



chairman's update

the NEWSLETTER of
DC Council Chairman Phil Mendelson

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A New Era Entering Council Period 22

We have a new Council – the peoples' branch of the government – for Council Period 22! I think this will be one of the best Council's ever, with members who are dedicated to the issues that challenge our city, and our government.

Our city is very healthy. Our population continues to grow as people flock to the city at close to 1,000 new residents each month. Government revenues continue to grow as more jobs are created, more residents find jobs, and unemployment drops. We have no unfunded pension liability, unlike many cities and states. We have cash reserves approaching the recommended standard of two months' operating needs. For the first time in decades, if not since Home Rule, we avoided short term borrowing to meet cash flow needs.

Yet we have significant challenges. Every councilmember, and the Mayor, are committed to affordability for our residents. And yet housing affordability remains a challenge – evidenced by the continued growth in homelessness. Every councilmember, and the Mayor, are committed to improving public education in the District of Columbia. And yet test scores for both the traditional and charter schools – while improving – remain unsatisfactory, and the achievement gap between blacks and whites is unacceptable.

I am optimistic about Council Period 22 and our ability to address these challenges. We will continue to have separate committees focused on education (chaired by Councilmember David Grosso), and housing (chaired by Councilmember Anita Bonds). And we are returning to having separate committees focused on Human Services (such as TANF and homelessness, chaired by Councilmember Brianne Nadeau) and Health (chaired by Councilmember Vince Gray). Our city has made amazing strides, beginning under former Mayor Anthony Williams, in reducing the uninsured and increasing access to quality health care, and yet, as you know, we wonder today whether the incoming United States President will roll back the federal Affordable Care Act which will put new stress on our local health care system.

For the first time we will have separate committees to focus on Labor and Workforce Development (chaired by Councilmember Elissa Silverman) and Business Development (chaired by Councilmember Kenyan McDuffie). My hope is that putting these sometimes conflicting issues – that is, helping workers while stimulating business profitability – into separate committees will enable us to develop better public policy and a better local economy.

Councilmembers Jack Evans and Mary Cheh return as chairpersons of the committees on Finance & Revenue, and Transportation & the Environment, respectively, where I think everyone agrees they have served well. Councilmember Brandon Todd is chairman of the resurrected Committee on Government Operations where he can give better focus to the internal operations of government, such as the Office of the City Administrator and OCTO – our office of information technology – than perhaps we have given over the past two years.

Finally, Councilmember Charles Allen takes leadership over the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety. Issues such as access to justice and police/community relations are critical, and I am very optimistic that Councilmember Allen has the skills to address them.

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Constituent Services Corner

A resident of an apartment complex in Southeast DC reached out to our constituent services team about stolen vehicles being parked in the complex's lot.

The constituent said several of the vehicles had no license plates and others had expired registration, but were taking up spots in the lot. The senior residents said they were fearful of parking their vehicles on the street due to the high criminal activities nearby.

Our team immediately contacted Commander Taylor at the 6D MPD station about the issue. That night, while our team was visiting the apartment complex, officers were seen ticketing and towing the unwanted vehicles.

When you're feeling like a dumping ground for misbehavior, call our Constituent Services team.

**Contact the
Constituent Services
Team at
(202) 724-8032**

chairman's update

Continued from front...

A strong legislature is vital to good government. Too often people look at the occasional tension between the legislative and executive branches and they worry. It is correct, in my view, to worry about a legislature that controls the government. But our form of local government is modeled after the federal system, and the founding fathers were deliberate in their creation of a government with checks and balances.

The legislature is the policy branch of the government. The legislature is the peoples' branch of the government. With the change in three of our members resulting from last year's election, the Council has been re-tuned to better reflect our citizens' priorities and concerns.

But a lesson I learned early in my service as a Councilmember, that while the public wants a strong legislature, it also wants a government that works. While tension between the Mayor and Council is great fodder for headlines and gossip, citizens don't like it. If I may venture into punditry, I think the recent national election was a reaction – and rejection – of gridlock in Washington. People may hold strongly to their views for and against issues, but what they really want is for their elected officials to work things out. To look for solutions that may involve compromise.

So this, too, is our challenge as a Council: to take our newfound energy with three new councilmembers and five new committees and work with our Mayor to find solutions – solutions to the pressing issues of affordable housing, quality education, economic and workforce development, effective social services, public health, and public safety.

This new Council is up to the task. And we ask you to hold us accountable.

Revenue Estimates Indicate District's Increasing Financial Health

The revised revenue estimates that were issued by the DC Office of the Chief Financial Officer at the end of the year revealed a double-digit growth in business-related taxes. This is stunning and reflects a level of economic vibrancy in our city that I have never seen. The growth in recurring revenues will release the next five triggers in tax cuts recommended three years ago by the Tax Revision Commission and adopted by the Council: helping with affordability by increasing the personal exemption and standard deduction for residents on their income taxes, and helping businesses by reducing the franchise tax rate to 8.75% (over a percentage point lower than it was two years ago).

Revenues for the fiscal year that just ended are about \$221 million above the September estimates, and revenues for Fiscal Year 2018 are now estimated at \$533 million – over one-half billion dollars – more than Fiscal Year 2015.

We have a very healthy city, financially. A model, I think for other states and cities. It is very good news.

www.ChairmanMendelson.com

Upcoming Hearings of the Committee of the Whole

Committee of the Whole Meeting
January 24, 2017
10 a.m. in Room 500

**Board of Zoning Adjustment
Lesylleé White Confirmation
(PR 22-30)**
January 31, 2017
2:30 p.m. in Room 412

**Metropolitan Washington
Airports Authority Board of
Directors Warner Session
Confirmation (PR 22-56)**
January 31, 2017
3 p.m. in Room 412

**Hearing on FY 2016
Comprehensive Financial Annual
Report**
February 2, 2017
10 a.m. in Room 500

To sign up to testify, or for more information, contact the Committee at (202) 724-8196
Or email cw@dccouncil.us



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