

October 22, 2023

Councilmember Frumin:

Last Wednesday, as you were leaving the “OurRFP” meeting to provide community responses to the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development’s (DMPED) and the Office of Planning’s (OP) proposal to upzone the Chevy Chase Commons site, I asked you if you were aware that OP had already submitted its proposal to the Zoning Commission to schedule the ‘SetDown’ hearing to rezone the Chevy Chase site, even *before* you attended the first OurRFP community meeting last Saturday. You replied that you were not.

You and I have just participated in back-to-back OurRFP meetings organized by OP and DMPED, orchestrated by a marketing firm, Link Strategic Partners, ostensibly to solicit and incorporate community input for the project. However, OP submitted the Set Down Report on Friday, October 13, *before* either one of these OurRFP community meetings. Furthermore, the ANC’s Community Survey, which included questions designed to determine community support or opposition to OP/DMPED’s project to surplus the CC Commons and upzone upper Connecticut Avenue will not be completed until November. OP/DMPED’s preemptive Set-Down action makes a mockery of these “community engagement” meetings and of the Bowser Administration’s supposed commitment to the OurRFP process. OP’s action on October 13 in signing off on the Set Down report also ignores your promise to listen to the residents “to shape this project that’s successfully integrated into the community.”

OP’s action is reported in UrbanTurf:

https://dc.urbanturf.com/articles/blog/how_two_new_zones_could_lead_to_more_development_in_chevy_chase/21591

Since OP and DMPED have acted, as you state, without your knowledge, we feel strongly that in the Chevy Chase community’s interest you should request that Mayor Bowser and new DMPED, Nina Albert, withdraw OP’s set-down submission to the Zoning Commission.

I hope that you agree that it is critical to ensure the Chevy Chase community that OP/DMPED's Chevy Chase Commons surplus and upzoning project is not a "done deal," and that the City has not wasted its fiscal resources and violated the community's trust with a sham "engagement exercise." Therefore, I request again that you consider the prejudice of DMPED/OP's peremptory action in signing off on the Set Down Report before the City held even one community engagement meeting, and how that ill-advised action may further jeopardize your credibility with the community.

Thank you for considering my request.

Sheryl Barnes, on behalf of Chevy Chase Voice