

The Freshman Class of ANC 6D

BY WILLIAM RICH

Three new Commissioners from Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) 6D were elected in November to serve the Near SW/SE neighborhood. ANC Commissioners are unpaid, non-partisan positions and are elected to a two-year term. I recently interviewed the freshmen – Cara Lea Shockley, who will represent Single-Member District (SMD) 6D 02, David Garber, who defeated incumbent Commissioner Bob Siegel from SMD 6D 07 in Near SE, and Bob Craycraft from SMD 6D 01, which covers most of the Southwest Waterfront.

Different Views of the Role of Commissioner

Each of the future Commissioners has a slightly different view on the role of an ANC Commissioner in the development of neighborhoods. Craycraft wants to represent the views of the silent majority, not just those of a vocal few, as well as strike a balance between homeowners and renters, who can often have very different views. Over in Near SE, Garber's background in design and development should aid in his advocacy for retail synergy from new development. "Each parcel of developable land is an awesome and unique opportunity to strengthen and engage the neighborhood. I want to help harness those opportunities and make sure that at the end of the day the neighborhood looks great and functions well," said Garber. He would like to see a diversity of retail options and feels that the area at full build-out could support the "grocery trifecta" – including a Harris Teeter, Whole Foods, and Trader Joe's. Shockley wants to strike a balance between fighting for the residents currently in the neighborhood against gentrification while attracting local businesses to make the area thrive

Initiatives

During his first term, Garber would like a neighborhood-wide transportation study done for Near SE as well as a comprehensive plan to guide future development. In addition, he would like to see "the creation of a neighborhood elementary school and a continued push to attract much-needed retailers and restaurants to the neighborhood." Efforts are underway by parents in the neighborhood to persuade the new Schools Chancellor to reopen Van Ness Elementary School on M Street, SE. Shockley would like to focus on safer sidewalks and better street lighting, since many of her constituents are elderly or have disabilities, as well as increased foot or bicycle patrols by police. On the other hand, Craycraft's SMD 01 is in the middle of a "Bermuda Triangle of development" as the Commissioner-elect put it, and presents several challenges to represent the needs of residents in a rapidly-changing environment. Waterfront Station, the SW Ecodistrict Initiative (formerly known as the 10th Street Task Force), Arena Stage, and the Southwest Waterfront fall in the boundaries of this SMD. Other concerns that Craycraft wants to address is the state of Jefferson Middle School and Amidon-Bowen Elementary School, Town Center West Park, and the endangered crop of mid-century religious architecture. In addition, he wants the rumors of Southwest possibly moving to Ward 8 after Census redistricting to be addressed head-on and residents' viewpoints considered.

A major development project planned for SMD 02 is Randall School, which will be designed by Bing Thom, the same architect as Arena Stage. Shockley is excited about this project, although she still wants to see all of the plans from the Telesis/Rubell team and



Cara Lea Shockley, ANC Commissioner SMD 6D 02. Photo: Courtesy of Cara Shockley



David Garber, SMD 6D 07 Photo: Courtesy of David Garber



Bob Craycraft, ANC Commissioner SMD 6D 01

is concerned about the future of the Southwest Health Center next door. "I want it to stay, if not there, then nearby. That clinic has been a godsend for so many of my constituents – including me," she said. Over in SMD 01, the Southwest Waterfront redevelopment will bring many changes to the area. "Overall, I think we have a home run with some of the most talented developers in the country involved. I'm not certain it's the right place to put

public housing – the lack of a walkable supermarket, drug store, or Metro station seemed to make it uniquely ill-suited for a lower-income resident," said Craycraft. Thirty percent of the housing planned, as mandated by the District, will be affordable. New retail establishments in Near SE/SW have requested public space permits, but in the past, commissioners have requested community benefits in exchange for their blessing. "I do not think it is an honest or fair use of the Commission's 'great weight' to require developers and businesses to fork over other benefits when often their interest and existence in the neighborhood is a community benefit in and of itself," said Garber.

Garber and Craycraft have different views on the proposal by Ward 6 Council member Tommy Wells to make M Street SW/SE a "complete street", which would include removing a lane of traffic, add cycle tracks, and widen sidewalks. While Garber fully supports the proposal, Craycraft has reservations. "I think the proposal is little more than quaint as long as we have pedestrians being killed at Fourth and M Streets and the MPD unwilling to ticket speeders and red light-runners blatantly running through our streets and intersections. I just don't have the confidence in DDOT or MPD's moving violations enforcement to feel the Complete Streets concept will work for us," he said. At November's ANC meeting, a representative from Wells' office stated that the Council member will help the ANC get a traffic study done for the M Street, SW/SE corridor, something the Commissioners have been advocating for several years and is has the support of Commissioner-elect Shockley. "Traffic patterns at all times of day and all the various layers – pedestrian, bicycle, car, public transportation, major streets, neighbor-

hood streets, major events – need to be understood,” said Shockley.

Connections between the northern and southern parts of SMD 01 and SMD 02 need to be stronger, which are divided by the Southwest-Southeast Freeway, according to Craycraft and Shockley. “Many people are surprised to learn that for those of us along Seventh Street, SW, L’Enfant Promenade is just as convenient as Fourth Street, SW, or could be,” said Craycraft. The problem is the walk to L’Enfant Plaza is inhospitable. There are plans to enhance the 10th Street, SW corridor, but it is several years away from being implemented. Access to the Federal Center SW area for residents is also challenging. “There’s a foot tunnel commuters use to get to Federal Center SW and its environs which is junky and scary; it and the pathway leading to it needs to be cleaned up and made more appealing – widened would be nice, policed would be even better,” said Shockley. In addition, most of the sandwich shops and other retailers north of the freeway are closed on the weekends, since they cater mostly to office workers and not to residents.

Some additional insight to how these new ANC 6D Commissioners will operate can be determined by which DC political figures they admire. Shockley admires former Mayor Sharon Pratt Kelly for her desire to combat problems in the city and Wells because he does a good job of listening to his constituents. Garber admires Wells for his energy and passion for making the District a “livable and walkable” city as well as former Mayor Williams’ efforts to lift the city out of years of corruption and Mayor Fenty for hiring “best-in-class” people despite the political consequences. Craycraft admires At-Large Council member David Catania, because “anyone who can be white, gay, and a closet Republican in a city that is majority African-American, straight, and Democratic and win at-large elections has earned my respect.”

William Rich is a blogger at Southwest... The Little Quadrant that Could (www.southwestquadrant.blogspot.com). ★

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