

## Jack's December report

At the November ANC1D business meeting, the ANC did the following:

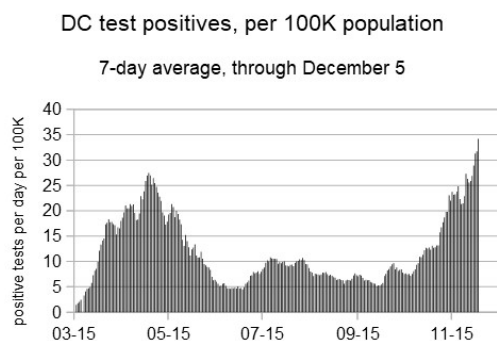
- Advised the Board of Zoning Adjustment (BZA) to approve two “special exceptions” for the planned development at 3125 Mount Pleasant Street (now the laundromat);
- Approved a grant of \$7500 to Food for All DC, to support free food distributions through December 31;
- Advised the Mayor and the District Council “that it has no confidence in DCPS Chancellor Ferrebee’s leadership on school reopening plans during the public health emergency”.

The **covid-19 state of emergency** continues, with no end in sight. The ANC continues to hold its monthly public meetings remotely, via Zoom, as indoor meetings are currently limited to just ten persons. This is not entirely a bad thing, because residents can “attend”, and participate in, our meetings, from their homes. But personal contact is lost, and of course residents without good internet access or skills will be at a great disadvantage.

Even in normal, non-pandemic times, I recommend using the month between meetings to contact your ANC commissioner, by phone or email. Then let him or her take the matter to the ANC. Or you can email all the commissioners at once at [anc1d@googlegroups.com](mailto:anc1d@googlegroups.com).

Lately there's been a great surge in **covid-19 test positives**, here and nationwide. The Northeast has actually done relatively well during this surge, perhaps because the plague hit here early, and people have taken seriously the admonitions to wear face masks and maintain “social distancing”. Nonetheless, the test-positive rate here is five times what it was in September, and higher than the peak of last spring, so we have to continue to be extremely cautious. I see almost no one on Mount Pleasant streets without a face mask.

South Dakota seems to be an extreme case of a refusal to follow the face mask and social distancing mandates, and that state now shows a test-positive rate of 98 per day per 100,000 population. In Wisconsin, another national hot zone, the rate is 73 per day per 100,000 residents. Compare the DC rate, at the current level, of about 30 per day per 100,000 population.. This is bad, but it could be worse.



## ANC 1D03 NEWSLETTER #209

Jack McKay, December 7, 2020

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We're back to the infection rates observed at the initial peak, last spring. The principal factor behind the current increase is believed to be the colder weather causing people to spend more time indoors, where the virus is more easily spread from person to person.

This plague isn't going away anytime soon, despite the profoundly irresponsible claims by soon-to-be-ex-President Trump that we're “turning the corner”, and it's all going to “go away” by itself. It won't, and we won't have significant vaccination of the population until next summer, so the current restrictions to mitigate the spread will have to be observed for months to come. That includes, of course, our monthly ANC meetings.

**Newton Street, from 14th to 19th, is now a “slow street”**, a trial to see if this will make the street safer for pedestrians. One factor behind the experiment is the need for “social distancing”, something hard to practice on a crowded sidewalk. So making the street “slow”, and reducing traffic on it (by prohibiting through traffic), is thought to promote walking in the street, to avoid brushing by other people.

Personally I doubt that there's enough pedestrian traffic on Newton to compel much dodging into the street to avoid other pedestrians. (I do see that on other streets, such as Lamont.) But the broader question is, aside from the “social distancing” matter, does this make Newton a better street for residents? We get countless complaints of traffic on Newton moving at excessive speed. And cut-through commuter traffic, coming from 16th or 17th, then taking Newton to 18th or 19th, has long been a problem. Does the “no through traffic” posting reduce commuter-cut-through traffic? Compliance is totally voluntary.

What I have heard about the “slow street” effort is that the barriers at intersections complicate traffic through the intersections, in particular, delivery trucks. I've been told also that traffic on Ingleside may have been increased by traffic diverted from Newton. As for the commuter cut-through problem, the sharp reduction in commuter traffic due to the pandemic has made it hard to say if that problem has been mitigated or not.

This is very much a test of the “slow street” notion, so residential feedback, positive or negative, is needed. Should Newton remain a “slow street”? Or not? Should other streets in Mount Pleasant be designated “slow”? Let me know.

Concerning Commissioner Stewart's resolution **criticizing DCPS Chancellor Ferrebee** – I abstained from voting on that, not knowing enough about the matter to vote, and

disliking the personal nature of the resolution. Certainly the question of school attendance during the covid pandemic is important, but it's also terribly difficult, for parents and schoolteachers alike. I simply do not know what the right answer is.

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**Homicides** are rare in Mount Pleasant, but do happen. On the evening of November 15, police were called to the 3100 block of 16th Street, where they found a man on the street suffering from stab wounds. The victim, a 38-year-old man, died at the hospital. The same evening a 49-year-old man was arrested and charged with Second Degree Murder While Armed.

Police tell me that the assault took place not out on the street, but within a residence on that block. That's a crucial fact, indicating that this was not a random assault on the street, but involved two men who were, for some reason, in the same apartment, and had a violent dispute. What they were doing in that 16th Street apartment I do not know.

This is generally the case for homicides occurring in Mount Pleasant: men having some sort of argument, and turning to weapons in the fight. As dreadful and tragic as such incidents are, they're not threats to the safety of the general public.

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Everybody knows that **parking in Mount Pleasant** can be a problem. Our blocks tend to fill up after about 6 pm, as automobile-commuting residents come home from their jobs. In most places, curbside parking is available during the day. (The coronavirus pandemic, causing many residents to work from home, has substantially changed this.)

It's tempting to think that our parking problem is due to outsiders coming in and taking up our residential parking. That's true for the 1800 block of Newton, a block that is jammed not just at night but during the day. But for most of the neighborhood, the problem is not outsiders, but us, ourselves. We residents own too many cars for this high-density neighborhood, not enough of us having off-street parking. That's why the worst time for finding parking is at night, not during the day.

Still, in the belief that some of the parking problem is due to nonresidents, Residential Permit Parking (RPP), intended to prevent commuters from using our residential blocks as all-day parking lots, has been invoked on many Mount Pleasant residential blocks. An unfortunate characteristic of RPP in the District is its implementation one block at a time, by petition of the block residents. Commuters discovering that their favorite parking block has been designated RPP simply drive to the nearest non-RPP block and walk a bit further to their destinations. (A Parking Task Force denounced this policy in 2003, but the Council has ignored that advice.)

RPP in Mount Pleasant began on streets adjacent to the business strip, where employees of the neighborhood businesses did indeed park all day. RPP pushed those drivers to blocks a bit further from Mount Pleasant Street. Then the residents of the next block, suddenly burdened with commuters' cars, petitioned for RPP. Each newly RPP-zoned block pushed commuters another block west.

The cars being pushed west weren't just from commuters.. Residents whose cars are not registered in DC cannot get RPP permits, so those cars, as well as any commuters, were pushed west by the expansion of RPP zoning. In addition, household help, after-school child care workers, and visiting contractors also sought out the non-RPP blocks to park and avoid parking tickets. Thus every new designation of an RPP block led to a swarm of cars appearing on the next available unzoned block.

This westward progress of RPP zoning reached the 2000 block of Park Road in 2018. Pierce Mill Road and Rosemount Avenue petitioned for RPP in 2019. Now Adams Mill Road is close to the last block remaining unzoned --and there are occasional efforts by Adams Mill residents to change that.

So the entire neighborhood is gradually becoming RPP-zoned. Residents who avoid registering their cars in DC, despite the law requiring registration within 30 days of residency, will be in a bind.

The Visitor Parking Pass (VPP) program was devised around 2013 to allow household employees and visiting contractors to park on our RPP blocks without penalty (and to avoid their cars clogging up the remaining non-RPP blocks). Every household on an RPP-zoned block can obtain a VPP, issued annually and valid for the year.

The VPPs are not issued automatically, but must be requested from DDOT. That brings me to the main point of this discussion: it's almost 2021, so our 2020 VPPs will soon expire – but DDOT isn't yet issuing 2021 VPPs. The DDOT website says this: “Changes are coming to the Visitor Parking Pass program for 2021. Please keep your 2020 pass and check back soon for more updates!”

What changes are being considered I do not know. One possibility is an effort to stop abuse of VPPs. There have been cases of residents selling their VPPs to commuters. That's illegal, certainly, and perhaps the “changes” being considered would be an attempt to stop that.

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I've been doing this **monthly newsletter** since my first ANC term, in 2003 – 18 years! I have the newsletter printed, at my own expense – no ANC funds – and I hand-deliver it to every residence in my single-member district, about 700 copies. It's on the internet, too, posted on my personal website, with links provided from NextDoor.com.

I am not permitted to put my newsletter in mailboxes, which are “for stamped mail only”. Mail slots are ideal, of course. Sometimes, though, there's no mail slot, and it can be hard for me to find a good place to put my newsletter, where it will be safe from wind and rain.

And please, neighbors, don't tape those mail slots shut! That really defeats their purpose.

<p><b>The December meeting of the ANC will take place at 7 pm, December 15. Due to the ban on gatherings of more than 10 persons, and the closing of the Library meeting room, it will have to be a “virtual” meeting, accessible via the internet, using Zoom software. See the ANC1D website, <a href="http://anc1d.org">anc1d.org</a>, for details.</b></p>
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