

The West End Flyer

Serving the West End Neighborhood of Washington, D.C.

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Getting Vaccinated: A Pain in Neighborhood 20037 is Not a “Priority Zip Code” for Scheduling Shots

The Covid-19 vaccination operation run by the D.C. Department of Health will get better—changes are now being made—but it may remain a headache for a little while longer.

Even so, the claim in Mayor Muriel Bowser’s situational update on the first day that residents over 65 years of age were eligible—that “Making your vaccine appointment will only take about 5 minutes”—was naively optimistic. The online system proved to be only barely possible to use at all. Ditto for the telephone number. Little was sent to seniors by mail or put on paper.

On the third day of over-65 eligibility, members of the District Council demanded a change, citing figures showing that residents in well-to-do Ward 3—where there were the fewest Covid cases and deaths—were getting the most appointments, while those in Ward 8, which had the most cases and deaths, received the fewest appointments.

DC Health seemed unaware of the well known “digital divide” between socio-economic areas and failed to adequately plan for it.

A bad remedy was administered to cure this real problem. Appointments for seniors in the three wards with the fewest Covid cases were put on hold. This included our Ward 2. The five wards with the most cases were soon replaced by “priority Zip Codes.” But the effect and results were much the same.

Under new rules in still in effect as the *Flyer* goes to press, seniors in all the “priority” Zip Codes can make appointments on Thursdays. The rest of us have to wait until Friday. On Thursday, January 28, at 9:00 am, 1,748 appointments were available, but gone in 17 minutes. Another 1,748 were made available to all Zip Codes for Friday, January 29. They too, were gone in the same period of time: 17 minutes.

That Friday, the District Council’s Committee on Health began another effort to try to straighten out the mess, beginning a two-day, roundtable hearing.

Vincent Gray, the committee chair, cited the “extraordinary stress and frustration” the system was causing and recommending a waiting list rather than the “intimidating and confusing” process in use.

Council members Mary Cheh from Ward 3, and Brooke Pinto from our Ward 2, both participated and both were interested to hear from hospitals, including Med-Star in Georgetown, that they were accepting vaccination applications from people over 65, whether they were patients in their group or not. DC Health had said otherwise. Pinto called that news a “really important clarification.”

The hearing was scheduled to continue on Monday, February 1. Some changes in the DC Health appointment portal and website have been made already, and more will follow.

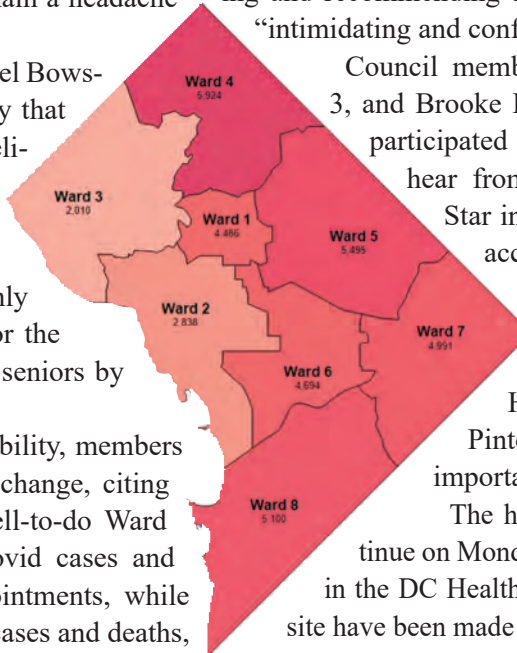
However, as the *Flyer* goes to press, residents in Zip Code

20037 cannot make appointments again through that system until Friday, February 5.

The most effective help for our neighborhood seniors has not come from the District government but from the Foggy Bottom/West End Village, a non-profit organization. It is assisting its aging-in-place membership to navigate the difficult process of making vaccination appointments and getting to the distant locations where the shots are given.

“We’re rolling out additional volunteers,” Denise Snyder, its executive director, told the *Flyer*. It now has six tech-savvy students assisting seniors not only to make appointments but to get them to the vaccination sites and bring them back.

The prioritization of other neighborhoods, “makes a lot of sense,” Snyder told the *Flyer*, “but it doesn’t help the extremely high anxiety level that we’re hear-



Wards and Covid cases as of January 28.

Continued on Reverse

ANC-2A Meets with Four New Members

The Foggy Bottom and West End Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC-2A) had its first meeting of 2021 on January 27. It will be different in many ways from its predecessor commissions. Its native meeting format is Zoom, for one thing, and it votes with its thumbs rather than voices.



ANC-2A's Commissioners and Executive Director at its January meeting.

It passed eight different but routine resolutions with all thumbs up and reserved a serious zoning issue involving the Columbia Plaza complex at 2400 Virginia Avenue for a special meeting—a procedure that it wants to adopt to shorten its monthly meetings and give adequate time and attention to major projects.

As expected, Jeri Epstein, was elected chair. She represents the east half of the West End and is one of the three commissioners who have served a previous term. She showed herself to be a congenial leader, more concerned with getting the work done than with the cumbersome details of parliamentary procedure.

Trupti Patel was re-elected to the office of treasurer. Yannik Omictin, a new member and student at George Washington University, was elected secretary, and new member Joel Causey, who represents the western half of the West End, was elected vice-chair.

On matters of procedure and record keeping, the commission will rely on Peter Sacco, an experienced executive director who will remain in that paid position. Sacco is a former ANC-2A commissioner who knows the neighborhood and the District government.

Epstein and the new commission also plan to divide the workload by establishing committees that will be headed by commissioners but may also include community members who volunteer.

“There are lots of ways to make our neighborhood

better,” she advised. “Find your interest, and lead it.”

The commission still has a vacant seat for single-member district 2A08, which mostly represents the GWU dormitory population. District law keeps it from being filled during a “health emergency.” The District is in one now, and has been since March.

Omictin introduced a resolution on his own initiative calling on the District Council to eliminate this statutory language. It passed unanimously, but will require legislation by the Council before anyone can be elected for the vacant 2A08 district.

Until the seat is filled, Omictin and new commissioner Adam Friend said they will split the duties of looking after this unrepresented area which borders on both their single-member districts.

The next regular meeting of the commission was scheduled for February 17 at 7:00 pm, and will probably be held again by Zoom. The ANC is following the example of the District Council in holding virtual meetings during the District’s health emergency.

Village Helps on Vaccine Process

Continued from First Page

ing about over and over again.” Seniors, she said, have been encouraged to get vaccinated and have been put high on the list, so many believe they need to act as soon as possible.

The Village currently has about 150 members in the Foggy Bottom and West End neighborhoods.

Six student volunteers are now working with them, which Snyder says is sufficient at present. “We can only register people on Friday,” she explained.

Last week she also told both the Foggy Bottom Association and the Advisory Neighborhood Commission that the Village would be available to help other seniors once it gets its members vaccinated.

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On and Off M Street

RESTAURANT FUTURES

A Valentine for the Blue Duck Tavern

Hotel restaurants in our neighborhood come and go. The Blue Duck Tavern at the Park Hyatt at 24th and M is an exception.

It used to be that visitors to Washington did not want to eat in their hotels except at breakfast. For lunch and dinner there were too many good restaurants and trendy new ones to try. Exploring Georgetown's interesting bars and boutiques was also on the to-do list of hoards of conventioners.

We respect the Park Hyatt Washington for being one of the few hotels in the West

sacrifices warmth." The cuisine became locally sourced farm-to-table and thus decidedly American, but still with McBride's fine touch and the hotel's stellar service.

On their 17th wedding anniversary in 2009, President Obama and the first lady had dinner there, giving it even more of a glaze.

After McBride left in 2011, a parade of replacement chefs kept the restaurant's reputation intact. In 2016, when the *Michelin Guide* came to Washington the Blue Duck was given a coveted star ... which was lost, unfortunately, in 2018.

The present chef, Jean-Louis Pihon arrived from the Park Hyatt in Dallas in November 2019. He had barely gotten his feet wet before the March 2020 closing and the resulting series of pivots caused by the Covid crisis.

He reassures us that he is not going to change much. "We have a clientele that keeps coming back," he told the *Flyer*. He says he wants to "enhance" the current quality concept and reinforce the "emotional connection" of returning.

Here's a hint on what to order now: Pihon is from Bretagne in northwestern France, but mentioned that his father had a house in the Perigord region. "There were duck farms and truffles all over the place," he explained.



Jean-Claud Pihon

Duck has always been on the Blue Duck's menu, and "Smoked Duck Breast" will be one of the five main course choices on his three-course, à la carte menu (\$135 per person) for Valentine's Day. We note also that another main course choice is "Vegetable Pot Pie" with black truffle as one of the ingredients.

The chef says he's happy to be open again for indoor dining, but has been busy since his arrival: "I haven't done a museum or anything like that." Welcome to Washington, Jean-Claud. We think you'll like it.

Blue Duck Tavern, 1201 24th Street NW. 202-419-6755. Dine-in and carry-out. Web: blueducktavern.com.

NEW ON THE BLOCK

Vet Hospital Coming

Zoning issues have been cleared for a 24-hour veterinary hospital on the C-1 level of 2311 M Street NW, a mixed-use office and residential building.

The 4,200-square-foot space is partially below grade, but visible from the sidewalk. It is presently vacant, and was last occupied by Blast Fitness, which vacated the space in September 2019.

Veterinary Emergency Group has 17 similar outlets in the United States. It describes



Interior design, veterinary hospital reception.

its mission as "helping people and their pets when they need it most."

The firm presented its plans before Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2A in July and received a resolution of support. The D.C. Board of Zoning Adjustment approved the plans on December 16, ruling that the facility would not adversely affect the use of neighboring property.

"We're planning to open for sure this summer," Carla Alves, the company's marketing manager told the *Flyer*.

In its presentation to the ANC, the company explained its practice of examining animals on carpeted floors rather than raised tables, and stating, "we never separate people and their pets."

The firm, which is based in Westchester, New York, says it will employ about 30 people to run a 24-hour operation 365 days a year. Patrons, it notes, "will always speak directly to a licensed emergency veterinarian."

The ten-story building was opened in 1990, with 35 condominiums on the top five floors, most of which are one-bedroom. The building has a lobby, a dry cleaner and a medical office on the first floor. Floors 2 to 5 have medical and other office tenants.



Tony Chi's 2005 architecture at the Blue Duck.

End that does not include Georgetown in its name for promotional reasons.

"The West End is our home," says Terry Dunbar, the hotel's general manager, who adds that it is proud to be in the neighborhood. Dunbar is a Park Hyatt veteran who began his career here and returned as general manager in September 2018.

When the entire hotel was closed in August 2005 for a seven-month renovation, its much-loved Melrose restaurant—which had dancing on Saturday nights and a convivial bar—was transformed into the Blue Duck by architect Tony Chi of New York and chef Brian McBride who had made the Melrose into the classy place that it was.

Power-breakfast guests there during the Clinton administration included presidential pal Vernon Jordan, who had the corner window table regularly.

When the redesigned space reopened in 2006 as the Blue Duck, Chi's new interior design was described as "an inviting modernism that embraces high tech but never

Worth a Walk or Worth Watching

THE SCHOOL WITHIN WALLS

Whistlers in Washington

The District is awash with works by James McNeill Whistler (1833-1904), the great American expatriate artist. Our National Gallery of Art has hung his famous painting, *The White Girl* (1862), prominently for years, and owns many of his other works.

The Smithsonian's Freer Gallery contains a whole dining room designed by him: *The Peacock Room* (1877), as well as a specialized collection of 52 other works. Some of his late career watercolors (see illustration) were on exhibit at the Freer in 2019.

An introductory video, the watercolors, and four well-done video lectures can still



Whistler, *Pink-Note, the Novelette*, 1883-84.

be viewed on the museum's website: asia.si.edu/exhibition/whistler-in-watercolor.

This month, too, the Foggy Bottom West End Village is presenting *Whistler at the Freer*, a Zoom production conducted by Richard Lum, on February 4, at 11:00 am. Reservations are necessary but there is no charge. (See contact information below.)

Many of the Village's new Zoom programs are posted on its YouTube channel, which is also worth exploring.

Contact: info@fbwevillage.org. Telephone 202-333-1327.

NEIGHBORHOOD NOTES

The GWU Bicentennial

George Washington University says it now has 27,000 students, most attending virtually, and only about 1,500 residing on its 7,000-bed Foggy Bottom campus during this spring semester (see map below).

It will kick off its **Bicentennial Celebration** with a virtual opening ceremony on February 9 from 4:00 to 5:00 pm, featuring former GW presidents and CNN's Dana Bash (Class of 1993). Registration is necessary in advance. Web: gwtoday.gwu.edu.

But wait a minute. Didn't we just have a year-long GWU "Centennial Celebration" that began on February 21, 2012?



GWU Foggy Bottom campus.

Oh, that was for 100 years on the Foggy Bottom campus? Fine.

This one's for the 200 years since the passage of the Congressional legislation that established a charter for "The Columbian College in the District of Columbia." President James Monroe signed it into law on February 9, 1821. So the math works out.

Three Baptist ministers had raised the funds, but Congress imposed a non-sectarian character on the college, which the Baptist Convention managed to circumvent for many years. It owned the real estate on College Hill around 14th Street NW and what is now Florida Avenue.

The name Columbian University was adopted in 1873, and it became George Washington University in 1904.

GWU now estimates its living alumni at more than 300,000. Membership in the GW Alumni Association, we're told, is automatic for anyone who completed 15 credit hours and left in good standing.

DINING IN & OUT

Restaurant Week 2021

Restaurant week was launched in Washington in January 2002, after the 9/11 attack kept people at home and tourists away. It has been run by the Restaurant Association Metropolitan Washington ever since.

There is now a week (sometimes more) usually in January and August, but this year's Covid closings have resulted in a two-week winter event that began on January 25 and ends February 7.



Nobu is a Restaurant Week participant this year.

Participating restaurants located nearby are listed below. Most offer fixed-price meals at \$22, \$35, or \$55. Check each for menu, carry-out, wine pairings, and so on.

Chef Geoff's West End, 2201 M Street NW. 202-524-7815. Web: chefgeoff.com.

Circa, Foggy Bottom, 2221 Eye Street NW. 202-506-5589. Web: circabistros.com.

Duke's Grocery, 2000 Pennsylvania Ave. 202-733-3967. Web: dukesgrocery.com.

Founding Farmers, 1924 Pennsylvania Ave., 202-822-8783. Web: wearefoundingfarmers.com.

Nobu, 2525 M Street NW. 202-871-6565. Web: noburestaurants.com.

North Italia, 2112 Pennsylvania Ave. 202-803-8051. Web: northitalia.com.

Rasika West End, 1190 New Hampshire Ave. 202-466-2500. Web: rasikarestaurant.com.

Ris, 2275 L Street NW. 202-730-2500. Web: risdc.com.

Back issues of the *Flyer* contain listings for local restaurants, groceries, dry cleaners and other services that may be helpful during the Covid-19 situation. See website:

www.friendsoffrancisfield.org