

By Electronic Mail

June 10, 2021

Council of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

RE: Calling for Hybrid (Virtual and In-Person) Meetings for Advisory Neighborhood Commissions

Dear Councilmembers:

Advisory Neighborhood Commissions have been meeting virtually since Mayor Muriel Bowser declared a public health emergency related to COVID-19 (coronavirus) on March 11, 2020. Despite some challenges due to minimal centralized support, virtual meetings are not only possible but have provided increased inclusivity and accessibility for Commissioners, as well as more residents. We call on the DC Council to authorize hybrid (virtual and in-person) Commission meetings following the end of the declared public health emergency.

Once the public health emergency ends and [emergency legislation](#) expires, Commissioners will need to be physically present at public Commission meetings to participate in those meetings, including being counted toward the presence of a quorum and voting. [DC Code § 1-309.11\(b\)\(1A\) \(Perm\)](#). For some portions of our population who cannot be vaccinated this poses inherent and still unknown risks. In addition, Commissions are likely not to have continued Cisco Webex licenses or other centralized supports to ensure options for virtual participation by either Commissioners or residents. A return to in-person meetings without a virtual option will exclude individuals and limit participation.

Overall, like many other public bodies, Advisory Neighborhood Commissions have seen an increase in the number of meeting attendees due to virtual meetings. Virtual meetings have improved the inclusivity and accessibility of Commission meetings for both Commissioners and residents, more fully satisfying our statutory obligations to “hear the views of residents ... on problems or issues of concern,” adequately consider community views, “ensure the broadest dissemination of information,” and “involve all segments of the Commission population in [Commission] deliberations regardless of race, sex, age, voting status, religion, economic status, sexual orientation, or gender identity or expression.” [D.C. Code §§ 1-309.11\(b\)\(3\), \(f\)](#).

As Commissions transition following the end of the declared public health emergency, hybrid (virtual and in-person) meetings will provide the following benefits:

- A virtual option keeps people safe and reduces risk of harm following a global pandemic.

- Commissioner and resident participation is more inclusive and accessible with a virtual option, including people who care for young children or other family members, people who are disabled, unhoused residents, and people who have extended work schedules or jobs that are not 9-to-5 work schedules.
- A virtual option provides an opportunity to make Commission meetings more accessible to members of DC's deaf and hard of hearing communities. Many virtual meeting platforms offer real-time voice recognition and closed captioning, providing a low-barrier mechanism to enhance the accessibility of meetings to those who are deaf or hard of hearing. By allowing hybrid Commission meetings, DC can immediately make these meetings more accessible while working to address resourcing constraints related to live interpretation services at Commission meetings.
- More individuals might consider running and serving for Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner where participation is more inclusive and accessible. Increased inclusivity and accessibility reduces the barriers to entry, which are already high due to the lack of centralized support for Commissioners.
- A virtual option is essential for participation by any Commissioner who resides at the DC Jail, as well as residents of the DC Jail, a potential future prison system, or residents subject to home confinement or terms of probation and parole that include a curfew.
- A virtual option is essential for participation by any Commissioner and residents who are students and may not have local housing during portions of the year, diminishing their representation in our government.
- Councilmembers, DC government agencies, and other government representatives can more easily attend (and seem to have more often attended) Commission meetings via a virtual option.
- A virtual option allows Commissions to transition from the current virtual-only setup and provides more flexibility regarding meeting logistics considering that meeting spaces and technology may not be immediately equipped for in-person meetings as the District transitions from an extended public health emergency.
- Video recordings of meetings, which include audio, that are shared on a public-facing website or platform are easily observable and presumably satisfy meeting transcription requirements. [D.C. Code §§ 1-207.42\(b\)](#). The [Office of the Attorney General for the District of Columbia](#) has opined that an audio recording satisfies this requirement. See Letter to Gottlieb Simon, Aug. 10, 2015, at 2-3 (on file).

While we understand that every Commission is different and may have different needs, the ability to have hybrid (virtual and in-person) meetings is essential to ensure efficient, effective, and responsive Commissions across the District.

Thank you for your consideration and implementation of our requests.

Sincerely,

Robin Nunn, ANC 2B03 Commissioner
Christian Damiana, ANC 3D07 Commissioner
Ben Bergmann, ANC 3D08 Commissioner
Evan Yeats, ANC 4B01 Commissioner
Erin Palmer, ANC 4B02 Commissioner
Alan Wehler, ANC 4C09 Commissioner
Jonah Goodman, ANC 4C10 Commissioner
Alison Horn, ANC 6B09 Commissioner

Layla Bonnot, ANC 1A01 Commissioner
Christine Miller, ANC 1A05 Commissioner
Dotti Love Wade, ANC 1A11 Commissioner
Jason Clock, ANC 1A12 Commissioner
Max Ewart, ANC 1B07 Commissioner
Eric Behna, ANC 1B08 Commissioner
Sabel Harris, ANC 1B12 Commissioner
Celeste Carano, ANC 1C02 Commissioner
Peter Wood, ANC 1C03 Commissioner
Meghan Faulkner, ANC 1C04 Commissioner
Zack Gold, ANC 1C05 Commissioner
Japer Bowles, ANC 1C07 Commissioner
Robin Sandenburgh, ANC 1D02 Commissioner
Jack McKay, ANC 1D03 Commissioner
Matthew Brandenburg, ANC 1D04 Commissioner
Yannik Omictin, ANC 2A01 Commissioner
Trupti Patel, ANC 2A03 Commissioner
Margaret McDonald, ANC 2A08 Commissioner
Mo Pasternak, ANC 2B04 Commissioner
William Zeh Herbig, ANC 2B05 Commissioner
Michael McKernan, ANC 2B07 Commissioner
Matthew Holden, ANC 2B08 Commissioner
Ellie Miske, ANC 2C02 Commissioner
Gigi Nelson, ANC 2C03 Commissioner
Ashley Warren, ANC 2D01 Commissioner
Kishan Putta, ANC 2E01 Commissioner
Gwendolyn Lohse, ANC 2E06 Commissioner
Elizabeth Miller, ANC 2E07 Commissioner
Brian Romanowski, ANC 2F01 Commissioner
Michelle Yan, ANC 2F03 Commissioner
Sherene Joseph, ANC 2F05 Commissioner
Rehana Mohammed, ANC 2F07 Commissioner

Alexandra Bailey, ANC 2F08 Commissioner
Janell Pagats, ANC 3C03 Commissioner
Sauleh Siddiqui, ANC 3C05 Commissioner
Chuck Elkins, ANC 3D01 Commissioner
Elizabeth Pemmerl, ANC 3D02 Commissioner
Tom Quinn, ANC 3E04 Commissioner
David Cristeal, ANC 3F01 Commissioner
Monika Nemeth, ANC 3F06 Commissioner
Lisa Gore, ANC 3/4G01 Commissioner
Michael F. Zeldin, ANC 3/4G04 Commissioner
Connie K.N. Chang, ANC 3/4G05 Commissioner
Chris Fromboluti, ANC 3/4G07 Commissioner
Candace Tiana Nelson, ANC 4A06 Commissioner
Pavan Khoobchandani, ANC 4A08 Commissioner
Jocelynn Johnson, ANC 4B03 Commissioner
Brenda Parks, ANC 4B04 Commissioner
Tiffani Nichole Johnson, ANC 4B06 Commissioner
Geoff Bromaghim, ANC 4B07 Commissioner
Alison Brooks, ANC 4B08 Commissioner
LaRoya Huff, ANC 4B09 Commissioner
Vanessa Rubio, ANC 4C01 Commissioner
Maria Barry, ANC 4C02 Commissioner
Audrey Anderson Duckett, ANC 4C05 Commissioner
Namatie Mansaray, ANC 4C06 Commissioner
Clara Haskell Botstein, ANC 4C08 Commissioner
Erik Lindsjo, ANC 4D01 Commissioner
Renee Bowser, ANC 4D02 Commissioner
Aryan Rodriguez Bocquet, ANC 4D03 Commissioner
Zach Israel, ANC 4D04 Commissioner
Eric Smith, ANC 4D05 Commissioner
Ursula Higgins, ANC 5B02 Commissioner
Prita Piekara, ANC 5B03 Commissioner
Colleen Costello, ANC 5B05 Commissioner
Sebrena Rhodes, ANC 5D01 Commissioner
Stephen Cobb, ANC 5D07 Commissioner
Denise Wright, ANC 5E03 Commissioner
Bradley A. Thomas, ANC 5E05 Commissioner
C. Dianne Barnes, ANC 5E09 Commissioner
Amber Gove, ANC 6A04 Commissioner
Laura Gentile, ANC 6A05 Commissioner
Robb Dooling, ANC 6A06 Commissioner
Corey Holman, ANC 6B06 Commissioner
Edward Ryder, ANC 6B07 Commissioner
Peter Wright, ANC 6B08 Commissioner

Mark Eckenwiler, ANC 6C04 Commissioner
Andrew Bossi, ANC 6D01 Commissioner
Alex Lopez, ANC 6E02 Commissioner
Patrick Parlej, ANC 6E05 Commissioner
Chioma Iwuoha, ANC 7B01 Commissioner
Tiffany L. Brown, ANC 7B02 Commissioner
Kelvin Brown, ANC 7B06 Commissioner
Anthony Lorenzo Green, ANC 7C04 Commissioner
Tamara Blair, ANC 7D01 Commissioner
Dorothy Douglas, ANC 7D03 Commissioner
Rebecca Morris, ANC 7D06 Commissioner
Delia Houseal, ANC 7E06 Commissioner
Kimberly Martin, ANC 7E07 Commissioner
Tyrell M. Holcomb, ANC 7F01 Commissioner
Whitney L.S. Weston, ANC 7F03 Commissioner
Salim Adofo, ANC 8C07 Commissioner
Monique Diop, ANC 8D04 Commissioner
Ellen Armstead, ANC 8D05 Commissioner
Shekita McBroom, ANC 8E01 Commissioner
Brittany G. Cummings, ANC 8E06 Commissioner

Amanda Farnan, ANC 1B Community Chair
Ann Keep
ACLU of the District of Columbia
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Cancel Rent Coalition
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DC Fiscal Policy Institute
DC Justice Lab
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Dr. Fran Buntman, Professor of Sociology, George Washington University
Elizabeth Falcon, DC Jobs with Justice
Harriet's Wildest Dreams
Ingrid Mahogany
Jen Jenkins
Jeremiah Goulka, Health in Justice Action Lab
John Stanard, Church of Scientology National Affairs Office
Jubilee Community Development Corporation
Katharine Landfield
Kathy P. Chiron
Makia Green, Working Families Party
Marc Schindler, Justice Policy Institute
Matthew Hanson, DC Action

Matt Robinson, Criminon New Life DC
More Than Our Crimes
Myra Woods
Neighbors for Justice
Open City Advocates
Pranav Nanda
Rabbi Charles Feinberg, Interfaith Action for Human Rights
Reed Cooke Neighborhood Association
Rev. Dr. Matthew Wattson, Pastor, Christ City Church
Sarah Bradach
Shayna Lonoaea-Alexander
Sunrise Movement DC
Talib Shakir
Tammy Seltzer, DC Jail and Prison Advocacy Project
Tara Libert, Free Minds Book Club
Townsend Janney
Valerie Jablow, Educationdc.net
Ward 4 Education Alliance
Ward 5 Education Equity Committee
Ward 6 Public Schools Parents Organization
Ward 7 Education Council
Ward 8 Education Council
Washington Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs

cc: Gottlieb Simon, Executive Director, Office of Advisory Neighborhood Commissions