

more time to work for the people of Ward 8.”

While I'm quoting Barry, here are a few of his best lines from the speech he gave to his colleagues before the vote:

“I have a long history of great integrity, this council knows my character.”

“After 31 years of being squeaky clean, why would I do this for a few thousand dollars?”

“The Bennett report reduces Marion Barry to a Southeast hustler.”

Jack Gets What Jack Wants

Councilmember Jack Evans (Ward 2) was working the room. During the council's monthly breakfast meeting Evans was taking individual councilmembers by the arm and walking them out of the room. Whispering in their ear. Something was up.

Turns out Evans likes cigars, and so do a lot of his rich friends. Each year he lights up with the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick at their annual St. Patrick's Day dinner at the Capitol Hilton as well as at the annual Fight Night, which benefits the Fight for Children organization, at the Washington Hilton. The problem is the ban on smoking in DC was going to put an end to those great traditions.

No worries, as any good legislator will tell you, laws were not made to be broken; they were made to be amended. Evans, a great legislator, introduced emergency legislation, the Special Event Exemption Emergency Act. Sounds important. The bill gives hotels that have ballrooms that seat 500 people or more a once a year exemption for cigars only.

Since it was offered as emergency legislation, it needed 9 out of 13 votes. When the roll was called, Marion Barry voted in favor of the bill. The bill was about to pass 9 to 4. But Barry spoke out, “Mr. Chairman, I'd like to change my vote.” The bill was dead, Evans was shocked, he was livid. He sprang into action knowing exactly what he had to do. He needed one of the “no” votes to ask for reconsideration and then change their vote.

First he went to Barry, then to Yvette Alexander (Ward 7), then to Phil Mendelson (At-Large) and Kwame Brown (At-Large). Back and forth, almost frantic, Evans paced the dais. A few minutes later Barry, spoke out again, “Mr. Chairman.” A new vote was called, and Barry switched his vote for a second time, and Alexander joined him. Evans and his buddies get to keep their smokes.

One Final Observation

Once a month, the mayor is scheduled to have breakfast with all 13 members of the council. The mayor usually cancels or just sends staff. When Fenty does show up, it's the one of the rare times the legislative branch and the executive sit down across the table from each other. For some councilmembers, it's the only time they get to be face to face with the mayor.

So when they do meet, you might expect a lot of important topics to be discussed like the rising unemployment rate, the \$200 million budget deficit, the AIDS epidemic, or perhaps the blizzards. You would be wrong. At the March meeting they talked about downsizing the security staff for the Wilson Building and nothing more.

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(Letter to the Editor)

Good day Ms. Rhee,

It was the goal of the mayor to change how our students learn in the city of Washington, DC. You and your staff brought in Friendship Edison Charter School to change Anacostia HS. But the school reform that was imposed at Anacostia Senior High School has failed. I have some concerns and questions that I want you to be aware of.

1. Why are students being put out of the school in the morning to walk the street all day.
2. There were 250 students who failed in the first advisory. In the second advisory which just ended 753 students has failing grades -- a clear message that the reform has died.
3. Mr. Lewis' office put in new lockers so that the students would not have to take their coats to class. Despite the fact that lockers have been paid for by taxpayers, the principal will not issue locks. Consequently, students' property is being stolen from unsecured lockers.
4. Because of Friendship Edison and the mayor, the college fair tour that Councilmember Kwame Brown (At-Large) has sponsored over the years to help students get into college has been damaged. In the past few years, Anacostia would fill up a bus, but now they might not have any students going on the trip because the principal did not gather the information the councilmember's office needed in order for the students from Anacostia to participate.
5. Your staff has been holding job fairs, such as the recent one at Shaw Jr. High School to recruit new teachers. Why? Are you manufacturing another RIF?
6. Anacostia might be the only school in DCPS that has four principals. How much money are they making? How many students are enrolled that justify this over-the-top expense? These funds should be used to hire more highly certified teachers and give the students real reform.
7. Also Friendship has left St. Johns out of the modernization project of Anacostia. St. John has been doing a great job with the students of DCPS and has been in the building for some years, but to date, St. John has not even been involved in these plans.
8. It was my understanding Anacostia is still a DCPS public high school and not a charter school. However, the principals operate as though they do not need to comply with the regulations of the DCPS. Sending students home for not wearing uniforms is one example of this abuse.
9. The Anacostia modernization program needs to be assessed – there are obvious problems.
 - a. For the welfare of our students, while construction in Anacostia is going on we cannot allow anyone that is not cleared by DCPS and FBI in the building.
 - b. I am requesting a written breakdown of the finances for the project to include:
 - i. When did the bid go out and how many companies place a bid for the Anacostia project?
 - ii. How much money has the city paid the contractors to date. Are these funds being paid from a previous capital building campaign?

While there were problems at Anacostia, which can be said for most schools in DC, things are now dismal. In fact is that the school is going downhill. The students do not respect staff members in the building. And the number of students that are sent home goes up every day.

I look forward to your help in his matter and hearing from you. You can give me a call at 202-609-5256.

Marvin Tucker

Marvin Tucker
Resident, Taxpayer and Parent of DCPS student