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The Southeast District Council met last night and decided to continue despite the partial withdrawal of city support and the district council role in the grant process (Parks & Street Fund, etc.). Several members stated their strong support for the district coordinators and for the district council as they have experienced it in the southeast.

Here is the message from Benham Stephanos of the Eritrean Association:

“Sorry for not following the politics of the council, mayor in the changes that happened. Yesterday I came to our regular meeting of the SEDC but what I heard of the change really Disappointed me or surprised me. I thought the way we were conducting business was to me an excellent way of involving the community with the direct connection the city Seattle Neighbourhood rep "Jenny Frank" and later Nam Frank. But the new system they suggested i think weakens the communications at least in our district. Maybe i am looking at this the wrong way, i would some feed back.”

Here is a message from Maia Segura of the Rainier Beach Merchants:

“I’m sure you’re right that someone has a grand vision that will strengthen the connections between the city and communities.

I agree with Benyam, though, that in the process there is a danger of throwing out the baby with the bathwater, as they say, in breaking this direct communications connection with and support of the SEDC. ”

Here is a message from my wife, Mona Lee, from 3 different Othello neighborhood groups:

“Some of the services Jenny Frankl and her predecessors used to do for us were as follows:

They would attend many meetings of the Othello Station Community Action Team, the Othello Park Alliance, On Board Othello, and other neighborhood groups. They would listen to our concerns, make suggestions. If there were neighborhood matching fund grants or other resources that would help meet our community needs, they would suggest them. They would help us make contact with grant administrators and even guide us on the application process.

These people were abreast at all times of our neighborhood issues and concerns. They also kept us informed of any changes or opportunities happening at the city level. They were always available to answer questions. I doubt that any month in any year ever went by without me, just one neighborhood activist, phoning and/or emailing them to ask a question.

I will mention one specific example: Once I applied for a neighborhood street fund grant to pave some pathways connecting our parks. I did not know that the pathways technically crossed two

district boarders, Southeast and Duwamish. Yun Pitri provided this information and brought my issue to the Duwamish District Council which I barely knew existed. Mostly we just need someone to turn to when we are at a loss or out of the loop and don't know what to do."

And I have sent a letter to the city council expressing the need for community wide forums, like those that have been provided by the district councils, for communication and dialogue among ourselves, as well as feedback to the city, rather than just the city interacting with individual community groups or neighborhoods isolated in their own silos. In fact we need far more support, not less, to better accomplish this kind of mission in a way that is inclusive of the diversity in our communities. Last night Tom Van Bronkhorst told us that we were welcome to not only continue our work, but expand it, and that one of the proposed budget amendments would provide limited funds (for building rental and the like = continuation of the "enhancement fund"). However, would we have energy and stability to do this effectively?

One option that DON is exploring is to have quarterly community-wide forums organized by DON to fulfill some of these purposes. DON is planning a "participatory budgeting" process for the grants that would have broader participation than the current district council based process. Both of these proposals will take a lot of DON leg work to be successful.

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