

Jack's June report

At the May meeting, the ANC did the following:

- Advised ABRA to approve the liquor license renewal applications for the Addis Paris Cafe, omitted from earlier ABRA renewal lists;
- Advised DDOT to approve petitions for Residential Permit Parking on Rosemount Avenue, Pierce Mill Road, and Klinge Road;
- Advised DDOT “to work with ANC 1D to review and refine several ideas for making modest, tactical [safety] improvements to Mount Pleasant’s streets”;
- Advised the Historic Preservation Office to consider certain matters to ensure that the Oakwood Terrace development “is compatible with the historic character of the neighborhood”.

The May meeting of the ANC was a mess, due to an error by the Mount Pleasant Library. Late last year I provided the Library with a list of ANC1D meeting dates for 2019, and in December, we were assured that the large meeting room would be reserved for our meetings: *“We’ll reserve these dates—just let me know if there are any changes”*.

Unfortunately, **those meeting dates were not, in fact, reserved.** This we discovered when I arrived for the May meeting to find the large meeting room already occupied. There was nothing for us to do but squeeze into a much smaller meeting room downstairs, leaving many unhappy residents outside in the hallway.

This error by the Library affects our June meeting as well, our June 25 date having been promised to someone else. So that meeting will be shifted to Wednesday, June 26. Thereafter we will resume our Tuesday schedule.

Some hideous **home invasions took place on Irving Street** in late May and early June. The last incident took place in mid-afternoon, and when the intended victim fled outdoors and screamed for help, neighbors came running. One in particular pursued the invader on foot, keeping him in sight until police, alerted by 911 calls, arrived to make an arrest.

Evidently this one man was responsible for the invasions, judging by security camera photos. (Home security cameras are increasingly affordable and capable.) He’s in jail now, held without bond, as a clear threat to public safety.

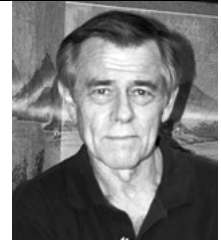
The man is now charged with multiple felonies, including assault with a dangerous weapon, sexual assault while armed, and burglary. He’s not a Mount Pleasant resident, nor is he from any nearby neighborhood. Why he chose Irving Street in Mount Pleasant for his vicious acts I do not know. But it should be evident that this is not an indication of continuing danger in this neighborhood. There is no hint of anyone else targeting Mount Pleasant residents for felonious attacks. As dreadful as the actions of this man were, this is a singular case, and this is not evidence that Mount Pleasant is a more dangerous neighborhood than we previously thought.

The next meeting of the ANC will be on Wednesday, June 26, 7:00 pm, at the Mount Pleasant Library.

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And he won't be back. According to the Washington Post, “He was released from prison two months ago after being convicted in 2007 of breaking into an apartment on Irving Street, across the street from the recent incidents”. Yes, he was let out on supervised release after 12 years in prison, and promptly set about perpetrating violent crimes. Nobody's going to repeat that mistake.

The best defense we have against crime is the readiness of our neighbors to rush to help in response to any call. This is not the first time that a criminal has been caught and arrested by the police because Mount Pleasant neighbors of the victim pursued the fleeing perpetrator until the police arrived.

I'm still bothered by the assertion by a resident at the April ANC meeting that only *“yesterday, or today, we heard about this meeting. We had no idea about this meeting. And this is just outrageous, . . . !”*

As Secretary of the ANC, it's my job **to inform the public about our monthly meetings.** Here's what I do, every month:

- One month before the meeting, I post information on the ANC1D website (anc1d.org), and on the ANC1D Facebook page. On the ANC1D website I also post “notes”, summarizing what I know about the upcoming meeting, updated as time progresses and new information comes in.
- One week before the meeting, I post announcements on the NextDoor and MountPleasantDC neighborhood sites. I also post, on the ANC1D website, a preliminary meeting agenda. The NextDoor and MountPleasantDC public notices include links to the ANC1D website.
- One week before the meeting, 20 paper posters are put up on streetlight poles around the neighborhood, four in each commissioner's single-member district.

Evidently this isn't enough, not for a resident who doesn't follow NextDoor, isn't signed up for MountPleasantDC, doesn't check the ANC1D website, doesn't notice the posters put up around the neighborhood, and doesn't get (or read) my monthly newsletter. But what more can be done?

Fact is, the internet is the principal information medium of the 21st century. And, as I've mentioned here before, NextDoor is now the principal vehicle for news about the neighborhood (including, for example, prompt warnings about the home invasions on Irving Street). The internet is not, today, just a playground for techno-geeks. It's an essential element in public communication.

Jon Stewart sponsored the ANC resolution concerning **traffic safety**. Well, nobody's opposed to traffic safety, but one has to ask, for the several elements suggested by his resolution, if they're desirable for traffic safety, why haven't they already been done?

Traffic safety is not a simple matter, and what appears to be a safety measure may not function as supposed. For example, crosswalks are commonly wanted to enhance pedestrian safety, but a crosswalk put at an unsafe location will actually increase pedestrian collisions, by providing a false sense of safety, tempting pedestrians to step into the street where it is not safe to cross.

One of Jon's suggestions is to "add new loading zones to Mount Pleasant Street in order to reduce double parking". But adding new loading zones would result in even less parking for business customers, so more loading zones might result in even more double parking, as well as discouraging patronage of our local businesses. Another request is to impose no-parking distances at crosswalks, to enhance the visibility of pedestrians about to cross. That sounds good, but that can mean even more curbside parking spaces lost, and, as a pedestrian, I like the physical protection offered by a parked car as I step into a crosswalk. I can find no DC regulation specifying a minimum distance of parking from a crosswalk.

So I've insisted that, rather than giving DDOT a blank check to do whatever they want, that DDOT be required to return to the ANC for our specific review of any proposed traffic safety measures.

Back when I started on this ANC work (2003), so-called "**voluntary agreements**" were the bane of Mount Pleasant restaurants. We've managed to get almost all of those agreements (no longer called "voluntary", because they were not voluntary on the part of the restaurateurs) terminated.

What might be the last VA still in force was at the Purple Patch Restaurant. A sample of its provisions: "*Licensee shall permit no live music, cover charges nor charges for admission to the establishment, and shall not provide an atmosphere for dancing, or a dance floor for dancing, or permit the moving of tables and chairs for the purpose of dancing.*"

In short, no entertainment allowed! And the ban on allowing customers to create a dance space shows that these rules were being imposed not on just the *management* of the restaurant, but on the *patrons* of the restaurant,

I tried once before to help the Purple Patch terminate their 18-year-old "voluntary agreement", but ABRA replied that a VA could be terminated only at the time of liquor license renewal. Okay, so the Purple Patch license came up for renewal this spring, and the restaurant applied again for VA termination.

Nobody showed up to defend that old VA, and it was summarily terminated on May 22. Yes, customers may now sing and dance, if they wish, at the Purple Patch. Now I personally am not about to do any singing or dancing, at the Purple Patch or anywhere else. But I'm happy to see other residents of Mount Pleasant allowed to do so.

The **proposed development on Oakwood Terrace** turned into a very bitter issue in 2013, and has become equally bitter now. On May 24 the ANC was advised by the developer's lawyer of a **Freedom of Information Act** demand for copies of "all public records" and "emails and correspondence" pertinent to that project, from 2013 to today.

What is he looking for? Beats me, but we'll provide him with the materials requested. For me, in particular, plowing through six years of emails to find and print everything having to do with this project will be a bunch of work, but very well, it will be done. There's nothing to hide here.

None of the other current commissioners was on the ANC in 2013, so it won't be so burdensome for them. As for the other ANC1D commissioners of 2013, many of their emails will be found on the ANC1D Google group.

We've been cautioned before about possible FOIA requests. These happen, and residents should be aware that their communications with the ANC might be turned up by such a request, and examined by a lawyer with a bone to pick.

The marvelous **mural along Klinge Road** will be the subject of restoration work by the Latin American Youth Center during June and July. I persuaded them not to barricade the entire bike track for the work, but to block off only small sections, to prevent collisions between painters and bicyclists. Bicyclists, please be careful as these people go about their work!

A property owner on Park Road is in trouble for having **paved a small front yard with flagstones**. But paving a front yard, however nicely, is not "historically correct" for Mount Pleasant, so the Historic Preservation Office is going to demand that he undo much or all of that rather nice work.

Who knew, back in 1985, that historic preservation was going to take over our front yards, as well as our houses? We were here when preservation advocates were pressing for our neighborhood to become a designated historic district, and I don't recall anyone warning that this would govern not only our houses, but our surrounding yards. The historic preservation law refers vaguely to "landscape features", and evidently that is taken as license to prohibit flagstones, however elegant, covering much of your front yard. A weedy front yard with a few flagstones is okay; a flagstone-paved front yard, however beautifully done, is not.

The **Addis Paris Cafe** has applied for a conversion of its liquor license from CR – "restaurant" – to CT – "tavern". Well, why would a restaurant ask to be classified a tavern? I have not spoken to Mrs. Solomon at the Addis Paris, but I presume that this is due to the food sales requirements for the restaurant license: "annual gross food sales of \$1500 or \$2000 per occupant"; or "the sale of food account for at least 45% of the establishment's gross annual receipts".

These food sales requirements can be troublesome for inexpensive restaurants, and several Mount Pleasant restaurants, including Haydee's, Don Jaime's, Ellē, and Mola, are licensed as taverns, not restaurants. This has not been a problem for the neighborhood, and I'll support this license change by the Addis Paris.