



Government of the District of Columbia
ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION 3/4G

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ANC 3/4G Testimony Before the
Committee on Facilities and Procurement
Performance Oversight Hearing on the
Office of Advisory Neighborhood Commissions
January 30, 2020

Chairperson White and members of the Committee on Facilities and Procurement, I am Randy Speck, Chair of ANC 3/4G (Chevy Chase), and I am testifying on behalf of our Commission, which authorized this testimony at its January 27, 2020 meeting by a vote of 7 to 0 (a quorum being 4). We have two issues with the Office of Advisory Neighborhood Commission's (OANC) performance over the past year — (1) its failure to provide specific guidelines for community grants and (2) its failure to implement the approved acquisition of software to help commissioners communicate better with constituents.

First, our ANC testified at the Committee's Oversight Hearing in February 2019, about the need for formal guidance from the OANC on the standards for awarding

grants.¹ We described the statutory requirement that “a Commission may approve grants only to organizations that are public in nature and benefit persons who reside or work within the Commission area” and that the grant application must contain “a statement of expected public benefits.” DC Code § 1-309.13(m). As we noted in our 2019 testimony, neither the statute, the Attorney General, nor the OANC have defined the parameters for what constitutes a “public benefit.”

We asked last year that the OANC issue “written guidelines for grants, including specific examples, so that all ANCs can better understand the criteria that should be used to determine whether a grant will produce a public benefit within the Commission area.” We raised this issue with the Committee again at its ANC roundtable on September 25, 2019. Regrettably, we still have no guidance, leaving ANCs in the dark about which grants are permissible and which are not. Again, we request that the OANC provide formal written guidelines defining “public benefit” for purposes of awarding grants and explain why it let another year lapse without this essential advice.

Second, we have repeatedly asked the OANC to work with ANC commissioners to improve their technological capability to communicate with residents and with each other. At our urging,² this Committee included \$100,000 in the FY 2020 budget “to procure or license mobile technology or software to support Commissioners who wish to use such

¹ ANC 3/4G’s February 20, 2019 testimony is available at <http://bit.ly/2uXplUm>.

² See ANC 3/4G’s testimony at the Committee’s March 27, 2019 OANC budget hearing, available at <http://bit.ly/3amsOw2>.

technology to improve outreach and engagement with their residents.” On August 9, 2019, we asked to meet with Director Gottlieb Simon “to discuss how your Office can use the money appropriated to improve ANC commissioners’ capability to communicate with their constituents.” ANC 2B Commissioner Lucky Barbieri and I met with Mr. Simon on August 15, 2019, and encouraged the OANC to work with the Office of the Chief Technology Officer (OCTO) to make sure that ANCs were getting the best technological support possible. We specifically urged the OANC to work with OCTO to acquire the software that was funded in the FY 2020 budget. We also tried to get the OANC to convene a meeting of ANC chairs to discuss these issues. So far as we are aware, OANC has taken no concrete steps to work with OCTO or to get further input from ANC commissioners.

On August 9, 2019, I contacted the Committee’s Director Shawn Hilgendorf to enlist his aid in setting up a meeting with the OANC and OCTO. On August 14, 2019, Mr. Hilgendorf reported that he had spoken with OCTO’s Chief of Staff.

She said that her team was in the process of pulling together the existing resources available for ANCs and initiating planning for using the resources the FY20 budget. She requested two weeks to get things together on her end before scheduling a meeting. I asked that she be in touch with me so that I can keep you updated and make the connection as quickly as possible.

On October 21, 2019, Mr. Hilgendorf emailed that he had “not yet heard back from OCTO as was promised in August.” In a subsequent email the next day, he said that “given the lack of substantive progress” with OCTO, Chair White would try to “elevate and accelerate this process” and will “get OCTO and/or OANC to provide a better

roadmap for engagement with the ANCs and completion of the project.” On November 19, 2019, he again reported that “the Councilmember is working on a meeting with both Directors at the same time to ensure they give this the level of attention it deserves and are working together.” Finally, on January 7, 2020, Mr. Hilgendorf said that the Chair “continues to put pressure on the OANC,” and he encouraged us to participate in these oversight hearings to raise the level of awareness on this topic.

On January 16, 2020, ANC 3/4G testified at OCTO’s oversight hearing before the Committee on Government Operations.³ In the hearings, the Lindsey Parker, Chief Technology Officer, indicated that she would be able to meet in “early February.” We wrote her on January 19, 2020, requesting a meeting as soon as possible, and she responded that “we will be speaking with the Council and the Office of ANCs to determine how best to proceed.” She has not yet set a date for an initial meeting.

ANC commissioners have taken the initiative to enhance our communications capabilities, but we have received no support from the OANC or OCTO. Four months of FY 2020 have elapsed with no progress at all toward implementing the Council’s appropriation of funds for software that will enable us to serve our constituents better. We urge the Committee — in conjunction with the Committee on Government Operations — to convene a meeting of the OANC, OCTO, and interested commissioners to expedite the acquisition of the funded software and to identify other technological tools that commissioners may use to improve their efficiency and effectiveness.

³ That testimony is available at <http://bit.ly/2RynvRI>.

Thank you.