

THE FCCA FOXHALL COMMUNITY CITIZENS ASSOCIATION

ESTABLISHED 1928

2014

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May 13, 2014

Mr. Cliff Seagroves
Office of Foreign Missions
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Room 2236
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Mr. Seagroves,

As President of the Foxhall Community Citizens Association (FCCA), I am writing to apprise you of several long-standing neighborhood concerns relative to the ongoing reconstruction project at the German Embassy. I am hopeful that by acting as an intermediary between our Foxhall neighbors and representatives from the German Embassy, you might assist us in solving some of the many problems that exist.

During the span of this project, which began in November 2010, we have had a member of the FCCA Board serve as a liaison with the German Embassy. The purpose for this was to allow for a free flow of communication and to develop a collaborative approach for solving problems as they arose. Before the construction began, a representative from the German Embassy informed members of the FCCA that there would be little or no impact upon the surrounding neighborhood as the project unfolded. In particular, residents were assured that construction workers would not be parking their cars on our residential streets.

The FCCA liaison has communicated regularly with officials from the Embassy raising various concerns ranging from increased litter on our streets, most likely from the construction workers who park there, to blocked driveways and overall illegal parking. On some occasions the Embassy officials have agreed to take up the issue with the construction company; other times they simply said that there was nothing they could do and encouraged us to take the matter up with the construction company directly, call the police, or contact the city, depending on the issue.

We have routinely invited the representatives from the German Embassy to provide updates for our FCCA newsletter and have asked them to be present at our monthly membership meetings to give status updates. This request has not been honored in an ongoing manner. The general consensus has been that the German Embassy does not feel that communicating with their neighbors is important.

We would like to also make you aware of two other problems that have raised serious concern for the neighbors immediately across from the Embassy. The first item may well be coincidental but worth mentioning: we have had an extraordinary number of residents reporting flat tires caused by nails or screws in the tire. These tires have, in most cases, had to be replaced rather than repaired. We suspect that this is most likely accidental and may be a result of workmen getting tools out of their cars/trucks, but it is a problem and has caused anywhere from \$200 - \$1000 for our residents, depending on how many tires and what type of car. We know that it would be very difficult to establish a direct relationship between this increased incidence of flat tires and the ongoing construction, but in our minds, there is a clear causal relationship.

The second issue is far more serious. We are still investigating, but we have learned that the sub-contractor responsible for spray-painting the outside structure of the embassy with epoxy paint over-sprayed by a considerable amount. Several residents have reported finding epoxy paint on their cars and some are concerned that it may also be on their homes (windows, solar panels). This epoxy paint is not only costly and difficult to remove. It also reduces the resale value of the vehicles affected. Our residents are taking this up directly with the insurance company of the sub-contractor, but it would certainly be good if the Embassy were to weigh in with their expectation that the issue is dealt with expeditiously. We may revisit this issue with you depending on how the situation evolves.

We feel that, even in the planning stages, the German Embassy staff did not take into account the disruption that would be caused by such a major reconstruction project in the middle of a residential neighborhood. There should have been much more time and planning dedicated to preparation and oversight. In the future, it is recommended that the State Department require that any embassy doing construction establish a committee comprised of representatives from the community, construction companies, and the Embassy that can meet regularly and address issues as they arise.

I have attached summary of the major complaints related to the ongoing construction. We would appreciate it if you could raise our concerns with the German Ambassador or Chargé and remind them that their embassy is located in a residential neighborhood and that it is incumbent upon them to ensure that the construction has a minimal impact on the surrounding area. We know that the construction is scheduled to be completed soon, but we felt that to not raise this matter with you would leave the German Embassy with the impression that how they have handled this situation is acceptable, and it is not.

We would be happy to attend a meeting with the Ambassador or Chargé if that would be helpful.

Sincerely yours,

Robert Avery
President of the Board
Foxhall Community Citizens Association
ravery@starpower.net

PS: Our Liaison with the German Embassy is Ms. Karen Volker. She can be reached at karenvolker55@gmail.com or 202-957-9554.

Please See Attachment

Summary of Complaints

- **Epoxy Paint.** Sub-contractor was negligent and over-sprayed epoxy paint by a considerable amount, impacting cars and homes on Reservoir Road across from the Embassy. The removal of epoxy paint from the cars is costly and difficult and affects the resale value of the vehicle. We don't yet know the impact on homes.
- **Parking on both sides** of Reservoir Rd. that begins around 6 am each day has prevented residents from gaining easy access to their homes and denies them the ability to park in front of their homes
- **Parking on both sides** of the road in ways that make exiting from driveways on Reservoir Road and turning from Kenmore Dr. onto Reservoir Road dangerous.
- **Spill over parking** on Kenmore Dr. and Charleston Terrace. This has prevented residents from gaining easy access to their homes and denies them the ability to park in front of their homes.
- **Illegal parking with impunity** - in no parking zones, in front of fire hydrants, blocking driveways, too close to driveways and intersections.
- **Traffic.** There is a constant flow of construction traffic traversing on Reservoir Road and Kenmore Dr. beginning in the early morning. Trucks use the Kenmore Dr. circle as a turnaround.
- **Ticket avoidance.** Some construction drivers have admitted that they wait on Kenmore Dr. in their vehicles until the DC ticket officer has left Reservoir Rd. This adds to the vehicles present on the street.
- **Potholes.** Many heavy trucks, by driving through, have exacerbated a section of the Kenmore Dr. with deep, deep potholes. Neighbors have suggested that the construction company repave this section of Kenmore Dr. at their expense.
- **Noise levels** have risen dramatically. In particular, a constant beeping can be heard throughout the day. It sounds like a truck going into reverse.
- **Litter.** This was never a problem before the construction started. Construction workers often eat in their cars and, it seems, are somewhat careless with their trash. This is particularly bad on the part of 47th Street that does not have a curb. We are worried about the litter and food waste there attracting rodents.
- **Rodent infestation.** One house immediately adjacent to the Embassy property experienced a rodent infestation. After some back and forth the German Embassy did reimburse the homeowner approximately 3/4 of the cost of dealing with the problem.
- **Flat tires.** Several residents have reported flat tires caused by nails or screws. Costs of repair range from \$200-\$1000 per household affected.