

Meeting notes – 1A Public Safety Committee – 1/31/17, 7-8pm (this counted as the February meeting)

- Public meeting; location: ANC 1A office at 3400 11th St NW Suite 200
- **Theme for the month:** Supporting community-building at the hyper-local (e.g. block) level
- **PSC Chair and note-taker:** Dan Kornfield (danielkornfield@yahoo.com)
- **16 participants:** José Calvo, Lin Lawson, Laura Laenz, Laura Cooper, Jason Cohen, Danielle Vu, Andrea Martin, Ben Trajtenberg, Ariel Trajtenberg, Stephanie Milne, Cameron Carr, Lori Parker, Anna Stewart, Catalina Talero, John Clarke

Summary: We had great turnout and sharing about experiences and visions to help build neighborly name-recognition and deeper community on each of our blocks (or in apartment buildings).

Details, shared and discussed:

- **Block parties & potluck picnics:**
 - People have had very positive experiences with block parties, which can range from big (formally shut down the street, fair atmosphere, moon bounce, etc.) to more easy-going (e.g. fall potluck picnic with a couple tables put out for people to place their food on).
 - Anna has organized a very successful picnic in ANC1A01 for three years now, and it builds momentum – Dan is considering trying to do it in the spring and fall each year, rather than just once a year, to create more touch-points with the neighbors who come.
- **Clean-ups:**
 - There are frequently volunteer clean-up activities different places in the city, including occasionally in ANC1A (Columbia Heights/Park View).
 - While these are good events, they can also sometimes range across many blocks and feel like one-off activities, meeting people who are never seen again, thereby not always fulfilling their full potential for relationship/community-building.
 - To address this, some people (e.g. Danielle Vu, Matt McFarland) are experimenting with doing more regular clean-ups (e.g. monthly) at a more hyper-local level (e.g. near Ogden & 14th, or Georgia & Lamont, respectively). This creates the opportunity for repeat experiences with very local neighbors who come out and get to know each other over time.
 - To ensure socializing, it was also proposed that it may be worth having one of the organizers of a very local clean-up open their living room for coffee or tea or hot chocolate either right before or right after the clean-up. An alternative which Matt has organized is meeting afterwards at a local bar or restaurant – even asking for a special drink discount for the group.
 - Some of the other people attending the meeting were inspired to try something following in Danielle and Matt’s footsteps in their own neighborhoods, or to join their events if they lived nearby.
 - Finally, John Clarke (Ward 1 Liaison, Mayor’s Office of Community Relations and Services) reminded us that it is easy to get free cleaning supplies (bags, gloves, brooms, etc.) and a dedicated trash-pick-up moment from the city to support a clean-up, just requires giving 5-7 days scheduling notice. This can be scheduled through 311 – Helping Hand program – DPW, or by contacting John at john.clarke@dc.gov.
- **Dog parks:**
 - Neighbors with dogs often find dog parks to be a great place to socialize. There was some question about whether the 11th street dog park was really an official dog park,

and also whether it would be possible to create a smaller section within it for small dogs, given that small dogs don't always feel comfortable around larger dogs.

- **Announcement boards (physical and electronic):**
 - Someone asked about the possibility of creating more physical boards in the neighborhood where people can post announcements. Sounds like a good idea, although I don't think anyone committed to taking action on this yet. Someone mentioned there already is a physical announcement board at the CH Community Rec Center, [see FB page here:] <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Columbia-Heights-Recreation-Center/145566172134651> and there is space for more of this elsewhere.
 - Electronically as well, someone asked about creating a message board or listserv for the area. There already are several functional ones (not to mention some that have petered off...). To name a few:
 - **NextDoor** (allows selection of how narrow or broadly you are trying to broadcast your post to various nearby neighborhoods, geographically) See <http://Nextdoor.com> and <https://columbiaheightsnorthwest.nextdoor.com>
 - **WardOneDC** at WardOneDC@yahoogroups.com (for all of Ward 1)
 - **There are also more hyper-local groups, such as:**
 - SpringPerry@yahoogroups.com
 - Park_View_DC@yahoogroups.com
 - HolmeadVillage@yahoogroups.com
 - georgiaavethrive@googlegroups.com
- **Orange hat brigades/ neighborhood watch:**
 - In the past in DC (not sure if any Orange Hat groups are active anymore), there were Orange Hat Brigades – groups of neighbors who would wear orange hats and walk around in small groups, including at night (sometimes with police escort), noting lights that needed to be repaired, etc. and intentionally sending a signal that neighbors were vigilant and active and their area was not open to drug dealing and other unwanted activities.
 - For many years Samantha Nolan, one of DC's most dedicated public safety volunteers, has led very powerful talks encouraging two things:
 - Making yourself, your car, your home, etc. a “hard” target – not enabling crimes of opportunity
 - The importance of neighbors getting to know each other, developing a phone directory, communicating and collaborating on behalf of the safety of the neighborhood. Sometimes this is organized formally into what is called a “Neighborhood Watch” <https://mpdc.dc.gov/page/neighborhood-watch>.
 - While that name “neighborhood watch” itself may be off-putting to some today, potentially invoking negative connotations of surveillance or vigilante-ism, especially after the shooting of Trayvon Martin, the concept did not originate that way. Even without a patrol, the concept that neighbors are safer when they know and talk to each other and are willing to say something when they see something remains compelling. And in some neighborhoods/ difficult stretches of main streets, a watch or patrol may still be useful.
- **Block phone directories:**
 - Even without forming a neighborhood watch, Samantha's block phone directory idea is a good one. She recommends doing so by going door to door, and describing it as an

opt-in both for community building and safety – no one is required to put their contact info down if they don't want to. Dan has started building such a directory for his own block, which reminds him he needs to hand out an updated version. Distributing printed copies by handing them to neighbors in person, rather than making electronic copies that could be forwarded, and also rather than pages left in a mailbox, helps ensure that only the neighbors themselves are receiving this contact list, it is not going to any commercial or other interests, and there is a human touch point in the giving and receiving.

- **Templates:**
 - Jason brought up the great point that many people may be interested in doing some of these steps, such as organizing a clean-up, or a block phone directory, but may not be sure how to do it.
 - Therefore, it could be very valuable to develop and make available some simple and practical how-to guides, templates, etc. based on early experiences.
 - Hopefully these meeting notes already provide a starting point for descriptions of experiences and advice in some of these areas, but they are not organized as a how-to guide.
 - How-to guides could also include some notes on pitfalls to avoid. For example, trying to go door-to-door -- e.g. to update the block phone directory -- after work when it is dark outside is usually a frustrating waste of time – wait until you can go during daylight, and people are much more likely to open their door and talk to you!

Also mentioned:

- **Security camera rebate program:** Mayor Bowser has offered a great rebate program for getting reimbursed for buying a security camera. More information can be found at this link, <https://ovsjg.dc.gov/service/private-security-camera-system-incentive-program> and in an email from John Clarke, which I will forward to the people who attended this meeting, and anyone else who contacts me and requests it.
- **Information blog:** This Public Safety Committee has a blog, and welcomes contributors! Also, if you would like some basic background info such as what is ANC1A, which police PSA area am I in, etc. scroll down to some of the earliest posts: <https://1apublicsafety.wordpress.com/>
- **ANC1A at large:** This meeting is not the same as the large group monthly ANC meeting where there are community announcements and ANC voting, it is rather a Public Safety Committee within ANC1A (although all are welcome). To learn more about the large group ANC meetings, other themed committees such as economic development, or to figure out which Commissioner represents your local neighborhood, see <http://anc1a.org/>

Next steps:

- In conclusion each participant shared one action, either big or small, they would take in the next month, mindful of ensuring that these discussions are intended to create tangible outcomes.
- Next steps to particularly consider coming out of this meeting are:
 - Get a few neighbors together and start or join a hyper-local block party or clean-up (especially one that has a predictable recurrence)
 - Consider building how-to templates for one or more of the activities mentioned
 - Invite to and distribute in person an opt-in block phone directory
 - Join the local NextDoor online community
 - Learn one neighbor's name this week!

- Even those who did not attend the meeting are very much invited to consider taking some of these next steps!
- We will have another PSC meeting on the theme of hyper-local community organizing every three months (next one in May).
- If you feel very inspired to help organize and support others on this Community-Building issue in a committed and consistent way, even if you did not make it to this particular meeting, please contact Dan to meet for coffee and discuss your volunteer involvement with this sub-committee within the Public Safety Committee.

Next 1A Public Safety Committee Meeting:

- The Public Safety Committee meets monthly (except August and December), and in 2017 each meeting will be focused on a rotation across 3 themes as follows:
 - In [January]/February, May, September:
 - Theme: **Hyper-Local (e.g. block level) Community-Building** (*sub-committee does not yet have a leader besides Dan – please volunteer!*)
 - In March, June, October:
 - Theme: **Public Information** (*sub-committee does not yet have a leader besides Dan – please volunteer!*): Blogging, interviews, etc. to inform neighbors about public safety-related issues and how DC government, volunteer, non-profit etc. institutions act and intersect with these issues
 - April, July, November:
 - Theme: **Youth Activities** (*sub-committee led by YaVonne and David Boyd*): how do we ensure young people in our neighborhood have safe and diverse ways to have fun after school/ in the summer?
- So the next Public Safety Committee meeting will be in March on the topic of Public Information. Specific date TBD, Dan will send out a Doodle poll soon.

Thanks to all who came, and will come in the future, for participating and caring about your local neighborhoods!