written to ZC on November 8 with fellow Commissioners Lynch and Zeldin to request that the set down hearing be postponed pending issuance of the ANC's survey results (see the letter in the Case Documents file). Chair Hood acknowledged the survey was in train but said there would be ample time for all parties to see and respond to it before the actual hearing on the case was heard.

Can ZC just waive its own rules? Apparently, yes. However, there was more at stake. The set down hearing was also the occasion for ZC to determine if the future hearing on the merits of OP's proposals would be established as a "contested" as opposed to a "rulemaking" case. In the former, the ANC (as well as others) is a party with full rights to submit evidence, question other parties, and advocate at length for our position (whatever that would be). In a rulemaking case, the ANC gets just three minutes to speak like any member of the public.

That the ANC was not informed of the hearing meant the Commission was deprived of our right to ask for a contested case. That meant our community was deprived of the right. And it means now our community will lack the robust voice we otherwise might have had. So, our exclusion was not a minor issue; it's how disenfranchisement happens.

What's next? That's the topic tonight (April 17) at the ANC special meeting on OP's proposals. Should the Commission appeal ZC's decision to designate consideration of OP's proposals a rulemaking case? Should it set that

aside and take a position on the merits of OP's proposals? If the latter, what should an ANC resolution say? Commissioner Gosselin is at work on a draft for possible discussion tonight.

Is there yet another way? At the April 11 meeting, our neighbor Brian Heilman suggested asking the Zoning Commission to decouple the two proposed zones for Chevy Chase. He argued the Community Center and Library site was unique and should be considered separately. Doing so would allow focus on the results of the survey, which only concerned that site.

Second turf town hall compares artificial and natural grass playing fields. The April 9 sequel to the community meeting on March 26 (focused on artificial turf and safety) once again brought leading national experts to help us address a pressing local issue – the proposed installation of additional artificial turf in our neighborhood. Panelists from both the artificial turf and natural grass industries shared information and perspectives with some 120 online participants. The two-hour video recording is time-stamped by panelists to make it easy to navigate. You can watch it [here](#).

In response to safety concerns, industry representatives pointed to the continuing popularity of artificial turf (AT). They argued AT should be part of a stable of choices, as it extends playing time, and gives natural grass fields a needed break. Others said developers build fields then forget them, without considering long-term implications or cascading effects which result from the introduction of plastic fields. Kristen Mello, an analytical chemist (and Councilor at Large, City Council, Westfield, MA) noted the negative impact on the environment of replacing healthy soil and grass, where many important biological processes take place, with plastic.

The makers of AT answered claims of increased injuries on AT fields. They pointed to factors other than “cleat surface interactions” which could cause injuries, including previous injury, biological make-up of individual athletes and style of play. In answer, Mello referenced an article from a peer-reviewed journal that consolidated scientific research on injuries among high school athletes. Their conclusions were categorical that more injuries occur on artificial turf. Hardness was also discussed.

On fields hardness is measured using a “GMax score.” The allowable GMax score for AT is currently about 165, while living grass is naturally softer, scoring 80-120. Frequency of testing is important. Industry argued AT fields conserve thousands of gallons of water and reduce chemical use. Mello and Diana Conway, President, Safe Healthy Playing Fields, Inc., pointed to the use of water needed to cool AT fields in summer and the resultant toxic run-off from those fields. Natural grass and soil provide absorption of stormwater, while AT is considered an impervious surface, adding to flooding concerns. Arno Harmsen, CEO, [Turf Talents](#), employs a new irrigation system called [DrainTalent](#) to remove or add water directly to the roots of natural grass, conserving water, optimizing growth, and reducing or eliminating the need for chemicals.

Proponents of AT argue it allows for both a longer season and longer hours of use per day. These longer hours of use mitigate the higher cost of installation and allow for revenue generation through field rentals. Maret said they anticipate 25-30 hours of use per week, including their own needs and rental to other sports groups. Sun Roesslein, Sports Stadium Manager, North Area Athletic Complex (football and soccer), Golden, CO (home field for six high schools in the Jefferson County School District) spoke to the two natural grass fields she operates that provide fields for six high schools, with 25-30 hours of games per week. At present, that usage is doubled due to an associated AT facility being closed for the season for safety concerns. Increasing temperatures due to climate change mean AT fields will be offline more often due to dangerous heat. A typical AT field needs to be replaced every 8-10 years. In 24 years, Rosselein's fields have never been fully replaced, and have won national awards. Installation of a high-tech natural grass field costs roughly \$400K while an artificial field costs about \$1.2M.

Both AT and natural grass fields require maintenance for optimum performance. This requires the proper equipment, which currently DGS does not have. Roesslein spends \$16K per year on seed and fertilizer for the two facilities she manages. If properly maintained, both artificial and natural fields allow athletes to play in the rain. Jared Minnick, Director of Grounds and Environmental Management, Maryland Soccerplex, Germantown, MD manages 20 natural grass fields that he maintains are “rainout proof.” Several experts stated properly maintained natural grass can be grown organically. Public entities can maintain natural grass fields, evidenced not just by the Jefferson County, CO and Montgomery County, MD fields but also by case studies documented by multiple sports fields in Massachusetts supported by expert practitioners at the [Toxic Use Reduction Institute](#) at the University of Massachusetts/Lowell.

Aaron Golembiewski, also of TurfTalents, discussed hybrid grass systems. By adding 5% of plastic threads into a 95% natural grass field, allowing the grass roots to twine around the plastic threads and anchor themselves more firmly to the ground, playing time was increased four-fold.

There was a continuing dispute over whether there is currently any meaningful recycling of artificial turf. Shaw Sports Turf has a facility that reuses worn carpets to make new shock pads, but their capacity is limited. Industry is trying to respond to the demand for recycling, but currently rolls of used AT are being dumped in many locations.

Neighbors give feedback on speed humps. On Saturday (April 13), as planned, I held a community Zoom meeting to discuss DDOT's (District Department of Transportation) planned installation of speed humps on the 2700-2900 blocks of Rittenhouse and the 2900 block of Tennyson. Eighteen neighbors participated. Here are the takeaways. We reiterated that the District's system for adjudicating traffic safety requests, including calls for speed humps/tables, does not favor our area due to evaluation criteria stressing crash data and racial and social equity factors. That said, repeated neighbor requests on specific streets over time have registered. So have other efforts to impress upon DDOT our concerns, including neighborhood meetings and individual petitions. Bottom line: we've gotten results. As to speed humps, the group saw them as a mixed bag. No one professed love for them, but most saw them as the only way to slow traffic down. There's too much speeding on our streets, all agreed. What about speed tables instead of speed humps? Speed tables are an alternative for future applications, but DDOT engineers have determined speed humps are the remedy on Rittenhouse and Tennyson. Can DDOT take care not to make them too high. Some spoke to scraping the underside of their cars on tall humps around the neighborhood. Could they be more visible with bolder striping? What about using yellow stripes for even greater visual effect? These, we noted, are all things I can ask DDOT to consider. What about bioretention bump-outs as traffic-calming and speed cameras for calming and enforcement? Our ANC single member district already has 26 bioretention beds, most of which stick out into the street, and we have two large ones on the way for Utah and Nebraska. Speed cameras are perhaps the only remedy for streets like Oregon, where speeding is ever-present. I am forwarding all the feedback to DDOT. Installation of the humps is likely to occur within the month.

DC discards the Conn Ave bike lane plan. The [news](#) came on Thursday (April 11) at a hearing of the DC Council's Committee for Transportation and the Environment. Upon questioning, DDOT (District Department of Transportation) Director [Sharon Kershbaum](#) said bike lanes would not be part of the effort to improve safety on the Avenue. She explained: "There are some bike lanes we have that are suboptimal ... I think we made some poor decisions in our effort to build out the network. Now we are going to be far more intentional." The District has thus made a round trip from an initial focus on safety with the Connecticut Avenue NW Reversible Lane Operations and Safety Study, launched in December 2019, which morphed into the Connecticut Avenue Multimodal Safety Improvement Project, with the added bike lanes component. ANC 3/4G [backed](#) Concept C in 2021, and looked at extending the bike lanes to Chevy Chase Circle at its [March 13, 2023](#) meeting. Confident the bike plan was a *fait accompli*, the Commission was not disposed to heeding petitions in opposition signed by several thousand residents and more than 100 Connecticut Avenue business owners. Petition sponsors got the same minute to speak as did other participants most of whom favored the bike lanes. A few weeks later, the Mayor granted the sponsors an hour of her time at a meeting also attended by then-DDOT Director Everett Lott. Shortly thereafter, he announced the plan was under review, setting in motion the decision current Director Kerschbaum explained on Thursday.

HPO tables Chevy Chase historic district designation. On Monday (April 8), DC's Historic Preservation Office released a statement on the proposed Chevy Chase [historic district](#), concluding, "Based on the information that HPO has received to date, it is clear that public sentiment on the proposal is sharply divided. Additionally, HPO's preliminary assessment is that the proposed boundaries are not sufficiently justified." The HPO [file](#) shows 193 letters for and 184 against the proposal. The statement goes on to say, "Given the lack of community consensus and concerns about the proposed boundaries, as well as the need to conduct a citywide analysis in order to more effectively evaluate historic district nominations, HPO is not prepared to recommend that the current proposal for a Chevy Chase Historic District be considered by the HPRB at this time." [Historic Chevy Chase DC](#) (ironically) opposed the designation. Its decision reflected, it said, "an evolution of thought and a greater awareness of the history of racist exclusionary practices that shaped Chevy Chase DC since its founding in 1907, even though "HCCDC itself launched a historic district campaign ... in 2008." The ANC's Race and Social Equity Committee sent the Commission a letter after the HPO decision also expressing its opposition on the grounds of "CCDC's (Chevy Chase DC) racist origins," among other concerns. The letter is attached. There's been various press coverage of the historic district proposal. The Washingtonian just published its [take](#), which notes HPO is signaling its consideration of historic districts DC-wide going forward might be subject to racial and social equity variables in ways it has not been in the past.

Maret steps up construction activity at ECC. Maret School circulated to the neighborhood around the Episcopal Center for Children the following update on Monday (April 15) regarding planned construction activity: *As activity on the site increases, we wanted to provide you with an update of some work happening that we expect to produce significant noise as well as some traffic interruption. Over the next two days we will be completing the installation of erosion and sediment controls on the site and the removal of tree stumps. This has been ongoing work and you might have seen equipment on site today. After that, our contractors will begin receiving materials for sheeting and shoring with the actual sheeting and shoring activity beginning later this week or early next week. Sheeting and shoring is used to provide temporary soil support during construction. It is a precursor to building the permanent retaining walls, many of which will provide critical support to the heritage trees on the site. The process involves driving soldier piles into the ground, and it will be noisy. We expect this work to take approximately 4-5 weeks. It will begin along our western property line, moving north (roughly parallel to Utah), and then follow the northern property line, moving east (roughly parallel to Rittenhouse). We have asked our contractors to complete this work as quickly as possible, while maintaining the necessary safety protocols. Later this week, our contractors will begin prepping Nebraska Avenue for wet utility excavation work. This work will involve digging up a portion of Nebraska Avenue and will allow us to begin tying into the*

city's stormwater system so that rainwater runoff on the site can be properly managed. The community can expect to see increased activity, as well as flaggers on the roads nearby.

NPS concludes its impact assessment for rehabilitation of the Rock Creek Park Golf Course. The National Park Service released today (April 17) a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the rehabilitation of the Rock Creek Park Golf Course. Per the statement: *The FONSI documents our decision to proceed with Alternative 2, as described in the environmental assessment for the golf course rehabilitation. Implementation of this alternative will improve the course conditions and accessibility, create new facilities for recreation and administration (including space for community partners), and establish two 9-hole courses, with varying degrees of difficulty, that are appealing and accessible to all levels of golfers. These actions will increase playability and broaden course appeal to the local community. The course's maintenance backlog will be addressed through the improvements in the selected alternative including rehabilitated golf holes, a new cart path system, an efficient irrigation system, improved stormwater management, a new clubhouse, and a new maintenance building. These updates will create an environmentally sustainable course while prioritizing the historic significance and integrity of the original, historic course design.* Click [here](#) for more information about the project.

2717 Tennyson goes on the market. Well, after a year and a half, the end might finally be in sight for the vacant and blighted property, “the green monster,” at 2717 Tennyson. News this week is that the unfinished house is now for sale. Here’s the [listing](#). While \$2.5M seems a stretch for a shell, it might well be highly negotiable. One can only hope the property moves quickly.

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.

Best, Bruce

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Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner

ANC 3/4G Single Member District 02

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