

NEIGHBORHOOD UPDATE

A Neighborhood Newsletter Published Jointly By The
Spring Valley-Wesley Heights Citizens Association And
Neighbors for a Livable Community

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News And Analysis:

DELACARLIA BIKE PLAN PUT ON HOLD AFTER SVWHCA, COALITION TESTIFY AT DC COUNCIL

SVWHCA President Receives DC Council Leadership Award



Dr. Jeffrey Kraskin, SVWHCA President, speaks at Community Cornerstones Recognition Ceremony, with At-Large DC Councilmember Anita Bonds.

Dr. Jeffrey Kraskin, President of the Spring Valley-Wesley Heights Citizens Association (SVWHCA), was named to receive a **Community Cornerstone Recognition Award for Community Leadership** by At-Large DC Councilmember Anita Bonds. The award was presented in a formal ceremony on January 22. (See Article On Page 5)

DDOT Director Responds That More Study Is Needed, But Plan Could Be Implemented In The Future

The District Department of Transportation (DDOT) has put a temporary hold on a plan to shut down and convert two traffic lanes on Dalecarlia Parkway for bicycle and pedestrian use. In a February 19 DDOT meeting, organized by the Board of Directors of the Spring Valley-Wesley Heights Citizens Association (SVWHCA), DDOT Director Jeff Marootian attributed his decision to strong neighborhood opposition to the plan.

SVWHCA Board members invited Paul Dougherty, a Spring Valley resident who leads the Coalition of Concerned Citizens of Spring Valley, Palisades, Wesley Heights, and Kent Neighborhoods on Dalecarlia Parkway to participate in the meeting with Marootian.

Neighborhood opposition to the DDOT plan was reinforced at a January 27 DDOT Performance Oversight hearing held by the DC Council Committee on Transportation and the Environment, chaired by Ward 3 Councilmember Mary Cheh. At the hearing, Dr. Jeffrey L. Kraskin, SVWHCA President, testified in opposition to the Dalecarlia plan. Dougherty also submitted separate testimony for the hearing. In other testimony at the hearing, Marootian told Cheh that
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SVWHCA, CITIZENS COALITION OPPOSE DELCARLIA BIKE LANE PLAN AT DC COUNCIL

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DDOT had made no decision on whether to implement the plan.

Subsequently, Marootian sent a letter on February 18, 2019 – just one day before the scheduled meeting with SVWHCA Board members and Dougherty – to ANC 3D Chairman Chuck Elkins stating that “modifications to Dalecarlia require further study.” Marootian did not state in the letter that DDOT was abandoning its plan.

In the meeting with SVWHCA Board members and Dougherty on February 19, Marootian said the agency would continue to study options for a bike and pedestrian lane on Dalecarlia, but that DDOT was “not actively pursuing” shutting down two traffic lanes at this time. Marootian was asked if he would commit to maintaining four traffic lanes on Dalecarlia as options for a bike and pedestrian lane on Dalecarlia were considered. He responded that he would not make that commitment.

“Let’s cut to the chase,” Marootian said. “DDOT has tabled the conversion of the Dalecarlia lanes for now.”

Marootian added that DDOT generally was not interested in moving forward with a project that did not have broad community support.

The SVWHCA Board members stressed to Marootian that there has been strong neighborhood opposition to the Dalecarlia bike lane plan from the time the issue was first raised as part of DDOT’s Rock Creek Far West Livability Study. In response, Marootian stressed that Livability Studies are about generating ideas, including many that are not likely to ever be implemented. SVWHCA Board members noted that the process used by DDOT to get residents’ input on the Rock Creek Far West Livability Study was flawed and had the effect of minimizing the significance of neighbors’ strong opposition to the Dalecarlia plan when it was first outlined by DDOT staff in May 2019.

SVWHCA President Calls On DDOT To Consider Other Options on Dalecarlia For Bicycle Lanes

“DDOT staff first told residents of its plan to close two lanes on Dalecarlia in May 2019,” Dr. Kraskin reminded Cheh at the DDOT Performance Oversight Hearing on January 27. “But, DDOT had announced a similar plan several years ago, which was dropped as a result of strong neighborhood opposition. This new proposal has triggered even more fierce opposition and left many residents scratching their heads wondering again what DDOT planners are thinking.”

Dr. Kraskin noted that DDOT justified its proposal to reduce Dalecarlia to two traffic lanes by equating the number of cars using Dalecarlia to the number that now use the 2-lane Foxhall Road.

“We find it stunning that DDOT planners would consider an over-utilized Foxhall Road to be the model for DC traffic planning,” Dr. Kraskin said. “Frankly DDOT’s plan – even for a pilot study

– makes no sense given that Dalecarlia is designed as a loop road for commuters, who otherwise would use our neighborhood streets; is heavily used by emergency vehicles accessing Sibley Hospital; and is designated routinely by DDOT as a construction truck route for new development projects in this part of the city.

“In making this decision, DDOT has collected no current data on use of Dalecarlia; ignores the growth in surrounding neighborhoods, including the adjacent Maryland suburbs; and is unaware of traffic impacts resulting from the continuing expansion of the Sibley Hospital campus.”

Spring Valley Resident Tells Cheh Nearly 1,000 Residents Oppose DDOT Bike Plan; Warns DDOT Plan “Is Far From Dead”

In his testimony submitted for the record, Dougherty, who had recently organized a separate meeting with Cheh on behalf of the Coalition of Concern Citizens, reminded the Councilmember that nearly 1,000 residents, including bicycle enthusiasts, signed a petition in opposition to DDOT’s plan. Dougherty noted in his testimony that the conversion of the two traffic lanes into bicycle and pedestrian lanes will present significant safety issues.

“This will block ambulance and other emergency access by backups with no place for vehicles to pull over and get out of the way,” Dougherty testified. “This is a real life-safety issue. It is simply not safe to have cars driving in two opposing lanes travelling close together given the topography and overall design of the roadway.”

He called the DDOT plan an “ill-conceived idea that benefits few and impacts many.” He noted the plan would create bottlenecks getting into Sibley Hospital at shift change hours; accessing Dalecarlia from Loughboro Road; and at Westmoreland Circle.

“Drivers will simply cut through Spring Valley and Kent Corner seeking less congested alternative routes, creating more traffic and safety concerns for our neighborhood,” Dougherty said.

In his testimony, Dougherty also outlined “viable” alternatives for the installation of bike lanes at Dalecarlia Road – one that would utilize the median on Dalecarlia for bike lanes and the other that would utilize DDOT’s eastern right-of-way alongside Dalecarlia.

DDOT’s plan to convert the two traffic lanes on Dalecarlia was included as part of the agency’s Rock Creek Far West Livability Study. Both Kraskin and Dougherty were critical of the study. Dougherty said in his testimony that the study was “deeply flawed.” Dr. Kraskin questioned the overall efficacy of DDOT’s Livability study and reflected DDOT’s unfamiliarity with the neighborhood.

“The study recommends sidewalks where they are not needed,” Dr. Kraskin said, “and ignores where they are greatly needed. The study also plans for a series of bicycle boulevards on already clogged 30-foot wide neighborhood streets in Spring Valley where cars cannot even pass one another in opposite directions because of parked cars on both sides of the street.”

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Dougherty also has been critical of ANC 3D's review of the DDOT bike proposal and was particularly critical of a recent list serv posting by ANC 3D Chairman Chuck Elkins "claiming victory" after DDOT's announcement that the bike plan was being "put on hold" at this time.

"I will ignore the fact that Chuck and various Commissioners from ANC 3D and their bike lobby proxies helped create this issue in the first place as well as Chuck's self-congratulatory comments about his efforts in saving the day," Dougherty said. "What is more important is that while DDOT has tabled the issue for now, it is far from dead. I am afraid that this is no victory but merely détente."

He warned that DDOT could do a pilot study in 2021 or 2022 "when no one is paying attention." He added it was important for residents to continue to be vigilant on the issue.

ANC 3D sent a letter to Marootian in September 2019 indicating it was open to supporting DDOT's bike lane plan and then appointed a special committee to consider the DDOT proposal. After the special committee advised the ANC that a "strong majority" of its members opposed the plan, the ANC sent a subsequent letter to Marootian in early February saying the Commission was "unlikely" to support the plan unless certain conditions could be met and asked that it be removed as a "priority item" at this time.

**DDOT To Consider Widening Sidewalk On Massachusetts Avenue
For Shared Bicycle, Pedestrian Use**

Dr. Kraskin also was critical of a plan to widen sidewalks on Massachusetts Avenue from Westmoreland Circle to Whitehaven Parkway including within the Spring Valley commercial corridor, for shared bicycle and pedestrian uses. He noted that this could require residents to remove fences and landscaping in their front yards.

"DDOT never did the homework to determine whether this is even feasible or safe for pedestrians," Dr. Kraskin added. "We are told, 'Don't worry, DDOT will do more work on these recommendations before implementing them.' This seems inefficient, a waste of tax dollars, and bad planning."

Marootian noted in the February 19 meeting that DDOT would give high priority to new bicycle infrastructure on Massachusetts Avenue utilizing existing sidewalks, but would still need to develop a plan. He pledged to work with residents as DDOT's plans evolved.

**SVWHCA PRESIDENT RECEIVES DC COUNCIL
COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AWARD**

Dr. Jeffrey Kraskin, the President of the Spring Valley-Wesley Heights Citizens Association (SVWHCA), was named this year to receive a Community Cornerstone Recognition Award for Community Leadership by DC Councilmember Anita Bonds. The award was presented in a formal ceremony on January 22.

"This evening's program is dedicated to the men and women that contribute to building strong neighborhoods and cement relationships with others so that all can take pride in the community,"

Bonds said at the awards ceremony. “Each are cornerstones of our community who make an extraordinary impact to the quality of life and general well-being of the residents of the District of Columbia.”

Dr. Kraskin has played a key role in revitalizing the 67-year old citizens association so that it again plays a prominent role in zoning, campus planning, alcohol licensing, and transportation policy issues on behalf of DC residents living in Spring Valley, Wesley Heights, and the surrounding neighborhoods.

Dr. Kraskin, a former ANC 3D Commissioner and former Chairman of the Ward 3 Democrats, also has taken a leading role to ensure that DC residents, especially children in all parts of the city, have access to quality vision care. Recognizing the link between vision care and the ability to get a quality education, Dr. Kraskin, a third generation provider of optometric care in Washington, D.C., volunteers regularly to work with parent groups and schools, particularly east of the Anacostia River, on vision and learning. He also has organized free vision screenings across the city in his capacity as former president of the DC Optometric Association and former Chair of the Optometric Council of the National Capital Region.

Currently, Dr. Kraskin serves as the Chair of the DC Board of Optometry working to protect the interests of consumers in DC for quality vision care.

Initiated by DC Councilmember At-Large Anita Bonds five years ago, the Community Cornerstone Awards recognize residents, businesses, and organizations that enrich the quality of life in the city.

“Too often, there is a constant abundance of information about the negatives and vulnerabilities of community – hardships, shortcomings, inadequacies, and lack of focus or concern for each other,” Bonds said in presenting the awards on January 22. “And every day, cadres of people of DC actively engage in changing this perception through their good deeds and works making DC a better place for all.”

Other community organizations in the area that received awards this year included the **Northwest Neighbors Village**, which provides support services for older adults in American University Park, Tenleytown, Friendship Heights, and Chevy Chase; and the **Lions Club of Palisades-Georgetown**. Rabbi M. Bruce Lustig, the senior rabbi at **Washington Hebrew Congregation** (Macomb Street), also was recognized this year. Previous recipients of the award from our neighborhood include Spring Valley residents Thorn Pozen (2018) and Tom Smith (2016).

SPRING VALLEY CAR BREAK-INS RAISE NEW SAFETY CONCERNS

A new round of day-time car break-ins in Spring Valley is sparking new safety concerns among neighbors. Reports on the NextDoor list serv indicate thieves have broken car windows to gain access to items, including purses and other bags, left in cars.

Recent car break-ins have been reported in the 4900 block of Glenbrook Road NW; 3800 and 4000 blocks of 49th Street NW; 4700 and 4800 blocks of Rodman Street NW; 5000 block of Overlook Road; 3500 block of Overlook Lane NW; and on Rockwood Parkway NW. There have been

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additional reports of car break-ins at the Palisades Recreation Center and on Fulton Street in Wesley Heights.

Most crime in our neighborhood occurs as a result of people not locking their car doors, leaving garage door openers in their unlocked cars, or leaving packages, briefcases, backpacks, gym bags, and other valuables – even just pocket change – in your car visible to anybody walking by.

However, reports that thieves broke car windows during daylight hours in these most recent incidents highlights their brazenness and determination.

Lock your car doors when you park your car outside your homes or in your driveways. Do not leave anything of value in your car that would tempt somebody to break in – not even a gym bag or spare change. Remind those visiting your house, including repair workers, to do the same.

Spring Valley and Wesley Heights residents are reminded to take sensible steps to guard against crime that is intended to victimize you and your neighbors. Most importantly, be aware of your surroundings in the neighborhood. Nevertheless, that does not mean that every unfamiliar person or car (Ubers, food delivery, etc.) is a threat to your property. But, if you see anything or anybody suspicious, call 911 immediately. The Metropolitan Police Department officers are best qualified to assess whether suspicious activity is a prelude to criminal behavior.

Keep your doors locked even when you are home. If you are doing home repairs, keep ladders out of sight of those who might use them to break into an unlocked upper story window. If strangers come to your door to sell magazines or other products, ask if they have a license or better yet, call 911 and let the police determine if they have the appropriate license. Few legitimate vendors go door-to-door anymore, especially at night.

**NEW ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH STUDY SEEKING
NEIGHBORHOOD VOLUNTEERS**

Dr. Valentina Aquila, an assistant professor of Environmental Science at American University, is seeking volunteers in the neighborhood for a new study on the impacts of green spaces on air quality. Specifically, the project is looking for residents and businesses along major streets with higher traffic volumes, such as Massachusetts, Wisconsin, and Connecticut Avenues, or smaller streets with high traffic volumes.

The goal of the project is to quantify the impact of trees on pollution. While it is often assumed that trees improve the urban landscape, some studies have shown that, in certain urban architectures, trees might actually decrease ventilation and “trap” pollution closer to the ground where people breathe.

To help collect data to assess these findings, neighborhood volunteers would host Purple Aire air-quality monitors in their front yards. Sensors about 3.5 inches x 3.5 inches x 5 inches in size would be hung on a pole, fence, or wall. AN outlet would be required to plug in the device and Wi-Fi to transmit data in real time for students to analyze. Alternatively, the sensors could function with a battery pack and a student would visit the site to replace the battery back and download the data.

If you are interested in participating, please contact Dr. Aquila at aquila@american.edu for more details. Please share this notice with friends who may live outside the Spring Valley-Wesley Heights neighborhoods.

Dr. Aquila is an atmospheric scientist who focuses on the role of aerosols in the climate system. Her main area of interest is stratospheric aerosol, mostly from volcanic eruptions but also from pollution, forest fires, and geoengineering (i.e. human intervention in the climate system to offset the impacts of climate change).

IN BRIEF ...

- **Whole Foods** announced recently that it will reopen its Glover Park store. The store closed in March 2017 over a dispute with the landlord. A settlement agreement was reached earlier this month. Whole Foods plans to remodel the store and has not yet announced a date for reopening.
- According to reports, **DeCarlo's Restaurant** is in negotiations to relocate to restaurant space at the Westchester on Cathedral Avenue.
- An **Amazon Grocery Store** is expected to open near the end of the year in Friendship Heights in space that housed the Giant in the Collection at Chevy Chase retail shops.

Neighborhood Update is a newsletter established by **the Spring Valley-Wesley Heights Citizens Association (SVWHCA)** and **Neighbors for a Livable Community (NLC)** to report news and information on issues of importance to residents of Spring Valley and Wesley Heights. You may send information appropriate for publication to Tom Smith at tmfsmith@rcn.com. No portion of this newsletter may be duplicated without written permission from the Spring Valley-Wesley Heights Citizens Association. This newsletter is distributed electronically. If you want to be on the distribution list, send your email to tmfsmith@rcn.com. Please share this with your own personal e-mail networks.

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