


COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

MEMORANDUM

TO: Nyasha Smith, Secretary to the Council

FROM: Phil Mendelson, Chairman 

DATE: February 28, 2024

RE: **Request to Agendize for the March 5, 2024 Legislative Meeting**

This memorandum is to request that the following measures be placed on the agenda for the March 5, 2024 Legislative Meeting:

- **Alexei Navalny Way Designation Emergency Declaration Resolution of 2024**
- **Alexei Navalny Way Designation Emergency Act of 2024**
- **Alexei Navalny Way Designation Temporary Act of 2024**

The purpose of the designation is to symbolically designate a portion of the public alley system in Square 197 abutting Lots 841, 820, and 88, as Alexei Navalny Way. Alexei Navalny was a Russian opposition leader, an advocate for democracy, and an anti-corruption activist. He was subjected to at least 3 attempts on his life by poisoning, most likely by state actors at the direction of President Vladimir Putin. After speaking out forcefully for democracy in Belarus (a Russian neighbor) in 2020, Navalny became sick on a flight because of a toxic nerve agent poisoning. He was transported to Germany where he eventually recovered, although the Kremlin denied any responsibility. After 5 months recovering in Germany, Navalny made the choice to return to his home country, despite knowing that there were outstanding (fabricated) charges awaiting him. Indeed, upon his return, he was arrested and placed in a Russian prison in February 2021. On February 16, 2024, the prison announced that Navalny had died a day after he was seen in good health. The Kremlin sought to silence Alexei Navalny for years, and likely succeeded in causing his death. However, ensuring that his name is not erased from the eyes and ears of a dictatorial regime is important to remind everyone – including those abetting an oppressive dictatorship – that the cause of democratic freedom is just.

I seek to move this on an emergency basis to preserve the Council's authority to designate streets and alleys without Congressional intervention. A similar proposal has been introduced in Congress and is likely to pass without our immediate intervention. As has been done with other street names relating to the political oppression of pro-democracy dissidents, this naming would designate the alley surrounding the Russian Ambassador's official residence – thereby serving as a continuing expression of solidarity between the people of the United States and the people of the Russian Federation who are engaged in a sustained and peaceful struggle for democracy. The Council previously carried out designations for Boris Nemstov in front of the Russian Embassy in 2018 and for Jamal Khashoggi in front of the Saudi Arabian Embassy in 2021.

Separately, I am introducing the permanent version of this legislation so that the Committee of the Whole may hold a hearing and adopt the designation on a permanent basis. The draft measures are attached. Please call me or Mr. Evan Cash if you have any questions at (202) 724-7002.

cc: All Councilmembers
Council Officers