

DCCA Email Exchange with DHS Regarding Encampments:
New responses highlighted in yellow



From: Glenn Engelmann <president@dupont-circle.org>
Sent: Thursday, May 7, 2020 1:58 PM
To: Handerhan, Larry J. (DHS) <larry.handerhan@dc.gov>
Cc: Bowser, Muriel (EOM) <muriel.bowser@dc.gov>; Mendelson, Phil (COUNCIL) <PMENDELSON@DCCOUNCIL.US>; Silverman, Elissa (Council) <esilverman@dccouncil.us>; Kimbel, Sherri (COUNCIL) <SKimbel@DCCOUNCIL.US>; Goines, Nicole (EOM) <Nicole.Goines@dc.gov>
Subject: 17th Street

Larry

I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the homeless encampment located at the corners of 17th and Corcoran Streets NW in front of the Safeway and the McDonald's. While I understand that some steps have been taken by the city to address the real health and safety issues raised by this situation, I am concerned that the efforts have been neither sufficient nor sufficiently coordinated across the various city agencies with jurisdiction.

Let me say at the outset I am cognizant of the rights of the homeless and want to see their health and rights protected. I am also aware of the limitations the present health crisis may impose on addressing the situation. However, the growth of these encampments has raised serious health and safety concerns for the homeless as well as the residents of the neighborhood. I fear that the situation will only be exacerbated as the city hopefully starts to open up in the coming weeks and months.

It would seem that a more intensive effort to engage with the homeless individuals, provide them with housing, without any preconditions, and then provide them with social services might be more successful. Housing not shelters would seem to be a better way to address the situation. The large number of unused hotel rooms might be suitable for this purpose.

The posting of MPD and National Guard personnel in front of the Safeway provides some security to the neighborhood but is surely not a long term solution. More needs to be done.

Thank you for your consideration,
Glenn

Glenn Engelmann
President
Dupont Circle Citizens Association
9 Dupont Circle, NW
Washington, DC 20036

From: **Handerhan, Larry J. (DHS)** <larry.handerhan@dc.gov>

Date: Thu, May 7, 2020 at 10:23 PM

Subject: RE: 17th Street

To: Glenn Engelmann <president@dupont-circle.org>

Cc: Bowser, Muriel (EOM) <muriel.bowser@dc.gov>, Mendelson, Phil (COUNCIL) <PMENDELSON@dccouncil.us>, Silverman, Elissa (Council) <esilverman@dccouncil.us>, Kimbel, Sherri (COUNCIL) <SKimbel@dccouncil.us>, Goines, Nicole (EOM) <Nicole.Goines@dc.gov>, Merk, Monika (EOM) <monika.merk@dc.gov>, Smith, Jessica (EOM) <Jessica.Smith4@dc.gov>, Smith, Rayna (EOM) <Rayna.Smith@dc.gov>

Glenn: thank you for reaching out. The District is tracking this location very closely and I am adding Monika Merk and my colleagues from the Deputy Mayor's Office to share the latest update.

I am not sure if I mentioned this during the recent Dupont Circle Citizens Association meeting, but I did want to confirm that we are a "housing first" community meaning we do not have preconditions for our supportive housing programs.

Larry Handerhan

Chief of Staff, Department of Human Services
Government of the District of Columbia
64 New York Avenue NE – 6th floor
202-299-5549 (desk)
202-704-2287 (cell)

From: Glenn Engelmann [mailto:president@dupont-circle.org]

Sent: Tuesday, May 26, 2020 11:39 AM

To: Handerhan, Larry J. (DHS)

Cc: Kimbel, Sherri (COUNCIL); Goines, Nicole (EOM); Merk, Monika (EOM); Smith, Jessica (EOM); Smith, Rayna (EOM)

Subject: Re: 17th Street

Larry,

I wanted to check in since I have heard nothing from your colleagues since I received your message a few weeks ago.

As I suspect you are aware, the encampments on Connecticut Avenue north of the circle seem to have expanded and there are also one or two tents now in the garden at the corner of P and Massachusetts on top of the exit from the Dupont Underground.

I would appreciate an update on the city's efforts to address this complex issue.

Glenn

Glenn Engelmann

President

Dupont Circle Citizens Association

9 Dupont Circle, NW

Washington, DC 20036

From: **Merk, Monika (EOM)** <monika.merk@dc.gov>

Date: Tue, May 26, 2020 at 8:28 PM

Subject: RE: 17th Street

To: Glenn Engelmann <president@dupont-circle.org>, Handerhan, Larry J. (DHS) <larry.handerhan@dc.gov>

Cc: Kimbel, Sherri (COUNCIL) <SKimbel@dccouncil.us>, Goines, Nicole (EOM) <Nicole.Goines@dc.gov>, Smith, Jessica (EOM) <Jessica.Smith4@dc.gov>, Smith, Rayna (EOM) <Rayna.Smith@dc.gov>

Good evening Glenn,

My sincere apologies. I had written out a response and evidently never sent it because I found it in my drafts inbox. Thank you for following up.

Yes, we are aware of the encampments on Connecticut Ave., DuPont Circle, and on P and Mass. The DMHHS outreach team engages the encampment residents on a weekly basis and provides them with hand sanitizer, gloves, face masks, trash bags, and water bottles.

Regarding the encampment on the DuPont Underground Fire Escape; given that fire escape grates must be "fully open and unobstructed," per code, we are working with all applicable agencies to do an immediate disposition of the tents that are obstructing this space. We are working to solidify a date in which all parties are available to accomplish this task but are hopeful that it will be done soon. As to the email that you sent on May 7th, the Encampment Response Team within the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services, is responsible for monitoring encampments, providing outreach, and scheduling cleanups.

Please know that we are very familiar with this encampment and have at least two outreach teams that engage with this site on a weekly basis. In order to help prevent the potential spread of the virus, we have distributed hand sanitizing wipes and bottles, trash bags, water bottles, gloves, and disposable face masks to the residents throughout this public health emergency. Additionally, we have also installed a hand washing station at this site and a porter-john nearby at DuPont Circle. We are continuously working to enforce safe practices for all residents.

Please note that the city is currently providing hotel rooms for unhoused residents who are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19. Unfortunately, as you note, capacity limitations mean that we must prioritize how unhoused individuals receive hotel rooms or enter into housing.

As you may know, the Encampment Response Team's ability to conduct full cleanup engagements has been limited since the declaration of the public health emergency. We are following guidelines provided by the CDC ("Responding to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) among People Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness") in order to prevent the spread of germs that may come with the disruption of moving ones' belongings. However, we are conducting full engagements whenever an encampment presents a public health and safety concern; examples include biohazards (human waste, needles), rodent droppings, and an accumulation of food and trash that are attracting rodents.

If you are experiencing any harassment or are witnessing illegal activities, we encourage you to report such activities to MPD as any concerns related to criminal activity falls under their purview.

We hope that this was able to offer some insight in how we are handling encampments. This is a complex issue that is certainly made more difficult by the current public health emergency, but please

know that this remains a priority for us. Please let us know if you have any questions. As always, thank you for your understanding and patience.

Sincerely,

Monika

Monika Merk

Encampment Coordinator, Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services

Monika.merk@dc.gov

202-702-9502

From: Glenn Engelmann [mailto:president@dupont-circle.org]

Sent: Wednesday, May 27, 2020 11:21 AM

To: Merk, Monika (EOM)

Cc: Handerhan, Larry J. (DHS); Kimbel, Sherri (COUNCIL); Goines, Nicole (EOM); Smith, Jessica (EOM); Smith, Rayna (EOM)

Subject: Re: 17th Street

Thanks Monika.

I understand that other cities have designated certain spaces such as stadium parking lots specifically for encampments. Is that something under consideration by the city?

Glenn

Glenn Engelmann

President

Dupont Circle Citizens Association

9 Dupont Circle, NW

Washington, DC 20036

From: Merk, Monika (EOM) <monika.merk@dc.gov>

Date: Wed, May 27, 2020 at 2:54 PM

Subject: RE: 17th Street

To: Glenn Engelmann <president@dupont-circle.org>

Cc: Handerhan, Larry J. (DHS) <larry.handerhan@dc.gov>, Kimbel, Sherri (COUNCIL) <SKimbel@dccouncil.us>, Goines, Nicole (EOM) <Nicole.Goines@dc.gov>, Smith, Jessica (EOM) <Jessica.Smith4@dc.gov>, Smith, Rayna (EOM) <Rayna.Smith@dc.gov>

Good afternoon Glenn,

This idea has been brought up in leadership meetings in the past. Research shows varying pros and cons to this method and the complexities that are involved with implementing it.

We will certainly continue to work this issue from every angle and appreciate suggestions and ideas.

Thank you and have a great rest of your week.

Best regards,

Monika

Monika Merk

Encampment Coordinator, Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services