

Mount Vernon Square

Neighborhood Association

Uniting our historic community since the 1970s

President
Cary Silverman

July 12, 2006

First Vice President
Si Kailian

The Hon. Kimberley Amprey Flowers
Director
Department of Parks and Recreation
3149 16th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20010

Second Vice President
Sam Farmer

Dear Director Flowers:

Corresponding Secretary
Camille Bonta

There was crime meeting held last night at the 2nd Northwest Cooperative Housing complex (400 Block of N Street NW), which is adjacent to the park at New Jersey Avenue and O Streets NW and is Department of Parks and Recreation property. The meeting included Assistant Chief Peter Newsham, Inspector Patrick Burke, and Lieutenant Ralph Neal, among others. Carlson Claptor, the neighborhood service coordinator, also attended. The focus of the meeting was a recent murder in the neighborhood and a surge in gang violence, however, a significant portion of the meeting was spent discussing public safety concerns stemming from the park, which we have previously brought to your attention.

Recording Secretary
Vacant

Residents discussed how they see continuous criminal activity in that park, are afraid to walk there at night, and cannot use the park during the day. Several of the residents noted how they had tried some time ago to get the lights turned on and, ultimately, the wiring was repaired but then the lights became dysfunctional within a month. The police and Mr. Claptor raised the prospect of literally fencing off the park to shut down the criminal activity. I hope it does not come to that and that we can fix the park so that people can again use it and it is not longer a District-owned nuisance property. In addition, the police will place temporary flood lights in the park this week and station an officer there to get the situation under control. Of course, this use of resources would not be necessary if the park had functioning lighting, which would allow the police to focus on other areas of concern.

Treasurer
Jeff Parke

Can you please expedite fixing the lights in the park? Michele Molotsky of Jack Evans' staff had informed me that Johnel Bracey had ordered new light fixtures for the park, which were scheduled to arrive on June 19. They have not been installed. It would also be very helpful to remove the long wooden benches in the park that facilitate vagrancy and, if possible, replace them with the 3-arm model. In addition, I believe Officer Tommy Barnes placed a request with DPR to remove the tables and seating in the south west corner of the park, which he believes is used for drug dealing. How can we make some immediate progress on these relatively small requests that can drastically improve the safety of residents?

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It is also my understanding that plans were developed for complete renovation of the park into a 9/11 Memorial Grove over one year ago, but that the plans were never put out for bid. The lighting/benches are our first and foremost priority, but we would also be interested in learning the status of those plans, DPR budget (or lack thereof) to move this project forward in 2007, and how the surrounding community's energy can be used to help.

I have waited patiently for a response to my original inquiry regarding these issues dated May 8, while crime and vagrancy continues unabated in the park. I appreciate receiving information from Kay Sibetta regarding the potential for entering a community partnership in support of the park, but it is difficult to consider participation in such a program without first fully understanding DPR's short and long-term plans for the park.

I have contacted your assistant, Renee Plumber, this morning, to see if we can reschedule the meeting that we had set for June 22 that you needed to cancel. I hope we can have a positive dialogue on how we can work together on this important issue for the neighborhood. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Cary Silverman
President, MVSNA

Cc: Peter Newsham, Assistant Chief, MPD
Patrick A. Burke, Inspector, MPD
Larry McCoy, Commander, Third District
Ralph Neal, Lieutenant, PSA 308
Tommy Barnes, MPD Officer / Partnership for Problem Solving
Kathy Patterson, Chairperson, Committee on Education, Libraries and Recreation
Michele Molotsky, Assistant Chief of Staff for Jack Evans, Councilmember Ward 2
Leroy Thorpe, Chairperson, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2C
Carlson Claptor, Neighborhood Services Coordinator
Anne Hill, 2nd Northwest Cooperative Housing