

Jack's January report

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

- Advised ABRA to approve the renewal of the liquor license for the Best World Supermarket;
- Heard Ms. Spring Worth, manager of the 16th Street bus-lane project, provide an extensive description of the project. No ANC action concerning the project was proposed.

The **December meeting of ANC1D** was the last of the 2019-2020 ANC term. New commissioners are Jason Hamacher (1D01) and Matthew Brandeburg (1D04). Returning 1D commissioners Robin Sandenburgh (1D02), Chelsea Allinger (1D05), and I (1D03) will continue representing our districts.

The **16th Street bus lane project** starts at Arkansas Avenue, just to the north of Mount Pleasant, and continues to H Street, downtown, at the north edge of Lafayette Park. The purpose is to make bus travel faster and more reliable than it currently is, and hence, to encourage more commuters to take the bus, instead of going downtown in private automobiles.

The project is plainly in keeping with the general urban goal today of reducing dependence upon personal automobiles. The benefits to bus service will come, no doubt, at some expense to automobile users. The consequences for automobile traffic remain to be seen. The people most inconvenienced by the creation of bus-only lanes may be commuters from Maryland.

The essence of the project is the designation of “peak period, peak direction bus lanes”. The southbound curb lane from Arkansas Avenue to U Street will be bus-only in the morning, while the northbound curb lane from Irving Street to Arkansas Avenue will be bus-only in the evening. An estimated 28 parking spaces along our side of 16th Street will be lost.

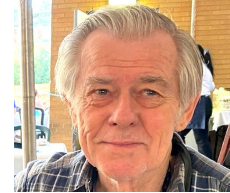
The covid state of emergency has confounded the usual commuter traffic, so we may not know how these bus lanes



ANC 1D03 NEWSLETTER #210

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affect automobile traffic until the pandemic is over, and we return to “normal” life.

Work on these bus-only lanes is expected to begin soon.

The political events of the past few weeks have been horrific. It's hard to focus on our local issues when Federal Government matters, such as the invasion of the House of Congress by a violent mob – are taking place. Here in DC these events have greater impact than they do far from Washington, if only because they're happening only blocks away from our homes.

There are numerous AirBnB homes in Mount Pleasant, and there have been disturbing reports of badly behaved renters in such homes, engaging in harsh behavior to the neighboring residents. Mount Pleasant is a neighborhood that strongly opposes many Trump values, favoring immigrants, same-sex marriage, and multiracial, multicultural, multilingual, and multiethnic living. Trump won just 3.2% of the popular vote here, compared to 94.5% for Biden and Harris.

The “new” Mount Pleasant ANC has its first monthly meeting on January 26. This will be via Zoom, of course, due to the covid-19 state of emergency.

Many people are puzzled by the concept of the ANC – the Advisory Neighborhood Commission – a government entity found almost nowhere else in the country. The **essential purpose of the ANC** is found in the DC Code: “Each Advisory Neighborhood Commission . . . may advise the Council of the District of Columbia, the Mayor and each executive agency, and all independent agencies, boards and commissions of the government of the District of Columbia with respect to all proposed matters of District government policy . . . which affect that Commission area”. A key phrase is “proposed matters” of DC government policy. That is, DC agencies are *required* to notify the ANC of whatever they *intend* to do in our neighborhood; then we can reply to those notifications, offering our “advice” concerning their plans.

The ANC is not, as is sometimes thought, the neighborhood government. We have no government authority over any resident, nor any business, in Mount Pleasant. We do not represent the DC Government in Mount Pleasant; we represent the residents of Mount Pleasant to the DC Government.

DC agencies are free, in practice, to reject our “advice”. The ANC does not have “approval” authority over anything. We can merely “advise” DC agencies of what we want them to do.

ANC advice is supposed to be given “great weight”, but that means only that an agency is supposed to explain to us why they're rejecting our advice. They frequently don't bother; there's no mechanism for us to compel a DC agency to meet that feeble “great weight” requirement. Many DC agencies will merely assert that they've given the ANC advice “great weight”, with no further explanation, and that's that.

Consequently it is very important for us, in our “advice” resolutions, to offer *persuasive* evidence in support of our advice, so that the DC agency decides that our advice is worth taking. Our ANC1D resolutions consist of a “resolved” statement – *what* we want the agency to do – followed by a “why” statement – *why* we think it's best for the agency to take our advice.

DC agencies are bound by the District laws that govern their work. A DC agency is not permitted to follow ANC advice if that advice is not consistent with their regulations. Hence, our advice must not only be persuasive, but must conform to the District regulations governing the agency in question.

Here's an example of ANC advice. In 2018 DDOT planned a repaving of the 2000 block of Park Road, the last block of Park Road before the bridge over Piney Branch and into Rock Creek Park. Their plans included **a new stop sign where Pierce Mill Road intersects Park Road.** That stop sign was going to make two or three parking spots on Pierce Mill illegal.

I pointed out to DDOT that Pierce Mill Road is more like a long driveway than a side road, and no one is dumb enough to speed out onto Park Road without stopping. The ANC supported my argument with a resolution, and DDOT evidently agreed that the stop sign was unnecessary, and took it out of their plans, saving those parking spots.

The plans also proposed a two-foot-wide painted “median” in the middle of Park Road, the road being wider than necessary for two traffic lanes, plus two parking lanes, and a bike lane, but not wide enough to add a downhill bike lane. I argued that there was a need for some buffer space alongside the cars parked on the east side of Park Road, because residents getting to and from their parked cars are forced to walk in the street, there being no sidewalk. DDOT agreed that that was sensible, so instead of a painted “median”, there's a painted space alongside the parked cars, intended to keep passing traffic a few feet away from the parked cars.

We also asked for a raised pedestrian crosswalk across Park Road, at the Klingle/Walbridge intersection. We didn't get that, but we'll keep trying.

That's what ANC “advice” is about: offering guidance to DC agencies in their efforts in our neighborhood.

In addition, we can offer **unsolicited advice**, though such advice does not get even that minimal “great weight” supposedly required for our notice-responsive advice. Some time ago I noted that there's not enough traffic on Klingle Road to warrant four traffic lanes, and that Mount Pleasant residents really need safe bicycling routes into Rock Creek Park. DDOT agreed, and now we've got barrier-protected bike tracks on either side of Klingle Road.

Work on the **improvements to the small park at 19th and Lamont** should begin in the spring. A peculiar situation has become evident: it's a park, for which the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) has responsibility – but the Department of Transportation (DDOT) is insisting that it's their property, and DPR has to defer to them.

The land was purchased in 1913, intended to be a continuation of Lamont Street to Walbridge Place (and my 19th Street property plat shows exactly that). But in 2000 Councilmember Graham had the area transferred to DPR, so that it could become a park, instead of a never-built portion of Lamont Street.

I thought that was the end of that – as did CM Graham, who dropped his effort to “close” Lamont Street formally, deciding that was unneeded – but DDOT disagrees, arguing that the area remains “their” right-of-way, no matter that there is zero possibility that the park would be destroyed in order to build more road. DPR, unfamiliar with this history, has yielded to DDOT direction concerning the design for the park.

I think that's absurd – it's a park, not a road, it will never be a road, and DDOT's role in the matter was terminated 20 years ago.

We'll just have to see how that evolves. It might be noted that, due to my personal interest in the matter – this is directly adjacent to my home – I will not involve myself in the matter as an ANC commissioner. I'm a neighbor, no more than that. If the ANC is doing anything here, it will have to be through Commissioner Chelsea Allinger.

DDOT has posted that it will convert a few parking spots on Newton Street into a **loading zone** to serve the Stoddard Baptist Home. This will be at the western end of the Stoddard property, close to their loading dock.

We hate to lose parking, certainly, but there's a clear need for this loading zone. Newton Street is too often blocked by trucks double-parked to make deliveries to the Home.

As for the lost parking – perhaps three spots – those are unrestricted, free-for-all spots on the Home frontage, not RPP, resident-only spots. The loading zone area will be available for overnight parking. Just please move your car in the morning, before any deliveries.

The **coronavirus state of emergency** is currently set to continue until March 17. Trust me, it is sure to be extended beyond that date.

As of December 23, the **Big Brown Bat** is the **Official State Mammal** of the District of Columbia. This action by the District Council came about by the initiative of the Girl Scouts of Ward 6. I think that's admirable!

The January meeting of the ANC will take place at 7 pm, January 26. 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, anc1d.org, for details.