

June report to constituents

Here is news of the **June 5 and 19 ANC meetings**, and other happenings in Mount Pleasant. At the June 5 regular meeting, the ANC:

- Endorsed a Monroe Street resident's request for a short-term blockage of the road, to allow a crane to install a rooftop air conditioning unit (my resolution);
- Requested pedestrian crosswalk downcount timers for the Irving Street crossing of 16th Street (my resolution);
- Requested "Stop for Pedestrians in Crosswalk" pylons for crosswalks on Mount Pleasant Street (my resolution);
- Advised the Historic Preservation Review Board to permit a front door replacement on Rosemount Avenue (the Historic Preservation Office objects to their current replacement door, even though it's invisible from the street, because "the new door is not compatible with a Tudor Revival rowhouse" (my resolution);
- Advised Parks and Rec to support a "Community Arts and Action" series for Sunday afternoons in Lamont Park this summer;
- Advised the Metropolitan Police to undertake "targeted enforcement of the law requiring drivers to stop for pedestrians in crosswalks", and called on the Mayor, and the District Council, to require the MPD to do so (my resolution);
- Advised the Alcoholic Beverage Control Board to approve requests by Haydee's, Don Juan's, and Don Jaime's Restaurants to terminate their current "voluntary agreements";
- Advised the ABC Board to terminate all "voluntary agreements" with Mount Pleasant restaurants, and to replace those VAs with an agreement requiring participation in a "Responsible Hospitality Partnership";
- Advised the ABC Board to consolidate the eight Mount Pleasant restaurant license proceedings;
- Authorized the Commercial Corridor Committee to spend up to \$1000 in support of organization of the Mount Pleasant Responsible Hospitality Partnership.

On June 19 we held a second meeting, this one for "informal discussion" of this "Responsible Hospitality" undertaking (see box), and a shorter discussion of affordable housing.

As always, this newsletter is printed and delivered **at my own personal expense**, with absolutely no public funds employed.

My requests for **pedestrian safety measures** on Mount Pleasant Street, and at Irving and 16th, received a prompt and affirmative reply from George Brnayan at DDOT: "Irving & Mt. Pleasant Sts. is scheduled to get countdowns by June 30, 2007. On June 6th I sent a request to Traffic Services for the pedestrian pylon signs for the 3 unsignalized crosswalks on Mt. Pleasant St. We have had trouble keeping these pylons in stock (they are very popular), so there may be a delay of a month to get those installed."

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Jack McKay, July 5, 2007



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

The **next ANC meeting** is on *Wednesday, July 11, 7:00 pm*, La Casa Community Center, 3166 Mt Pleasant Street. For an agenda, see anc1d.org.

This is the policy statement approved at the June 19 meeting:

1. A new Mount Pleasant hospitality management umbrella organization will be called **the Mount Pleasant Responsible Hospitality Partnership**.
2. The purposes of the Mount Pleasant Responsible Hospitality Partnership will be (1) to increase the cultural vitality and diversity and economic viability for both businesses and residents; and (2) to actively mitigate nuisances.
3. The initial governing board of the Mount Pleasant Responsible Hospitality Partnership will be made up of representatives of Mount Pleasant residents, merchants and liquor license licensees, and community groups.
4. The Mount Pleasant Responsible Hospitality Partnership's initial governing board will meet soon to set up the mission, structure, and rules of the organization.

There was considerable debate of the second item. Gregg Edwards wanted this statement to declare explicitly that the top priority was increasing the cultural diversity and vitality of the commercial corridor. I objected, asserting that the first priority should be controlling any adverse consequences of the "hospitality" businesses, such as noisy people on the street late at night. It seems to me that, if this Partnership succeeds in controlling such problems, then our restaurants can offer more live music and entertainment, and increased vitality will naturally follow. Gregg eventually settled for the statement as written above, which might be interpreted as putting "cultural vitality", etc., first, or might be interpreted as putting the two goals on an equal footing.

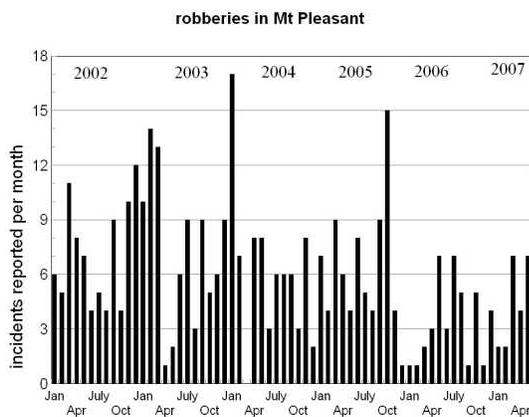
If this "Responsible Hospitality Partnership" is unable to control nuisance problems attributed to Mount Pleasant restaurants, then it will be a failure. *That has to be priority one.*

Mr Branyan of DDOT also endorsed my call for an **MPD program of enforcement of the law requiring drivers to stop for pedestrians in crosswalks**: “Thanks for the letter to the Chief and Mayor. This is exactly what they need to hear”, he wrote. I have asked our MPD officers directly for such a law enforcement program, but they decline, complaining that they’re already stretched thin dealing with “real” crime. No doubt, but the principal complaint of pedestrians in DC is the difficulty in safely crossing streets, and the refusal of drivers to stop for pedestrians in crosswalks. Unless the MPD gets serious about enforcing pedestrian rights, DC drivers will continue to refuse to yield to pedestrians in crosswalks. Indeed, the anti-pedestrian attitude of drivers here is so strong that it’s dangerous for drivers to stop for pedestrians, because you may be rear-ended if you do. Only MPD enforcement can put a stop to that attitude.

The **Mount Pleasant Traffic Study** is beginning. There will be three public meetings, at which all residents can raise their concerns about traffic and parking issues. No dates for these meetings have yet been set.

The **Rosemount Avenue historic-preservation window dispute** is “on hold”, the hearing having been scheduled, then postponed, at each of the recent Historic Preservation Review Board meetings. I’ll argue that the vinyl windows installed by the young owners should be allowed, given that they meet the *community standard* of “harmony” with the area. The Historic Preservation Office wants all their new windows removed and replaced with “authentic” replicas of the originals, i.e., wood where the frames were wood, metal where the frames were metal. They also want the new door taken out and replaced with one that meets their “Tudor Revival” standard, even though that side-facing door is invisible from the street. I think this goes beyond the law, which requires only “compatibility”, not “replication”.

This illustrates the difference in Historic Preservation as it is imposed, and what Mount Pleasant people want from it. We want our houses to *look* right, and to fit appropriately in the architecture of the neighborhood. True preservationists aren’t content with appearance, but want *historically accurate construction* of our houses, at whatever cost to the homeowner, and even if practically invisible to the public.



“A robbery occurred at 19th & Monroe St NW at approximately 4:30 pm on July 1. Complainant reports she was approached by an unknown suspect who tried to put a plastic bag on her head. Complainant moved and suspect struck her causing her to fall to the ground. Suspect then took complainant’s purse and fled the scene.” -- MPD

“A robbery occurred at 18th & Newton St NW at approximately 2:46 am on May 20. Complainant reports while walking a vehicle pulled up alongside her. An unknown suspect jumped out of the vehicle with a gun in his hand and stated ‘Give me your s***.’ Complainant threw down her purse and ran.” -- MPD

Despite these troubling incidents, the frequency of robberies in Mount Pleasant remains about normal. It’s been worse.

Haydee’s, Don Juan’s, and Don Jaime’s Restaurants have petitioned for **termination of their existing “voluntary agreements”**. This is a necessary step, because VAs remain in force forever, if not challenged. New VAs may be written, but the old VAs remain in effect, including the live music bans. (Dancing is also banned by the MPNA, and if the restaurant patrons try to move tables to create a space for dancing, the restaurateur is required by the MPNA VA to stop them. Why does the MPNA object to dancing? That seems puritanical.)

The Marx Café has agreed with the MPNA to be allowed “entertainment” (music?) on Sunday afternoons, and just two evening hours’ worth, from 9 to 11 pm, for no more than 12 “special events” a year. Laurie Collins, president of the MPNA, claims that this pittance is all that Aleks Duni, the owner of Marx, wanted: “Nope, wasn’t our idea at all. It was what the establishment wanted and it was modeled after the ANC agreement [of 1999]. Contrary to some who want to believe otherwise, there were a few of us who sat during these negotiations who can swear under oath that this is truly what the businesses wanted. You see, those who want to think otherwise weren’t there--nor were they “invited” by the business to participate. I don’t say this with arrogance, I say this with 100% confidence, that this is fact.”

I spoke to Aleks on June 26, and he is in truth very unhappy with this pitifully small entertainment allowance. He told me that the extra revenue he might get from offering live entertainment under the MPNA restrictions won’t even cover the annual fee for his entertainment license. Aleks’ lawyer has told him that he’s going to be locked into this restrictive agreement for another six years, adding to his dismay.

More important, I believe that Mount Pleasant residents who patronize the Marx Café want more than one short evening of music and entertainment per month at Marx. As one new arrival to the neighborhood said, standing outside her new home on 18th Street, “Mount Pleasant Street needs some perking up”. Yes, it does.