

## Jack's January report

At the December meeting, the ANC did the following:

- Allocated up to \$3000 for the purchase of books to be given away at author/illustrator speaking events at the Mount Pleasant Library;
- Advised the Mayor's Agent to approve the front window installed at 1627 Monroe Street, despite the HPRB declaration that the window is "incompatible".

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The **new ANC "session"** is about to begin, with two brand-new commissioners, Chelsea Allinger of Lamont Street, and Robin Sandenburgh of Newton Street. I'll be beginning my 17th year on this ANC.

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On Christmas Day, **gunshots were heard on the 17 00 block of Newton**. This caused considerable upset as residents worried that there was an armed robber in the area.

The incident turned out in fact to be an argument between two men, leading to one of them firing shots. This was classified by the MPD as an ADW – "assault with a dangerous weapon". That's a bad thing, to be sure, but it's much less bad than a street robbery turning into a potential homicide. As for the victim – well, there seems to be none. The second person in the loud argument heard before the gunshots has not appeared to file a complaint.

Mount Pleasant is inner-city DC, not upscale suburbia, and things like this happen, though not as frequently as was the case a decade or two ago.

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Back in 2011, the MPD decided to reorganize the PSAs (Police Service Areas) of the District to try to equalize the "calls for service" among the seven MPD districts. In order to reduce the count for the third district (which includes Columbia Heights and Shaw, very busy police-call areas), Mount Pleasant was shifted from the third district (3D) to the fourth (4D), the latter covering neighborhoods to the north and east of us, centering on Georgia Avenue and extending to the Maryland border.

We protested that change at the time, because Mount Pleasant is closely coupled to Columbia Heights and Adams Morgan, whereas neighborhoods to the north – 16th Street Heights, Crestwood, and the Georgia Avenue corridor – are not. Furthermore, the calls-for-service count from Mount Pleasant was low, so moving us into 4D did little to reduce the calls-for-service count for 3D. Nonetheless, MPD Chief Lanier was adamant, and so Mount Pleasant became a remote corner of 4D. (Then-Councilmember Jim Graham described us as "a bump on the rump" of 4D.)

This month there is another **reorganization of the PSAs** under way, and Mount Pleasant is, as of January 10, again in 3D, along with many of our Columbia Heights neighbors.

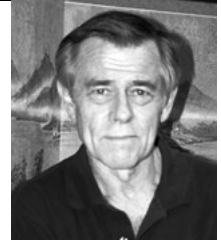


The PSA – previously 408, now 302 – includes Columbia Heights south of Monroe Street, from here to Sherman Avenue.

## ANC 1D03 NEWSLETTER #188

Jack McKay, January 14, 2019

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I think that makes a lot of sense, given that there is so much interaction now between Mount Pleasant and the adjacent portions of Columbia Heights, most significantly, the Metro station at 14th and Irving, and the shops along those blocks of 14th Street.

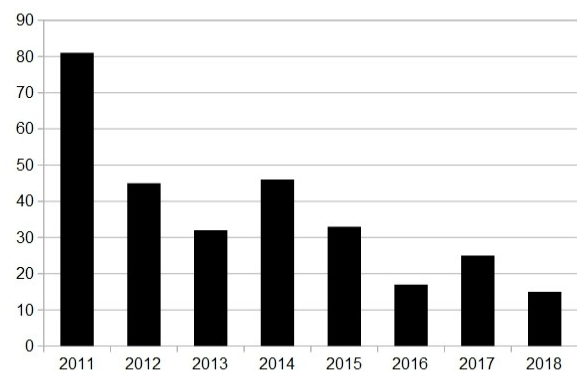
Years ago, 16th Street was practically a barrier between us and Columbia Heights. That's no longer the case, and it makes sense for the police coverage of our adjacent neighborhoods to be unified.

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**Burglaries** are troublesome, our row house homes being especially vulnerable. A great many residents leave their homes unoccupied during the day. Burglars know that, and, after confirming that no one is home, they look for an out-of-sight door or window to break in.

Happily, the count of burglaries here has decreased substantially in recent years:

Burglaries in Mt Pleasant



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I mentioned in my July newsletter the problem of **window replacement** on a row house at 1627 Monroe. The homeowner had gone to some effort to get a historically correct replacement. When the window contractor showed up to do the installation, he asked about the historic preservation permit, and was assured that the permit was "at the office".

Unfortunately, it wasn't. The contractor had somehow neglected to apply for the permit. And somebody in the neighborhood noticed that the window had been replaced, and notified the Historic Preservation Office (HPO), which issued a notice of violation.

The ANC asked the Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB) to overlook that failure by the contractor, and to judge the window based on its preservation merits alone.

Would it not have been approved if the application had been timely filed? The window contractor testified at the HPRB hearing, taking responsibility for the work having been done without the historic preservation permit.

I think it's clear that the window is "compatible with the character of the historic district", as the law requires. The HPO staff report stated that the "mortar was not as closely matched as it could have been, and there should have been a more substantial mullion between double-ganged windows. But the chosen windows are compatible replacements".

Okay, what is, really, the complaint?

The HPRB, by a 7 to 1 vote, declared that the window "*is incompatible with the character of this house, its consistently fenestrated row, and with the historic district in general*". In my opinion, they were simply irritated that the window replacement had been done without the preservation permit, and were punishing the homeowner for the contractor's error. He's being told to rip out the new window and reinstall the old, at, of course, considerable expense.

There is an appeal mechanism for such an unfortunate decision, via the so-called "Mayor's Agent". The homeowner has attempted that appeal, and the ANC supported him with a resolution, asking the Agent to overrule the HPRB and declare the window "compatible". I have also submitted a personal letter to the Agent to that effect. The Agent's hearing was scheduled for January 10 (hence its appearance in this newsletter), but that hearing has been postponed, for reasons unknown.

I believe that this is an example of regulatory overreach by the HPO. Certainly, we want to prevent incongruous development, such as the awful pop-ups that afflict other neighborhoods. But historic preservation too easily becomes a rigid insistence that absolutely nothing be changed about the exterior of our homes, however inconsequential. Our local historic preservationists, Historic Mount Pleasant (HMP), ought to be the first to protest, because this bureaucratic excess harms the very reputation of historic preservation. Opponents of historic district designation in other neighborhoods take such incidents as examples of why designation should be opposed. But HMP has taken the extreme-preservationist view, supporting the HPO's assertion that this replacement window should be disallowed.



Now is the time to apply for **Visitor Parking Passes (VPPs)**. Most of Mount Pleasant is now zoned for Residential Permit Parking, so visitors, including household employees, can park for only two hours during the workday. The VPP allows your guest to park freely in RPP zones. Every household (whether owning a car or not) is permitted one VPP.

The 2000 block of Park Road has been notified that **RPP zoning of their block is imminent**, so they should now be applying for the Zone 1 RPP endorsement to their vehicle registrations.

RPP is intended to prevent commuter parking on residential streets. That's not much of a problem here, and Mount Pleasant would do perfectly well without any RPP zoning. But once RPP began, up close to Mount Pleasant Street, what commuters there were, and residents whose cars aren't registered in the District, moved their cars westward. So the westward blocks got RPP, pushing even more vehicles further to the west. Each newly zoned block increased the number of non-permit cars clogging the blocks to the west. And so the RPP zoning has grown, now to the last block of Park Road.

RPP zoning here is more about cars owned by residents but not registered in DC, and therefore ineligible for RPP, than it is about commuters. (West of 18th Street, only Newton Street has a significant commuter-parking problem, due to the Stoddard Baptist Home.) When I surveyed cars parked on the 2000 block of Park Road, I found eight cars with non-DC tags. That's not a large number – I counted 38 legal parking spots – but clearly residents with non-DC cars know that this block is unzoned, and so park there, though they may live blocks away. (When my own block was unzoned, I saw precisely that behavior.)

RPP on that last block of Park Road will cause those vehicles to depart, though they are certain, of course, to appear on the few remaining unzoned blocks in Mount Pleasant, one more step in the gradual migration of such vehicles to the west, evading the RPP blocks.

RPP zoning is not a solution to the non-DC car problem! If you live in DC, you should – legally, must – register your car in DC. That's the law, and there are so-called ROSA squads which patrol neighborhoods late at night, seeking out cars lacking DC tags, on the assumption that the owner of a car parked here very late at night must be sleeping here, and therefore may well actually reside here. (There is provision for people who frequently stay overnight, despite not residing in DC.)

A new law now coming into effect, with a \$100 fine:

*DCMR 22, 2207.5 Motor vehicle operators approaching from the rear or approaching from the lane adjacent to a transit bus shall yield the right-of-way to the transit bus when the transit bus signals its intention to re-enter traffic. This section does not relieve an operator of a transit bus from the duty to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons using the roadway.*

The next meeting of the ANC will be on Tuesday, January 22, 7:00 pm, at the Mount Pleasant Library.