

Jack's October report

At the September 17 meeting, the ANC:

- Advised the Board of Zoning Adjustment to grant a “special exception” to enclose a back porch on Kilbourne;
- Advised the ABC Board to permit the conversion of the liquor license for the Marx Cafe from CR (restaurant) to CT (tavern);
- Advised the Historic Preservation Office to permit a new sign (“Western Union”) at 3112 Mt Pleasant Street;
- Advised ABRA that the ANC has “no objection” to a “stipulated” license for the Each Peach Market at 3068 Mt Pleasant Street;
- Advised DDOT to consider repair or repaving for a number of alleys in Mount Pleasant;
- Expressed support for statehood for the District of Columbia;
- Advised the Mayor to halt implementation of new regulations concerning “demolition by neglect”;
- Authorized the expenditure of up to \$7000 in ANC funds for “festival lights” across Mount Pleasant Street;
- Advised DDOT that it approves the current design for an Adams Mill Road retaining wall.

How times have changed. The **Marx Cafe** has applied for a change of its liquor license from “restaurant” to “tavern”, a change that would, among other things, eliminate the minimum food-sales requirement that would qualify it as a “restaurant”. Before 2003, my first year on this ANC, this would have set off a firestorm of protest. I recall that ANC, led by Laurie Collins, actually sending someone over, during an ANC meeting, to the cafe to confirm that its kitchen was still open and operating, and it wasn't quietly turning itself into a tavern. The owner of Marx at the time, Mark Peters (hence “Marx”), fought bitter battles with the pre-2003 ANC.

But this current application for conversion to a tavern, allowing current owner Aleks Duni to close his kitchen and cease serving food whenever he wants, brought not a peep of protest from any of the current commissioners. We trust him to run a good, neighborhood-friendly business. And if his customers are content to be offered only drinks after some hour of the evening, fine. At this time there are two taverns in Mount Pleasant: the Raven, which has always been a tavern, and Haydee's, which not long ago changed from restaurant to tavern. I've perceived no harm done to the neighborhood.

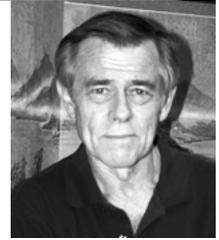
Last month I noted some changes by DDOT to the **visitor parking pass** program. But those changes ran into heavy opposition in the District Council, so they were cancelled. DDOT will, as in the past, mail new visitor passes to each household in Mount Pleasant. Our current household visitor passes will continue to be valid through December, despite the September 30 expiration date.

I voted “no” on China Terrell's **statehood-support resolution**. No, I'm not opposed to DC statehood, though that's a truly impossible dream. (Statehood has been, from the beginning of the United States, wholly politicized, and politics right now says “no way” to DC statehood. I don't see that changing.) I do think the ANC ought to stick to its legally specified business, namely of advising District

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agencies concerning their policies and actions affecting our neighborhood.

That's our job. The statehood resolution did not advise any DC Government body to do anything. This was simply a pointless stunt. Who, in the US Congress or the states, will be influenced by what this little ANC thinks about DC statehood?

Back in 2009, I helped the residents of Monroe, Newton, and 19th Streets, and Ingleside Terrace, get their **blocks zoned for RPP (residential permit parking)**. The problem on these blocks was not really commuter parking, which RPP is intended to prevent, but no-DC-tag parking, by Mount Pleasant residents whose cars aren't registered in DC. Those cars wouldn't be a problem if distributed evenly around the neighborhood, but of course they're concentrated on whatever few blocks remain unzoned. I estimated that one-third of the overnight parking on those blocks was by Mount Pleasant resident-owned vehicles without DC tags, and hence ineligible for RPP permits.

Now the problem has migrated to the remaining unzoned blocks, Walbridge Place and west. A number of residents have inquired about getting those blocks – Walbridge, Adams Mill Road, Rosemount Avenue, Pierce Mill Road – RPP-zoned. A problem, of course, is that if any of those blocks goes RPP, then the residents of the still-unzoned blocks will be prohibited from parking there, being ineligible for RPP permits. (A bad policy, about which a DC Parking Task Force complained a decade ago, to no avail.)

So the best thing to do is to have these blocks all go RPP at once, then everyone has RPP stickers, and no one is left out. (Klinge Road, having no parking, cannot be RPP-zoned, but those residents will become eligible for RPP permits if the blocks around them are RPP-zoned.)

Are there residents of each of those blocks willing to undertake the laborious RPP petition process of obtaining a majority of the households of each block in support of zoning that block? Let me know.

I visited the current principal of Bancroft Elementary, Alison Auerbach, on September 27, to talk about the issue of **the lottery for preschool and pre-kindergarten children**, and the policy for dual-language schools of giving out-of-boundary-with-sibling children priority over in-boundary children. I personally think that Mount Pleasant residents should be given every encouragement to send their children to Bancroft, because of the neighborhood history of preferring to send children to west-of-the-park schools, leaving Bancroft for the children of immigrant and low-

income families. The preference for OOB/sibling children is no doubt suitable for Oyster, which has difficulty having a sufficient number of native-Spanish-speaking children to remain dual-language. Oyster is down to a mere 16% English-language-learners, whereas Bancroft has 65%, and is in no danger of losing a “critical mass” of Spanish speaking children.

The policy of favoring OOB/sibling at dual-language schools is set at the DC Public Schools level, not at Bancroft. For what it's worth, I pressed Ms. Auerbach to seek flexibility in such policies, given that what's appropriate for one DC school isn't necessarily right for another.

Some 22 Mount Pleasant in-boundary children won places at Bancroft in the lottery, while 16 were wait-listed. I do hope those wait-listed children make it in. A bit of perspective: almost 400 out-of-boundary children were wait-listed for Bancroft. Our neighborhood school has become one of the most-desired schools in DC.

The **Oakwood Terrace proposed construction** continues to be the subject of Historic Preservation Review Board consideration. I've been content to leave this matter to Adam Hoey, because that lot is in his district, and to Historic Mount Pleasant, because that's their special interest. On September 26 the HPRB held another hearing on the project, to review the current plans, as revised by the owner upon the advice of the HPRB at the July meeting. That hearing was continued on October 3, at which time the HPRB voted 7 to 0 (with 2 abstentions) to support the staff report, which supports “the development of the concept”. The Board members noted that the project is “not incompatible” with the historic district, and therefore must, by historic preservation law, be permitted.

As I've advised residents, and other commissioners, many times: find out the regulations which govern a District board's decisions, and base any complaints on those regulations. DC bureaucrats and board members are not politicians and don't care about the popularity, or unpopularity, of any decision. Only the regulations that guide their decisions matter. In this case, the only issue was “compatible” vs. “not compatible” with the historic district. Because Mount Pleasant architecture is so varied, ranging from modest row houses to grand mansions to enormous apartment houses, it's hard to say that anything is “not compatible”. And it seemed clear to me, from the very beginning, that the HPRB was not going to stop this development, however much the neighbors disliked it, and however loudly the ANC might complain.

The year-long **Adams Mill Road project** is near completion. By early November, we should have our two-way route to Adams Morgan and the Zoo open again. I think the rock-faced median barrier now looks pretty good. With the roadway elevated to its operational level, that median barrier doesn't look so tall.

In short order, Mount Pleasant drivers will have their legal left turn from Kenyon onto Adams Mill. In addition, the sidewalk going down that hill will be wider, meeting ADA standards. The street lights are elegant “teardrop” lamps, versus the industrial-style cobras that used to border the street. Better provision is made for bicycles, as well as

pedestrians. This will make for a very fine entrance to Mount Pleasant from Beach Drive.

I haven't had much to say about **crime in Mount Pleasant** lately, because there hasn't been much to say. We continue to enjoy *the lowest violent-crime rate east of Rock Creek Park*. The number of robberies in Mount Pleasant (robbery is categorized as a crime of violence) is about half what it was just ten years ago. The count of robberies per resident – the best measure of the actual threat to you and me – is about three times what it is west of Rock Creek Park, to be sure, but it's less than half the rate that prevails east of 16th Street.

The theft-from-auto count here remains unchanged, even as the robbery count has been decreasing. This has always been the problem that most frequently afflicts Mount Pleasant residents. Still, the theft-from-auto rate here is just half what it is east of 16th Street.

As always, the crime rate here is low compared to anywhere else east of Rock Creek Park, but high compared to west of Rock Creek Park. It's all about proximity to neighborhoods afflicted with poverty and boys growing up without good male role models.

Commissioner Terrell is quite upset with me, because I objected to her **violating the ANC's by-laws concerning commissioner testimony to DC boards**, e.g., the HPRB. The chairperson of the commission has to be very careful, when speaking for the commission, to voice only views that are explicitly supported by ANC resolutions. She can say whatever she wants as a single commissioner, but is severely limited when speaking for the ANC. She went, in my opinion, far beyond the content of our May resolution when offering testimony, as ANC chair, at the HPRB's September hearing.

China disagrees with my assessment. Fair enough, but then she goes on, in a letter to the ANC and to some residents, to make some outrageous accusations, including a claim that I “knew about, but never disclosed” that median barrier on Adams Mill Road. No, like everyone else, I was totally surprised by that barrier, and I was shocked to see it pop up in the middle of that construction. “I shudder to think of what our neighborhood would have become with all your efforts this year”, she continued, making this disagreement about her testimony as chair into a personal assault on old Jack.

I voted “no” on Adam Hoey's **festival lights** resolution. This amounts to funding Mount Pleasant Main Street's unsuccessful 2010 proposal for such lights (with an amount, \$7000, more than half this ANC's annual funding). Adam is president of Mount Pleasant Main Street, and that connection makes this, I think, too close to Adam's appearing to use his ANC position for the benefit of his own organization.

“Rocky” Rakani has operated the **Argyle Convenient Store** since 1985, back when it took some courage to open a shop in this then-troubled neighborhood. Confronted by a gun-armed robber, he said “go ahead and shoot, m*f*r, you're not getting anything!” He's now sold the shop and is retiring.

The next meeting of the ANC will be on Tuesday, October 15, 2013, 7:00 pm, at the Mount Pleasant Library.
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