

September report to constituents

Here is news of the **September 4 ANC meeting**, and other happenings in Mount Pleasant. The ANC:

- Advised the District Government to develop new procedures for large events, such as Fiesta DC;
- Proposed a street festival grading system, to promote and reward better performance by festival sponsors;
- Advised prompt approval of Fiesta DC permits, to permit the sponsors to focus on preparations for the September 30 event;
- Authorized engaging a contractor to handle ANC monthly meeting posters;
- Rescinded all “voluntary agreements” of prior Mount Pleasant ANCs;
- Asserted that the Mount Pleasant Neighborhood Alliance (MPNA) was fully aware of current petitions to terminate their VAs, and objected to requiring the petitioners to repeat the placard period;
- Advised that liquor license renewals and entertainment endorsement applications be considered simultaneously, and that the several renewal applications be considered simultaneously, for efficiency.

Fiesta DC, set for September 30, appears to be on its way, with some help from the ANC. There is a regulation for large events that requires “a consent list of 90% of the resident housekeepers and occupants of business and other establishments within a distance of 500 feet from the perimeter of the location where the event is to take place”. Well, it’s hard work just to find 90% of residents at home. If just 10% can’t be found, or decline to consent, then the criterion isn’t met. That amounts to less than 2% of the population of Mount Pleasant. It’s unreasonable that so few residents could prevent a street festival that thousands of residents would enjoy.

I am told that no one has ever insisted that this requirement be met. Routinely, event sponsors undertake an effort to show neighborhood consent, and the Mayor waives the 90% requirement. At the August 7 meeting, the ANC voted unanimously for this requirement to be waived here, responding to rumors that Mayor Fenty had said that this event should be done “by the book”. His Ward One outreach person, Jackie Reyes, attended our September 4 meeting and assured us that he would not stand in the way of Fiesta DC.

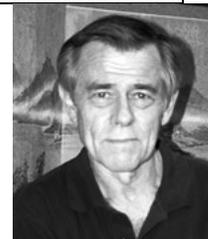
The ANC has proposed that the requirements for large events such as Fiesta DC be revised to be more sensible, and to encourage improved performance by event sponsors by rewarding them with eased permit requirements in the future.

On the night of August 28, three **gunshots were heard on Monroe Street**. Eight days later, a little after 10 pm on September 5, **five more quick gunshots were heard**, in the same area. Only an hour before the second incident I had

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Jack McKay, September 24, 2007

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walked right by that spot with my precious nine-year-old, who lives with her mother on that block.

Many residents believe that these gunshots are associated with the drug dealing that has long taken place in the vicinity of Monroe and 18th. Maybe that is so, but drug dealing has gone on there, and in other places in Mount Pleasant, for many years, and has never before resulted in gun violence. This is, as Officer Quiles said at the PSA (Police Service Area) meeting on September 11, very small scale dealing, not in the same league with what goes on right on the other side of 16th Street. It seems to me to be too small for drug dealers to fight deadly battles over.

The September 5 gunshots were fired by someone standing in the street, judging by the location of the shell casings, and the impact on a car on the south side of the street. I believe the shooter was standing in mid-block, firing westward along the street at a car which then sped away. The casings were small, indicating that the weapon was a low-caliber pistol.

What to do about such a threat to innocent bystanders? A number of people want to go after the drug dealing, on the assumption that that’s behind the gunshots. But we’ve been working on this drug dealing problem for years, with little success. There are great difficulties in stopping open-air drug dealing, as evidenced by the many such drug markets known in the District, “almost 100”, according to one count. It’s not simply a matter of pressuring the police to “do something” about it. They would stop the dealing if they could, here and everywhere else it takes place, I guarantee you that. What sounds so simple – make undercover buys, arrest ‘em all – isn’t. The dealers are skilled in evading arrest, and in avoiding conviction, if arrested. In March, 2004, for example, seven young men were found next to a Ziplock bag of crack and marijuana on Monroe Street and charged with “possession with intent to distribute”. The US Attorney declined even to “paper” the arrests, knowing that the charges would not hold up in court.

Some residents want to hold the members of a certain household on that block responsible, in the belief that they’re involved in the drug dealing, which brought about the gunshots. The homeowner and two young men of this household appeared at their own volition at the September 11 PSA meeting and denied any involvement.

Absent any courtroom-worthy evidence that they are involved, I must treat all residents of the area with respect, including those in this household. I hear the complaints, yes,

but I hear what these young men have to say, too. I won't condemn anybody based on the sparse evidence at hand.

The battle to permit **live music and entertainment in Mount Pleasant restaurants** continues. While we might prefer pure sit-down restaurants, such as those in Cleveland Park, that business model doesn't work in Mount Pleasant. There's not enough restaurant business, the restaurants are too small, and food prices are too low, for a conventional restaurant to survive. What we have is a formula that better suits our neighborhood: a restaurant with entertainment, providing not just food and drink, but a place to be entertained and to socialize.

The Hear Mount Pleasant group has come up with a good compromise, permitting live music and entertainment, but only until midnight during the week, 1 AM on weekends, and providing noise controls and resident complaint mechanisms. Mount Pleasant will not turn into a noisy, congested night-club zone, like Adams Morgan.

The MPNA "voluntary agreements" (VAs) have prohibited live music, live entertainment, and dancing, since about 1999. I'm not into such things, but many younger Mount Pleasant residents are. Since this is what the Mount Pleasant marketplace wants, and what some restaurants want to provide, let's do it, while respecting the welfare of nearby residents.

Three Mount Pleasant restaurants have asked ABRA (the Alcoholic Beverage Regulation Administration) for termination of their MPNA agreements: Don Jaime's (placard-posting date April 20), Haydee's (April 27), and Don Juan's (June 1). The ANC has endorsed these applications.

The MPNA knew of these petitions from the start. Laurie Collins, MPNA president, posted on the Mount Pleasant Forum on April 26, "If you have not seen the green placard in the window of Don Jaimes, please take a look. . . This placard means the public is now notified that Don Jaimes requests termination of their VA". I posted on April 27 that the three restaurants would be filing for termination of their agreements. Laurie and I exchanged several e-mails in the following days on this topic.

Now, five months later, Laurie claims that the MPNA was not properly advised of these applications, and therefore the procedure should be repeated from the beginning, including the 45-day placard period. Evidently the MPNA should have received a first-class-mail notification from ABRA, but didn't. On September 12 the ABC Board called all parties to a "fact-finding hearing" to deal with the MPNA's claim that the procedure should start all over again

Surely, if Laurie wanted a letter from ABRA notifying the MPNA of the termination applications, she could have requested that letter from them last April. Instead she waited in silence for five months, then wanted everyone to go back to square one. This maneuver was clearly intended just to obstruct and delay the process. I do not see how such a delay would be to the benefit of the membership of the MPNA.

The ABC Board asked how the MPNA "had been harmed" by the absence of the first-class-mail notification, given that their president had indisputably been aware of those applications since the beginning. Laurie had no plausible answer to that, and after a closed-door discussion, the ABC Board rejected the MPNA's demand that the process be restarted. There will be a "roll call hearing" on October 31 concerning these VA-termination petitions, and, in time, a "protest hearing", which is akin to a court trial, as the Board will hear testimony for and against VA termination.

Tentative date for the first community meeting for the **Mount Pleasant Traffic Study**: Sunday, October 28. I've suggested that this meeting be held at Bancroft Elementary.

"A **robbery occurred on the 2000 blk of Pierce Mill Rd Nw** at approximately 9:20 pm on 9-18-07. Complainant reports he was approached by two unknown suspects. One suspect struck complainant in the mouth and stated "give me your money." Complainant complied and suspects fled the scene. Suspects are black males 20 years of age, 5' 9" tall and dark complexion." -- MPD report

There have been 41 robberies so far this year in Mount Pleasant. Most of them, 75%, occurred east of 18th Street. Robberies on the "west end" are uncommon.

The **Asian Tiger mosquito**, which makes life outdoors so hard to enjoy during our summers, has been in this area only since 1987, when it was evidently brought here in a shipment of used tires to a tire recycling plant near Baltimore. Unlike other mosquitos, which feed only during dawn and dusk, the Asian Tiger feeds all day long. On us.

Tigers breed only in small, hard-sided containers of water (like tires, pet water dishes, birdbaths, flower pots, and roof gutters, and open drains), not in open pools. "The eggs of the Asian Tiger Mosquito are glued to the sides of the containers and require a period of drying before they are ready to hatch. When rain raises the water level in the container, the eggs hatch and the mosquito develops from larva to adult in the contained water source." The only way to reduce the number of these pests is to eliminate all such outdoor cups of rain-water. It takes five days for eggs to hatch and mature, so emptying potential breeding sites every three days does the job. In its entire life, this mosquito goes no further than 200 yards from its breeding place, so that's the area that you have to clear of such spots.

"The tiger mosquito does best in residential areas where shade and water-holding containers are common." Yes, that well describes Mount Pleasant. Lucky us.

The **next ANC meeting** is on **October 2**, 7 pm, 3166 Mt Pleasant Street. The next **PSA 301** meeting is on October 9, 7 pm, Mt Pleasant Library.