

Mount Vernon Square

Neighborhood Association

Uniting our historic community since the 1970s

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July 10, 2006

Peter Newsham
Assistant Chief
Metropolitan Police Department
Henry J. Daly Building
300 Indiana Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20001

Re: Shaw / Mount Vernon Square Area's Continuing Deadly Crime

Dear Assistant Chief Newsham:

It is our understanding that last week MPD held its "open season," which may result in staffing changes for our area, Police Service Area (PSA) 308. We hope you can address how these staffing changes will affected our area at the forum tomorrow night at the Second Northwest Coop., and provide us with assurance that the area will have an increased police presence in the future.

Less than one month ago, on June 15, members of our Association participated in the crime forum held at the United House of Prayer. This meeting occurred after approximately nine months of continuous gang warfare including gun battles on the streets of the Shaw / Mount Vernon Square neighborhood, largely within PSA 308. At one recent PSA meeting, for example, officers reported over thirty calls for service for gunfire in a single month. It has become all but routine to hear shots fired and to see streets cordoned off with yellow police tape. As you well know, this situation is particularly dangerous on the 1200-1400 Blocks of 5th, 6th, and 7th Streets NW, and the 400, 500, and 600 Blocks of M, N, and O Streets N.W.

This past week was crime-as-usual in our PSA, although the consequences had unusually deadly results. On Thursday night, a man was shot in the leg during a robbery attempt. On Friday, two youths playing with a gun on the 1300 Block of 5th Street NW resulted in one accidentally shot in the face. The violence culminated on Saturday, with the death of long-time DC activist, Chris Crowder, an aspiring mayoral candidate, who was gunned down in his wheelchair at 6th and N Streets. This is precisely where numerous other shootings have occurred in recent months, including an incident on June 10 in which a man was shot multiple times and transported to Howard University Hospital (CCN:077-185).

All of these incidents occurred within two blocks of each other and in an area in which the ongoing criminal activity is well known to MPD and all that live there for many months. Yet, shootings and violence continue even after the June crime forum, which you attended with Chief Ramsey. With the exception of the occasional stationary roadblock and flood light, which is of dubious and extremely short-lived effectiveness, the police presence in the

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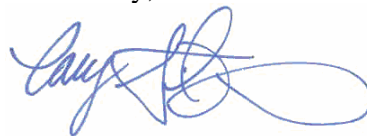
neighborhood does not appear to have increased. At the crime forum, for example, I expressed our Association's position that there needs to be more police officers and more effective deployment, including foot patrols and bike patrols, in these well known problem areas. This does not appear to have occurred.

Can you please provide us with the staffing schedule for PSA 308? We are particularly interested in knowing the number of officers assigned to PSA 308 on each shift, how they are deployed (patrol car, foot patrol, bike patrol, other), and how this number has changed from previous months/years? We would also be interested in learning how many officers assigned to PSA 308 are on detail or disability and not actually on the streets of Shaw / Mt. Vernon Square. Finally, what is MPD's plan for altering the current staffing/deployment to address the ongoing crime in our neighborhood, as the current staffing/deployment appears to not be working?

We are committed to working closely with MPD to address crime and continue to do our part through passing on information regarding suspicious and illegal activity and documenting drug dealing and nuisance properties. MVSNA members are participating in "Partnership for Problem Solving" and we continue to actively work on two situations identified during that program. We are in close communication with prosecutors and the court system to ensure that judges understand the impact of illegal activity on the community. We routinely communicate with MPD officers and seek better lighting and street repairs from the city. But we need more manpower with increased visibility if we are to get crime under control and restore public confidence in the safety of our neighborhood. We need officers walking and biking the streets and alleys, talking with neighborhood residents about their observations, and monitoring suspicious activities.

We look forward to discussing these issues with you at tomorrow night's forum.

Yours truly,



Cary Silverman
President, MVSNA

Cc: Charles H. Ramsey, Chief of Police
Larry McCoy, Commander, Third District
Ralph Neal, Lieutenant, PSA 308
Marco Santiago, Community Outreach Coordinator, Third District
Jack Evans, Councilmember Ward 2
Leroy Thorpe, Chairperson, ANC 2C