

## Jack's February report

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

- Selected ANC officers for the year, and dealt with other routine matters required every January;
- Approved the ANC1D quarterly report to the DC Auditor for the first quarter of fiscal 2021;
- Advised DDOT to implement truck noise mitigation measures for the new Newton Street loading zone.

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**ANC officers for 2021:** Robin Sandenburgh, chair; Matthew Brandeburg, vice chair; Chelsea Allinger, treasurer; Jack McKay, secretary.

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The ANC resolution concerning **truck noise** was mine, a consequence of comments I received during public discussion of the proposed loading zone for Newton Street, adjacent to the Stoddard Baptist Nursing Home. The response from residents to the loading zone has been favorable, because having the trucks parked next to the curb, rather than double-parked out in the street, will put a stop to the all-too-frequent blocking of Newton by delivery trucks.

Residents did note a common complaint about these trucks: noise. Early-morning deliveries are especially annoying. Truck drivers tend to leave their truck engines running as they make their deliveries, many of them convinced that their big diesels should, once fired up, not be shut off until the end of the day.

The loading zone won't change that, of course. But what we can do is have prominent posting at the loading zone of the District's law prohibiting idling longer than three minutes, in the hope that that will encourage greater compliance. The resolution passed at the January ANC meeting, agreeing to the loading zone, also called for that signage, and received a promising response from DDOT.

However, it's not clear how much this is going to help. I understand that some – many? – of the trucks making deliveries are “reefers”, refrigeration trucks. If the refrigeration unit runs off the truck engine, as I gather is commonly the case, then the truck is exempt from the three-minute limit.

What more can be done? Residents asked that the use of the loading zone be allowed only after 8 AM, whereas the proposed start time is 7 AM. My resolution asks for that, but I doubt that we'll get that. And if the loading zone isn't available at 7 AM, truckers may simply double-park in the street, and that certainly is no help.

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**The Covid-19 plague** continues. We're all sick to death of having to wear masks and avoid close contact with anyone we don't know (and even those we do). Vaccinations are now available, though the procedure for actually getting a shot is very clumsy, and vaccination appointments seem in practice to be available mainly to residents with good internet access and a willingness to persist until an appointment is found. The “digital divide” is, in this case, downright deadly.

I was lucky; Sibley Hospital obtained some vaccine, and called in recent vaccination-qualifying patients to get shots. I was one of those recent patients, so I've had my two. Emily

## ANC 1D03 NEWSLETTER #211

Jack McKay, February 15, 2021

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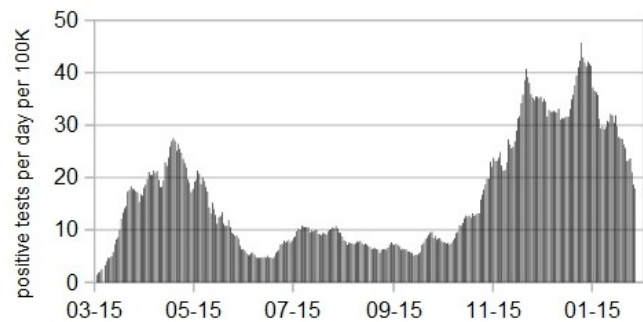


had to do it the hard way, fighting with that dreadful website set up for making appointments, and finally landing one. So we're vaccinated, which is a great relief to us, due to our age. Like other Mount Pleasant residents who are senior citizens, we've been isolating ourselves for the past eleven months, fearing that acquiring the virus would be, for either of us, a death sentence.

The daily count of test-positives has been declining sharply of late, here and nationwide. In early January, the daily count here was up to 45 positives per 100,000 DC population. Now it's less than half that.

### DC test positives, per 100K population

7-day average, through February 10



The dreadful rise in that daily count, from about seven last September, to over 40 in January, may have been due to Christmas travel. The present count, about 20 per day per 100,000 residents, while much lower than that early-January peak, is far above the counts of last fall.

In short, the situation is better, but still awful. I find no agreement among the experts on what caused the awful autumn increase in the count, nor on the decline that's taken place since.

Here in DC, that daily count has to drop below 5 to permit a Phase III relaxation of the pandemic restrictions. Last September, it appeared that we would reach that level before long. Now there's no telling when the daily count will drop to 5.

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Last November, Newton Street, from 14th Street to 19th Street, was declared a “**Slow Street**”, prohibiting through traffic and reducing the speed limit. This is an experiment, and DDOT will want to know if the experiment should become permanent, or not.

Certainly eliminating through traffic would be nice; too many drivers come from 16th, or up 17th from Piney Branch

Parkway, to take Newton Street across the neighborhood, then off to somewhere else. However, as a frequent user of Newton to get from Columbia Heights to home, I have wondered what constituted, legally, the banned “through traffic”? Am I “through traffic”, going to 19th and Lamont?

Well, DDOT has now specified what is “through traffic”: *“no person shall drive a vehicle upon such street or portion of the street except . . . drivers of vehicles whose destination or origin is on or within two (2) blocks of such street or portion of the street”*. Two blocks? That's Park Road, and anyone who lives south of Park Road is beyond that two-block range, and so may not use Newton Street as a route into or out of the neighborhood.

In short, half the population of Mount Pleasant may not use any portion of Newton Street for travel into or out of our neighborhood. I think that's flaming ridiculous, and is alone sufficient for resisting the continuation of “Slow Street” status for Newton, given the absence of any significant slowing of traffic by the designation.

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Months ago, a **Target shopping cart** showed up in the little park at 1900 Lamont. There it sat, until one day in February, when I guess somebody decided to deal with this litter in the park by dumping it in the alley, as if that's a suitable place for it.

In the alley, the cart promptly migrated to right in front of my garage. Having little choice in the matter, I have left it in front of my garage – fact is, we're not going out often these days, due to the pandemic – and filed an “illegal dumping” report.

Yes, “illegal dumping”, not “bulk collection”. If you file the latter, whatever you asked to be picked up will be considered yours, and if there's anything improper about it, you'll be held responsible. I advise residents to file things dumped in their alleys under “illegal dumping”, so that whatever's been put there is not your responsibility.

Unfortunately, the expected time for dealing with such dumping is 18 working days, i.e., about a month. Happily for me, this grungy shopping cart has already been acknowledged by DPW: *“Per Inspector Ingea, violation was observed. A request to remove the red Target shopping cart in the rear of the property was sent to DPW. Please be patient. The alley is accessible at 1900 Lamont St NW and 3200 Walbridge Pl NW.”*

So maybe I won't be afflicted with this thing until April. I guess I should be happy that it's just an old shopping cart, and not, say, a dirty mattress, something all too frequently found dumped in our alleys.

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Near where Mount Pleasant Street intersects Park Road, and abruptly becomes 17th Street, there's a small “triangle park” adjacent to Park Road, between that intersection and “little” Mount Pleasant Street. (Who devised that confusing street arrangement?) Now there's a proposal to make that a **dog park**.

I know plenty of dog owners who would love to see a dog park in Mount Pleasant. Perhaps the availability of a dog park would reduce the current misuse of Rock Creek Park as a

dog run. But we're also hearing from residents living close by this park who do not want it made into a dog park.

One problem is that the dog-park use would essentially occupy the whole park, which would be surrounded by five-foot fencing, and accessible only through a double-gated passage. This triangle park is small, well under the 5000 square feet declared the ideal minimum by DC dog park regulations. So essentially every bit of it would be a fenced dog pen. There would be no walking across this park to reach the bus stop on the Park Road side.

So, while I sympathize with the desire for a dog park in the neighborhood, this does not seem to be a location to recommend for that purpose. But let's see what people have to say. And let's hear from DPR, which has authority over these things: is the site suitable? If it's not suitable for a DC dog park, then that, for better or worse, ends the matter.

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I'm sometimes asked **if a permit is needed** to do certain things, e.g., front porch repairs. I answer that, if at all in doubt, yes, apply for the permit!

Mount Pleasant has two characteristics that make permits necessary for even minor, routine things. First, we're a historic district, which means that anything visible from the street is subject to historic preservation review. That includes paving over any portion of your front yard. And many of our houses have front yards that are legally in “public space”, being unused portions of the street right-of-way. Indeed, many of our front porches lie on public space (legally so, as “projections”). So, DDOT Public Space has to approve.

So permits are needed in Mount Pleasant for almost anything you do outside of, or on the exterior of, your house. I see way too many bright red “Stop Work” orders slapped on the front doors of houses where work has begun, without permits.

It happens that I want to put handrails on my front porch, for safety when the steps are slippery. Last fall I bought a couple of nice iron handrails, made for concrete front steps such as ours. Now all I need is a permit allowing me to bolt these handrails in place.

Well, three months after my permit application, I still have no permit. Oddly, the Historic Preservation Office was no problem, providing immediate approval. And I must say that the DCRA folks have been very helpful. But DDOT Public Space . . . that office offers no explanation, but has sat silently on my permit application, for weeks on end. The most recent action from them is to demand that I now apply for yet another “supplementary” public-space permit. Surely I could have been told that months ago! And how long will I have to wait for this?

Is my experience with permits typical? Three months, for an utterly trivial project? No wonder residents (and small-scale contractors) avoid applying for permits.

**The February meeting of the ANC will take place at 7 pm, February 23. Due to the pandemic, it will have to be a “virtual” meeting, accessible only via the internet, using Zoom software. See the ANC1D website, [anc1d.org](http://anc1d.org), for details.**