

## Jack's October report

On October 7, the ANC did the following:

- Advised the Board of Zoning Adjustment (BZA) against approval of a zoning variance at 1665 Harvard Street;
- Advised Public Works (DPW) to remove any treebox barriers that violate Municipal Regulations;
- Advised against permitting the razing of 3130 16th Street, rescinding an earlier resolution supporting the application;
- Called for public participation in the reconstruction of the 1600 block of Park Road, a DDOT project that has been tacked onto a Columbia Heights project, with no communication with Mount Pleasant residents;
- Advised DDOT to promote wider participation in the Mount Pleasant Traffic Study.

A Council act sponsored by Councilmember Graham provides for a "Performance Parking Pilot Program" in Mount Pleasant, responding to our calls for reform of the **Residential Permit Parking (RPP)** system. This "pilot" (i.e., experimental) program will have two components: a "visitor parking pass" (VPP), and a "day parking pass" (DPP).

The VPP eliminates the need for residents to go to a police station to obtain 15-day passes for visitors. Each household will be given a permanent VPP pass, which can be lent out to visitors, including household workers. This may ease the parking burden on unzoned blocks, because residents will no longer be inclined to tell their visitors and household employees to go find parking on the nearest unzoned block. This is already being done in Ward Four, and DDOT is watching closely to see if the VPP is abused.

The DPP element creates a substitute for a commercial parking garage, making use of spare curbside space for commuters to our neighborhood. That is, people who come to work in our homes, doing house care or child care, people who come to work in our schools, and even people coming to work in Mount Pleasant businesses, providing services essential for many neighborhood residents, may *purchase* these permits, for \$160 a quarter, equivalent to about \$2.50 a workday, comparable to twice-daily bus fare.

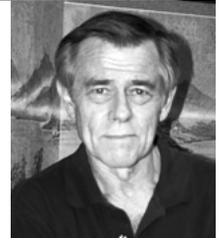
Our parking crunch comes at night, not during the day, because many Mount Pleasant residents take their cars to their jobs. During the workday, roughly one-third of our curbside parking space is vacant, or more than 500 vacant parking spots. These DPP permits will be limited in number – DDOT proposes 200, the ANC recommended just 85 – and parking will be allowed only until 5 pm, thus freeing up those curbside spots for residents coming home. This parking would be allowed only where current curbside occupancy is under 60%, which means, in practice, 18th Street and west.

This is a necessary step towards making RPP neighborhood-wide, instead of block-by-block. The latter merely concentrates all non-permit cars on whatever blocks remain unzoned (e.g., Monroe, Newton, Ingleside), and denies residents of unzoned blocks RPP parking permits, so those residents find that they cannot park on blocks right around the corner from their own homes, as if they're not really residents. That's got to end.

## ANC 1D03 NEWSLETTER #74

Jack McKay, October 27, 2008

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On September 15, the Adams Morgan ANC held a public session on the question of **Historic District**

**designation for Lanier Heights** (from Harvard Street to Columbia Road). This is the process that Mount Pleasant went through in 1986. It seems that people have learned from our experience. The great majority of residents appearing at this meeting were vehemently opposed to HD designation for their neighborhood, and Councilmember Graham issued a letter advising against designation, due to popular opposition. Coincidentally, Chevy Chase (DC) just completed a poll of residents of their neighborhood, also proposed for HD designation. The outcome of that poll was 3 to 1 opposed.

The problem with historic preservation is that, while it is sold as a way to prevent the razing of old buildings and their replacement with "McMansions", in practice it brings about a heavy burden of strict regulation of "alterations", severely restricting the ability of homeowners to improve or even just maintain their own homes. One Lamont Street homeowner saw his roof-repair costs doubled, to \$56,000, by historic preservation demands. (Cost is, absurdly, not a factor in historic preservation decisions.) An 18th Street developer was forced to destroy a very nice little polished-stone walkway border, because that was fancier than the Mount Pleasant historical standard. A Rosemount Avenue couple remains under orders to pull out their new, energy-efficient windows, and spend thousands for custom-made wood replacements, because the preservationists will allow only real wood, no imitations. As one Mount Pleasant resident wrote, "the permit process required to make any improvements is just too expensive, time-consuming, frustrating, and heavy-handed."

That's why Lanier Heights and Chevy Chase are fighting historic district designation. The historic preservationists need to learn that, unless the harshness of the "alterations" regulation is relieved, neighborhoods will reject historic district designation altogether.

Last summer, the Historic Preservation Office posted a notice that they would, in September, offer a proposed regulation that would actually allow property owners in a neighborhood a voice in historic-district designation. (Isn't it appalling that they're currently allowed no such voice?) Curiously, that proposed regulation never appeared. The HPO is free to declare a neighborhood a historic district, over the objections of the property owners in that neighborhood. Evidently the preservationists prefer it that way, because homeowners, once advised of the expensive burdens of historic district regulations, do in fact object.

Mayor Fenty's reform of the DC Public Schools organization included the formation of a “**State Board of Education**”, which, unlike the previous Board of Education, does not deal with day-to-day school operations, but just advises the Superintendent of Education on matters of school curricula and academic standards. The State Board initially consisted of five elected and four Mayor-appointed members. As of January 2, all nine members will be elected, one from each Ward, and one at-large.

There are four candidates for the Ward One seat, including Ingleside Terrace resident **Lillian Perdomo**. Lillian's Multicultural Community Services organization has run a program called “Parents as Partners”, teaching parents how to help their children succeed in school. Children of highly motivated residents will do well in any school, pushed by their parents to do the work and learn the material. Children who don't get such support at home fall behind, and it's not easy for our schools to make up for that. Lillian will bring this insight to the School Board, and will provide a vital Latina voice as well.

I am acquainted with three of the four candidates for the Ward One Board seat. Lillian Perdomo has my support.

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When I was young, segregation was the law, and bigotry was socially acceptable. Now, barring catastrophe, we're about to see a man of African and American background elected President of the United States. This is astounding, something that was inconceivable not so many years ago. It's a measure of how profoundly this country has changed in the half-century since my childhood.

It's an honor for me to be **on the ballot on November 4**, along with Barack Obama. After you've voted for him, please toss a vote my way too, a vote of support for me to continue this ANC work, and these newsletters, for another two years.

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In my July newsletter, I warned of the growing problem of **bedbugs**, noxious insects that are extremely difficult to get rid of, once they've infested your house. A 19th Street resident said that a friend of hers ridiculed her advice to sterilize a newly purchased piece of used furniture before taking it into her home, only to call later with an apology: it had bedbugs, and now her home had bedbugs. From the New York Times, October 21: “the small, roachy-looking bloodsuckers have been spreading through the nation's homes and hotels at such a hyperventilated pace that by next year they are expected to displace cockroaches and termites as America's leading domestic pest insect.”

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Residents have asked when Verizon's **fiber-to-the-home** (FiOS) system will come to Mount Pleasant. This promises to be a convenient way to get cable TV, telephone, and high-speed Internet. The District Council is considering approval of an agreement with Verizon to provide FiOS to DC.

So, when will FiOS be right here in Mount Pleasant? Well, judging by the information from Verizon, this won't be any time soon. “Within six years” it will serve part of Adams Morgan, and that seems to be as close as it gets, in that time span. We'll all be much older before FiOS gets here.

Last month I noted that **burglaries** in Mount Pleasant were way up, 14 reported in September, far above our average of five or six. The MPD noted the increase, and put a plain-clothes squad on the job. The most effective police are the ones that you don't see, because they don't look like police. Whether that was responsible or not I can't say, but in October the burglary count dropped precipitously, just *two* reported, as of October 26.

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Many (but not all) ANCs give out **grants** to local organizations. This ANC used to, but stopped, after the DC auditor penalized us \$5,250 in 2004 for inadequately documented grants. Other Ward One ANCs have difficulty with grants paperwork. ANC 1C (Adams Morgan) was recently penalized \$18,795, and 1B (U Street/Cardozo), \$31,940, for inadequate grants paperwork. This is why I have opposed ANC grant-giving, and I remain skeptical of our ability to do this job properly. Nonetheless, the ANC has agreed to start a very modest grants program, allowing only small grants, no more than \$500. A key characteristic of this revived grants program is that funds will be disbursed only *after* the ANC receives the necessary paperwork from the grantee. In the past, once the grantees had their cash, they had little motivation to provide the required paperwork.

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For the first nine months of 2007 we had problems with our financial records. Our quarterly reports to the auditor were turned in late, and documentation of expenditures was lost, so we were dunned almost \$4000, one-fifth of our annual funding from the District, for expenditures disallowed by the auditor.

In October 2007, I took over our bookkeeping, first supporting Jane Zara as ANC Treasurer, then, this May, becoming Treasurer myself. This month we received word from the DC Auditor concerning our quarterly reports for the six months from October 2007 through March 2008. I'm pleased to report *zero* ANC expenditures disallowed by the Auditor, for any reason, for those two quarters.

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October 16 was our last eighty-degree day of 2008, almost exactly six months after the first, April 11. **Daylight Saving Time** comes to an end at 2 AM on Sunday, November 2. The cold and gloom of winter are close at hand.

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On the **Harvard Street BZA** (zoning adjustment) matter, I generally try to help residents get whatever permits they need to do what they want, barring objections from their neighbors. In this case, the neighbors objected, and with good reason. Hence the resolution opposing the variance.

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About that enormous **oak tree** at the corner of 19th Street and Park Road: DPR has agreed to take the rock wall down carefully, and restore it, without harming the tree. That's a far cry from their position in March, when they were all set to bring out the chainsaws and take that immense tree down, just because it complicated the task of repairing that stone wall. We owe a debt of gratitude to the District employee who secretly called me to blow the whistle on the plan to take the tree down, without warning to anybody.

The next ANC meeting will be on **Tuesday, November 11**, 7:00 pm, La Casa Community Center, 3166 Mt. Pleasant St.