

**Testimony of ANC 6D01 Commissioner Robert Craycraft**

**B19-757, the "Department of Parks and Recreation Revenue  
Generation Clarification Amendment Act of 2012"**

**and**

**B19-758, the "Department of Parks and Recreation Concession  
Authority Act of 2012"**

**Wednesday, July 11, 2012 at 1:00 pm  
Room 412, John A. Wilson Building  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20004**

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Good afternoon, Councilman Wells, and thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today on the Department of Parks and Recreation Revenue Generation Clarification Amendment Act of 2012 and the Department of Parks and Recreation Concession Authority Act of 2012.

I am speaking today as the Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner (ANC) for the Single Member District (SMD) 6D01 which encompasses three District of Columbia Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) facilities: Amidon Field and Promenade at Fourth and G Streets, S.W., Jefferson Field at Seventh and G Streets, S.W., and the Southwest Duck Pond at Sixth and I (Eye) Streets, S.W.

Today's topic is of great interest to me, for several reasons. My SMD borders National Parks Service (NPS) parklands at the Tidal Basin to the west, and the National Mall to the north. I am also a NPS volunteer on the National Mall, so get to see first-hand how concessionaires can add, or detract, from public park space.

The concept of concessionaires in DPR facilities is also of professional interest to me. As an executive of the American Resort Development Association, my work is closely involved with the third-party firms operating seamlessly within some of our largest nation's resorts. From food and beverage to swimming pools to golf courses to ski lifts to gift shops, many of the amenities resort guests enjoy would be impossible for any resort operator to finance and operate single-handedly. Instead, they depend upon experts from various industries to bring

their knowledge, their capital, and their economies of scale to expand guest opportunities in a seamless manner that does not lower the resort’s brand integrity. I’m certain you can see the parallels to our DPR facilities.

At their very best, concessionaires expand amenities without providing obstacles to those not using the services. Plumbing and freezing an otherwise empty water feature, such as the Southwest Duck Pond, in winter can obviously provide a new recreational venue, but don’t overlook that renting skates also makes the activity affordable to those who cannot, or choose not to, purchase them.

Based on these experiences, I am very supportive of allowing revenue-generating concessionaires within our public parks. This photograph is my favorite illustration of why. Both are District lands at the southwest corner of Seventh and G Streets, S.W. The area on the left is



Jefferson Field. It’s my understanding that because intramural sports teams pay a fee to play on the Field, DPR is allowed to hire a contractor to keep the grass in good condition. The area on the right of the photo is also DPR’s responsibility but they are not “allowed” to have it cut. They must depend upon the Department of General Services (DGS) to cut the grass. This spring, the grass was 28” tall and it took a visit by the Ward 6 Liaison from the Mayor’s Office to get it cut.

However, I want to today express grave concern about the competencies and resources of the DPR to manage the complicated relationships between a public agency and multiple concessionaires.

In my experience as the founder of the Neighbors of Southwest Duck Pond in 2010, and more recently as ANC Commissioner, I have found DPR's Park Partner program to be a wonderful idea in theory, but virtually non-existent in reality, particular in terms of their "workshops, training, resources and events hosted by DPR..."

My recommendation to Council if this concept moves forward is to engage professional staff from private industry or other public agencies with a proven track record of third-party outsourcing management. In the transition from DPR to DGS management of many public facilities in 2011 and 2012 there seemed to be an attitude of "we'll figure it out as we go along." I think that would be a terrible mistake to make with such a serious step as allowing private firms to operate in our public parks.

Thank you, on behalf of the constituents of ANC 6D01, for the opportunity to make our comments known today, and for your continued focus on the development of our community and the District of Columbia.