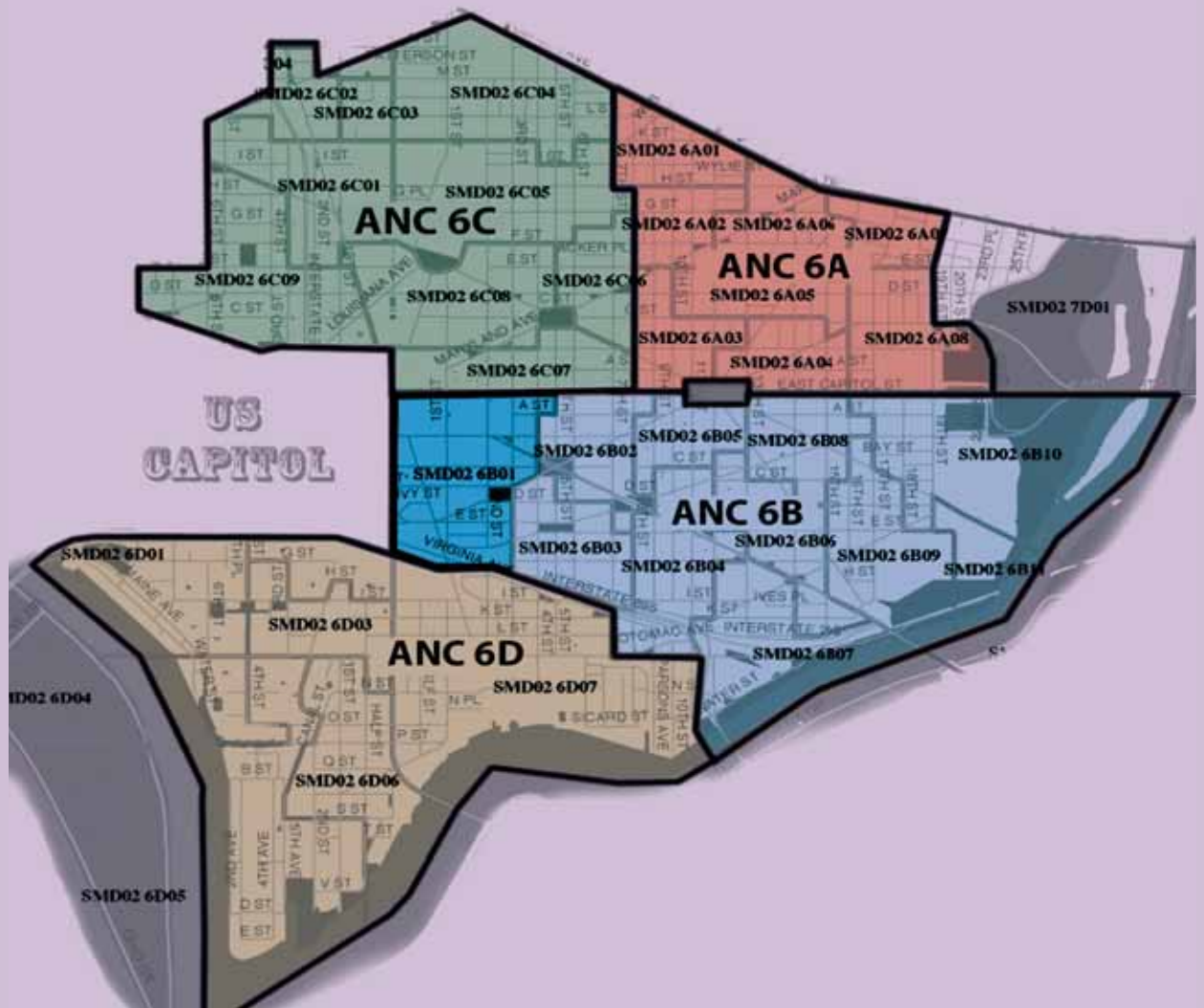


NEWS



ANC 6A

Crime, Convenience Store 'Connection' and Contentious Construction

BY TANYA SNYDER

A One-Man Crime Ring

Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner David Holmes (6A-03) announced that crime in the neighborhood went up 29 percent in May – but it was all one guy, and he’s been arrested. André Grimes allegedly stole laptops, television sets and other expensive items, mostly entering homes through unlocked rear windows. He was arrested June 2 and pled guilty to 14 burglaries – though they think he’s responsible for even more.

Problems are popping up on H Street, too. Commissioner Raphael Marshall (6A-01) brought to the ANC’s attention fights and drug activity occurring at some establishments on the corridor, including Sticky Rice. Commissioner Nick Alberti (6A-04), who also serves on the Alcoholic Beverage Regulation Administration, said ABRA investigated the incident at Sticky Rice and determined that the restaurant wasn’t in violation. The management did everything right leading up to and in response to the event. Still, Marshall says it’s at least the third serious fight to break out at Sticky Rice.

And that’s not all. Juvenile incidents are on the rise as well, “and we’re not even in the summer months yet,” in the words of Commissioner Kelvin Robinson (6A-08). He says youth have been responsible for three incidents lately, including one that involved the use of a pistol. No

one was hurt that time, and police responded quickly with police dogs. Three young people were detained, but the gun was not found. Another incident appeared to be gang-related, as kids fought over turf. And then a “melee” broke out around 16th and A Streets NE.

The police have pledged to bring in more forces, but things are going in the opposite direction on the ANC itself. The Public Safety Committee had consisted of Commissioner Robinson and Rebecca Sibia, a community volunteer. Sibia just resigned, leaving the committee with no chair and just one member. Robinson is hoping to be able to reconstitute a functioning committee to address the crime issues in the neighborhood that don’t seem to be going away. If you’re interested, contact Commissioner Robinson at kelvin.robinson@anc6a08.com or 202-744-0379.

No One’s Thanking Heaven for This 7-Eleven

Some neighborhood residents looking forward to the coming H Street facelift are disappointed to learn that the new H Street Connection will include a 24-hour 7-Eleven store. They worry about late night hours of operation, litter, the sale of tobacco products and loitering.

Representatives of the store attended the last Economic Development & Zoning Committee meeting to discuss the issues. They said they’re working with a cleaning service to deal with trash and will be using security cameras to address crime. They said their surveillance systems are high-tech, involving up to 16 cameras per store, and employees are trained yearly in safety and crime prevention. They try to get a full frontal shot of every person coming into the store, and they save surveillance videos for at least four

or five months.

Other neighbors rejected the idea of a 7-Eleven on more aesthetic grounds that it won't "fit into the neighborhood" or help to remove the "negative stigma" H Street has developed. The store representative tried to reassure them that 7-Eleven has been part of "gentrification efforts" elsewhere in Washington, DC.

He also addressed questions about loitering, saying 7-Eleven works with local police to "debar" habitual loiterers, including day laborers who often congregate in front of 7-Eleven stores to wait for work. Though the store normally staffs according to sales demands, he said 7-Elevens in DC never have just one staff person during the late-night hours, so there will always be someone on hand to deal with a security issue, while another person stays at the register.

Another sticking point: the H Street Overlay prohibits new fast food establishments, and 7-Eleven sells wings in most of its stores.

The ANC is trying to reach an agreement with 7-Eleven on all of these issues.

Public Staircase

It seems there is always a crowd of people lining up at ANC meetings to pitch some home improvement project or another, only to be smacked down by the commission. This month was no exception. Peter Haley bought a vacant property in the neighborhood six months ago. By all accounts, it was an eyesore, and neighbors are glad he's fixing it up. But in the process of doing so, he's run into familiar problems with public space permits.

In DC, the land in front of your house and on the side is all public space. Only your backyard is your own. So anything you want to build on the front or side of your house requires a special exception, allowing you to build on public space. And the ANC is on record as protecting public space wherever possible.

The ED&Z committee supported Haley's construction of window wells on the side of his house but was less convinced by his petition to build a staircase up from

the basement (which is now just a cellar with a dirt floor.) Committee members say he can just as easily build those stairs in the back, on his own land.

The issue sparked a somewhat unusual backlash from audience members who had no stake in the construction project whatsoever. One accused the ANC of being "nitpicky." Another wanted to know "what's the big idea" if the city and the neighbors say it's OK. (Indeed, Haley has collected 10 letters of support from neighbors, and an initial meeting with the city's Public Space office indicated that they were friendly to the idea.) One person said he "sympathized" with Haley and advised ANC commissioners to "be careful" how they use their authority, saying "it irks me that you'd decide against someone who wants to do a thoughtful renovation."

On the commission, Bill Schultheiss (6A-06) agreed with them. He said the commission wasn't being fair and that the proposal was consistent with how properties have been developed on the Hill.

Some on the commission worried that the underground staircase could be a safety issue, with Maury Elementary School nearby. But others mentioned that right at Maury there were several large dumpsters – also on public space – behind which many people could hide. The staircase, as designed, would take up more than half of the 6-foot space between the house and the sidewalk.

Community member Margaret Halwell agreed with the commission's final vote to oppose the construction of the staircase. She said the danger of making an exception is that others will be right behind, demanding the same treatment. She said, "This is how entire historic neighborhoods become degraded and lose their fabric, their character and their integrity."

ANC 6A meets the second Thursday of the month at 7 p.m., at Miner Elementary School, 601 15th St. NE. Visit www.anc6a.org for more information. ★

ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION 6A Kelvin Robinson, Chair, 744-0379



Serving the Kingman Park, Linden, Near Northeast, North Lincoln Park, Rosedale, and Stanton Park communities



ANC 6A meets the second Thursday (July 8), 7 pm, at Miner Elementary School, 601 15th Street, NE.

www.anc6a.org

Alcohol Beverage Licensing Committee

3rd Tuesday, June 20, 7pm • Sherwood Recreation Center
Corner of 10th & G Streets, NE • Chair, Mary Beatty, 546-4196

Transportation & Public Space Committee

3rd Monday, July 19, 7pm • Community Room of the Capitol Hill Towers
900 G St. NE • Chair, Omar Mahmud, 546-1520

Economic Development & Zoning Committee

3rd Wednesday, July 21, 7pm • Sherwood Recreation Center
Corner of 10th & G Streets, NE • Chair, Drew Ronneberg, 431-4305

Community Outreach Committee

No Meeting in July • Church of the Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith Annex
1235 C Street, NE • Chair, Elizabeth Nelson, 543-3512

Please check the Community Calendar on the website for cancellations and changes of venue.

Attend a meeting! Volunteer for a committee! It's your ANC!

