

**January 2025 ANC 6A COC Meeting**  
**January 27, 2025**

In attendance:  
Clare Dougherty  
Melissa Rohan  
Ashley Blake  
Stephen Kolb  
Keya Chatterjee  
Paul Spires

Committee Chair Paul Spires called the meeting to order and led an icebreaker activity on favorite movies.

Chair Spires made announcements regarding Sunday morning neighborhood clean-ups and invited participants to join the WhatsApp group for the People's Front of H Street, which he shared was a useful communication channel.

Chair Spires recognized former ANC 6A Vice-Chair Keya Chatterjee, who took the group through a discussion of an organization that she co-founded, Free DC.

Building upon the legacy of Julius Hobson and the passage of DC Home Rule in 1973, Free DC is an organized movement to push back on the authoritarian tactics of the Trump Administration and allies in Congress who seek to weaken the independence of and asset authority over the District of Columbia.

Keya discussed the "Gathering Strength" strength phase of this work; outlined models of power and supporting pillars; the use of fear and chaos to destabilize communities; and the need to come together to build relationships and resist these tactics. She outlined three tools to push back: protest, non-cooperation and alternative cooperation, to maintain DC's agency and freedom.

Keya offered various ways to get involved with Free DC. Join their Ward 6 signal channel; sign up to host a house party; join the meeting on Thursday evening January 30th at Solid State books on H Street; go to [freedcproject.org](http://freedcproject.org) and sign up. Committee members asked questions about engaging Council members and our Congressional representative. Gail mentioned the importance of tying the Free DC agenda to the DC Statehood movement, which enjoys broad support across the District.

Next, Chair Spires took the committee through a discussion on frequency of meetings. It was decided that the meetings would remain on a monthly schedule.

Melissa Rohan, founder of H Street Sweet H Street, related blogs and podcasts provided a variety of ideas regarding rejuvenation of H Street. She mentioned that while she has organized monthly street cleanings along H Street, she cannot do this work alone and would welcome support from others in the community.

Ms. Rohan also suggested “Done in a Day” projects, which would include asking landowners on H Street which sort of improvements/repairs/upgrades they need and then work with Home Depot, Lowes and Costco to donate related supplies and items to help get the projects done.

Melissa also shared an idea for community members to take on/adopt different tree boxes for beautification, flower planting, etc. Gail suggested that rat abatement could be an issue and Melissa responded that whoever takes on the responsibility of caring for a tree box would need to ensure they are rodent free and safe/healthy for the community.

Ms. Rohan noted that she has been involved with the Cherry Blossom Festival in DC for over a decade. She sees potential for the H Street community to benefit from some sort of Cherry Blossom activation, which the National Cherry Blossom Association would be happy to promote across their significant communication channels. She would like to get local businesses involved, but they need a vision to rally around. Gail suggested possible outreach to Charles Allen’s office to see if they would like to support the effort. Perhaps businesses could have sidewalk tables, sales etc.

Ms. Rohan went on to discuss issues related to local crime and the potential for Charles Allen and the police to meet at a local home with constituents to discuss crime, as she sees a gap between the people who live in the area and those that are charged with protecting them. Clare mentioned block parties organized by MPD on 13th Street, engaging families right around Maury Elementary and in the neighborhood.

Committee member Ashley Blake went on to lead a conversation about the importance of the preventative approach when it comes to addressing crime. She suggests that communities rely less on MPD.

She suggested the following strategies:

1. Hindsight - better understand the origins of the police
2. Insight - she suggested that statistics indicate policy doing harm through surveillance and discrimination
3. Foresight - Align with a policy abolitionist approach, working to achieve public safety through a restorative justice model.

Ms. Blake raised the idea of divesting some police resources and reallocating them. She emphasized that this is the start of a conversation and that she would like to continue to discuss Communities of Care and an Abolitionist Framework. Chair Spires committed to future discussions on the topic at committee meetings.

The meeting went overtime, so Chair Spires adjourned the meeting.