



PHOTO/OLIVIA ANDERSON

D.C. Poultry Market, located at 3225 Colvin St., has been open since July 2021.

## Slaughterhouse mostly avoids disruption

**At least one complaint has been filed during the business' first year**

BY OLIVIA ANDERSON

Colvin Street is industrial, filled mostly with nondescript brick buildings. The atmosphere is quiet and empty, save for a few cars pulling in and out of parking spots and the distant echo of nearby Duke Street traffic.

It's not apparent at first

glance that almost one year has passed since a hotly controversial halal slaughterhouse opened on the block. In that time, the business has more or less avoided causing disruption among neighbors, though at least one complaint, in December 2021, has been filed against the butchery.

The Alexandria location of D.C. Poultry Market operates seven days a week at

3225 Colvin St., butchering live birds to order for customers, who choose from the 300 to 500 chickens shipped regularly from Lancaster, Pennsylvania. The chicken is then removed from its steel cage and slaughtered using halal practices that follow Islamic law.

The journey leading up to this point was rife with

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community pushback as well as a lawsuit that was eventually dismissed. And although City Council approved the live market in March 2019 in a 5-2 vote, with then Councilor Amy Jackson and then Vice Mayor Elizabeth Bennett-Parker dissenting, it subsequently faced multiple delays before opening in July 2021.

According to slaughterhouse owner Abdul Mused, things have been going smoothly since his shop opened last year.

“We opened and everybody’s happy and we have no complaints and we have become friends with all the neighbors,” Mused said. “We’ve been doing very, very, very well and we haven’t had any issues, either from the city, from the health department, from the agriculture department. ... It’s been better than expected, to be honest with you.”

Mused recalled that many residents once feared that animal remains would be routinely scattered throughout the street and putrid smells would waft through the air. He claimed that a big portion of the initial community apprehension came from an exchange of misinformation by animal rights activists.

Yet once the butchery opened and people saw that this was not the case, Mused said, they relaxed.

“They were thinking that blood will be in the street, the smell will be all over the places, the value would go down of the buildings in the neighborhood. So [the animal rights activists] made them think that we’re gonna butcher the lambs and goats and chickens in the street,” Mused said.

Greg Beiro, vice president of MCA Construction, located caddy-corner to the butchery, mostly corroborated Mused’s statement. He said that the



PHOTO/OLIVIA ANDERSON

Customers select their live chicken, which is then removed from a cage and slaughtered in another room.

months leading up to the opening were a bit rocky due to skeptical neighbors and residents, including Beiro himself, who originally thought a slaughterhouse might not be a “proper usage” of the space.

Looking back on the prior year, Beiro said he doesn’t have many qualms anymore.

“They’ve been fine. I think people were initially concerned, legitimately so, about the odor. There’s really been nothing that I’ve considered too offensive, actually,” Beiro said. “... I think most peoples’ concerns haven’t been really fully realized. I think they’re fine – they’re just trying to make a living like everybody else.”

Other nearby business owners – including Frolick Dogs, Dogtopia and MB Bakery – either did not respond to requests for comment or declined to comment.

Though it appears the slaughterhouse hasn’t posed recent reported problems, the first few months after opening were a different story. In early December 2021, resident Elizabeth Seltzer said she heard reports from several nearby

businesses of “foul smelling sludge” consisting of flesh and feathers dumped on the corner of Roth and Colvin.

Seltzer, who in 2019 represented the plaintiff in a lawsuit against the slaughterhouse’s potential opening, stopped by the site at 6:30 a.m. one morning to check it out. Sure enough, despite it still being dark outside, she saw the entrails and snapped a few pictures.

“You can clearly see the chicken feathers and the slime and the sludge. It was absolutely, definitively, slaughter remains, without question,” Seltzer said.

A complaint was filed with the city, which responded by sending a zoning inspector to examine the facility. During the visit, the inspector found that the business was observed to be compliant with SUP conditions and left Mused with a warning notice based on the photographic evidence.

Mused, however, asserted that the complaint in December 2021 was because of the nearby garbage company –

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not his business.

“The garbage company, they picked up our garbage and they were overloaded from a previous pickup and they spilled some of the garbage. It came out of their truck. It wasn’t in our shop, it was a couple blocks down,” he said.

During the city inspector’s visit, Mused said the inspector should instead contact the garbage company for any follow-up questions. He said that nearby businesses noticed the entrails and immediately incorrectly targeted the shop.

“Anything they spill, [the neighbors] think is me. No, it’s not. My garbage is sealed in containers, like any typical meat market,” Mused said. “But that day, when they called, I told one of my guys, ‘Even if it’s not ours, just go down the block and clean it.’ To be good to the neighbors.”

Beiro said he remembered both the “chicken slicks” trailing down the road from Colvin to Roth and Mused’s immediate handling of the situation.

“It was pretty nasty, but they got right on it. They had guys out there with their brooms and trash cans picking it up, and I haven’t seen any of that in months,” Beiro said.

Another possible violation took place early on after the butchery opened.

According to Beiro, he and other nearby businesses also noticed that early on the slaughterhouse would open its garage doors and front doors seemingly for ventilation purposes.

The city requires in the slaughterhouse’s SUP that the facility keep its doors closed to prevent the release of particulates and odors, making the slaughterhouse’s open doors illegal. Beiro said that he hasn’t seen any open doors in recent months.

“When they first opened, they must have been having



PHOTO/ELIZABETH SELTZER

Neighbors filed a complaint against the slaughterhouse in December 2021 after animal remains trailed from Colvin Street to Roth Street.

some problems with the air in there, because they kept opening those doors. They had a lot open, and I’m pretty sure people on the street were recording them. I think the city did come down and the doors have been closed now,” Beiro said. “All the doors are always closed now. I think they had some hiccups in the beginning but I think they’ve been fine.”

Beyond the technical violations, Seltzer expressed general concerns about the ways in which the chickens are slaughtered, and the quality of the food being sold to the public.

The Colvin Street facility is considered an exempt slaughterhouse, meaning that it is legally free from inspection under the United States Department of Agriculture Poultry Products Inspection Act.

Specifically, the facility is not required to undergo federal “continuous bird-by-bird inspection and the presence of inspectors during the slaughter of poultry and processing of poultry products,” according to the PPIA. This exemp-

tion generally applies to owners’ private poultry holdings or businesses that process a small amount of poultry.

However, those exempt under the PPIA are not allowed to create adulterated or misbranded products. But Seltzer argued that an exemption can result in certain pathogens and illnesses appearing in animals, such as salmonella, that are spread by touching, wiping eyes or not properly cooking the meat.

“If you want to go in and you want to buy that and that’s what you want, well I think you have the right to be informed about what you’re getting,” Seltzer said. “... That’s one of my concerns as a citizen – that people should know.”

Yet Mused stood firmly in defense of his business and operations, encouraging curious residents to stop by and see for themselves.

“To be honest with you, if you go to my store, it’s the cleanest store on the whole block,” Mused said. “You just walk into it and you’ll see.”

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