

ANC Redistricting: Introduction of ANS

As I indicated at first reading on Bill 24-700, I would have amendments at second reading, and yesterday I circulated an amendment in the nature of a substitute.

I want to again thank the subcommittee on redistricting for the work they did to review the recommendations of the eight ward task forces and make adjustments that were then put into a subcommittee print.

My understanding is the subcommittee made adjustments to the ANC & SMD proposals of every ward task force except for Ward 4. In spite of that work, there were two wards from which I – and I believe all councilmembers – heard substantial community protest: Wards 7 & 3.

In the three days between the subcommittee's mark up and the full committee's mark up, I was able to deal with only the Ward 7 communities. I met with representatives from East of the River and then West of the River. We worked out a resolution specific to the boundaries of two ANCs – 7D & 7F but still had work to do regarding the SMD boundaries within those ANCs. The refinement of those SMDs is reflected in the Amendment in the Nature of a Substitute before us now.

The ANS has both ANCs crossing the Anacostia River, but, importantly, the SMDs west of 19th Street are wholly contained in one ANC, 7D. Another important change in the ANS, is the SMDs comprising ANC 7F have been redrawn. A third important change is that the SMD that includes the jail has been adjusted to exclude an apartment building, the Park Kennedy.

I regret that the Subcommittee Chair did not support the first reading changes because they did not agree with the Subcommittee's recommendation. But what I proposed to the Council was a compromise worked out with the affected communities (7D & 7F) to address their considerable protest.

Following first reading I turned to the complaints being raised about the Ward 3 boundaries. I decided to hold a community meeting to hear the concerns and suggestions. That meeting was May 31st – one week after first reading.

I have apologized repeatedly that my office did not get the notice out until the day before the meeting. There have been accusations that only certain individuals or groups were invited, but that is not correct. My office sent the notice to every Ward 3 listserv (except, I learned yesterday, McLean Gardens, which has yet to accept our request to be a participant). The notice was also sent to every Ward 3 ANC commissioner. We did not have Task Force email addresses, so their notice went out the next day. I apologize the notice did not go out sooner. Still, almost 180 people attended.

The audience was overwhelmingly opposed to the Ward 3 Task Force's recommendation. Objections were raised regarding five areas:

1. **First**, The American University campus, which has been in the Spring Valley/Wesley Heights ANC 3D for decades, will now be in the Tenley Circle ANC 3E. Several individuals described the map looking like a "hernia," and argued that the neighborhoods most affected by the campus are in ANC 3D, not 3E. The ANS responds to these comments and keeps the AU campus in 3D.
2. **Second**, A triangle of land south of Tenley Circle and west of Wisconsin Avenue, which has been in the Tenley Circle ANC 3E for decades, and is surrounded by ANC 3E, will now be in a new ANC 3A centered on Wisconsin Avenue south of Van Ness. The ANS responds to these comments and keeps this triangle in ANC 3E.
3. **Third**, That residences centered on Massachusetts Avenue (e.g., the Berkshire Apartments and Westover Place) will also be included in the new ANC 3A centered on Wisconsin Avenue. I'll note that the Ward councilmember had earlier told me she thought Westover Place should be in 3D, not 3A. The ANS responds to these comments and keeps these residences in ANC 3D.
4. **Fourth**, The greatest energy was objections to dividing the Cleveland Park Neighborhood between an ANC, ANC 3-C, focused on Connecticut Avenue and an ANC, the new ANC 3A focused on Wisconsin Avenue. The Ward 3 Task Force report justifies this radical change – I say radical

because Cleveland Park has been wholly contained within one ANC since 1976 – saying that ANCs should be centered around hubs of population and activity and to put ANC borders in spaces between these centers of gravity.

I must note that nowhere in the law is this policy to be found. Rather, ANCs, by their very nature, are *neighborhood* commissions, and the law speaks of “neighborhood cohesiveness” (§ 1-1041.02(e)). Further, I note that only the neighborhood of Cleveland Park was affected by this policy.

The Task Force also argued that the middle area of Wisconsin Avenue – the area it proposed for the new ANC 3A, is an area “of yet undetermined future planning” justifying a need for a singularly focused ANC. But having managed the Comprehensive Plan through the Council last year, I can tell you that there are no plans for future planning for this portion of Wisconsin Avenue.

What also was concerning to me were comments from two task force members at my community meeting, who said it was important to break up or reduce the privilege of single family homeowners.

I do not find these arguments persuasive, and they go against the goal of ANCs to be neighborhood focused. Moreover, my own sense, as someone who gets elected to office, is that the Cleveland Park neighborhood is very unhappy with the Task Force proposal. For these reasons the ANS is responsive to the residents’ concerns, eliminates the new ANC 3A, and reunites ANC 3C.

5. Finally and fifth, complaints were raised at the May 31st meeting that the Woodland Normanstone neighborhood was split. My understanding is that the Subcommittee tried to fix this, but the attached ANS actually accomplishes the fix.

Much has been said that the ANS disrespects the work of the Task Force, but I counter with two arguments. First, the Subcommittee also made changes to the recommendations of the Ward 3 Task Force – and, indeed, made changes to seven of the Ward Task Forces’ recommendations. Second, of the 43 SMDs drawn by the Task Force, the ANS makes substantial changes to only 4. And the only other changes effected by the ANS are the five I just enumerated.

There is no doubt in my mind that the ANS proposes a better map, and it is a better response to the community.