

Minutes  
**ANC 6A Community Outreach Committee (COC) of  
Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) 6A  
Regular Meeting - May 23, 2022**

Meeting called to order at 7:02 pm.

Quorum present.

**COC members present:** Roni Hollmon (Chair), Marc Friend, Adina Wadsworth, Stefany Thangavelu

**COC members absent:** Jason Gresh, Sarah Bell, Gladys Mack

**Commissioners present:** Amber Gove, Keya Chatterjee, Robb Dooling

**Panelists:** Ward 6 Councilmember Charles Allen, Chelsea Ricker (HIPS), Leo Gudonov, Lieutenant Alai Araz (MPD 1D), Captain Zdenek Fronek (MPD 5D), Jen DeMayo (Councilmember Allen's staff), Celeste Duffie (DPW), Jasmine Coilton (MOCRS)

**Community members present:** 43

A round of introductions were made.

Chair Hollmon asked that Leo Gudonov give an overview of the problems being faced by residents and J.O. Wilson Elementary School.

Leo Gudonov described the myriad of issues facing the neighborhood from sex work near J.O. Wilson, while trying to be empathetic. There are human feces sometimes, public urination, used condoms, broken alcohol bottles, drug trade which he is unsure how it relates to sex work, confrontations with neighbors both verbal and non-verbal and violence to sex workers. Quality of life is impacted.

Councilmember Charles Allen said these are complex issues and this is not the first time discussing these issues. Hearing about confrontations is very alarming. Activity appears to have increased in the last few months. He is glad there is discussion about how the issues can be addressed holistically.

Ms. Celeste Duffie from the Department of Public Works (DPW) says she is familiar with the issues. She shared her experience with the Bank of America on H Street NE and not feeling safe to use it because of dice shooting at the mouth of the ramp. Where it is safe, DPW can provide street cleaning and related services. DPW does enhanced enforcement because of the street car on H Street NE. he will get a baseline of what DPW is doing and get those numbers to the Councilmember's office and to ANC 6A. The hard issue is biohazards because they are not allowed to place their employees in danger. While it is not impossible, it cannot be addressed by submitting a 311 ticket. DPW has experienced violent confrontations of workers including hospitalization.

Councilmember Allen said that vehicles are being used for sex work and that there is illegal parking on the 8th Street side off H Street. It does not appear that enforcement is occurring because of intimidation.

Mr. Gudonov shared that he does jog by the area sometimes and he has seen a man near the sex workers that is selling drugs, but he does not know if that man is related to the sex workers or whether it is just a convenient place to sell drugs.

Ms. Duffie said she will check with supervisors who will know if a ticket is not completed, the reasons for lack of completion and get that information to COC.

Commissioner Keya Chatterjee asked Ms. Duffie for clarification on the biohazard policy and said that she would like to make it a 311 request and asked what the pathway would be for getting biohazardous material picked up?

Ms. Duffie said this is a relatively new issue with human feces and other biohazards. There is a process for encampments, but she is not aware of a process for human biohazards elsewhere.

Councilmember Allen said there needs to be an outline of areas where there are biohazards and DPW should clean those areas in a timely fashion. He agrees with Commissioner Chatterjee that this needs to happen sooner rather than later.

Chelsea Ricker of HIPS wanted to address some of the issues posted in Chat and that it is unfortunate when there is trash, waste and noise. She wanted to caution people about relating all of this to sex workers. A lot of people are having poverty issues, health crisis, mental illness crisis and the pandemic. Sex workers are in the best position to know if someone is trafficked or not. HIPS has a mobile van from which the organization can talk to sex workers and has built a community with sex workers. She also gave an overview of all the services HIPS offers.

Captain Zdenek Fronek of the Metropolitan Police Department's (MPD) Fifth District (5D) gave an overview of his background. He is aware of the historic sex worker on K Street NE. MPD is aware of people coming from other jurisdictions. Ideally it would be good to put officers there, but with the increase in violent crimes, MPD does not have the officers to dedicate to this issue due to manpower shortages. MPD will try to give special attention, but violent crime and protests take precedence over sex work. He has reached out to the narcotics and sex work unit (NSID) which handles these operations. He said that MPD will arrest sex workers and johns, but this will not solve the problem. The individuals will be back the next day and it will not be a deterrent for most. He also gave the crime statistics for the last 30 days for the area between 5D and 1D.

Lieutenant Alai Araz of MPD's First District (1D) shared they have a human trafficking task force. They are making inroads into sex work industry and, when arrests are made, MPD works to divert sex workers into the services they need to exit the lifestyle. Every District is challenged with manpower shortages, but he will develop strategies around the issues.

Commissioner Chatterjee inquired about officers who have victimized sex workers and what training officers receive to interact with sex workers.

Lieutenant Alai explained that officers accused of a crime are placed on a no contact status and that they are investigated by internal affairs and he cannot comment on those issues. The human sex trafficking task force is a specialized unit of officers who receive special training and not radio patrol officers that interact with sex workers.

Ms. Ricker objected to further criminalizing sex workers and said that this will only make the problem worse and does not prevent harm to sex workers and reiterated that sex workers are the best defense against sex trafficking. She said she would talk to sex workers about being near the school but could not promise they would move.

Lieutenant Alai reminded everyone that, although he empathizes, sex work is still illegal in the District of Columbia. If MPD is called upon, they have no choice but to arrest sex workers and johns since their activities violate DC code.

Mr. Gudonov said he appreciates the work HIPS does. The current situation is not sustainable and he wondered what programs are being offered to sex workers by the city, such as job programs and things of that nature.

Committee Member Marc Friend said that it is hard to separate sex work issues from the larger issues of poverty, homelessness and other issues that impact residents. He wants to know how ANC 6A can help support the work of HIPS and find long term solutions.

Commissioner Robb Dooling asked Mr. Friend if it would be helpful for ANC 6A to write a letter reiterating its support for a public restroom pilot location at 8th and H Street NE.

Mr. Friend responded that it could not hurt and gave the top 3 locations identified for the city, with only two being in the budget so far.

Commissioner Dooling asked whether the ANC could request that 8th and H Street NE replace 17th Street and Benning Road NE.

Commissioner Chatterjee made a motion that a letter be sent requesting the 8th and H Street location be bumped up on the public restroom pilot list and that DPW institute a process akin to the one for pet waste and dead rodent removal to alleviate the human waste and loose condoms in the area. Commissioner Dooling seconded the motion. The motion passed 7-0-0.

The Mayor's Office of Community Relations and Services (MOCRS) representative Jasmine Coilton weighed in and said she would like to schedule a walk in the area to see what is going on there. She looks forward to working with both HIPS and MPD to resolve the issue.

Chair Hollmon stated that there was a number of comments in Chat about the sex work near the school.

Mr. Friend said he would have liked to hear from the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS). Chair Hollmon told him that the principal of J.O Wilson was contacted to attend this meeting and never responded nor did DCPS on the administrative level. She Inquired if there were J.O. Wilson parents in Chat that wanted to comment; since the school is not within the boundaries of ANC 6A, she did not have contact information for parent representatives to invite them to this meeting.

Mr. Gudonov said that his child had attended J.O. Wilson. He had seen sex workers in the morning and it is a hard thing to explain to a 5 year old.

Chair Hollmon asked Jen DeMayo where legislation addressing sex workers stood. Ms. DeMayo explained that the bill had been championed by Councilmember David Grosso, who is no longer on the council. Many residents weighed in from all perspectives but the proposed legislation was pulled and not pending. Chair Hollmon requested if someone who works on legislative issues could contact her. Ms. DeMayo said she would contact Chris .

Ms. Ricker said that Ms. DeMayo is correct that there is no pending legislation . She said there was a series of legislation that pushed sex workers off line and back on the street. She reiterated that sex work needs to be decriminalized. She recommends that people support decriminalization.

Chair Hollmon asked Ms. Ricker what can be done about underage sex work which is trafficking. Ms. Ricker reiterated that decriminalization was the answer because sex workers cannot go to the police, so any individuals being trafficked have no way to work with law enforcement.

Mr. Gudonov thanked everyone for their perspectives and told Ms. Ricker he would like to engage with her off line to find out what legislation would be most effective for a long term solution.

Commissioner Chatterjee thanked everyone for engaging in a difficult conversation and for the clarity she got about why DPW is not picking up biohazards and finding a way to make that happen. Understanding how a policy forced sex workers back onto the streets and maybe there needs to be review of that policy.

Commissioner Gove said that it was a great meeting. She looks forward to working with Commissioner Chatterjee for solutions to the more immediate issues and with the community for long term solutions.

Chair Hollmon inquired if Commissioner Chatterjee would be participating in the walkthrough with DPW and the MOCRS. Commissioner Chatterjee said she would coordinate that and had put her email address in Chat.

Committee Member Adina Wadsworth made a pitch for anyone in attendance that wants to join the COC.

Rob posted in Chat that he would love for community leaders to think about what inaction sends as a signal when people can come in from Maryland, they can defecate, they can have sex on people's property and then they can leave with no consequences.

Captain Fronek said that it was a great meeting and he enjoyed hearing all the perspectives since there are always two sides for every issue. Some residents want MPD to enforce more while others want sex work decriminalized and the residents are stuck in the middle.

MBee posted in Chat that she wanted to confirm that notes were taken as this was her first meeting. Chair Hollmon responded that notes were taken.

Meeting adjourned 8:21 pm.