

**Council of the District of Columbia
OFFICE OF WARD 5 COUNCILMEMBER ZACHARY PARKER
MEMORANDUM**

1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20004

TO: Chairman Phil Mendelson

FROM: Councilmember Zachary Parker 

RE: Request to Agendize Measures for the February 3, 2026 Legislative Meeting

DATE: January 29, 2026

I request that the following measures be agendized for the February 3, 2026 Legislative Meeting:

- **Rhode Island Avenue Corridor Long-Term Lease Adjustment Emergency Declaration Resolution of 2026**
- **Rhode Island Avenue Corridor Long-Term Lease Adjustment Emergency Amendment Act of 2026**
- **Rhode Island Avenue Corridor Long-Term Lease Adjustment Temporary Amendment Act of 2026**

Under Subtitle I of the Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Support Act of 2025 (cited as the Economic Revitalization Initiatives Amendment Act of 2025), the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development Limited Grant-Making Authority Act of 2012 was amended to allow the Deputy Mayor to establish a Rhode Island Avenue Support Grant Program to award grants through a competitive process to eligible businesses and eligible commercial property owners in the Rhode Island Avenue Corridor.

In addition to other criteria, an eligible business must sign or intend to sign a long-term lease of a commercial property in the Rhode Island Avenue Corridor, while an eligible commercial property owner must sign or intend to sign a long-term lease with an eligible business for the commercial property in the Rhode Island Avenue Corridor. Under this subsection, a long-term lease was defined as a fixed-term rental agreement with a lease period of no fewer than 10 years, exclusive of options. This timeframe differed from the original proposal of 5 years, which was in line with industry standards.

With input from DMPED, this legislation is designed to amend the timeframe to no fewer than 5 years, with a minimum of 3 years remaining on an existing lease as of the closing date of the application period. Emergency legislation is needed as the longer timeframe may lead to a substantially decreased pool of eligible businesses to revitalize the Rhode Island Avenue Corridor, and runs counter to the purpose of the Economic Revitalization Initiatives Amendment Act of 2025.

- **Friends of Wangari Gardens Grant Emergency Declaration Resolution of 2026**
- **Friends of Wangari Gardens Grant Emergency Amendment Act of 2026**
- **Friends of Wangari Gardens Grant Temporary Amendment Act of 2026**

In the Report and Recommendations of the Committee on Transportation and the Environment on the Fiscal Year 2026 Budget for Agencies Under Its Purview (Report), the Committee on Transportation and the Environment (Committee) identified \$75,000 in the capital budget of the

District Department of Transportation (DDOT) for the “installation of a water meter and potable water source” at Wangari Gardens, a community garden-park located on DDOT property bordered by Kenyon St. NW, Park Pl. NW, and Irving St. NW.

Friends of Wangari Gardens is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that has a memorandum of understanding with DDOT regarding the use of Wangari Gardens. As detailed in the Report, Friends of Wangari Gardens has been using a fire hydrant permit from DC Water as its water source, but the cost of this arrangement has increased dramatically in recent years. Funds were allocated to DDOT because that agency is the custodian of the property where Wangari Gardens is located. Funds could not be appropriated to D.C. Water because D.C. Water is an independent self-financing authority. The Council adopted the Committee’s recommendation and included \$75,000 in capital funds for a water source at Wangari Gardens in the FY 2026 Local Budget Act of 2025 and FY 2026 Local Budget Emergency Act of 2025.

In conversations between DDOT staff, officers of Friends of Wangari Gardens, and council staff, it has become clear that the best path to expeditious completion of this project is for Friends of Wangari Gardens to manage the project directly and for DDOT to transfer the funds to them. While DDOT is the custodian of the property, it does not have staff capacity or expertise to engage with D.C. Water on the unique needs of Wangari Gardens.

Emergency legislation is needed to provide DDOT with authority to make this grant to Friends of Wangari Gardens. While the Department of Transportation Establishment Act of 2022, effective May 21, 2002 (D.C. Law 14-137; D.C. Official Code § 50-921.02(c)(1)) provides DDOT with the authority to make grants under \$1 million dollars, that authority is constrained by language requiring that those grants “achieve the District’s transportation goals, including safety objectives and to support streateries and the streatery program.” The emergency legislation clarifies that DDOT has the authority to make a grant to establish a water source at Wangari Gardens even though such a grant is not related to achieving the District’s transportation goals.

Copies of the draft measures are attached. For any questions or concerns, please contact Neferteria Brown, Legislative Director, at (771) 333-9734 or nbrown@dccouncil.gov.

cc: Members, Council of the District of Columbia
Office of the Secretary
Office of the General Counsel
Office of the Budget Director
Mayor’s Office of Policy and Legislative Affairs