



ANC 1A ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION 1A

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SMD 1A04 – Chris Hall SMD 1A05 – Christine Miller SMD 1A06 – Brandolon Barnett SMD
1A07 – Mukta Ghorpadey SMD 1A08 – Kent C. Boese SMD 1A09 – Michael Wray SMD 1A10
– Rashida Brown SMD 1A11 – Dotti Love Wade SMD 1A12 – Vacant

Commissioner Brandolon Barnett ANC 1A06

Resolution Requesting Replacement (and ideally More Advanced) Outdoor Toilet Facility for the Columbia Heights Civic Plaza

Whereas: The removal of the previous facilities, once broken, have made the work of programming and supporting the Columbia Heights Civic Plaza nearly impossible and led to the cancellation of Children’s programming, and more. Testimony to this effect can be found at the conclusion of this resolution.

Whereas: District Bridges, in conjunction with other stakeholders, have identified alternative locations for a facility which would be less of an impediment to public enjoyment of the plaza.

Whereas: ANC1A has previously expressed support for the Public Restroom Act which would create permanent solutions in high need areas.

Whereas: In 2022 the city promoted its acquisition of “[toilets of the future](#)” which could be part of the long term solution in the Columbia Heights Civic Plaza.

Therefore, be it resolved that: Advisory Neighborhood Commission 1A requests that DHS, DGS, DCRA, or whatever relevant agency previously provided the porta john in use in this space replace the porta john/facility that was removed from the plaza

Advisory Neighborhood
Commission 1A 3400 11th Street
NW #200
Washington, DC 20010

Be it Further resolved that: Any and all steps be taken to bring a more sustainable long term solution to the issue in our Civic Plaza, a lynchpin of public space for residents of Columbia Heights. This would ideally include, at a minimum, improved maintenance and transparency into who supplied the solution and what the maintenance schedule is in a way that is shared with ANC1A.

And be it finally resolved that: The Chair of Advisory Neighborhood Commission 1A, or any member of the Executive Committee or designee in their absence, shall be authorized to communicate this resolution to the members of the Council of the District of Columbia and all governmental agencies.

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District Bridges Testimony from Sara Rockefeller, Columbia Heights Community Navigator with District Bridges

Since beginning in my role as Columbia Heights Community Navigator with District Bridges at the end of January, I have spent over 400 hours doing direct street outreach at the Civic Plaza, and currently have case notes on over 82 individuals who frequently spend time in that space. Most of these residents are housing unstable, and with the exception of one or two, all are experiencing chronic substance use disorder. This is the number of "regulars." On top of that number, every single day I continue to meet new residents in the space - there are many more people who regularly spend time there than it may appear to most folks in the neighborhood.

There is currently a damaged porta-potty that is not regularly serviced on the sidewalk at the intersection of 14th, Park and Kenyon, on the Civic Plaza. While the porta-potty is broken, physically has fallen over into traffic several times, and is not regularly serviced, it is used frequently every day, by many Columbia Heights residents who do not have access to another bathroom. Many of the residents who spend time at the plaza are barred from entering nearby establishments to use the restrooms, some due to prior incidents, but most because they are unhoused and/or intoxicated, and security personnel at the five surrounding properties have been given directives to keep them off of the premises. While the vast majority of individuals who spend time at the plaza and are experiencing substance use disorder are men, there are at least 7 unhoused females who also regularly spend time there and have an even greater need for access to a safe bathroom than do their male counterparts.

For a particular period of six weeks I received information from the residents that the porta-potty had not been serviced, and was essentially non functional. Prior to those six weeks I had not experienced any issues with human waste on the plaza, however during those six weeks there were at least 11 incidents of human feces on the plaza and I personally witnessed individuals urinating in the space countless times, something I only witnessed a time or two when the bathroom was functioning. District Bridges, FreshFarm and other community partners and residents are working hard to activate the plaza space with events and activities for the entire community to enjoy, however people do not want to come play in the fountain, to shop for or sell produce, or to dance salsa when there is human waste there. FreshFarm has had a hard time keeping vendors at the Columbia Heights Market location, in part because of the condition of the porta-potty, which begins to smell in the summer months and keeps patrons away.

The Clean Team (Career Path DC) does an excellent job with the tireless task of cleaning the public space. They have a team out daily and are committed to power-washing the plaza every month. While the bathroom was completely out of service, District Bridges had to request additional emergency power-washes in order to clear the space of human feces so that the Farmer's Market could take place.

To date, no DC agency has taken responsibility for the current porta-potty and it is unclear who put it there. An unserviced, physically damaged porta-potty is a hazard to the community, but simply removing it would be even worse. A variety of stakeholders have discussed long-term plans to pilot a permanent or semi-permanent bathroom structure in Columbia Heights. The permanent bathrooms a few blocks away at Girard Park have been permanently closed by DPR due to the prevalence of illicit activity that occurred in the bathrooms, as well as the challenges of maintaining a functioning facility. Personally, I do not believe a permanent bathroom facility at the Civic Plaza should be considered for the same reasons. Whatever solution is proposed for the plaza should ideally take into consideration the fact that if the bathroom is cleaned by being hosed down, the runoff will spill into the children's splash-pad. If the facility is not within a half block of the plaza itself, the probability that people continue to relieve themselves on the plaza is extremely high. While most people would prefer to see the Civic Plaza free of a porta-potty, with the current reality of the space, my experience spending time there leads me to offer a strong recommendation that the current porta-potty be removed and replaced with a regularly serviced porta-potty, or similar facility, placed in the same location or within a half block of the current location.

Certification:

After providing sufficient notice for and with a quorum of 7 present at its July 14th meeting, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 1A voted, with 7 Yeas, 0 Nos and 0 Abstentions, to adopt the above resolution.



Michael Wray Chairperson, ANC 1A

Cc:

Chairman Phil Mendelson
Councilmember Brianne K. Nadeau, Ward 1
Councilmember Mary Cheh, Ward 3
Councilmember Janeese Lewis George, Ward 4
Councilmember Charles Allen, Ward 6
Councilmember Anita Bonds, At-Large
Councilmember Christina Henderson, At-Large
Councilmember Robert White, At-Large
DCRA Director Ernest Chrappah
DDOT Director Everett Lott
DOH Director Dr. LaQuandra S. Nesbitt