

Jack's November report

On October 20, the ANC did the following:

- Endorsed the transfer (sale) of the (closed) SuperSave Market's retailer liquor license to El Progreso International Market.

On November 3, the ANC held an "informal" meeting, which was quite well attended, including a large Latino group. A main topic was alcohol policy, and the director of the Alcoholic Beverage Regulation Administration, Fred Moosally, attended our meeting. Fred, who's closely followed our live-music battles from the beginning, observed that we've now got live music in Mount Pleasant, "and the sky hasn't fallen".

It's **autumn-leaves season**, and DPW is sucking up leaves in our neighborhood, their "first pass" through. Pretty soon they'll go away, and return after November 22 for a second pass. Residents are to rake leaves *into the tree box*, between the sidewalk and the curb, before that date. Please don't rake or blow leaves into the street, where they just clog gutters and storm drains, and may even start fires, ignited by hot catalytic converters on the underside of parked cars.

The loose leaves collected by the vacuum trucks will be composted for garden use. Leaves put in trash bags will go to the landfill. Guess it's clear which method is preferable.

On November 2, U Street restaurant owner Nora Amaya was found dead in her Woodner apartment, a **homicide**, Mount Pleasant's second this year. As in the first, last July, in the Harvard Towers, the homicides occurred inside the victim's own apartment, with no sign of forced entry.

In October I described the case of a guy last August **firing seven 9-mm rounds into an occupied bedroom** on Adams Mill Road, and the MPD statement that the man arrested for the act "will face criminal charges of robbery and assault with a dangerous weapon". In fact, the U.S. Attorney for the District charged him with only a "misdemeanor theft". Then, on November 9, even this pitiful little charge disappeared, the case "dropped without prosecution".

This horrific incident has been, for me, an education into the way the justice system *really* works. The fundamental flaw: inadequate public resources for investigating crimes and tracking down criminals. Don't believe what you see on TV.

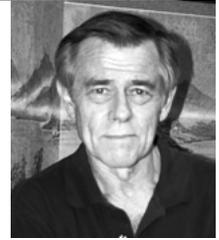
We continue to struggle with the **parking issues on the newly RPP-zoned blocks of Monroe, Newton, Ingleside, and 19th**. A "working group" of block residents met at the Stoddard Baptist Home on October 21 to talk about what, if anything, should be done for the Bancroft and Stoddard employees who are now prohibited from all-day parking on these blocks. There seems to be general agreement to a day-pass program for these and other Mount Pleasant employees, but only with a number of stringent conditions – and definitely not "free".

Meanwhile, a number of Bancroft and Stoddard employees appear to be trying to beat RPP by using "visitor" passes, either those obtained from the MPD, or the "permanent" passes lately provided to residents. This is a very counter-productive tactic, because residents being asked to give up

ANC 1D03 NEWSLETTER #86

Jack McKay, November 10, 2009

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



some parking for day passes are very displeased by employees misusing "visitor" passes for commuter parking.

The Baptist Home has sent a letter to its employees instructing them to cease any such activity.

A representative of the DC Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program attended the October 1 meeting of residents at the Rosemount Center, and later sent a letter demanding that the residents of the Stoddard Baptist Home be "given the same opportunities and rights as their neighbors". I replied that, if the Home is to be treated as a "residence", then the curb alongside the Home must be zoned residential, RPP. On the other hand, if the Home is considered an "institution", then the curb can remain unzoned, and the nonresident employees of the Home can continue to park there. The Home can't be a "residence" in one breath, then an "institution" in the next. If it's a "residence", then that curbside goes RPP, and the Home, being a "group home", not an apartment house, gets exactly one permanent visitor's pass.

I haven't heard back from the Ombudsman's office. I don't think they foresaw the consequences of treating the Home as a residential household. Right now institutional status serves the Home fairly well, as they use that unzoned curbside space as their employee parking lot. I'd sure like to see the day passes for the employees of the Home, and of Bancroft.

Daylight saving time is gone, and now the sun sets at 5 pm. The earliest sunset of the year comes in *early* December, when the sun sets at about a quarter to five. By the time of the winter solstice, sunset is already coming several minutes later in the day.

This early darkness emphasizes the darkness of some of our streets, lit only by the occasional streetlight. I advocate keeping porch lights on *all day and night*. For one thing, a street of brightly lit front porches is a lot cheerier than a street of black darkness. For another, a dark porch can be a signal to burglars that nobody's home, especially if the homeowner habitually turns a porch light on upon getting home from work. A third reason for keeping porch lights lit, whether you're home or not, is to provide a refuge for anyone on the street who might feel threatened. A frightened resident can head for the nearest well-lit porch and act as if they're home, or are awaiting a friend to answer the doorbell. And a fourth reason: our mail is being delivered after dark these days. Give the mail delivery folks a little light on your porch.

I use compact fluorescent lights (CFLs) in my porch lights. Running a small CFL all day and night costs about 13 cents a week, or less than seven dollars per *year*. For this you can

brighten up the neighborhood, and provide a bit of additional security.

Speaking of security, I analyzed some statistics of **thefts from automobile**. Those are a plague, our neighborhood suffering about 11 automobile break-ins every month. No place in the neighborhood is safe from these thefts.

It's perhaps surprising that the theft-from-auto rate in Mount Pleasant (thefts per month per resident) is *lower* than in any other neighborhood in the Third MPD District (roughly, Ward One). It's *lower* than the average for DC as a whole, and about half the average for the Third MPD District.

Of course, if you're a victim, it's small solace to be told that the problem is worse in other neighborhoods. The best advice is, as always, be city-smart, don't leave apparently valuable stuff visible in your car (e.g., GPS systems).

Residents entering Mount Pleasant from Porter/Klingel and continuing along Klingel to Park Road know how perverse the timing of those two traffic lights, the first at Adams Mill, the second at Walbridge, is. Less than 10 seconds after the Adams Mill light goes green, the Walbridge light goes red, and no one travelling at legal speed can make that second light. Aside from the frustration factor, some drivers bypass these lights by taking the right onto Adams Mill, then left into the alley, through the alley, left onto Walbridge, and a right-on-red at Park Road. But using our alleys as if they are streets is a very unsafe practice. Exiting from an alley, invariably with poor visibility, is especially treacherous. DC law requires, by the way, that a driver exiting an alley *stop before the sidewalk*, to check for pedestrians about to cross the alley. Rare is the driver who actually does that, most of them charging without pause out of the alley and across the sidewalk, ignoring the possibility of children and pets about to cross the alley.

Last June I asked DDOT to investigate this light timing, and, somewhat reluctantly, after a push from Councilmember Graham, they agreed to do so. The promised investigation did not, however, come to pass. In October I repeated the request. Much to my surprise, DDOT replied this time with an assertion that they were “working on this issue as we speak”, and that adjustments would be made “before the end of next week”. Three weeks later, observing no change, I pressed DDOT yet again. Once again, a promise: DDOT will “check with our signal folks to get an update”. We'll see.

I've also asked DDOT to do something about that miserable **steel plate in the middle of the Park Road/Klingel/-Walbridge intersection**. It's been there since March, and no one can say when it will be removed and the roadway properly paved. DDOT replies that it's not their steel plate, and so it's not their problem, never mind the hazard to traffic of that plate, now bent and broken loose by the countless trucks and buses banging over it. I'll keep on this.

In June, DDOT put up a **yellow post in the middle of Park Road at 19th Street**, preparing for a “yield to pedestrians” sign. That's nice, though such signs rather frequently suffer the fate of the sign on Park Road at Pierce Mill, that is, crushed by trucks apparently unable to dodge the sign. In the

19th Street case, the problem was fundamental: the eastbound traffic lane on Park Road is a substandard width, just nine feet, whereas traffic lanes are properly 10 to 12 feet wide. Buses and large trucks are eight feet wide, so there's no room to spare in a nine-foot lane. The yellow signpost – just the post, not yet a sign – forced large vehicles up against the curb, where a piece of sharp-edged steel, part of the storm drain, projected out just an inch or two, enough to slash the tires of vehicles scraping the curb. The resident at that corner counted a dozen cars and trucks suffering slashed (and thus destroyed) tires, including a Metrobus and an ambulance.

On September 23, at my insistence, the yellow post was removed. It was doing much harm, and not much good. What would be nice would be an increase of that substandard traffic lane width to a proper 10-11 feet, possible via a reduction of the width of the parking lane to eight feet (it's now 10 feet wide). But that's much harder to bring about. (Why is the parking lane overly wide, and the traffic lane so narrow? Until late 2002, that parking lane was a rush-hour traffic lane. Then I succeeded in ending the ban on parking on the north side of Park Road during rush hours. But the lane markings weren't revised to convert the traffic lane into a parking lane.)

On October 22, the Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB) considered specifically the ANC's **objections to the expansion of the Mount Pleasant Library**, responding to our complaint that our “issues and concerns” had been ignored in the previous month's hearing. The HPRB dismissed our complaints and reaffirmed its earlier approval of the expansion, by a 6 to 0 vote. I think this game is over: the powers downtown are going to approve this expansion, whatever objections are raised by the ANC, or anybody else. I'm sure that if any resident wanted to attach a big, “contemporary style” addition to their row house, the HPRB would summarily reject the proposal. But if the Library wants such an addition, well, that's okay, even though the Library is a building of truly distinguished architecture, an “Italian Renaissance villa”. Somehow, a modern-style addition to that architecturally remarkable building is “compatible” with the historic neighborhood.

Since last March, this has been law in the District, via an act of Council sponsored by Councilmember Graham:

DCMR 18, 2202.10 A person driving a motor vehicle shall exercise due care by leaving a safe distance, but in no case less than 3 feet, when overtaking and passing a bicycle.

If you're approaching a tight spot in the road, and passing a bicyclist would require you to squeeze close by him or her – don't do it. Wait until you can give him clear space to pass. Biking in this neighborhood, I encounter way too many drivers who think that bicyclists are supposed to move aside for cars, anywhere, anytime. They're not. I also see way too many bicyclists who think that they're exempt from stopping for red lights, stop signs, and pedestrians in crosswalks. If bicyclists respected the traffic laws, maybe drivers would give more respect to bicyclists.

The next ANC <i>business</i> meeting will be on Tuesday, November 17 . The ANC's next <i>informal</i> meeting, if held, will be on December 1 .
