**New Columbia Statehood Commission Meeting**

March 20, 2015 at 2:30pm

John A. Wilson Building, room 301

**Attendees**

Mayor Muriel Bowser

Council Chairman Mendelson

Senator Paul Strauss

Senator Michael D. Brown

Representative Franklin Garcia

James Hurley, Office of the Chief Financial Officer

Aaron Droller, Esq. Assistant General Counsel, Office of the Chief Financial Officer

Beverly Perry, Senior Advisor to the Mayor

LaDavia Drane, Director, Office of Federal and Regional Affairs

Roberta Downing, Deputy Director, Mayor’s Office of Federal and Regional Affairs

Alana Intrieri, Legislative Counsel, D.C. Council Chairman Phil Mendelson

Rema Zadah, Esq. Attorney, Senator Strauss

Omeed Tabiei, Legislative Assistant, Senator Strauss

Irene Mutwiri, Legislative Correspondent, Senator Strauss

Jack Kornblatt, Intern, Senator Strauss

Theadora Brown, Legislative Counsel, Representative Garcia

**Minutes**

The meeting was called to order at 2:55pm.

**REVIEW OF DRAFT BYLAWS**

The meeting began by reviewing the interim by-laws, as amended by Mayor Bowser at the first meeting of the New Columbia Statehood Commission (NCSC). Senator Strauss moved consideration of the interim by-laws as permanent. In reviewing the bylaws further, Chairman Mendelson pointed out that section 3.7 outlines when special meetings of the NCSC can be called and noted that the language outlining that 72 hours’ notice be given before a special meeting had been inadvertently deleted. Mr. Strauss agreed to accept Chairman Mendelson’s suggestion to reinstate the language in section 3.7 indicating that not less than 72 hours’ notice be given prior to any special meeting.

Chairman Mendelson also suggested deleting section 3.1 of the interim bylaws, stating that his vision was that the Commission would meet twice a year. Mayor Bowser supported that change. Senator Strauss said he was fine with getting rid of subsections b and c under section 3.1 and keeping subsection d. Chairman Mendelson suggested striking subsections b and c and adding them to the opening paragraph.

In considering section 3.5 of the interim bylaws, Chairman Mendelson raised the issue of how notice of meetings is given. After discussion of various websites that could be used for notice, Senator Strauss noted it was an existing legal requirement that the meetings are posted on the websites of the Board of Ethics and Government Accountability, but noted that nothing would prevent a Commission member from additionally posting notices on the websites of Executive Office of the Mayor, the D.C. Council, or using any other website as determined by the rest of the Statehood Delegation.

Chairman Mendelson suggested striking all the detail under section 3.10 of the interim bylaws.

Mayor Bowser inquired about office space for the Statehood Commission and where the Executive Director of the NCSC would work. Senator Strauss indicated that the Statehood Delegation already occupies space in room C-09 in the basement of the Wilson building which the Office of the Statehood Commission could share. All proposed changes were accepted. Chairman Mendelson called for a vote on the amended by-laws, which were then approved by the Commission by unanimously.

**STATEHOOD DELEGATION COMPENSATION**

Senator Strauss began the discussion of compensation for the Statehood Delegation by distributing a draft resolution outlining that Senator Brown would chair a committee to draft and submit a report with findings as to whether the Statehood Delegation should receive compensation. Mayor Bowser suggested that the report would be more impactful if the three people affected weren’t part of the committee who would write the report. After discussing the required composition and expertise of the compensation committee, Mr. Mendelson suggested that there be four people on the Committee. Senator Strauss moved to amend the language of the proposed resolution to say that each Co-Chair may nominate a member of the committee with the understanding that that means there could be up to five people on the committee. Chairman Mendelson called for a vote on the amended resolution, which was then approved by the Commission unanimously.

**BUDGET FOR NEW COLUMBIA STATEHOOD FUND**

Senator Strauss began the discussion of the budget for the New Columbia Statehood Fund by stating that prior to the meeting, the delegation met on their own to discuss their priorities for programming. He stated that the Delegation was informed by the CFO’s office that the budget needs to conform to the personnel vs. non-personnel distinctions in the budget. The Delegation-prepared budget request was distributed to the Commission members by Senator Strauss.

Mayor Bowser asked how this proposed budget compares to previous budgets. Senator Strauss stated that there were no previous budgets. Previously, the Statehood Delegation’s budget was funded strictly through funds they receive through the tax check-off revenue stream.

Senator Strauss then explained the part of the budget that would fund the “51 Stars Outreach Campaign” in which Hollywood “stars” film public service announcements (PSA) on D.C. statehood that are aired around the country. He explained that thus far, they have created three PSAs as part of this campaign and that they want to do more PSAs until they reach 51 in their “51 Stars Campaign.” He stated that they have certain expenses related to production of the PSAs. They have the expense of either bringing people to the District or catching them when they are in town. In their last effort, Senator Strauss said that he went to Hollywood and worked with the Creative Coalition, a group that gets movie/TV stars to participate in public service activities. He stated that he wants to have the next PSA effort in place by late April when movie/TV stars are in D.C. for the White House Correspondents Dinner. He suggested that perhaps Mayor Bowser might want to participate in these events as well.

Mayor Bowser asked if one of the goals of the Commission was to determine the Statehood Delegation’s budget. Chairman Mendelson stated that he wanted as much as possible to leave it to the three elected representatives to decide how they want to spend the money.

Senator Brown stated that he has no expenditures on the proposed budget. He said that he does not intend to take any money from the Commission. He said that he lobbied the Council against this legislation and asked the former Mayor to veto it. However, he said that he is willing to participate as much as he can to facilitate his colleagues receiving money. He said that he has spent at least $50,000 of his own money previously on statehood efforts.

Chairman Mendelson stated that under the law, the maximum that you could pay the Executive Director of the Office of the Statehood Delegation would be $100,000. Senator Strauss stated that the CFO has assigned the Commission an Agency Fiscal Officer to ensure that their allocation of the personnel budget conforms to the legislative language.

Chairman Mendelson asked about the “Festival Promotion” line item in the proposed budget. Representative Garcia gave an explanation of the festival promotion line item.

Senator Strauss discussed the budget items for travel to Ohio and Pennsylvania in advance of the Democratic and Republican conventions. Chairman Mendelson questioned those trips since the conventions are not until 2016. Senator Strauss explained that these would be trips made in advance of next year’s conventions to lay the groundwork for 2016 activities.

Mayor Bowser stated that the Commission has to be very careful not to include any lobbying or political campaign work in the budget. Senator Strauss said that one of the things that he plans to discuss with the Commission’s partners in the CFO’s office is outreach, advocacy, and education work.

Chairman Mendelson stated that they could go to the Democratic convention for outreach and advocacy to advance D.C. statehood but that the law says that they cannot use these funds for political campaigns or contributions. He also stated that the check-off funds are now part of the New Columbia Statehood Fund.

Senator Strauss stated that it was the Statehood Delegation’s strong consensus that the check-off funds remain for their original purpose and that they be kept separate from the Statehood Agency funds that are appropriated in the DC budget.

Following this discussion, it was resolved by the Commission that the Delegation’s budget request for Non-Personnel Services was approved by unanimous consent.

**HIRING OF AN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Mayor Bowser stated that the law says that an Executive Director has to be hired. Senator Strauss moved consideration of a proposed Commission Resolution appointing a Committee Chairperson and naming two committee members to determine the procedures for the identification and retention of an Executive Director. Chairman Mendelson stated that having an Executive Director makes the Commission stronger. The resolution appointing Senator Strauss as Chair of the Committee for the purposes of determining procedures for the identification and retention of an Executive Director was approved by the Commission without objection.

Senator Strauss stated that the delegation would like to hire various staff, to not exceed the amount allocated for personnel in the budget. Extensive discussion ensued regarding whether the Commission would use its funds to hire one Executive Director or more than one employee. Mayor Bowser stated that there shall be an Executive Director but that the staffing is not limited to just one employee. She also asked whether the funding in this budget is just for one year of the Commission’s activities. Senator Strauss confirmed that yes, the current funding is for just this fiscal year.

Following this discussion, it was resolved by the Commission, that the Delegation’s Personnel services budget was approved at the amount set in the Fiscal Year 2015 budget.

Chairman Mendelson asked about the “optional” item on the agenda about including honorary members in the Commission. That item was tabled for the next meeting.

Mayor Bowser asked how the check-off funds were used previously. Senator Brown stated that the funds were reported to the Office of Campaign Finance and were split between the three representatives. Discussion ensued about how the check-off funds would be consolidated and spent and how there should be a budget for that money so that it is handled in a thoughtful, premeditated, orderly way. A request to discuss the Tax-Check Off funds was tabled until the following meeting.

Mayor Bowser asked when this Commission needs to meet again. Chairman Mendelson suggested that the Commission meet again in six months. The meeting adjourned at 4:03p.m.