

Jack's April report

On March 16, the ANC did the following:

- Declined to pass three resolutions concerning the mural proposed for 3125 Mount Pleasant Street;
- Advised the District Council to disapprove contracts for the Mount Pleasant Library renovation/expansion;
- Advised the Mayor and the MPD to reject any involvement with the Federal "Secure Communities" program (my resolution);
- Objected to the manner of implementation of the "Secure Communities" program.

On April 6, we held an "informal" public meeting, mainly discussing ideas for enhancing the commercial strip.

I've supported **Byron Peck's mural** from the beginning, over a year ago, when it was proposed for the Heller's building. In May, 2009, the location was shifted to the Raven building (now known as Atonatl). In December I introduced a resolution of support, which failed, only Oliver Tunda voting with me. In the March newsletter I noted that Dave Bosserman would introduce a resolution of support at our next meeting, which I intended to vote for.

Well, that newsletter item brought a substantial response objecting to the mural, not the usual "I don't like it" (there have been plenty of those), but "it won't work", because the detail in the mural would be invisible from the street. Byron produced a Photoshop image of the mural as it would be seen from the sidewalk, and the critics were right. In an attempt to please numerous constituencies, Byron had put in too much detail, and the mural wouldn't work, not from the street.

Dave's resolution of support failed to pass, only Oliver Tunda (again) voting for the mural as planned. Gregg Edwards then offered a resolution flatly objecting to the mural. That failed, only Phil and Gregg voting for it. I then introduced a compromise resolution, calling for a revision of the mural to address the "too detailed" criticism. My resolution failed, only "Stormy" Scott voting with me. Why my compromise failed to win votes from mural supporters I do not know. Surely a "revise it and try again" would have been better than "no", which is what the absence of a supportive resolution from the ANC amounts to.

Last November, the Metropolitan Police (MPD) quietly signed up for the **Federal "Secure Communities" program**. On March 8 some of us met with MPD representatives to find out why they had signed up for this program, and what it meant for our neighborhood.

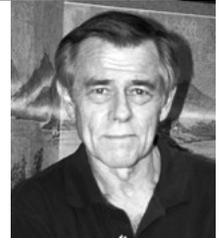
Well, beware of any Government program with such a "motherhood" name (remember the "Patriot Act"?). Councilmember Graham rightly declared this name "straight from George Orwell". Briefly, this program makes our police agents of ICE, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency.

The MPD claims that their participation in this program will help them in "taking dangerous criminals off of our streets". No, it won't. "Secure Communities" has nothing to do with identifying "dangerous criminals". It's about identifying and deporting "illegal" immigrants, whether "criminals" or not.

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Persons arrested for serious offenses – not convicted of anything, just arrested – will have their fingerprints sent to ICE to determine their immigration status. Then, even if they are never tried for nor convicted of any crime, they are subject to deportation.

Why is that a bad thing? Because the MPD, to its credit, has done its best to avoid becoming immigration police, knowing that that would impair their ability to fight crime in our neighborhoods. Effective policing requires the cooperation of everyone in the community, because most crimes are solved not by fancy forensics, but by someone coming to the police with information. If no one comes forward, because residents fear and distrust the police, then crimes aren't solved, and criminals remain free to strike again. That harms all of us.

The ANC unanimously passed my resolution denouncing the MPD's participation in "Secure Communities", and on March 19 I testified to the Council Committee on Public Safety and the Judiciary, arguing that MPD participation would harm law enforcement and the safety of the entire public.

The MPD was set to begin its collaboration with ICE in mid-March, but has thought better of it, having encountered strong opposition from immigrant organizations and others. (The Adams Morgan ANC also passed a resolution objecting to MPD participation in this program.)

My position on immigration should be clear. I participated in the Immigration Rights rally on the Mall on March 21, proud to be a native-born "Anglo" in support of immigrants. (My earliest-known ancestor arrived here 295 years ago, a refugee from English persecution of Quakers.) As New York Times columnist Lawrence Downs wrote, comparing this rally to a "Tea Party" demonstration on the same day: "Kill the bill! Si se puede! Same beat, different drums. I'll take the one that rings with patience and hope. Sounds more American."

The **March 24 PSA (Police Service Area) meeting** was conducted in Spanish. All the residents present spoke Spanish, and Councilmember Graham sent Steve Fernandez, a native Spanish speaker, from his office. This is building much-needed bonds of trust between our Latino residents and the police. Residents were telling the police about what's going on on Mount Pleasant Street, such as Latino gang activity, when the police aren't around to see. We need this.

Chief Lanier might attend our next PSA meeting, on April 28, at Councilmember Graham's request.

Those "**permanent**" visitor passes distributed to residents last year expired on March 31. Happily, Councilmember

Graham has renewed this program for another year, and residents are now receiving new passes in the mail. (Mine arrived on April 1.) As for the old passes, Parking Enforcement is supposed to honor them through April 16. Of course, some of these officers haven't gotten the message, and have written tickets for "expired" visitor passes. If you've gotten one, contact me.

For years, **a homeless man has lived in Rock Creek Park**, in a camp just on the other side of the Park Road bridge over Piney Branch. We've seen him countless times, making his way through our neighborhood, generally hobbling along with a crutch.

On March 8, he was found dead at his outdoors "home" in the Park. Natural causes, I presume; surviving February outdoors must have been hard. I understand that a sister from North Carolina came to DC to retrieve his body.

His name was Bruce Field, and I gather that he once was a young man with a promising future, but mental illness did him in. He wasn't a bad guy. When offered a civil greeting, he would reply, and I think he was grateful for such little gestures of ordinary respect. But he wouldn't hold a conversation with anyone.

I'm impressed by the number of Mount Pleasant people who have expressed their sadness at his passing. He was just a disheveled homeless guy, with a mind lost to dementia, but he was part of the neighborhood. Nobody objected to his presence, and many residents are sad to hear that he died.

On March 22, the ABC Board held a "roll call" meeting concerning the **night-club license application by Haydee's Restaurant**. "Mediation" between the restaurant and opponents (the MPNA, and one "group of five or more" residents) is set for April 8, then there will be a "status" hearing on April 21. Nothing significant will actually happen until a "protest" hearing, set for May 26.

You would think police officers would have better things to do than pretend that they're DPW Parking Enforcement officers. But one Officer B Davis, Badge #2919, seems to aspire to that status, and has **afflicted residents with numerous parking tickets**, including bogus tickets for 25-foot parking at intersections, and an absurd "Improperly Affixed Registration Sticker" citation. I've complained to Lt Pate about this. MPD officers should be here to protect us from crime and criminals, not to ride herd on residents' parking habits. Parking Enforcement can handle that job, and they're capable of botching it up all by themselves.

Exactly one year ago, a **daytime-only parking-pass program** was to start up, allowing commuters to Mount Pleasant institutions to park on RPP blocks for a small fee, about \$2.50 a day. A number of residents endorsed RPP zoning of Monroe, Newton, and Ingleside on the understanding that this day-pass system would compensate for the absence of a commercial lot in Mount Pleasant and minimize the hardship imposed on, especially, employees of Bancroft Elementary and the Stoddard Baptist Home.

Well, that plan evaporated, even as our parking signs were modified to indicate where these passes would be valid (IDD

blocks). No one admits responsibility for killing it, but abruptly, the system that was all set to be in place by last March disappeared.

I've been struggling to revive that program, because I never intended RPP zoning to be such a burden on our institutional employees. But the most recent word from DDOT, March 17, is that "DDOT does not have the resources at this time to institute this pilot program". And that's that.

We might have had a better outcome if the employees at Bancroft and Stoddard had promptly agreed to and endorsed this day-pass parking deal, willing to pay a modest \$2.50 per day for all-day parking. But no, they complained bitterly about the cost, believing that they had some right to free parking on our neighborhood streets. Well, if the residents are ambivalent about allowing commuter parking, and commuters object to paying anything at all for parking, where's the popular support for this program? No wonder DDOT and CM Graham let the program disappear.

I waited for one car to pass, then stepped out into the crosswalk at 19th and Park. But the driver of the next car at the stop sign wasn't about to wait for any pedestrian, despite the law requiring drivers to **stop for pedestrians in crosswalks**. She actually swerved out into the oncoming-traffic lane, intending to rush by in front of me. An older woman, I guess she's of the generation that thinks that automobile drivers own the road, and everyone else is supposed to step aside.

Some of us on the ANC are proposing making Mount Pleasant Street, or at least one block of it, into a **"pedestrian encounter zone"**, where pedestrians can cross the street anywhere they like (as they do, pretty much), and drivers are required to yield to them, anywhere. This works in Europe, and it can work here, too, on a road characterized by slow traffic and numerous pedestrians. The "encounter zone" just gives pedestrians priority, everywhere, and slows traffic to a pedestrian-safe speed.

An extension of this is to make the parking lane in front of the several restaurants between Lamont Street and Park Road into a "curbless sidewalk", allowing the restaurants to open up sidewalk cafes along that block. The sidewalk cafe at Don Juan's is a great success. Imagine five or six of these along the block from Marley's to Heller's.

The new director of DDOT, Gabe Klein, thinks this would be a wonderful thing to try. The ANC resolution calls for a study (not yet implementation) of such measures. I'd like to see our commercial strip be like an old-time "town square", where people meet and socialize, instead of a noisy roadway dominated by car, truck, and bus traffic.

The last time we saw high temperatures of 80 or above was October 9. **The first 80-plus-degree temperature this year came on April 5**, almost exactly six months later. Winter's over, and the record snows of February are just a bad memory. Except, of course, for our gardens, which are disaster areas of broken plants.

The next ANC <i>business</i> meeting will be on Tuesday, April 20 . The next <i>informal</i> meeting will be on Tuesday, May 4 .
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