

Jack's September report

At the August 17 ANC meeting, the only topic was the upcoming Fiesta DC. A detailed list of "topics of concern" was approved by the ANC, and given to the Fiesta officers.

The **Latino Fiesta** is to take place here on Sunday, September 26. Our neighborhood is really too small, Mount Pleasant Street too narrow and short, for this event, so there are problems, to be sure. But it's a credit to Mount Pleasant to have the Latino Fiesta here, and I hope people will tolerate the inconvenience for one day.

Traffic is a problem, and cutting off Irving Street, our east-west arterial, is particularly troublesome, as confused drivers wander around trying to figure out how to get around the blockage. For people unfamiliar with the area, making one's way through Lanier Heights and Adams Morgan can be hard. Last year I asked that Irving be kept open, except during the actual parade, with traffic officers to keep fiesta goers and traffic apart. But the people who govern such events would absolutely not permit any roads crossing any festival.

It's September; school has started, the football season is under way (go Steelers!), summer's over and a new year is under way. Oh yes, **there are elections**. ANCs are strictly "non-partisan", so we're not involved in the primaries. But on the November 2 general-election ballot, you'll see the ANC candidate for your single-member district. Nobody has filed to oppose me, so I'll be the only name on the ballot here.

Assuming that I manage to beat out "write-in" (who got 42 votes in 2008), I propose simply to continue working just as I have for the past eight years, doing what I can to fix the problems that crop up in our neighborhood, like steel plates in intersections left in place and forgotten, or snow-covered streets left unplowed, or pavement markings overlooked (see next). And these newsletters will keep coming, telling residents what I'm doing, what the ANC is doing, and what's going on in our neighborhood. If that's okay with you, then please put in your vote for me on November 2. Aside from beating out "write-in", the total vote count for me will matter.

Adams Mill Road was repaved in July. DDOT didn't come to the ANC to ask how Adams Mill Road might be improved. I would have suggested bike lanes – there's ample width – but the opportunity wasn't offered, and the road was repaved with no changes. (Next year the Adams Mill/Kenyon/Irving intersection should be rebuilt, permitting the left turn from Kenyon Street onto southbound Adams Mill Road.)

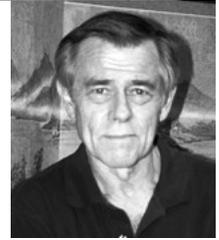
The DDOT contractor omitted the pavement markings on Adams Mill at Klingle Road, the labels that show that the left lane is for left turn only, but drivers in the right lane may turn left or right. Gabriela Vega, our Ward One DDOT Planner, took care of that oversight for me. There's also the matter of the silly "Stop Here on Red" sign, that's really supposed to be on Klingle Road, stopping traffic before the Rosemount intersection. Getting that fixed seems to be impossible.

The 25-foot-to-intersection parking battle continues. I was lucky enough to spot a Parking Enforcement officer as she was ticketing Emily's car on Lamont, parked in the 40/25 space. I told her that the car was legally parked, but she

ANC 1D03 NEWSLETTER #96

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replied by citing the law as it stood before 2006, allowing such parking only until 7:30 AM. As for the "at all times" change invoked by the law passed in that year (with my assistance), her supervisor "had never heard of it". Guess it takes a long time for changes in the parking laws to penetrate to the lower levels of bureaucracy. Once again, I set the DPW folks straight, though I now have yet another parking ticket to deny. (I'm five for six on these denials.)

A horrible accident occurred on the morning of August 5. A young Mount Pleasant mother, Melinda Jelbaoui, crossing 17th Street, somehow **fell under the wheels of a District trash truck making the left turn from 17th onto Lamont**. She's lucky to be alive – the truck stopped, quickly – but she is grievously injured.

Nobody knows how she fell under the truck. But her terrible injuries *could have been prevented*, if Councilmember Graham had succeeded in having these enormous trucks equipped with "side-underrun preventers". In Europe, these devices are required on large trucks, to prevent bicyclists, pedestrians, and small cars from being crushed by the rear wheels. In 2009, responding to the death of Mount Pleasant bicyclist Alice Swanson under the wheels of a trash truck, CM Graham got the Council to pass a measure calling for these protectors on District-owned large trucks. Law L17-0352, effective March 25, 2009, requires the Mayor to "issue rules to implement the provisions of this section within 180 days".

What happened to this law? The Councilmember tells me that the Chief Financial Officer determined that putting these side-underrun protectors on District trucks would cost about \$3 million, and the Council has to identify those funds for the law to take effect. That hasn't happened, so there are now no plans to equip District trucks with side-underrun protectors.

How does one put a price tag on the injuries suffered by Melinda Jelbaoui? I understand that she's out of intensive care, but remains in the trauma ward. For her, for her husband, and for her four-year-old daughter, this is the most terrible of nightmares. The appropriation that might have prevented this amounts to just one three-thousandth of the District's annual budget.

At about 10 pm on August 16, an employee of the Stoddard Baptist Home was **robbed on Newton Street**, by a young man armed with a silver handgun. He "approached the victim from behind and demanded money and took her purse and dumped the items on the ground". The creep got all of five dollars. Neighbors helped the victim find her things.

Robbers are rarely tracked down, because they leave few clues. Chief Lanier brags about the homicide clearance-by-arrest rate, now about 60%, but homicides are relatively easily solved, because the killer and victim generally know each other. Robbers pick on total strangers, so there's little to go on but a vague description of the perpetrator. The clearance rate for robberies in DC is a mere 17%, significantly lower than the rate for medium-sized cities in general, 26%. I have complained to the District Council about the low rate of solving robberies in the District, and there is some pressure now on the MPD to do better.

It is unusual for robbers to use handguns. Of the 34 robberies in Mount Pleasant to date this year, just 9 involved guns. Being robbed is bad, but being threatened with death if you resist, or if the robber panics, is worse. The shooting death on Irving Street of Gregory Shipe, five years ago this month, is believed to have been the result of a "robbery gone bad".

As for the rate of robberies in Mount Pleasant, that appears to be *increasing*. Since 2004, we've averaged 5 or 6 robberies per summer month. This summer the average is 7 per month, and there were 8 in August. This is not a happy trend.

Don't be fooled by Chief Lanier's boasting about reducing crime. Homicides are down, yes, but homicides are down everywhere in the U.S., so she can't legitimately take credit for that. Street robberies, considerably more likely threats to us ordinary residents than homicides, are *not* decreasing. If what Chief Lanier is doing to fight crime is so effective, then why aren't robberies decreasing? Actions like her "all hands on deck" events are mere publicity stunts, good for impressing residents, but useless for reducing crime, and dreadful for police officer morale.

The Chief would do better to ask why the District's rate of clearing robberies by arrest is one-third *lower* than the nationwide average for medium-sized cities. If the MPD solved more robberies, fewer robbers would be out and free to rob again, and young toughs might be less tempted to make robbery a career choice.

On September 8 the ABC Board issued its **denial of a night-club license for Haydee's Restaurant**, by a 4 to 1 vote. It would in fact have been quite a surprise to me if they had permitted the license. That's not because Haydee's as a night club would in fact have been a problem, but because the term "night club" conjures up images of sin and violence.

The Board argued that the neighborhood is too residential, and has too many children, to be appropriate for a night club. Somehow, a night club is thought to be inherently a source of trouble. I say, look at the Wonderland Ballroom, on Kenyon Street at 11th. It's in a residential neighborhood, on a residential block, right across Kenyon Street from Tubman Elementary, and to my knowledge, it's not a problem to anyone. Like Haydee's, it's a popular neighborhood spot, and is not a magnet for troublemakers from outside the area.

I'm confident that Haydee Vanegas would similarly keep her restaurant from ever being a problem here. (Note that her home is just a couple of blocks away.) This is why the ANC endorsed Haydee's night club application last February, by a

unanimous, 6 to 0 vote. The ABC Board ignored that, as I expected they would.

I met with the principal and vice-principal of Bancroft on August 18, to talk about **the Bancroft playground fiasco**. They agree that neighbors ought to have been kept advised about the Bancroft plans, and should not have been taken by surprise. They also agree that the playground ought to be open to the neighborhood after school hours, just as the old playground was. Unfortunately, there's much worry about the security of their bigger, better, more costly playground, and unless somebody steps up to provide after-hours supervision, mainly to prevent vandalism, I expect the playground to be locked up, the neighborhood locked out, after school. I hope I'm wrong about that.

There are plans coming for a development on **the vacant lot at the convergence of 17th Street and Oakwood Terrace**. The property owner, Carmel Greer, wants to keep the neighborhood advised of what is planned – no surprises! It appears that no zoning variances will be needed, and ANC "permission" will *not* be required. I'm sure some neighbors will be unhappy at seeing this wooded lot built on. So let's have a conversation about it, and see what will be agreeable to the neighborhood. e-mail: carmel@bonfiglidesign.com

The **storage pod on 17th Street**, awfully badly positioned at the bend in the road on the way to Piney Branch, caused much dismay because it was a terrible visibility hazard. I relayed plenty of complaints to CM Graham, and to DDOT Public Space. DDOT at one time promised to send an inspector to review the situation – and then renewed the permit for another week! What are they thinking?

A construction van parked on Lamont Street, in front of the old library, was a similar Public Space fiasco. I think the official approving the occupancy permit for the van (for five months!) just didn't notice that it was going to occupy not just the parking spaces, but a traffic lane as well. Gregg Edwards and I complained, and everyone concerned agreed that that was intolerable. The van's been replaced with a narrower unit, occupying only the parking lane.

I will continue to press Public Space to be more careful about issuing such permits.

Rainfall here has been below normal for the past three months. As dry as it's been here, it's much worse up the Potomac River, in western Maryland, where severe to extreme drought conditions prevail. Nonetheless, "from a water supply perspective, there is sufficient water in the Potomac River to meet Washington metropolitan area demands, and the upstream reservoirs are moderately-full to full", according to NOAA. That is, despite the dry weather, there's no threat to the District's water supply.

Water conservation doesn't help much here, because our water comes from the river, not from reservoirs. The upriver reservoirs are called upon only if river flow falls below a critical level, and at this time that is not considered likely to happen.

The next ANC <i>business</i> meeting will be on Tuesday, September 21 , and the next <i>informal</i> meeting on October 5 .
