

## Jack's July report

At the June meeting, the ANC did the following:

- Endorsed a “stipulated license” for the Addis Paris Cafe;
- Endorsed a request by the Bancroft contractor for permission to work on July 4, a holiday; and
- Advised HPRB approval of a new window installed at 1627 Monroe Street.

A Lamont Street resident asked when DDOT would come **replace the treebox sod** where it had been disrupted by sidewalk work. To our surprise, a DDOT contractor then came and removed the existing sod from the whole length of the 1800 block of Lamont, both sides. Then new sod was laid, not only on Lamont, but in some areas of Park Road, too.

Well, that's nice, I suppose, but this was done at the very end of June, just as we come to the hottest month of the year. DDOT did some heavy watering, but then the new sod was turned over to us residents for nurture and maintenance. I asked DDOT for some guidance as to exactly what residents should do, and offered to go door-to-door with their expert advice, but got only this: “The grass can receive 'bi-weekly watering... to wet the sod at least 2 inches into the sod bed,' but that should happen naturally from rainwater so only water if necessary”. In short, we needn't do anything.

But summertime rain isn't that frequent, and a fair amount of the new sod has already been totally dried out by the July sun. I sent photos to DDOT, and they're investigating the situation. I'm afraid much of that new sod is a loss.

We approved a “stipulated license” for the **Addis Paris Cafe**, a new Ethiopian-French restaurant on Mount Pleasant Street at Irving. That permits the restaurant to serve beer and wine, while awaiting final approval of the liquor license. The proprietor, Mrs. Solomon, is from Ethiopia, and lived in Paris, hence the unusual combination of cuisines.

There was an election held here in June. It's most unfortunate that **the DC primary election**, once held in September, now takes place in June, five months ahead of the general election. While it is merely the primary, it is tantamount to a general election in the District, because the number of registered Democrats here far exceeds the count of all other political party members. That makes this election especially important, and it would be better to have it later in the year, closer to the November general election, when people are surely paying more attention to political matters. It could be held as late as August and meet Federal regulations.

Be that as it may, how did Mount Pleasant vote? It's not possible to figure that out precisely, because one of the two precincts that make up Mount Pleasant includes a chunk of Columbia Heights. Still, the sum of these two precincts is mostly Mount Pleasant. So, how did our neighborhood vote?

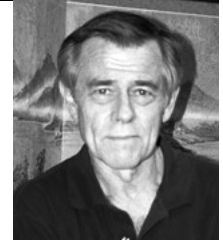
For Mayor, and comparing to the District's vote:

	Mount Pleasant	DC
Muriel Bowser	82.4%	80.0%
James Butler	9.2%	10.2%
Ernest Johnson	8.3%	6.0%

## ANC 1D03 NEWSLETTER #183

Jack McKay, July 15, 2018

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For At-Large Councilmember:

	Mount Pleasant	DC
Anita Bonds	37.5%	42.4%
Jeremiah Lowery	41.6%	34.4%
Marcus Goodwin	21.0%	22.5%

For District Council Chair:

	Mount Pleasant	DC
Phil Mendelson	48.0%	53.8%
Ed Lazere	52.0%	45.7%

For Ward One Councilmember:

	Mount Pleasant	Ward One
Brianne Nadeau	48.4%	48.3%
Kent Boese	25.2%	25.1%
Lori Parker	13.0%	13.0%
Sheika Reid	13.4%	13.4%

And, finally, for Initiative 77, the tipped-minimum-wage law:

	Mount Pleasant	DC
Yes	62.3%	55.7%
No	37.7%	44.3%

Commissioner Stewart and I attended the **June 26 meeting of the Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB)**, where the ANC argued in support of homeowners in two Mount Pleasant cases. Historic Mount Pleasant (HMP) sided, as usual, with the Historic Preservation Office (HPO), objecting to what the homeowners requested permits to do.

One case had to do with an ancient, falling-down garage on the alley east of 18th Street, north of Park Road. The ANC had voted last October in support of the two residential families who have long wanted to tear down that relic and replace it with something new (but architecturally consistent with the historic district). Experts testifying for the residents showed that very little of the original structure remains. By a 7 to 1 vote, the HPRB endorsed the residents' request for permission to raze the structure, observing that “the building could be razed because it no longer contributes to the character of the Mount Pleasant Historic District due to a loss of historic integrity”.

The other historic preservation case dealt with a **window replacement at 1627 Monroe Street**. This was a very

awkward situation, because the window replacement had already been done, without the permit. The window contractor had assured the resident that the permit had been obtained, but that was not so; the contractor had in fact neglected even to file the application. This put the homeowner in the very unpleasant position of having done work without a permit, a situation that tended to bias the HPO against his application.

The ANC asked that that error be overlooked, because it was entirely the contractor's mistake, while the homeowner had done all he could to be sure the work was compliant with historic district regulations. The HPRB "acknowledged the ANC resolution [of June 24] and stated that the proposal would be evaluated the same as if the work were proposed and had not already been done".

The HPO staff report implied that, absent the permit misstep, the window might be acceptable: "This proposal might have been the beneficiary of the Board's application of flexibility had the proposal preceded the work". Nonetheless, the board rejected the proposed window replacement, asserting that it was still "not compatible", largely because it was a bit larger than the original. The homeowner is now faced with the unhappy task of taking out the new window and restoring the original, or something more acceptable to the HPRB.

This is not the first instance in which I've seen a homeowner get into historic permit trouble because a window contractor mishandled the permit effort. As one of the HPRB members said, be sure that permit "is in your hot little hands" before any such work is begun. Don't trust a contractor's promise that the permit is "back at the office", or something such.

It should be noted that the window contractor attended the HPRB meeting and spoke on behalf of the homeowner, admitting that the error was theirs.

The ANC does not support doing work without permits, of course. But in this case the error was made by the window contractor, not the homeowner, and I personally thought the replacement window was just fine. The ANC resolution advised approval, "with appropriate suggestions [by the HPRB] to improve its compatibility", but the HPRB said no. That window has to look from the street just like its 1937 original, and that appearance takes priority over the wishes of the residents of the house.

Historic preservation again: the electrical service at **the 1900 Lamont apartment house** is being upgraded, and that requires an electrical utility box mounted at the external connection. Historic preservation objects to visible utility boxes, presumably marring the "historic" appearance of our homes. (Wasn't there electricity in 1930?) One proposal was to put the utility box indoors, eliminating one of the 32 apartments. I think that's too high a price to pay for a minor cosmetic matter. This will come up at our July meeting.

On July 5 a posting appeared on the Nextdoor neighborhood chat site about a **dog found, by a Klingle Road resident, lost and wandering around 18th Street and Park Road**. I think the pup was frightened by the very loud Fourth of July fireworks exploded in the alley paralleling Park Road between 18th and 19th.

The resident was trying, through Nextdoor, to locate the dog's human. A number of residents offered sympathetic suggestions, but no one knew where the little white dog lived. Our resourceful Klingle Road neighbor solved the problem by walking the dog along Park Road, and noting that she seemed to want to turn in at a certain house. No one was home there, so that clue could not be confirmed. Shortly afterwards I found the resident home, and yes, she was the dog's human! So we trooped off to Klingle Road to reunite her with her pup, who was very happy to be claimed and taken to her home.

I bring this up to suggest that residents sign up for this Nextdoor site, which has a specific category for Mount Pleasant residents, with 2740 subscribers. It's currently the best site for on-line conversations about the neighborhood, and is an effective tool for, in cases such as this, reuniting a lost dog (or cat) with a resident. In this case, the dog's human was not a subscriber to Nextdoor, so the posts there weren't going to solve the problem.

On July 7, a **bicyclist was killed on M Street downtown**, crushed by a truck making a right turn across the bike lane. This brings to mind a similar tragedy of 10 years ago, when Mount Pleasant resident Alice Swanson was killed in a very similar collision, on R Street near Dupont Circle.

With ever more bicyclists on the road, it's important that we drivers be aware of the possibility of a bicyclist passing on the right as we attempt a right turn. In bicyclist parlance, it's a "right hook" collision.

In fact, according to DC law, we drivers are to make right turns as follows: "*Both the approach for a right turn and a right turn shall be made as close as practicable to the right-hand curb or edge of the roadway*" (DCMR 18, 2203.3). In short, get far enough to the right that a following bicyclist cannot try to pass on the right. I see way too many drivers making their turn from the traffic lane, yards from the right-side curb. If you do that, and a bicyclist smacks into your car on the right, you're legally at fault.

Large trucks, of course, can't get very close to the curb for sharp right turns. So we bicyclists have to be aware of the possibility that that truck up ahead could be about to try a right turn. We have to be very cautious about passing trucks on the right at an intersection. The consequences can be fatal!

DDOT has devised proposals for **safety measures on the 2000 block of Park Road**. We'll be reviewing these in the coming weeks. Comments from residents are welcome. A number of curbside parking spaces will be lost. The fundamental problem on this block is the absence of street-level sidewalks, on both sides of the street, forcing residents to walk in the street to get to and from their parked cars.

A 17th Street resident has filed **to challenge me for this ANC seat in November**. Well, this makes the election interesting! I'm happy to have a competitor, offering residents a choice.

The next meeting of the ANC will be on Tuesday, July 24, 7:00 pm, at the Mount Pleasant Library.