ANC3B Resolution Regarding Homeward DC Omnibus Legislation

Whereas, Mayor Muriel Bowser has proposed legislation, "Homeward DC Omnibus Approval of Facilities Plan for Persons Experiencing Homelessness Act of 2016" (B21-0620), to establish homeless shelters in each of the Wards of the District of Columbia;

Whereas, ANC3B supports the Mayor's goals of closing DC General, providing better temporary shelter for homeless families, and moving them more quickly into permanent housing, but we do not support the lack of transparency and due process under which this legislation was crafted and presented, and believe the legislation is seriously flawed as a consequence;

Whereas, the details of the Mayor's plan were announced publicly on February 9, 2016, with last-minute notice that the Ward 3 site would be located at 2619 Wisconsin Avenue conveyed to the chairman of ANC3B on the eve of that announcement;

Whereas, community forums on the plan were held in each Ward on February 11, 2016, with minimal notice to residents and at the time of these forums, neither the proposed legislation nor any information regarding site selection was available to ANC3B or community members;

Whereas, since then, a number of concerns have been raised regarding the Homeward DC legislation, including, but not limited to:

- the request for exemption from usual oversight processes, which would suspend the contracting and procurement reviews that protect taxpayers and prevent corruption,

- the specific details in the Letters of Intent to Lease attached to the legislation that conflict with the wording of the legislation and, in Ward 3 at least, do not accurately represent what we have been told since the legislation was filed,

- the enormous costs of the plan and the reliance on leasing shelter sites from developers for what seems to be an excessive amount of money, funds which might be put to better use creating permanent, affordable housing,

- the suitability of the sites selected, specifically in Ward 3 with regard to the zoning limitations of the surrounding residential neighborhood, the already
severe overcrowding at Stoddert Elementary School, the limited availability of local day care, and the lack of access to Metro;

Whereas, no Advisory Neighborhood Commission, including ANC3B, which represents the neighborhood abutting the Ward 3 shelter site and is home to Stoddert School, was given any role in identifying or advising on proposed shelter sites;

Whereas, the proposed shelter sites in each Ward raise real and individual concerns that should be addressed before the Council approves the legislation so that all contractual details going forward reflect the shared interests of both the District and the communities that will host shelters;

Whereas, those shared interests include closing DC General, treating homeless families with more dignity and respect, and creating well-run temporary shelters for them in communities that work for both the homeless families and the surrounding neighborhood;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

(1) ANC3B strenuously requests that the proposed Homeward DC legislation not be treated as emergency legislation, and that the Council assure itself through its usual oversight and review processes that the site selections are appropriate and the amount of rent the Mayor proposes to pay to developers is necessary.

(2) ANC3B requests that the Council review each proposed shelter site on an individual basis and amend the legislation to address the real, site-specific needs of surrounding communities, which in Ward 3 include:

- dedicating this shelter for families with pre-school children to address the issues of overcrowding and limited resources at Stoddert Elementary School, and including day care as part of the wraparound services;

- reducing the size of the shelter to be more in line with the single-family, residential neighborhood in which it will be located and more consistent with R-1-B zoning regulations,

- correcting the legislation to reflect assurances we have been given that this facility will house no more than 38 families at one time, will only be three stories high, and will limit any shared bathrooms to a maximum of two families per bathroom.

- assuring that the site cannot be repurposed by stipulating that the location will automatically revert to its original single-family, residential use when it is no longer needed as a temporary shelter for homeless families;

- creating a local advisory board to include one representative each from ANC3B, ANC3C, the Glover Park Citizens' Association, and the Massachusetts Heights Citizens' Association as well as one or two others from both communities who will be kept informed throughout the development of the project and engaged in
matters pertaining to its operation, and whose recommendations will receive serious consideration and be implemented when feasible.

(3) ANC3B requests that the Council not become involved in the zoning reviews of proposed sites either by recommending expediting the zoning decisions or otherwise urging approval of variances, which under D.C. Code is exclusively the responsibility of the Board of Zoning Adjustment with participation by Advisory Neighborhood Commissions.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Chairman, who is also the Commissioner of ANC3B-02, or her designee is authorized to represent the Commission on this matter.

This Resolution was APPROVED/DISAPPROVED by a vote of 4-0 at a duly noticed public meeting of ANC3B on Wednesday, March 16, 2016, at which a quorum was present. (A quorum is 3 of the 4 sitting members.)

Jackie Blumenthal, Chairman

Ann Mladinov, Secretary