

Jack's February report

At the January meeting, the ANC did the following:

- Elected ANC1D officers for 2019;
- Advised DDOT to issue a public space permit to the Addis Paris Cafe;
- Authorized expenditure of up to \$2200 for a direct-mail outreach to residents, about plans for the 1900 Lamont park;
- Endorsed a DDOT proposal to prohibit right turns on red at two Mount Pleasant intersections, and suggested three additional locations.

The 2019-2020 session of ANC1D is under way, with Jon Stewart as chair, Yasmin Romero-Latin as vice chair, Chelsea Allinger as treasurer, and me as secretary.

I was surprised to learn that some residents receiving my newsletters weren't aware that these newsletters are primarily about the ANC. Way back before I was on the ANC, I complained that residents couldn't easily find out what the ANC is doing in the neighborhood. So when I was first elected to the ANC, in November 2002, I decided that I would write a monthly newsletter to tell my constituents what their ANC is doing.

Of course, I include neighborhood news – this newsletter isn't only about the ANC. But primarily, it's about what your ANC is doing, and why. And the day I stop being an ANC commissioner, the newsletters stop, too. That day will surely come.

The right-turn-on-red (RTOR) topic illustrates how ANCs are intended to function. DC agencies are supposed to tell us, in advance, of their plans for the neighborhood. So DDOT informed us that they plan to impose **“No Right Turn on Red” at two Mount Pleasant intersections** – on 17th Street at Park Road, and on Lamont at 16th Street. Then we have a month in which to agree or disagree with the proposal; in this case, the ANC response is “no objection”.

The ANC can also suggest additional things for the DC agency to do, and Jon Stewart added to our resolution a request for RTOR bans at three additional Mount Pleasant intersections: from southbound Mount Pleasant Street onto Argonne Place, from eastbound Irving Street onto 16th Street, and from northbound Mount Pleasant Street onto Irving.

Our “advice” concerning imminent District agency plans will commonly be very influential; if we objected to the no-RTOR locations planned, DDOT would be inclined to reconsider (though they're free to reject our advice). Our requests for new actions, not on their current plans, tend to have little immediate effect. So I expect to see no-RTOR at the two interpretations already on the DDOT list. I do not expect to see RTOR bans at the three additional locations.

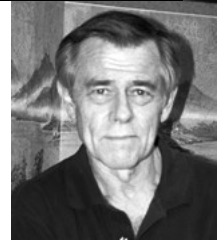
Personally, I think DC overdoes RTOR bans. The RTOR prohibition on Kenyon at Adams Mill, for example, I think is unwarranted. But I don't mind the RTOR ban proposed for Lamont at 16th, where right-turning out into fast-moving 16th Street traffic is chancy, and there are many pedestrians coming down the 16th Street sidewalk.

Years ago, RTOR was prohibited everywhere in DC. The Federal Government compelled an end to that policy in 1980,

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in an effort to make traffic laws consistent, state to state.

As for a red arrow – e.g., on Kingle at Adams Mill – no RTOR is allowed. A red arrow in DC means “stop and stay stopped until the light goes green”.

The **public space permit for the Addis Paris Cafe** was a special situation. That's on Mount Pleasant Street just north of Irving, where Mrs. Solomon offers a marvelous mix of French and Ethiopian pastries and dishes.

The cafe has a small sidewalk area, on a stage elevated above sidewalk level. Mrs. Solomon was under the impression that that area was part of the restaurant's lot. But upon applying for a license to serve alcoholic beverages on that sidewalk cafe, she was informed that it's actually “public space”. This is a very common situation in Mount Pleasant: what we think of as our own property may actually be public right-of-way.

So Mrs. Solomon needs a public space permit for the use of the cafe area directly in front of her restaurant. There's no reason why she shouldn't have use of that space; being on an elevated stage, it's not usable as actual sidewalk. And a sidewalk cafe adds to the safe and sociable atmosphere of Mount Pleasant Street. So I offered an ANC resolution of support for the Addis Paris Cafe, advising DDOT to issue her a public space permit. That will be decided at a Public Space Committee meeting on February 28.

This is one of our ANC tasks: we're supposed to be knowledgeable of District rules and regulations, and how to go about getting any necessary DC Government permits. I'm happy to be able to help Mrs. Solomon get the permit she needs to make use of that bit of public space.

The **little park in front of the 1900 Lamont apartment house** has long been a center of controversy. Previously leased and maintained by the apartment house, it's been a public park since 2001, and that has led to its severe degradation. What was once a “greenspace” is now a wretched mud pit. It gets too much foot and dog traffic for the sparse ground vegetation to handle, so what was once grass is now just dirt and mud, plagued with severe erosion.

Councilmember Brianne Nadeau has obtained funds for the “improvement” of the park. That's fine, though I don't know what can be done to save the area from continuing harm. Grass, as the pun goes, grows by inches, but dies by feet.

Brent Sisco, of DC Parks and Recreation, spoke to the ANC about the plans for “improvement”. He noted that the surface is so severely damaged by compaction and erosion that the trees lining the park are suffering.

My position concerning that park has always been that whatever is acceptable to the residents of the 1900 Lamont apartment house, is acceptable to me. The problem has been, from the beginning (20 years ago), that activities in the park have a direct effect on residents of the apartment house, because their windows – for most residents, their only windows – are directly over the park. For that reason, they've strongly objected to proposals for a playground in the park. Sure, a playground would be nice, but with no supervision, it could too easily become an uncontrollable noisy disturbance for apartment house residents. People aren't always considerate about being quiet, nor about confining their activities to daylight hours.

For years I've been the voice for the apartment house residents, my next-door neighbors. But now they have their very own ANC commissioner, Chelsea Allinger. I'm happy to have her take the lead on representing the interests of those residents, who have told her how they feel ignored and abused by neighborhood playground advocates, who have appeared to be uncaring about the concerns these residents have of noise and disturbance.

I'm reminded of the plans to put the Bancroft soccer field on Mount Pleasant Street, directly across the street from residences. Those residents objected, and so the soccer field was shifted, at significant expense, to the 18th Street side of Bancroft. I think the residents of the 1900 Lamont apartment house deserve equal consideration.

There will be a community meeting on what is to be done about the park at the Mount Pleasant Library on March 4, at 7 pm. The ANC authorized funds for a direct-mail notification of residents about this meeting.

We've been gradually getting rid of those so-called **“voluntary agreements” that long banned live music and dancing** in Mount Pleasant restaurants. But one survives, at the Purple Patch restaurant. I tried once before to terminate that VA, but was unsuccessful, because terminations can be accomplished only at the time of liquor license renewal.

Well, renewal time has arrived for the Purple Patch, and this time we're going to get the job done. I've promised the proprietor, Patrice Cleary, that. All the commissioners agree: the ban on live music in Mount Pleasant is nonsensical.

The **Brown Street Market** was, for many years, a convenient little shop just off the Mount Pleasant Street commercial strip. It's been closed for some time now, as one set of owners failed to make a go of it. Now a new owner is attempting to bring the market back to life.

The problem is the liquor license. Originally the market had a license to sell beer and wine, and that's all the new owner wants to do – no hard liquor. I think residents will want the market to again be able to offer beer and wine, and that seems also to be necessary for financial viability.

But there's a problem. No new licenses can be issued in an area zoned residential. The new owners can get their license only by transfer of an existing license from the previous owner. And the ABC Board argues that it's been closed for

too long, so the existing license is void, and the new owners cannot have a liquor license of any sort.

I think the neighborhood wants the Brown Street Market back in business, and if a liquor license is necessary to accomplish that, then so be it. So I'm sponsoring a resolution at the upcoming ANC meeting to have the previous liquor license transferred to the new owner, however much time has elapsed since the market closed.

The zoning regulations were rewritten a few years ago. The Zoning Commission, for these new regulations, wrote a definition of “penthouse” that is absurdly broad. In fact, **every garage-roof deck in the city is now a “penthouse”**, and the DCRA has been imposing penthouse regulations on anything on any rooftop, no matter how remote from the common concept of a “penthouse”. Specifically, the sides of a garage-roof deck now must be set back from the roof edges a distance equal to the height of the fence around the deck. This may result in a deck barely big enough for a picnic table, and I'm certain that this is not what the Zoning Commission had in mind when it was writing penthouse regulations.

Even the DCRA Zoning Administrator agrees that this is absurd, and pointless, but feels bound by the text of the regulation. The penthouse setback is supposed to render the structure hard to see from street level. For, say, a housing for a rooftop heat pump, on a multistory building, okay. But for a garage-roof deck, on an alley? What's the point?

Working through Councilmember Nadeau's office, we spoke to the Zoning Administrator on February 8, and determined that the ANC should take the lead on persuading the Zoning Commission to write a definition of “penthouse” that properly defines what is, and what is not, a rooftop “penthouse”. The current garage-roof applicant will have to seek a “special exception” through the Board of Zoning Adjustment.

The 2000 block of Park Road will be posted for Residential Permit Parking any day now. Residents of Pierce Mill Road and Rosemount Avenue are considering petitioning for RPP, fearing an avalanche of non-permit cars on their blocks. Should that come about, I'm convinced that Klinge Road residents – the north side, anyway – will be able to get RPP permits, though their street has no parking.

The fundamental problem, again, is too many Mount Pleasant residents owning cars not registered in DC, and therefore ineligible for RPP permits. All those cars collect on whatever blocks remain unzoned, thus creating a parking problem, of residents, not of commuters. Our parking headaches come not during the working day, but after hours, when residents come home in their personal automobiles and look for curbside parking. RPP is not intended to deal with that problem.

A substantial number of my **January newsletters went undelivered**. It was snowy and icy, and an unfortunate number of residences offered snow-covered front steps. I'm not about to risk a fall on slippery steps, sorry.

The next meeting of the ANC will be on Tuesday, February 26, 7:00 pm, at the Mount Pleasant Library.