

District Waterways Advisory Commission - Meeting #5 Meeting Minutes

Date: July 22, 2026
Time: 10:00am – 12:00 pm
Location: In-Person, District Department of Transportation

Call Meeting to Order

- At 10:09am, quorum was met and the meeting was called to order.

Commission Logistics

- **Vice Chair Melissa Bird** opened a discussion regarding the June meeting minutes.
- **Comm. Trey Sherard** (Anacostia Riverkeeper) asked a clarifying question during review of the June meeting minutes about a statement on new wetland regulations related to dredging (June minutes, p.3).
 - **Comm. Gretchen Mikeska** (DOEE) clarified that the comment referred to [new procedural guidelines put in place in January 2025](#) and committed to sharing them with the group.
- **Comm. Ebony Payne** (ANC 7D-05) motioned to approve the June meeting minutes.
 - **Comm. Diane Groomes** (The Wharf) seconded the motion.
- The June meeting minutes were adopted by voice vote.

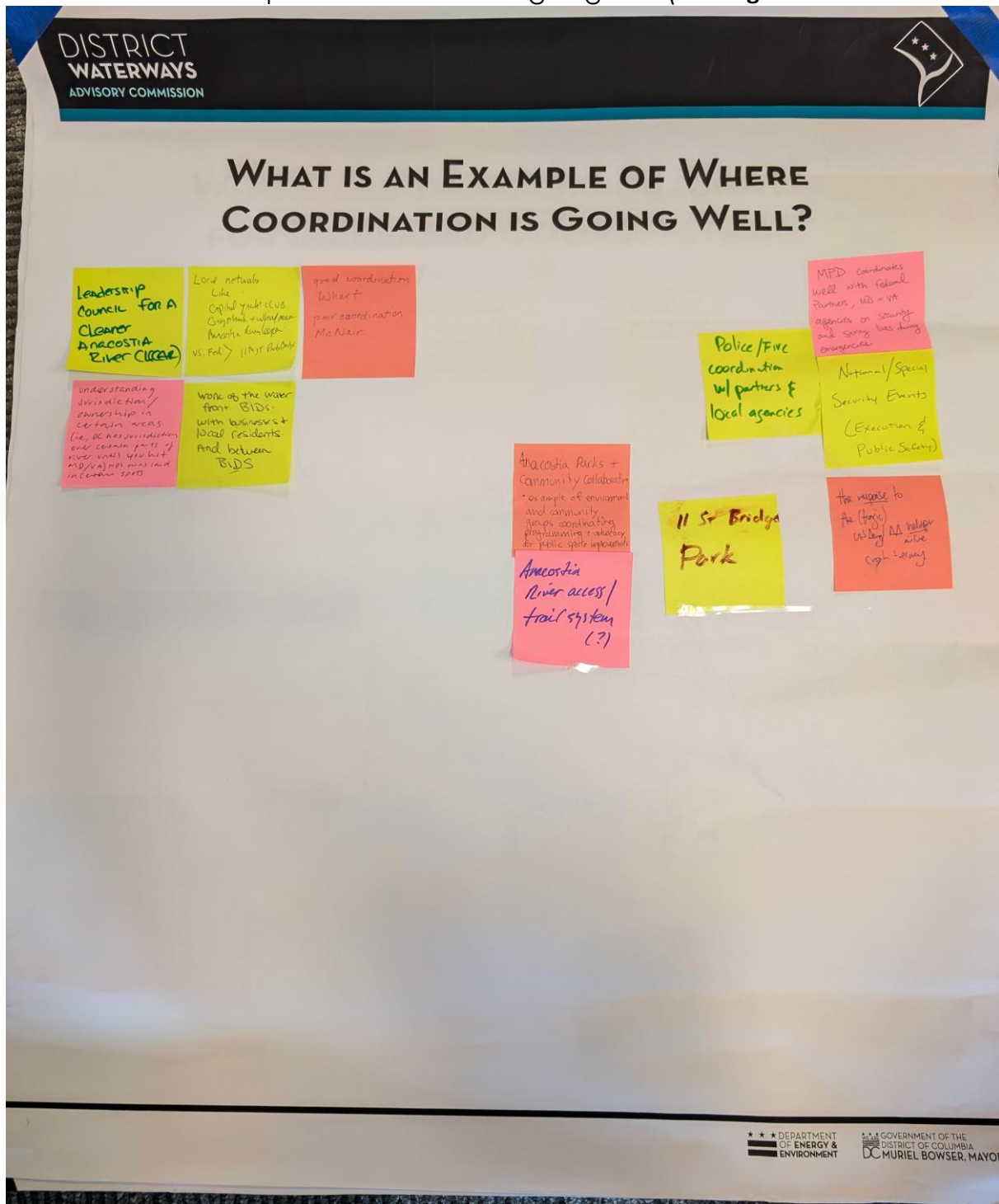
Review Meeting Objectives

- HR&A reviewed meeting objectives.

Topic Area Focus

- I. **Interagency & Regional Coordination**
 - HR&A presented on the topic area.
 - HR&A and Trueblood.city facilitated an activity in which commissioners and the public identified where coordination is going well and where it could improve.

Examples of coordination going well (See Figure 1



o **Figure 2)** included:

- Public safety, such as MPD and police/fire response and national security events. Others cited the
- 11th Street Bridge Park
- The Wharf

- Anacostia Park and Community Collaborative
- Anacostia Park trail system and river access,
- Local river user networks (Capital Yacht Club, Gangplank Slipholders Association, Anacostia Riverkeeper)
- Waterfront BIDs' work with businesses and residents and each other
- Commenters also noted a shared understanding of jurisdiction and ownership,
- Leadership Council for a cleaner Anacostia River (LCCAR).
- Opportunities to improve coordination (**See Figure 2**) included:
 - Dredging
 - Interagency coordination on major projects
 - Permitting and transportation plans and regulations.
 - Public access at Navy Yard, Diamond Teague Park docks, Fort McNair, and the broader Anacostia.
 - Water quality and environmental concerns
 - Lack of consensus on flood prevention and baseline map data
 - Public and stakeholder engagement.
 - Nutrient trading across jurisdictional boundaries
 - Local business and diversity participation,
 - Shared economic goals,
 - Small- and large-boat traffic.
 - **Comm. Trey Sherard** (Anacostia Riverkeeper) noted that the Diamond Teague Park docks need better coordination: DPR should replace vandalized signage stating that private motor craft may not tie up to the kayak and fishing dock, with new signage on each cleat to remove the "I didn't see the sign" argument, so Harbor Patrol can enforce the rule. He noted that one fishing event this summer had already lost about 30 feet of kids' fishing space to a privately owned, out-of-state boat, and called for a shared registration information exchange among the three jurisdictions and possible enforcement reciprocity, since many Virginia- and Maryland-registered boats use DC waters and docks but Harbor Patrol cannot contact their owners.
 - **Comm. Kristina Noell** (Anacostia BID) called for improvement in two areas: a broader understanding of the communication structure and shared economic goals, and greater agency and community partnership.
 - **Comm. Rachel Clark** (R. Clark Consulting) noted that even when interagency and intergovernmental stakeholders are convened, issues often are not resolved until late in the process, and the right people may not be in the room.
 - **Comm. Trey Sherard** added that carve-out for emergency-response vessels and registered nonprofit or government vessels should be made explicit alongside the ban on private vessels.

- **Jeffrey Lenard** (DC Fire) noted that two coordinating committees for waterways rescue have different memberships:
 - the NCR Waterway Partners Working Group, which includes local, state, and federal law enforcement and Fire/EMS/SAR responders.
 - MWCOG Potomac River Rescue agreement comes from a subcommittee of the Fire Chiefs Committee with no law-enforcement involvement, making it hard to hold non-signatory responders to the agreement.
- **Jeffrey Lenard** (DC Fire) added that the DC Fireboat also has a Port Partners Working Group linking the Wharf, commercial industry, and marinas to public-safety partners for information sharing. Still in its infancy, it aims to meet twice a year, before Memorial Day and before the Christmas boat parades.
- HR&A opened the floor for general comments.
- **Vice Chair Melissa Bird** (Vice-Chair) asked what MWCOG's role has historically been in regional waterfront coordination.
 - **Comm. Trey Sherard** (Anacostia Riverkeeper) noted that MWCOG houses much of the regional science, including trash monitoring and task groups on toxins and sediment, and has long convened partners through the Anacostia Watershed Restoration Partnership via three bodies:
 - community advisory committee,
 - management group of agency staff and technical nonprofits
 - steering committee of jurisdictional environmental agency heads and federal representatives.
 - **Brent Peterson** (DOEE) noted that MWCOG is responsible for the Potomac River Rescue Agreement among DC, Alexandria, Fairfax, Prince George's County, and potentially other upstream areas, which outlines areas of responsibility and how jurisdictions share resources for larger incidents.
 - **Comm. Matt Ries** (DC Water) noted that MWCOG convenes the Intermunicipal Agreement (IMA) on water quality. The Blue Plains facility serves DC along with Prince George's, Montgomery, Fairfax, and Loudoun counties and part of Arlington, and has coordinated jurisdictions for decades. This could serve as a model for other regional coordination.
- **Comm. Matt Ries** (DC Water) noted that nutrient trading relates mainly to water quality. Under the Chesapeake Bay Agreement addressing wastewater, stormwater, and agricultural runoff, nutrient trading is managed state by state, letting entities trade where removal is more cost-effective. Maryland, Virginia, and Pennsylvania have trading opportunities, but the District does not,

despite discharging into the same water body. The original vision was a Bay-wide market, and limited geographies constrain the region.

- **Comm. Trey Sherard** (Anacostia Riverkeeper) noted that, from an environmental-nonprofit perspective, urban areas like DC and the Anacostia are harder and costlier to treat, raising concern that the District could become a "sacrifice zone," and asked what a shift from state to regional or Bay-wide trading would look like.
 - **Comm. Matt Ries** (DC Water) responded that a Bay-wide approach would be more efficient while targeting a similar water-quality goal.
- **Comm. Matt Ries** (DC Water) noted that the same water body is subject to differing regulations. The Anacostia is only 17% within the District, with the rest in Maryland. This creates an institutional misfit between the water body and how it is regulated across states, cities, and districts. It also extends beyond water quality.
- HR&A and Trueblood.city facilitated informal voting to select two topics for further discussion. Water quality and dredging received the most votes, followed by places on the water and economic benefits.

In-Person Group 1: Water Quality

- **Comm. Matt Ries** (DC Water) noted that COG, the Anacostia Watershed coordinating committee, and a broader Bay policy committee were discussed. While District regulations help protect water quality, most of the watershed lies in Maryland even though it affects DC, and Potomac water quality reflects activity in Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia.
 - **Julia Wakeling** (DOEE) asked about the relevance of certain plans to water quality.
 - **Comm. Matt Ries** (DC Water) asked whether there is a more efficient way to address water quality, noting that other parts of the country use an EPA-sanctioned overlay to regulate water and objectives in a coordinated manner.
 - **Julia Wakeling** (DOEE) noted that DOEE is in ongoing negotiations with EPA and Maryland on future waterway permitting, and that the watershed implementation plan is ongoing and should be kept in mind.
 - **Comm. Ebony Payne** (ANC 7D-05) noted that she thinks in terms of what is visible (trash) and not visible (E. coli, PCBs, chemicals), observed that the Southwest looks much better than in the past, and wanted to break these categories down to identify the main contributors.

- **Jim Woodworth** (DOEE) noted that DOEE manages eight trash traps and coordinates skimming-boat data to find the most effective placements, including potential additions in Oxon Run, and that the Commission could help identify trash-capture opportunities and inform new regulations or gaps.
 - **Comm. Ebony Payne** (ANC 7D-05) asked what current initiatives are underway to address water quality.
- **In-Person Group 2: Dredging**
 - **Comm. Gretchen Mikeska** (DOEE) shared an example of the difficulties in getting dredging project permitted. The District seeks to undertake a locally-funded dredging pilot project on the Anacostia but is struggling to get permits from NPS / NOAA Fisheries due to impact on submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) that has moved into the federal navigation channel on the Anacostia, which has added additional layers of process to advance dredging. DOEE wants to remove a sandbar under the Anacostia Bridge, used by 450 boaters per day to improve safety and is working with the Army Corps of Engineers to determine a path forward.
 - **Vice Chair Melissa Bird** asked how conflicts are resolved when stakeholders disagree on a successful process, and who has the final say.
 - **Comm. Jason Kopp** (Gangplank Slipholders Assoc) noted that the current pilot would allow navigation from the Potomac to the CSX Bridge.
 - **Comm. Gretchen Mikeska** (DOEE) noted that cleaner water has brought more boaters, creating a safety problem, since experienced boaters know where the sandbar is, but others may not.
 - **Comm. Hootan Kaboli** (Events DC) noted that he has gone through permitting near that location and found no clear project owner for approval authority, which can frustrate developers and others trying to act.
 - **Comm. Jason Kopp** (Gangplank Slipholders Assoc) questioned how the City would ensure a safety plan for non-motorized vessels and police enforcement of no-wake zones if more motorized vessels are allowed.
 - **Comm. Jorge Galindo** (Anacostia Comm. Boathouse) noted that, anecdotally, boaters get stuck on the sandbar and docks on the sandbar can limit water access.
- **Virtual Dredging Group:**

- **Comm. Gilles Stucker** (DMPED) noted that it is critical to dredge from an economic development standpoint. He asked where the land is to take dredged material.
- **Comm. Trey Sherard** (Anacostia Riverkeeper) stated that the river is filling with sediment, harming water quality. Other reasons to dredge include climate and economic resilience, in part by mitigating risk.
- **In-Person Group 1 Report Out: Water Quality**
 - **Julia Wakeling** (DOEE) reported that the group discussed water quality and how the District handles being downstream of large jurisdictions, source identification (trash, PCBs, and similar), and gaps in trash programming and interventions.
- **In-Person Group 2 Report Out: Dredging**
 - **Comm. Gretchen Mikeska** (DOEE) reported that DOEE has a small project of about 20,000 cubic yards, primarily in the federal navigation channel under the Pennsylvania Avenue Bridge and fully funded by District and Maryland monies. The group is working through submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) that has moved into the federal navigation channel. National Marine Fisheries and the National Park Service say dredging cannot proceed because of the SAV, and the Army Corps of Engineers remains undecided. DOEE is advocating to remove the sandbar, which serves 450 boaters per day and rising as water quality improves.
 - **Comm. Trey Sherard** (Anacostia Riverkeeper) asked whether the federal government has said DOEE cannot dredge where there is SAV, or that it must mitigate any SAV removed.
 - **Comm. Gretchen Mikeska** (DOEE) noted that DOEE is waiting for National Marine Fisheries to assess further. A mitigation ratio has not been set, but there is a potential path forward.
 - **Comm. Eric Lindheimer** (USACE) noted that the Army Corps reviewed the plans for EPA and is aware of the dredging in the federal channels, that its navigation branch will evaluate dredging requests from anyone though the environmental review is more complex, and that the area has not been dredged in a long time and contains PCBs, prompting more scrutiny. He noted funding prioritizes the highest economic drivers such as the Port of Baltimore. Because the District has no commerce up the Potomac beyond fuel barges to Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling, dredging for recreational purposes is a lower funding priority absent a national-security or major economic driver.

- **Comm. Trey Sherard** (Anacostia Riverkeeper) noted that sedimentation in the Anacostia is increasing flood risk to areas like Navy Yard and proposed waterfront development and asked how the economic risk of not dredging the federal channels could factor into how the Army Corps works with Congress on funding tiers.
- **Comm. Eric Lindheimer** (USACE) noted that a planning division conducts independent studies on DC flood-risk protection while his branch focuses on channel navigability. Flood-risk protection requires different expertise, but he offered to reach out to others.
- **Comm. Kristina Noell** (Anacostia BID) asked how the group could better coordinate and integrate data to identify where sedimentation limits navigation and where strategic dredging could expand the Anacostia as a usable economic and recreational asset while advancing water-quality, environmental, and restoration goals.

II. Local Control

a. HR&A presented on the topic area.

- **Comm. Matt Ries** (DC Water) raised questions about timelines, federal administrations, the District's relationship with the federal government, and the timeframe for such decisions given the impact of politics on feasibility. He suggested the Commission look at recent successes such as the RFK development.
- **Comm. Trey Sherard** (Anacostia Riverkeeper) noted many potential opportunities for local control but was unsure about feasibility. He cited federally owned space that is not maintained, such as the National Park Service strip by the Arboretum, as a prime opportunity.
- **Comm. Ebony Payne** (ANC 7D-05) asked – given how many plots of land the federal government does own - what the Commission's priorities for what would be to fix, suggesting the Commission narrow it's scope to specific spaces
- **Chairman Darryl Madden** suggested the Commission consider both what it seeks and what other organizations want control of. For example, are there some areas where National Park Service might be willing to enter agreements with the District, where there may be low-hanging fruit.
- **Vice Chair Melissa Bird** raised concern that taking on more local control could limit future federal or cross-jurisdictional funding, noting that, while Franklin Park is a good example of collaboration, it took many years to resolve between the

District and the federal government and its restaurant still has not opened due to permitting and bureaucratic hurdles. She suggested the Commission needs to think about how to streamlining transfer-of-jurisdiction and cooperative-management agreements, so park development does not take 10 to 20 years.

- **Comm. Rachel Clark** noted that increased local control of parkland would advance all of the goals and suggested pursuing systems-wide local control rather than a tract-by-tract approach, while balancing new obligations against existing park-maintenance responsibilities. She noted the DPR is recreation-focused while a separate agency (DGS) handles maintenance. She suggested if the District did want to take on control of more parkland it needs to systematically rethink how parks are maintained to how to do it efficiently with the resources currently available.
- **Thomas Hastings** (Civilian staffer, Naval Support Activities Washington) noted that, as a federal landowner, he has struggled to get a strip of the riverwalk shoveled regularly. He indicated it was a little unclear who was responsible, perhaps NPS, and that because federal entities find it hard to give up land, such matters must be handled case by case with the larger goal in mind.
- **Comm. Trey Sherard** (Anacostia Riverkeeper) wondered whether a trigger could be set to advance a transfer agreement where it is not happening on its own. For example, if a parcel is federally owned but unmaintained, that could be grounds to make pursue local control over that parcel, such an approach would be more systematic.
- **Jim Woodworth** (DOEE staff) noted that he oversees green-infrastructure maintenance and sees a wide range of park conditions along the waterfront. He appreciated the trail's unified wayfinding and suggested a unified approach to maintaining all land types, including green infrastructure, stormwater, and vegetation, and also related signage, with the Commission potentially leading efforts to unify how waterfront properties are maintained and by whom.

Meeting Schedule & Next Steps

- b. HR&A previewed a revised schedule and discussed a set of working groups that will be established to provide deeper discussion on specific topic areas.

Adjournment

- c. **Comm. Melissa Bird** motioned to adjourn the meeting.

- d. **Comm. Ebony Payne** seconded the motion to adjourn.
- e. The meeting was adjourned at 11:57am.

APPENDIX: Meeting Discussion Boards

Figure 1: Discussion Board 1:
What is an Example of Where Coordination is Going Well?

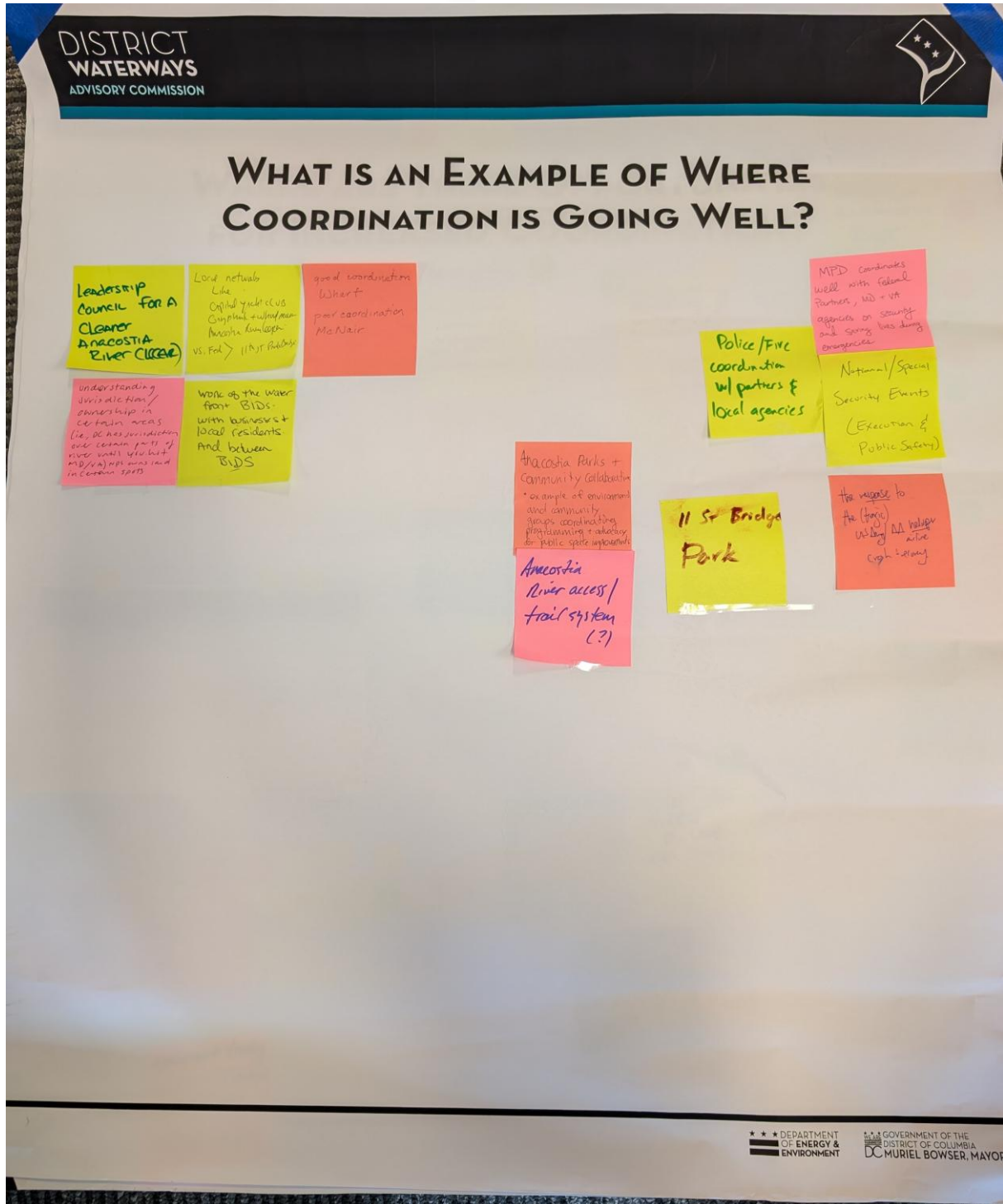


Figure 2: Discussion Board 2:

Where are There Opportunities for Increased Coordination?

DISTRICT WATERWAYS ADVISORY COMMISSION

WHERE ARE THERE OPPORTUNITIES FOR INCREASED COORDINATION?

Planes

- Navy Yard Riverwalk → Anacostia Riverwalk connection
- Diamond Teague Park Dock (Trey)
- Ft McNair
- Facilitating Public Access to Anacostia + PB

Stakeholder engagement

- Still symmetrical communication & local definition of projects. Plan and then tell us really. Take no input.
- More coordination with D.C.G. to facilitate stakeholder engagement
- Create agency & community partnership

Capital Projects

- Improve interagency coordination on major projects & infrastructure. Miss opportunities for some amenities. Better coordination of activities between VA / DC waterfront. Plans, regulations, transportation etc.

Dredging

- Dredging in the Anacostia River
- DREDGING**

Data sharing

Name: Diana Sullivan

Comment:

Better Coordination Needed:
 Better, consistent and on-going study of federal agency land use for Potomac, Anacostia, and other waterways. Developing approach to flood protection for sea level rise. No one is doing the same. Baseline data on talking w/ one another!

Boats & Regulations

- Emergency response coordination. No law enforcement involvement in NCR working group. Or MWOCs Potomac River Rescue.
- Small boat TRAFFIC VS. LARGE BOAT TRAFFIC
- Guidelines on regulations, particularly for emergency response, non-profits, government agencies, etc.

Water Quality

- Water Quality/ Regs coord. on a Watershed scale
- More coordination is needed to improve water quality concerns (i.e. e coli, PCBs, etc)
- Improve areas for remediation, environmental concerns, water quality
- Nutrient trading across jurisdictional boundaries (VA-DC-MD)

Econ. Benefits

- Diversity Participation Local Business Participation
- Broader understanding of communication & shared economic

*** DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT ***
 *** GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA ***
 DC MURIEL BOWSER, MAYOR