

Jack's April report

At the March meeting, the ANC:

- Agreed to spend up to \$3500 to have the Main Street “gumbuster” put to use along Mount Pleasant Street, removing gum from the sidewalks;
- Objected to the heavy traffic violation fines proposed in December by DDOT, and advised the District Council to consider fines adjusted according to an offender's income;
- Endorsed entertainment, increased hours of operation, and termination of an old “voluntary agreement” for Marleny's Restaurant;
- Agreed to provide ANC endorsement of a “stipulated liquor license” for the business moving into the Heller's Bakery site, upon request;
- Implemented minor technical revisions to the ANC1D bylaws, adjusting for the decrease from six to five commissioners;
- Advised that Mount Pleasant be included in the DDOT Crosstown Multimodal Transportation Study, which currently ends at 16th Street, excluding our neighborhood;
- Advised improved DMV procedures for Limited Purpose Driver's Licenses, currently very inconvenient for applicants.

DDOT (the District Department of Transportation) is developing a plan for expedited bus service on 16th Street, to encourage more use of bus transit downtown. One element of this plan is the **elimination of northbound and southbound stops on 16th at Newton and Lamont**, no doubt to reduce the amount of time the bus spends at stops.

Since January we've heard complaints about that proposal, from residents who would have to walk extra blocks to the bus stops on 16th at Park Road or Irving Street. It seems to me that little time will actually be saved by the elimination of these stops, because the time at a stop is governed by the number of people boarding at the stop, not the stop-and-restart itself. If just as many people are boarding the bus, but at one stop, instead of two, little time will be saved. For some residents, especially the older or the disabled, the extra walking distance will be a hardship, as well as a deterrent to taking a bus. If DDOT wants to encourage more residents to take the bus downtown, this is not the way to do it.

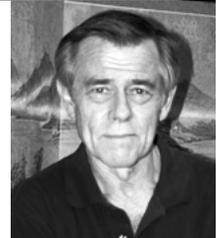
I put a resolution advising DDOT to retain the Lamont and Newton bus stops on the January ANC agenda, but that meeting was ruined by the Library's early closing on our meeting day, due to the January blizzard. It was also on the February agenda, but only two commissioners showed up for that meeting, one shy of a quorum, so nothing could be done. So my resolution was on the March agenda. But at this meeting, much to my dismay, one commissioner complained that he needed time to hear from residents about the bus stops, evidently having ignored the issue since it was first raised, two months earlier. So my resolution was tabled until the April meeting. Maybe then this commission will finally respond to the complaints sent to us three months ago.

For years, residents have complained about **traffic speed on the 2000 block of Park Road**, that last block between our neighborhood and Rock Creek Park. Speed humps and the

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Jack McKay, April 17, 2016

Jack McKay
3200 19th St, Tel. 462-8692
jack.mckay@verizon.net
<http://DCJack.org>



like are not permitted on that road, because it is classified a “minor arterial” (meaning that it handles a lot of traffic passing through Mount Pleasant, neither originating nor terminating in Mount Pleasant). Since 2009 this ANC has been asking the MPD for a speed camera on Park Road.

I am not a big fan of speed cameras, which can too easily be merely “revenue generators” for the District. The DC Government has been quite distressed because its “revenues” from speed cameras have been less than expected, leaving a gap in the District's budget. There are at least nine speed cameras in DC that generate more than a million dollars a year in speeding fines, each. For those cameras, safety may be little more than an excuse.

Nonetheless, a speed camera is the best way to reduce traffic speeds on that Park Road block, given that speed humps and the like are prohibited. This is all about slowing drivers down, not inflicting fines on anybody. Drivers tend to speed up when they see parkland ahead, exiting residential congestion, and they also emerge from the park at speed, having sped through the parkland.

On March 25, at long last, that speed camera was installed, on a streetlight pole in the middle of the block. *Mount Pleasant drivers beware: anyone exceeding 35 mph may get an unwelcome surprise in the mail.* I am requesting “Photo Enforced” signs for the speed limit signs at either end of the block, because we want drivers to know that that camera is there, and to refrain from speeding down that block.

One resident of this Park Road block has been insistent that we impose the **DDOT-proposed “traffic calming” by road narrowing**. Part of the speeding problem is perhaps the great width of that block of Park Road, widened by bike lanes on either side. A standard technique for “calming” traffic is to visually narrow roads, a “choker” technique.

DDOT has suggested that the bike lane on the east side of the road be eliminated, and a concrete median be built to squeeze passing vehicles closer to the parked cars, thus perhaps persuading drivers – cautious ones, anyway – to slow down.

There are two grave problems with this approach. Most importantly, it eliminates the bike-lane buffer space between the parked cars and passing traffic. Right now, if you're a resident getting into or out of your parked car, there's a five- or six-foot safe distance between you and passing vehicles. DDOT would reduce that to perhaps two feet. This is hardly an enhancement to your personal safety.

Perhaps if this forcing of traffic up close to the parked cars really slowed traffic, it would be worthwhile; but it doesn't. DDOT says that such a "choker" reduces the 85th-percentile traffic speed by seven percent, which in this case amounts to 2 mph, dropping that speed from the present 32 mph to 30 mph. (This is confirmed by observation on the 1800 block of Park Road, which has no bike-lane buffer space, and for which the 85th-percentile traffic speed is 29 mph.)

One doesn't have to be a trained traffic engineer to know which of these two situations is more hazardous:

- (1) Traffic moving at 32 mph, separated from your parked car by the five-foot bike lane; or
- (2) Traffic moving at 30 mph, just two feet from the side of your parked car.

With the concrete median forcing passing vehicles close to the parked cars, a driver won't even be able to steer away from the parked cars, to give anyone getting into or out of a car additional safety clearance, or to avoid an abruptly opening car door.

Imagine, say, trying to help a child into a back-seat toddler seat, standing perforce in the street, the car door open, and here comes traffic, compelled by that concrete median to brush close by you, threatening even to rip your car door off. And for this you get a 2 mph speed reduction! That's a bad idea, and under no circumstances will I support this notion.

There have been occasional reports about proposed **road reconstruction work on Beach Drive**, work which will result in disruptive, months-long closures. When? That's hard to say at this time. Proposals to do the job were due on March 29, just a couple of weeks ago. I'll keep track of it. Certainly the road needs work! Pothole city.

Beach Drive, by the way, was supposed to be a quiet road for touring Rock Creek Park, not a commuter highway from the Maryland suburbs to downtown DC. The tunnel connecting Beach Drive to the Rock Creek Parkway, completed in 1966, inadvertently made Beach Drive a popular commuter route.

On April 12, a District contractor came through the neighborhood with **replacement street trees**, seedless sweetgums. One is right at my home, replacing the maple that a District contractor truck driver accidentally ripped down last June.

Now it is up to us residents to help these trees survive our long, hot summers. Summer rainfall isn't reliable, and the District ignores its trees, once planted. So when the hot, dry months arrive, we nearby residents have to water those young trees. Too often I've seen young trees left to die because the adjacent residents didn't take responsibility for them. That's a loss for all of us. I've accepted responsibility for the sweetgum near my house, and I hope other residents with newly planted street trees near their homes do the same.

Way back last November, DDOT suggested that **bike lanes be marked on Adams Mill Road**, from the Klinge Road intersection to Kenyon Street. No curbside parking would be affected. Essentially, the two southbound traffic lanes would become one traffic lane and one bike lane. Traffic on Adams Mill is never heavy enough to warrant two lanes, so there will

be little effect on traffic flow. The bike lanes would facilitate bicycle access to the Rock Creek Park bike path via the Zoo, and perhaps via Klinge Road, if that conversion to a bike lane comes to pass.

I've had this bike-lane proposal on the ANC agenda since November, but the commission has yet to respond to the DDOT request for our support. I brought it up again at the March meeting, but one commissioner wanted more time to consider the proposal. (More time? Since November?) This is very frustrating!

It won't be long before **mosquitoes** are again a plague here. The worst of the mosquitoes are the Asian Tigers, very aggressive beasts that feed all day long, not just in the early morning and late evening. Closely related to the *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes that are notorious for spreading Zika, dengue, and yellow fever, Asian Tigers, *Aedes albopictus*, are also capable of spreading nasty tropical diseases, including Zika.

These *Aedes* mosquitoes are "container" mosquitoes. The females lay eggs on the dry walls of a small container, which hatch when rainwater fills the container. The first step in mosquito control is for us residents to empty out every such container after a summer rainfall.

Another means of reducing mosquito populations is the "lethal ovitrap", which attracts mosquitoes by appearing to be a good egg-laying place. The trap captures the female after the egg-laying, as well as preventing any hatched mosquitoes from escaping. These devices are not expensive, under ten dollars, and I'm suggesting to our hardware store that they be stocked for sale there. In its entire lifetime, a mosquito generally remains within a hundred yards or so of its breeding place. So we could achieve a significant reduction in mosquitoes in our yards, with no pesticides, and no spraying, if every back yard here has a few of these mosquito traps.

The most common crime here in Mount Pleasant is **Theft from Auto**. Many of us have learned, the hard way, that we just cannot keep anything of value in our parked cars. Frequently the damage done to the car – the busted window – costs more to repair than the value of whatever the thief stole. It's infuriating!

Last year there were 136 such thefts reported in Mount Pleasant, about 11 per month. Curiously, the rate seems to have declined this year, with just 15 reported so far; that's 5 per month. Let's hope this trend continues.

One morning in March I objected to a driver's use of his car horn, twice, to signal to a Lamont Street resident that he was there and waiting. The driver claimed that it was legal to use his horn as a signal, and too bad if the noise disturbed the neighbors. No, it's not: DCMR 18, 730.3, "The driver of a motor vehicle shall, *when reasonably necessary to ensure safe operation*, give audible warning with his or her horn, but *shall not otherwise use the horn when upon a highway.*" In short, **honking one's horn for anything other than a safety warning is illegal.**

The next meeting of the ANC will be on **Monday, April 25, 7:00 pm, at the Mount Pleasant Library.**