

ANC 3F Resolution Urging Office of Inspector General to Investigate Mishandling of Hearst Park and Pool Project

Whereas, Hearst Park and Pool (Hearst Recreation Center and Hearst Pool) is approximately a four-acre park located at 37th Street, Idaho Avenue, and Quebec Street, NW, adjacent to Hearst Elementary School, Hearst Playground, and Hearst Recreation Center Cottage at the northern boundary, and is contiguous or proximate to multiple residences included within the boundaries of ANC 3F and contiguous to ANC 3C boundaries;

Whereas, the Hearst Park and Pool improvement project included design and construction including, but not limited to, a new playground area, new tennis courts, renovation or replacement of existing soccer fields, a new pool and pool house, ADA renovations to site, stormwater management, remediation of site drainage, runoff, erosion issues, landscaping, fencing, site furnishings amenities, signage, and hardscaping;

Whereas, the Hearst Park and Pool improvement project started with the fencing of the park and the removal of over 100 trees in June 2019 and was delayed repeatedly until eventual completion in Spring 2022;

Whereas, in addition to delays, the Hearst Park and Pool improvement project lacked transparency in construction decisions and implementation;

Whereas, ANC 3F passed resolutions in support of the Hearst Park and Pool improvement project;

Whereas, Department of General Services (DGS) is the general contractor for the Hearst Park and Pool Improvement Project;

Whereas, constituents in ANC 3F were directly affected by the delay involved in the city's construction of the swimming pool and new recreation field in the Park;

Whereas, D.C. taxpayers have a direct interest in the expenditure, and potential waste of public funds on the Project;

Whereas, at a meeting at the Park in January 2021, attended by Councilmember Cheh and her Deputy Chief of Staff, representatives of DGS, the Department of Parks and Recreation ("DPR"); and of Blue Skye Construction, and representatives of Neighbors for Hearst Park's ("NFHP") and other local citizens; DGS, DPR and Blue Skye represented that the Project was not over budget and that sufficient funds were on hand to allow completion of the Project without the need of exceeding the original cost;

Whereas, based on NFHP expert geologist's report, which NFHP shared with city officials in 2016, DGS and Blue Skye were on notice that excavation near the underground streams identified by the geologist would likely unearth groundwater;

Whereas, this groundwater was unearthed and caused nearly a year of delays unrelated to the Pandemic and presumably wasted substantial amounts of taxpayer funds for the additional work it took to attempt to remedy it, with the problem still persisting today;

Whereas, the foreseeable groundwater issues are ongoing since the inception of the project and despite a stated project design intent of "maintaining the existing mature Willow Oak heritage trees" and constant attempts by stakeholders to engage with DPR and DGS on the topic, the resulting water inundation around the roots of the park's heritage trees caused one heritage tree to contract hypoxylon fungus and it subsequently died, with another heritage tree expected to succumb before next spring and several others in danger of the same fate;

Whereas, there have been other unnecessary delays caused by negligence and lack of proper oversight at the project: the playground was initially closed and fenced off at the end of June 2019 but no construction began until August with completion delayed into late September (with promised shade structures not installed until April 2020) - leaving the local neighborhood children unnecessarily without a playground for all of Summer and the Hearst ES students without a playground for the first month of the 2019 school year; in August 2021 contractors covered much of the soccer field with sod, but then removed all of it due to improper grading, delaying the opening of the field for an additional season; a second contractor was hired to re-grade and lay sod at the field, but it remains soggy and unsuitable for regular use as a soccer field even when it hasn't recently rained; extensive additions of lighting, signs, and a mechanical elevator beyond what exists in other facilities; the wall between the tennis courts and pool has paint that is blistered and peeling;

Whereas, DGS and DPR continue to fail to provide regular updates on mitigation and attempts to remedy the long-standing problems and issues identified before the project began, and that have continued following completion of the project, leading to widespread distrust and frustration among the neighbors and community stakeholders.

Be It Resolved that ANC 3F urges the Office of Inspector General (OIG) of the District of Columbia Executive Branch to conduct an audit, inspection, and investigation of DGS and DPR around the Hearst Park and Pool improvement project.

Be It Resolved that the ANC authorizes the Chair and the Commissioner for 3F01 and subsequently 3F05 to represent the Commission on this matter.

This Resolution was presented as a draft at the regularly scheduled November 15, 2022 meeting and then discussed and voted on by ANC 3F __ yes; __ no; __ abstained; at the regularly scheduled ANC 3F meeting held via Zoom on December 13, 2022.

Claudette David, Chair
ANC 3F

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