

Jack's April report

At the March meeting, the ANC did the following:

- Advised approval of the application by Suns Cinema for an expansion of its operations (increasing seating to 28);
- Advised the Zoning Commission to reject the proposed amendments that would eliminate side yard requirements for semi-detached row house structures in Residential Flat zones;
- Asked DDOT to implement pedestrian safety improvements for the pedestrian crosswalk on Park Road, at the Klinge/Walbridge intersection;
- Advised the Board of Zoning Adjustment (BZA) to deny the Special Exceptions and Variances requested for 1665 Harvard Street;
- Tabled a resolution advising the Office of Planning (OP) to publish staff reports for zoning relief and historic preservation review cases at least five business days in advance of the pertinent hearing.

Last month's newsletter was delivered late, partly due to cold, windy weather, and partly due to my cataract surgery during the week of normal delivery. I'm hoping to have things back to normal this month! But the weather isn't helping!

Fire and EMS Chief John Donnelly attended the ANC meeting to tell us about **a new system for handling calls to 911**. "After the launch of the Right Care, Right Now program [on April 19], callers to 911 with non-emergency injuries or illnesses may be transferred to a nurse. The nurse will ask the caller questions and assess his or her symptoms so that the nurse can refer the caller to the most appropriate non-emergency medical care available, most likely a community clinic or urgent care clinic in the caller's neighborhood. Medicaid and DC Healthcare Alliance enrollees will be provided with free transportation to and from the clinic."

The MPD publishes lists of **illegal firearms confiscated** by the police. Lately one such confiscation was quite close to home, on 19th Street. Worrisome! But it turns out to be not so troubling: "The weapon was found by a citizen who was cleaning out the attic of an old house, and was turned over to the Police Department for destruction".

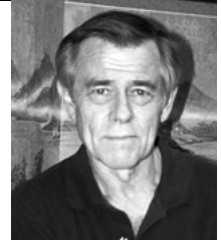
A Kenyon Street resident wants to put **a fenced-in deck on the roof of his garage**. Well, why not? There are scads of those about the neighborhood. Many of our houses are well above alley level, so the roof of an alley garage is at ground level for the back yard. Putting a deck on the garage roof makes it into usable outdoor space.

Ah, but the historic preservation folks don't like decks, because outdoor decks weren't part of the original, circa-1920 architecture of the neighborhood. As the Historic Preservation Office (HPO) wrote, concerning this proposed deck: "Arguably the feature that detracts most from the historic character of the Mount Pleasant Historic District is its profusion of decks. Mostly a legacy of the two decades preceding historic designation, they sometimes create a chaotic alleyscape of weathering wood structures and jutting stairs at all levels."

ANC 1D03 NEWSLETTER #180

Jack McKay, April 15, 2018

Jack McKay
3200 19th St, Tel. 462-8692
e-mail: jack@dcjack.org
<http://DCJack.org>



Well, it's an alley, for goodness sake! Our alleys are already "chaotic alleyscapes" of Supercans and recycling bins and garages and car-parking pads. If a garage-top deck is reasonably nicely done, as many are, then what's the problem?

Is this what Mount Pleasant wanted, when it allowed itself to become a designated Historic District, in 1986? I was here during that debate, and I think not. The idea was to fend off incongruous development, namely the destruction of row houses and their replacement with modernistic structures. I don't recall anyone saying that it was going to prohibit any changes to the appearance of your house or adjacent to it, whatever your current wants and needs.

What's curious about this situation is that the architect for this garage-top deck is a prominent member of Historic Mount Pleasant (HMP), a member of their Design Review Board. If anyone can design a historically-acceptable deck, he's the one! But even HMP rejects his proposed deck. There weren't any decks in Mount Pleasant 60 years ago, so no decks will be tolerated in Mount Pleasant today, not if they're visible from any public street.

I think most Mount Pleasant residents would be perfectly willing to have this Kenyon Street neighbor have his garage-roof deck, built with a design and materials compatible with the historic characteristics of the neighborhood. But there's little that the ANC can do, because the HPO pays far more attention to HMP than to us. If HMP doesn't like it, then the HPO won't approve it, whatever the ANC says.

This just in: **a nasty armed robbery** on Ingleside Terrace, at 4:30 AM April 14: "The victim reported that he was walking home when two suspects approached him on the sidewalk. One suspect pulled out a dark handgun (possibly a .45 caliber pistol), placed it to victim's head, and demanded his property. The victim gave the suspects his cellphone and wallet containing cash and identification cards. The suspects then fled eastbound on Ingleside Terrace, N.W."

This is the third robbery-with-gun incident in this northwest portion of Mount Pleasant this year, an exceptional number. I've reviewed the incidents – January 13, 2:35 AM, at 19th and Newton, and March 14, 1:30 AM, on Mount Pleasant Street between Park Road and Newton (attempt) – to see if one robber is behind these incidents. The answer is no, the descriptions given of the robbers in all three incidents differ quite substantially. It does not appear that anyone is lurking on these blocks lying in wait for hapless victims to appear.

This illustrates again that, while the crime rate here in Mount Pleasant is low, it's definitely not zero, and caution is warranted, especially if you're out on a deserted street very late at night. And I'm sure the police are doing what they can.

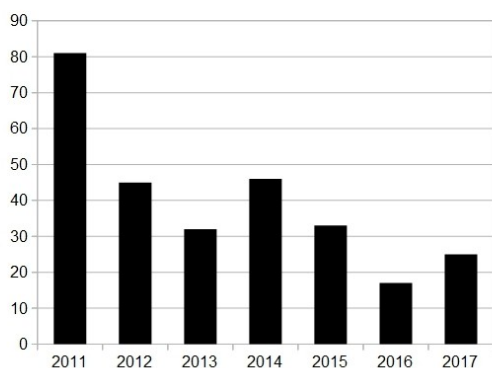
We all worry, not unreasonably, about home **burglaries**, especially during the day, when residents are at their jobs, or in school, and our houses are unoccupied and vulnerable. Forty-four years ago, when we moved into our 19th Street house, having a security system installed was high on our things-to-do list.

But the neighborhood has changed rather a lot since then, so how serious is the threat of home burglary today? Fact is, it's been years since our security alarm system has gone off due to an attempted penetration.

In 2017, there were 27 reported burglaries in Mount Pleasant. The burglary-per-capita rate here is practically identical to the rate for the District as a whole, about 2.5 burglaries per thousand residents for the year.

Our neighboring police districts – 4D to the north, 3D to the south and east – have modestly lower burglary rates, about 2.0 per thousand residents. West of Rock Creek Park, in 2D, the rate is even lower – 1.6 per thousand residents for the year. It's in Southeast, and Northeast, and especially across the Anacostia, that the burglary rate gets high, reaching 4.1 per thousand residents in 7D, far Southeast.

Burglaries in Mt Pleasant



Burglaries have been in a modest decline over recent years. Most recent burglaries are opportunistic – guys testing doors to find one that's unlocked, and darting in to grab what they can. The advice from the MPD is, don't make it easy for them. Lock your doors, latch your windows shut.

The Mayor's Office tells us that some **road-repaving work** is planned for Mount Pleasant this year, including Ingleside Terrace, and the 2000 block of Park Road. The stretch of Park Road is in especially dreadful condition.

Of course, one consequence of improved road surfacing is higher traffic speeds. I'll have to make some more speed measurements on Park Road to see if the traffic speed increases above the 34 mph (85th percentile) I measured recently.

Beach Drive north of Broad Branch remains closed, "to fall 2018". Lots of work is being done, and there are no indications of any change to that schedule.

Aside from the problem of speed on that block of Park Road, there's a problem for **pedestrians attempting to cross Park Road to the Klinge Road block**. That's a soft right turn for westbound Park Road traffic, so cars tend to come around the corner at some speed. Furthermore, some drivers don't understand that the red right arrow means stop, and stay stopped, thinking perhaps that the solid green to its left means ignore the red arrow and "go".

My resolution passed at the March ANC meeting calls for two safety modifications to this crosswalk. One change is the addition of curb extensions, so that pedestrians can be farther out from the sidewalk as they await their green light; this makes them more visible to drivers making that right turn, whereas currently the view of pedestrians is impaired by street-sign and traffic-light poles along that curb. The second change is an "elevated crosswalk", such as is already in place across Park Road at 19th. It's not a "speed hump", which is prohibited by the rules for roads designated "arterials", but it is enough to compel the attention, and perhaps respect, of drivers.

Will DDOT follow up on our request? We'll see.

A **longtime resident of 19th Street** is selling her home of 50 years and moving out, much to the dismay of all of her neighbors. But she's getting old, and maintaining a big old row house is a burden. We're all ever so sorry to see her go! The bright side of the picture is that she'll get a nice bit of money for her house, as houses here sell for far more than we longtime residents imagined possible, years ago.

A resident of "little" Mount Pleasant Street, adjacent to Bancroft, called about a **car that's been parked on that block for a month** – no DC tags, no RPP (and no tickets). Councilmember Nadeau's office is trying to help, but there's no law being violated that warrants the car being towed away. Current law allows a car to remain in a curbside spot forever – or until the registration expires.

If a car is in a violation that warrants towing – blocking rush-hour traffic, say – then it may be towed, but they're towed only as far as the nearest available legal parking space. A Lamont Street resident asked me about that policy, having had such a car dumped by a tow truck in front of his house. Yes, that's what they do, saving the substantial time required to haul a car to the impound lot, far away across the Anacostia and down towards the Wilson Bridge. So this is a fiscally sensible policy, but one which penalizes innocent residents, who find unwanted cars dumped in front of their homes. And the car's owner may have some difficulty in finding his towed car.

April 16 was a **DC holiday – Emancipation Day**, celebrating the banning of slavery in the District, in 1862 – and the contractor working on Bancroft Elementary asked the ANC to support his request to continue work on that day. We agreed to that, of course: our priority is getting our neighborhood school, Bancroft Elementary, back into operation.

The next meeting of the ANC will be on <u>Tuesday, April 24</u> , 7:00 pm, at the Mount Pleasant Library.
