

## Jack's July report

At the June ANCID business meeting – held via the internet, employing “Zoom” software – the ANC did the following:

- Revised the ANCID bylaws to permit a state-of-emergency grant;
- Advised DDOT that this ANC would support any applications for “streatery” restaurants on Mount Pleasant Street;
- Approved a grant of \$10,000 to the Spanish Catholic Center for giveaway food supplies during the coronavirus pandemic;
- Advised the Mayor, and the Council, to “implement the reforms contained in the Comprehensive Policing and Justice Reform Emergency Amendment Act of 2020”; and
- Advised Councilmember Nadeau, and the Council, to consider the DC budget “with the express objective of balancing the role and presence of police in our communities with proven non-police interventions and support services”.

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**My newsletter** has been, for the past 18 years, a sheet of paper delivered to every residence in my ANC district. Lately, because of the coronavirus, I have not been doing personal delivery of my monthly newsletter, respecting the “stay at home” order of the public health emergency.

I have posted my recent monthly newsletters on my web site, but I'm not satisfied that that provides sufficient “outreach” to the neighborhood. So now, with the virus stay-at-home order lifted, I will resume delivery of my paper newsletter.

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The ANC is funded by the District, with a quarterly stipend intended to cover expenses, such as office rental. This ANC has long had minimal expenses, having no office and no employees, so it's run an annual surplus of several thousand dollars. This has accumulated, over the years, into a rather hefty bank account.

The Commission is severely restricted in its use of its funds, and it's been difficult to use them for neighborhood services. The law says, for example, that the ANC may not spend its money on “meals”, which I take to be intended to prevent us from buying fancy dinners for ourselves. The lawyers downtown interpret that restriction to prohibit the use of ANC funds for the purchase of any food that might be made into a meal for anybody. Hence, our ANC funds may not be used to buy food, no matter how great the neighborhood need.

Specifically to overcome these restrictions, the DC Council passed a law in May allowing, for the duration of the coronavirus state of emergency, exceptions:

“during a period for which a public health emergency has been declared by the Mayor . . . a Commission may approve grants to organizations for the purpose of providing humanitarian relief, including food or supplies, during the public health emergency”.

The need for assistance here is plain to see: every Wednesday morning a line for food at the Spanish Catholic Center begins at their back door, winds through the Sacred Heart schoolyard to Park Road, west on Park Road to 17th Street, north on 17th

## ANC 1D03 NEWSLETTER #205

Jack McKay, July 13, 2020

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to Monroe, then east on Monroe – hundreds of people who, because of the coronavirus emergency, need help to feed their families.

So the ANC in June modified its bylaws to take advantage of this new law allowing grants for food purchases, and immediately approved a grant of \$10,000 to the Spanish Catholic Center for emergency food. Another large food-purchase grant is expected in July.

The ANC has also been able to spend close to \$30,000 for face masks and hand sanitizer for Mount Pleasant residents suffering in the coronavirus crisis. If we hadn't been saving up money for years, we wouldn't today be in a position to provide so much emergency assistance.

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The ANC endorsed a substantial statement of support for the **Black Lives Matter** movement, written largely by Commissioner Sandenburgh. I pressed the commissioners to make the statement not just about the national movement, but about DC, and, especially, about Mount Pleasant.

This was done, the statement calling for implementation of the Comprehensive Policing and Justice Reform Emergency Amendment Act of 2020, and for budget revisions to the MPD budget with an eye to “proven non-police interventions and support services”, and closing with this statement: “*We wish to take this moment of nationwide concern to reiterate that Black Lives Matter in Mount Pleasant, and always will. In particular, police abuse of any of our residents will never be tolerated*”. Yes, exactly!

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**The Black population of Mount Pleasant** has decreased substantially in recent years. Thirty years ago this neighborhood was 36% Black non-Hispanic. The most recent estimate is just 13% Black non-Hispanic, and I expect that proportion to decrease even further with the 2020 census.

I'm very unhappy with that trend, which is certainly contrary to what we anticipated when we moved here in 1974. But it means that we, all of us, have to be very clear that *everyone* is comfortable and welcome in Mount Pleasant. People who are not comfortable with racial diversity don't choose to come live in Mount Pleasant.

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There have been two disturbing incidents near the 7-11 on Mount Pleasant Street. On the afternoon of June 24, gunshots were fired from a passing car at the people in the park adjacent to the 7-11. No one was hit, and whoever the intended target was did not come forward. Unfortunately the settling of disputes with guns is becoming all too common, in many urban areas, not just here in DC.

Then, around 11 pm on July 1, **a woman parked in the lot behind the 7-11 was attacked**. It's possible that this was initially just a "theft from auto", as she had substantial belongings in her car, and perhaps the thief didn't see, in the dark, that the car was occupied. When she objected to the smashing of her car window, she was physically attacked and seriously injured.

This location is a popular community gathering place for Latino men, but I think neither of these incidents had anything to do with them. In the case of the woman attacked in the parking lot, the attacker was not Latino. In fact, the men who came to her aid, and called 911, were. She says that the Latinos "were also being screwed around with by that guy", and that "I have never had a problem with them. Always polite to me." In short, the perpetrator was not one of the 7-11 "esquiñeros".

This incident is categorized by the MPD as a "simple assault". But the victim was hit in the head with a rock, and I think that makes this an ADW – assault with a dangerous weapon. I'm communicating with her, and with the MPD, about this violent incident. Whatever's going on there behind the 7-11 – the assault, the gunshots – has to stop.

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The coronavirus pandemic has severely harmed our neighborhood restaurants. With Phase 2 of the state of emergency, our restaurants can now have indoor customers – but not full occupancy, and many residents are not yet willing to be indoors customers, due to the virus risk.

Sidewalk cafes are one means of providing outdoor (safer) space for restaurant customers, but this isn't possible on the very narrow sidewalk on the east side of Mount Pleasant Street. So there's a provision now for curbside parking spaces to be taken as an expansion of the sidewalk, allowing outdoor seating for restaurants. Thanks to the diligent efforts by Carolina Buitrago, Director of the Columbia Heights/Mount Pleasant Main Street, **such a "streatery" has been opened on Mount Pleasant Street**, serving the Mola, Purple Patch, and Pollo Sabroso restaurants.

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A DPR contractor has been at work developing conceptual designs for **the little park at 1900 Lamont**. A "community meeting" is to take place at 6 pm on Thursday, July 16, for the presentation of these proposals.

Of course, large public meetings cannot be held during this coronavirus pandemic, so this meeting will be held via the internet, accessed via your computer, or by telephone. For detailed instructions, go to this website: [19th-and-Lamont](#).

There are, of course, Mount Pleasant residents who don't have internet access, or who just aren't comfortable with computers and the internet. Unfortunately, internet access is increasingly a necessity for participation in public affairs. That leaves some residents behind, on the wrong side of a "digital divide".

Whatever takes place at this 19th and Lamont meeting will be summarized in my September newsletter. (There will be no newsletter in August.)

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**The ANC will be on the November 3 ballot**, the current terms expiring in early January. Yes, I will be a candidate for

another two-year term. In order to have my name on the ballot, I must file petitions with the Board of Elections bearing the signatures of ten residents of my district.

Ordinarily this would be a door-to-door polling project. But this year, due to the coronavirus contagion, such random personal contact is discouraged. So the rules for ballot access have been changed, just for this pandemic situation.

I need only 10 signatures, not the 25 usually required. And I want to get those signatures in a careful, no-contact process, respecting the virus concerns of residents. Therefore I'm going to ask you – the recipients of this newsletter, and therefore residents of my ANC district – to email me ([jack@dcjack.org](mailto:jack@dcjack.org)) a request for the petition form. I will email you the petition, which you must print out and sign. Then you put the signed form out for me to come pick up. Or you scan and email me the signed form, if you have the equipment for that. It's awkward, but it's what we must do during this miserable coronavirus pandemic.

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A Lamont Street resident suggested that **Lamont be made a "slow street"**. "Slow Streets are restricted to local traffic only and the speed limit is set at 15 miles per hour to support neighborhood-based safe social distancing while walking, running, or cycling." Lamont certainly seems suitable for that, already being narrow and perforce slow, and not a "through street" to anywhere, thanks to the termination at 19th.

The legal limit on Lamont, once 25 mph, on June 1 was reduced to the citywide limit of 20 mph. Was there a detectable reduction in traffic speed upon this change? I haven't noticed any. But how do drivers know that the speed limit on Lamont, and numerous other side streets in Mount Pleasant, has been reduced from 25 to 20 mph? There are no signs indicating the lower limit.

Designating Lamont a "slow street" would presumably bring about signage indicating the 15 mph limit. So perhaps this would be effective at reducing traffic speeds. So, designating Lamont a "slow street" between 19th and Mount Pleasant Street seems like a good thing to do. I don't see a downside to this, other than the increased clutter of street signs.

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**Covid-19 infections** have been skyrocketing in some parts of the country – Florida, South Carolina, Texas – but not, happily, here. The District was one of the last jurisdictions in the country to relax the stringent, stay-at-home measures imposed in March.

But the DC count of Covid test positives has been increasing since early July. The daily count of test positives has increased from about 35 per day to 50 per day. That's not a lot, but it's clear that we must continue to be cautious. Yes, we must wear those face masks. I don't like them either.

**The July meeting of the ANC will take place at 7 pm, July 21. Due to the ban on gatherings of more than 50 persons, and the closing of the Library meeting room, it will have to be a "virtual" meeting, accessible via the internet, using Zoom software.**