



Downtown Neighborhood Meeting

Minutes

Calvary Baptist Church
755 8th St NW

Washington, District of Columbia 20004

February 8, 2011 6:30-8pm

Board President Nanette Paris opened the meeting at 6:45pm with a reminder that all Downtown Neighborhood Association information, issues, and applications can be found on our website at dcdna.org.

Mr. Tommy Wells was introduced as the meetings first guest. Mr. Wells said that he was looking forward to working with the new ANC commissioners, especially Kevin Wilsey who has taken over Charlie Doctor's position. Mr. Wells mentioned that he has changed committees and now is the chair of transportation, public works, taxi cabs, etc. He is working on developing a new living model for the city that incorporates public transportation and public spaces and living areas. His staff point person is Daniel. Mr. Wells also mentioned that the council was saddened by the passing of Jack Evans' staff member Jeff Coudriet at 48 years old. Mr. Wells then addressed a few concerns of members of the audience regarding pedestrian crossings. The Barn Dance lights at H and 6th were mentioned as beneficial to pedestrians. Mr. Wells said that the downtown area is maxed out on cars and city engineers and planners need to alter the current traffic philosophy. He also addressed a few comments about the nightclub space that is now once again available and the sports bar on Indiana.

Mr. Paris introduced Mr. Jack Evans, who has been a councilmember for 20 years. Mr. Evans immediately broached the budget crisis. Although there are hard choices to be made, Mr. Evans pointed out that in fact the city is so much better off than it has been in the past. In the early 90's the city was in a hole (BBB⁻ rating meant that the city could not borrow funds). The Control Board was established and the city borrowed from Treasury. During the years that followed, the city benefited from the robust economy and built trust. In 2006 DC started hitting their savings account and this has gone from 1.6 billion dollars to 920 million in the past 4 years. This is unsustainable. The debt burden is only growing. There is a 12% cap currently in place. We are at 11%. DC will have to live within its means. It cannot afford to lose its AAA rating. The two areas that are pivotal to the deficit are Revenue (taxes) and expenditures. DC already has high taxes. The sales tax is 6%, the income tax is 8.5%; commercial property taxes are high, residential a bit better but assessments are high. It is difficult to consider raising taxes in view of the fact that 15% of taxpayers are already paying 70% of the taxes.

The expenditure side includes three areas: human services, public safety and public education. None of these are easy to cut either. Unfortunately DC law states that non residents may never be taxed. This makes a commuter tax impossible. Lawyers who work in the city do not pay a dime in taxes to DC. Washington is the only city in the USA that is not even allowed to pick up sports taxes. It's a given that Congress will never allow taxes for DC.

The economy does seem to be looking better. Movements are taking place in development and this will bring in more money eventually.

A member of the audience asked Mr. Evans whether the Franklin Shelter, which was closed, was indeed going to be sent down as surplus property and put up for bid. He said that it was up to Mayor Grey to do this, but he didn't think that this would be a problem. He also said that the likelihood of the shelter being reopened was very slim.

Board member Ewing Miller asked if the parking meters could be programmed to be more expensive during the day and less so at night. Mr. Evans said that this was possible.

Mention was also made of the fact that the Ward lines would be redrawn with the year. Each ward has a limit of 78,000. Lines are redrawn to make sure that this is so. The last time it was done was 2001 when the boundaries were rearranged around Ward 2, the population of which was too high at the time. Once the Wards are redrawn, the ANC boundaries will be drawn and the SMDS. Mr. Evans referred to his point person Andrew Huff, and encouraged all to call him if they were in need of additional information.

Pepco then gave a presentation regarding the Smartgrid in DC. Meters in the city are being replaced by digital meters through which information can be received and communicated back to the consumer. Fifty percent of the cost of the Smartgrid is covered by a grant by the Council.

The digital meters work with antennas that have already been placed around the city (100 radios cover DC).

Installation of the new meters started in September and will go through April 2012.

The smart grid will help make restoration of electricity more effective and faster. It will be easier to find exactly where the problems are, without the input of customers. The rest of the cost will be passed on to the customer. However, these costs should be reduced because the smartgrid will help the company reduce its costs.

Lieutenant Fowler of PSA101 gave a brief overview of crimes in the area. Theft from autos is still the worst problem and the lieutenant reiterated that drivers should put all things in a car out of sight.

Rachelle Nigra quickly talked about the committees that are being formed for the first time in her ANC district. Volunteers are needed for the ABC licensing committee and the zoning and public safety committees.

Board member Terry Carter reminded everyone to fill out the annual resident survey. A link is on the DNA's website. This must be done by March 8th.

The next meeting will be Tuesday March 8 and will cover the possibility, once again, of a grocery store for the area.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20pm.