

Minutes of the Woodley Park Community Association
Fall Membership Meeting
November 10, 2020
Via Zoom
[Meeting Video](#)

Present: Approximately 20 people were in attendance, with the meeting held on a virtual basis using Zoom. A quorum of more than 12 WPCA members present was established. It was agreed that the meeting would be recorded per the express consent of all attending the meeting, including the elected officials who had been invited to speak at the event, and that the meeting would be posted on the WPCA website.

WPCA President Courtney Tolbert gaveled the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. She thanked everyone for coming and introduced the other Board members that were present – Courtney Tolbert, Jeff Myers, Warren Gorlick, Carolyn Abbey, John Goodman, Melissa Maxman, Peter Brusoe, Stephanie Zobay and Katie MacFarlane.

- **Discussion with Karl Racine, Attorney General.**

- Melissa introduced AG Racine. Racine noted the new ANC 3C Commissioners and he applauded the stability of the local ANCs.
- Racine expressed concern about misinformation that had circulated earlier about COVID-19, and expressed understanding that the WPCA had decided to re-schedule his earlier March meeting date until this time. Racine noted that we are now in a serious wave in the epidemic, and the need to take precautions until a vaccine is developed. Racine addressed the fact that COVID may exacerbate the inequities and the great impact the virus may have on low-income individuals.
- Moving on to issues involving his Office, Racine's stated that his staff runs a robust [consumer protection operation](#) that DC residents can contact with complaints, and also has a mediation office to assist residents who might seek to resolve their disputes without having to undertake litigation.
- Racine noted anti-violence initiatives through his "[Cure the Street](#)" programs where staff tries to intervene before violence takes hold.
- Racine has also brought a lawsuit against the DC Housing Authority for poor conditions in some housing projects administered by that agency. Racine expressed regret that the Housing Authority was not more amenable to work in a cooperative manner with his Office; however, once he sued the Housing Authority, the agency came to the table and a settlement was quickly entered into. Racine has also brought lawsuits against private sector landlords.

Racine's responses to specific questions:

- The DC murder rate has been steadily increasing from its low point in 2012, with a stunning 23% increase just this past year. What should the District be doing to address this issue, or should we just acknowledge this is part of a national trend that may be beyond the control of local officials to prevent?
 - *Answer: Racine noted that many cities have seen increases in crime. But whether a national trend or not, the District should be doing everything they can. Racine emphasized his Cure the Streets initiative is working,*

though funding is of concern. Racine also noted investments in diversion programs.

- Besides crime issues, what new policy initiatives should be initiated in the District?
 - *Answer: Racine emphasized programs against abusive landlords, affordable housing programs and wage theft.*
- If DC Statehood does not prove achievable, is retrocession of the District's residential areas into MD a useful consolation prize, or just window dressing?
 - *Answer: Racine does not support retrocession. It is not what DC residents want.*
- During the recent elections, Racine campaigned for DC Council candidates who favor higher income and property tax rates on District residents. Does Racine have any concerns that the District will lose residents if tax rates in the District are increased.
 - *Answer: Racine believes that if tax increases are imposed, they could be focused on higher earning individuals in a way that should not result in an undue loss of population.*
- Should Racine's office take over major criminal prosecutions from the U.S. Attorney's Office?
 - *Yes, the District should control its own criminal prosecutions.*
- **Discussion with Mary Cheh, Ward 3 Councilmember**
 - Cheh started by discussing with Racine, who had remained on the Zoom call, citations in lieu of arrests and whether individuals given citations commit subsequent crimes.

Cheh's responses to specific questions:

- Plans to address the ongoing COVID-19 health emergency, specifically:
 - How is the city planning for changes in commuting that allow for less crowding as things open up in the future – e.g. fewer people willing to take Metro, so increased use of sidewalks by pedestrians and need for more bike lanes to accommodate bikes, e-bikes, scooters, etc?
 - *Answer: Cheh noted that the DC Council enacted legislation for DDOT to create expanded bike lanes and other programs. Cheh expressed some concerns about the operation of the Slow Streets program, and there will be a hearing on Nov. 16. DDOT has also been directed to create 20 miles of additional protected bike lanes.*
 - Is the city planning for further support of restaurants by increasing road/lane closures to allow for outdoor space? Any help for restaurants as we enter cooler weather?
 - *Answer: Cheh noted that the District has created its "streeterly" program, a one stop application process for restaurants to obtain authorization for outdoor eating spaces..*
- Status of the Hearst Park and Pool renovation, specifically:
 - The original time line had project completion in 2020, and work has now stopped and the latest update from DGS states delay due to contract negotiations. What is the plan to bring this project to completion?
 - *Cheh expressed frustration about the lack of information from DGS which oversees the private contractors. But just today, Cheh was informed that work on the site was ongoing. A temporary de-*

watering system has been created. DGS has indicated a goal of finalizing the project by late spring, 2021.

- Status for re-opening schools.
 - *Answer: Like the Hearst pool situation, Cheh expressed frustration about the lack of information from the school authorities as to when physical classes will commence. She noted that she and other Councilmembers have not received responses to questions they have raised.*
 - Potential development of the property where the Marriott is and the status of the Comprehensive Plan:
 - Will a Small Area Plan (SAP) be part of the Comp Plan, to assure that any development of the property where the Marriott or Omni are will have a SAP?
 - *Answer: She will offer an amendment to the Plan to require a SAP.*
 - What is the plan for finalization of the Comp Plan and is this taking into consideration the COVID-19 pandemic (and/or potential future pandemics) and the potential need for greater spacing?
 - *Answer: There will be 2 days of hearings this Thursday and Friday on the proposed amendments to the Plan. The Comp Plan will not be finalized this year, it will probably be acted upon in early 2021. With respect to the Comp Plan however, COVID is irrelevant, since the Comp Plan is a long term plan that will presumably out-last COVID.*
 - What does the Council think that “de-funding” the police means?
 - *Answer: Cheh clarified that in general the MPD is a qualified and competent police force. She does not believe that the Council supports a significant shift in funding from the police, and Cheh has “no interest” in police de-funding. Still, Cheh believes that there are some things that the MPD could do better, and she is working with other Councilmembers to address certain issues. She also expressed a concern about police overtime practices and what the process was to authorize overtime pay. By contrast with the MPD, where she generally expressed satisfaction with its operations, Cheh expressed concerns about the manner in which the U.S. Park Police operates, given the fact that they frequently patrol areas within the District.*
 - Courtney noted a recent incident in which the Park Police assumed, wrongly, that her son was the perpetrator of a neighborhood crime and proceeded to handcuff her son and treat him in a rough manner. While the Park Police eventually apologized, Courtney is concerned that the incident speaks to greater issues among at least the Park Police that patrol in the area.
- **Bylaw Adoption**
 - Because some people dropped off, Warren, in his Secretarial capacity, asked for confirmation there was still a quorum to transact business. John and Peter certified that a quorum of members in good standing were still present.

- Peter moved adoption of the amendments to the WPCA bylaws that had been made available for review to the full Membership prior to the meeting. The Motion was approved by the required two-thirds majority.
- Courtney asked for any other comments for the good of the WPCA. Peter thanked WPCA Member Roger White for the work he has been doing on keeping the community attuned to crime happenings in the community.
- Adjourn – Meeting adjourned at 8:45pm. Next meeting of the Board on Dec. 1 at 7:30.