



***Council of the District of Columbia, Committee on Transportation & the Environment,  
Budget Oversight Hearing: District Department of Public Works (DPW)***

***April 14, 2016, 11:00 AM  
John A Wilson Building, 1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Room 123***

***Testimony of Chris Weiss, Executive Director, DC Environmental Network (DCEN),  
Director, Washington, DC Office, Global Green USA (U.S. Affiliate, Green Cross International)***

Good morning Chairperson Cheh and other Councilmembers and staff.

I am Chris Weiss and I am the Executive Director of the District of Columbia Environmental Network (DCEN), and Director of the Washington DC Office for Global Green USA.

Spearheaded by Global Green USA, the DC Environmental Network (DCEN), founded in 1996 — is working toward a vision of rebuilding Washington, DC’s neighborhoods and communities for long-term economic stability — accomplishing this by protecting and restoring the Capital City’s urban environment. DCEN is spearheaded by Global Green USA, U.S. affiliate of Green Cross International.

The mission of Global Green USA is to foster a global value shift toward a sustainable and secure future. Global Green is a national leader in advancing sustainable and resilient communities. We green cities, schools, and affordable housing to help protect human health, improve livability, and support our planet’s natural systems in an effort to stem climate change.

Thank you for holding this important District Department of Public Works budget oversight hearing today.

On April 5<sup>th</sup>, in preparation for this hearing, the DC Environmental Network, Global Green USA, DC Fiscal Policy Institute, Institute for Local Self Reliance, Alice Ferguson Foundation, Rock Creek Conservancy, Anacostia Riverkeeper, Just Electric Transportation, DC Greens, IMG Rebel, Downtown DC Bid, Sustainability Initiatives, Sierra Club – DC Chapter, Energy Justice Network, and other sustainability advocates and organizations, participated in a DCEN/DCFPI sponsored budget briefing.



*Figure 1: DCEN/DCFPI DPW Budget Briefing, April 5, 2016*

Participants listened to a budget overview given by DPW Director Shorter and were given opportunities to comment and ask questions. This process was a great opportunity to learn and ponder how to engage in the District's budget process. Director Shorter and staff should be commended for their candid analysis and commitment to transparency.



Consistent with our experience with our DOEE budget briefing, a number of issues surfaced that we would like to share with the Committee on Transportation & the Environment. Here are a few of them (partial):

- **OFFICE OF WASTE DIVERSION FTE ELIMINATIONS:** As you know, when the Office of Waste Diversion (OWD) was established it was determined that DPW would need 6 FTEs to cover the functions of this office/program. Mayor Bowser's budget proposes eliminating the remaining 2-3 unfilled positions. We asked Director Shorter about this at our briefing and he shared his thoughts that the elimination of these positions would not hurt current and future initiatives, and how, if necessary, other components of the agency could help support the functions of OWD. **REQUEST:** We are hoping the Committee will explore this issue even more during this budget hearing. We believe that over the next year and ½, there is a healthy amount of potential to start laying the groundwork for improving the District's recycling rates. The OWD may need to staff up to do a good job on this front. In the next week DCEN may take a formal position on this budget change, but would like to hear DPW Director Shorter and the Committee hash this issue out a bit.
- **PURCHASE OF 5 STREET SWEEPERS:** DPW is currently planning on purchasing 5 new, alternative fuel, street sweepers. Some years ago a number of Anacostia River focused organizations met with DPW to discuss the purchase of street sweepers. "Street sweepers do much more than just keep things clean. They're used to pick up trash, dirt, chemicals, motor oil and more that can contaminate the environment. If these potentially harmful substances are removed from the street, the construction site, or the parking lot before they reach storm drains, they are less likely to end up in rivers and lakes." Thus, street sweepers can be an effective measure in reducing pollutants in stormwater runoff. This may be a new opportunity to re-visit this issue and possibly, ascertain, that the new street sweepers have the capabilities to do the best job possible of cleaning contaminants off our streets before they enter our rivers.
- **DCEN LIKES A NUMBER OF THE NEW INITIATIVES THAT PROMOTE DC SUSTAINABILITY:** Composting for special events, textile recycling, recycling/waste diversion awareness in 50 schools for the SWEEP Jr. Program, and the creation of private hauler reporting and registration requirements. DPW has some important programs for employees that promote sustainability principles, including their partnership with the Academy of Hope Public Charter School for adults

to help with obtaining a GED, and enhance literacy, math and computer skills. All these programs seem to deserve as much financial support as is necessary.

After hearing, we may come back with focused recommendations for your consideration.

We continue to be excited about the future of the evolving Department of Public works, and look forward to working with the Committee and DPW on important sustainability initiatives.

Thank you.