

July report to constituents

Here is news of the **July 10 ANC meeting**, and other happenings in Mount Pleasant. At this meeting, the ANC:

- Tabled indefinitely Gregg Edward's motion from the December meeting providing for "non-voting delegates" to the ANC
- Agreed that changes to the plans for the enclosure of a back porch at 1834 Park Road were insignificant, and confirmed that the ANC has "no objection"
- Made me Commission Secretary
- Agreed that a request from DDOT for inputs to their plans for a Mount Pleasant Traffic Study, as they develop a Statement of Work for a contractor, could be responded to by individual commissioners (my response, a summary of Mt Pleasant traffic issues, covering through-traffic speed, business delivery trucks, school traffic congestion, and troublesome intersections, is posted on my Web site, DCJack.org)
- Called on DPW to reconsider its new policy of collecting bulk trash from in front of residences (my resolution)
- Advised the ABC Board to delete the bans on live music, live entertainment, and disk jockeys from "voluntary agreements" attached to Mount Pleasant restaurant liquor licenses
- Called on the MPD to "to provide adequate personnel for continuation of its Mount Pleasant foot patrols" (my resolution).

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Jack McKay, July 24, 2006

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Many people complain about badly behaved people on Mount Pleasant Street, hassling pedestrians, urinating in alleys, or being passed-out drunk. **Foot patrol officers** are needed to control, and prevent, such behavior. They get to know the people on the street, learn who are the okay folks and who are troublesome, and win the confidence of everyone, from street people to business owners. People have noted an improvement in conditions along Mount Pleasant Street, and are grateful for the presence of an authority figure who can respond quickly when there is a problem.

Recent personnel shifts have left the MPD short-handed, and whenever there's a manpower shortage, the MPD gives priority to officers sitting in squad cars, waiting to respond to radio calls. Hence, our foot patrols have nearly disappeared in recent months.

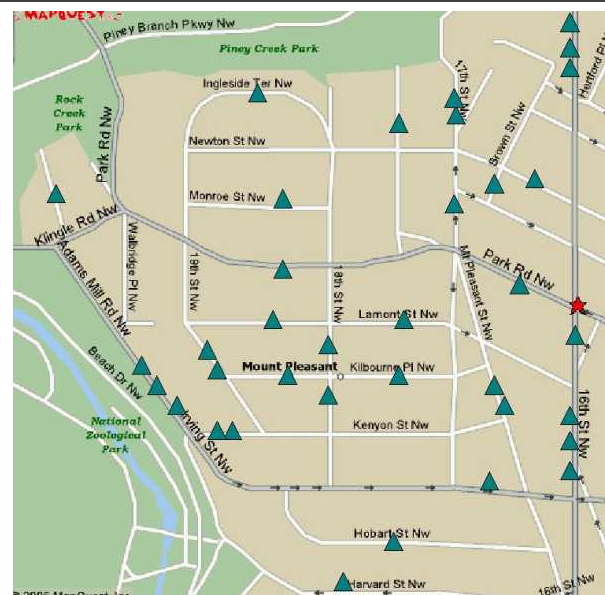
The ANC passed, unanimously, my resolution calling for **restoration of MPD foot patrols** along, and adjacent to, Mount Pleasant Street. Coincidentally, the "crime emergency" has provided for more officers on the job, and Inspector Burke replied to my resolution to say that the MPD "can accommodate this request immediately".

As everyone knows, there's a "**crime emergency**" under way in the District. In fact, crime is not much higher than a year ago, but lately robberies have occurred in Georgetown, and down on the Mall. There are over a thousand robberies a year in our part of DC, but this is dismissed as "normal". A handful of robberies on the Mall, and in Georgetown, creates an "emergency".

Robberies are indeed up in DC (14% above the two-year average), and in the MPD Third District (20% above the average), but are not up in Mount Pleasant: just three in June, and four so far in July, not much different from our average of five a month. **Our local "crime wave" is in burglaries:** eleven in June, seven so far in July, versus an average of under four per month. (A burglary is a person entering your home to steal things. This category does not include theft from yards or cars.)

The map shows the distribution of these burglaries here so far in 2006. While most robberies occur east of 17th Street, burglaries happen everywhere in the neighborhood.

Mount Pleasanters are mostly working people, so many of our homes are empty during the day. Police in a squad car passing by can hardly tell if a burglar is inside somebody's house. It's up to us to secure our homes, and, for those of us who are home during the day, to watch out for our neighbors' homes.



Locations (approximate) of burglaries in Mount Pleasant, the past six months. Burglars prowl around the neighborhood until they find an opportunity, an empty home with an unguarded opening.

The ANC passed, unanimously, Wayne Kahn’s resolution calling for **an end to the ban on live music**, live entertainment, and disk jockeys in Mount Pleasant restaurants, imposed by the MPNA via so-called “voluntary agreements”. I initiated that resolution, and I wrote the draft, which Wayne revised to his taste.

Nobody wants to see Mount Pleasant turn into a noisy night-club zone, like Adams Morgan, with streets crowded with traffic and people until well after midnight. I’m certain that Mount Pleasant won’t go that way. For one thing, our restaurants are quite small, and haven’t close to the capacity of Adams Morgan night clubs. For another, these “voluntary agreements” can still be used to impose limits on entertainment, e.g., ending by midnight, or allowed only on weekends, if necessary. Surely we can devise a compromise that will provide some local entertainment for Mount Pleasant residents, provide a venue for Latino music and entertainment, and contribute to the economic viability of our struggling restaurants, while avoiding the congestion problems of Adams Morgan.

Mount Pleasant Street is way too quiet, almost deserted, after about 10 pm. A modest amount of nightlife will be a welcome improvement to the neighborhood, even for those of us who have no interest in entertainment with our meals.

Our ANC terms are for two years, ending this December. **This November, you’ll be able to decide whether you want me to continue doing this job, or not.** Yes, I’ll be on the ballot, though my wife has questioned the sanity of my decision to run for a third term. This job amounts to lots of stress, and lots of time, for zero pay. (Just doing the newsletter costs me \$800 a year.) Many ANC commissioners abandon the job up after a term or two. I believe that four of our six seats will be vacated this fall.

I am, as you know, pretty direct about my opinions, and there are folks in the neighborhood who disagree with my actions. There will be, I am sure, a very strong effort to get me off your ANC. It’ll be up to you to decide.

Several residents have complained to me about **the new DPW policy of collecting bulk trash from in front of our homes**, instead of from the alleys. It’s certainly unsightly to see worn-out furniture piled up on our sidewalks. Furthermore, parked cars will surely interfere with this collection.

The ANC passed my resolution calling for Public Works to reconsider this policy. We advise DPW to identify alleys that are exceptionally narrow, and to limit this front-collection policy to residents along such alleys. For everybody else, let’s go back to alley collections.

I’m working on **getting two badly positioned “no parking” signs** moved. One, at 1857 Lamont, should be 5 feet from an alley, but is a full 35 feet away. Another, at 18th and Newton, is 13 feet farther from the stop sign than it ought to be. It’s a huge battle to get such misplaced no-parking signs moved, so don’t expect quick results. I just have to keep after DDOT until they move the signs.

The next ANC meeting is on Tuesday, August 1, 7:00 pm, La Casa Community Center. I don’t know what will be on the meeting agenda.

I have long complained about the inordinate focus on **“more police on patrol”** as a defense against crime, when the District’s deficiency clearly lies in our detective work. Because most robbers repeat the offence, once they begin, the best way to prevent future robberies is to quickly track them down and put them away. In the Georgetown case, the robbers were already known to the police, from past robberies, but the MPD hadn’t put together sufficient evidence for a charge. As the report in the Post made clear, our detectives are not up to the task. The “attackers were suspects in at least two other recent holdups”, the Post reported, one robbery more than a month earlier, and “police also had surveillance video of the suspects from a camera at a gas station, where the suspects apparently used a credit card taken in another robbery”. But the MPD detective squad was evidently slow to make use of these leads, and no arrests were made. The robbers who killed the New York Times reporter in upper Northwest were also suspects in previous robberies. The Post continues, “privately some prosecutors say *detectives have not always been aggressive about developing those leads when the trail is hot.*” Is it any surprise **that the District’s robbery closure rate is a dismal 16%, compared to the urban average of 21%?**

I continue to argue, at every opportunity, that we need more detectives working robberies – there are just five in our district, burdened with over 1000 robberies a year – and we need to give them more resources, and perhaps stronger motivation. I’ve said this to our councilmembers, I’ve said this in the Washington Post, and in June I said this personally to Chief Ramsey (who did not disagree with my assertion that our detectives aren’t doing as well as they should).

The emergency legislation proposed by the Mayor, and passed by the Council, does nothing to help our detective squads do better at getting repeat criminals off the street. Adrian Fenty, the lone councilmember with the courage to challenge the “do something, even if it’s ineffectual” tide, and point out that the Mayor’s emergency measures are mainly for political show, did say that we need to do more about follow-up to crimes, instead of simply throwing more uniforms onto the street to soothe Georgetown residents who are shocked to find that violent crime isn’t confined to our side of the Park.

Too many young toughs in the District have learned **that five out of six robberies go forever unsolved**. That statistic does not mean that, after six robberies, a robber is likely to be caught. It means that the guys doing five out of six robberies are *never* caught. For all too many young men, afflicted with bad backgrounds, poor educations, and no work skills, robbery is a perfectly rational career choice. We’ve got to put a stop to that.