

Jack's June report

At the May ANCID business meeting, the ANC did the following:

- Advised the Alcoholic Beverage Regulation Agency (ABRA) to renew the liquor license for Sportsman's Wine and Liquors, 3249 Mt Pleasant Street. The proprietor, Mr Arun Mody, runs a fine and popular little shop.
- Affirmed our 2008 position opposing any use of the Pine Street / Sacred Heart Way roundabout for left turns onto westbound Park Road (my resolution).

Normally I would be **delivering this newsletter** during the week of June 14, preceding our ANC meeting on June 22. That didn't work out, due to various complications at home. So here it is, a bit late.

For many years, **the left turn off northbound 16th Street onto westbound Park Road**, into Mount Pleasant, was prohibited. Drivers were required to take the right turn off 16th and pass in front of the Sacred Heart church, then make the left onto Park Road, and wait for the light to cross 16th. The reason for that roundabout turn was simply to expedite through traffic on 16th, many of them commuters on their way to the Maryland suburbs. The traffic engineers, obsessed with moving cars along the 16th Street major arterial, didn't care that this traffic pattern isolated the little park defined by 16th Street, Pine Street, and Park Road, and seriously complicated the pedestrian route for people walking north and south along 16th. Only moving as many cars as possible along 16th Street mattered; and cars stopped for drivers attempting the left turn into Mount Pleasant reduced traffic flow, so they banned that turn and forced drivers to the Sacred Heart roundabout.

Way back in 2007, Gregg Edwards and I succeeded in changing that – mainly, to see traffic on Pine reduced to a minimum, so that pedestrians could easily cross from the church to the park, making that park an extension of the church. The left turn directly from 16th onto Park Road is now allowed, and there's a green-arrow phase to the traffic light to facilitate that turn. Nobody has to go around the Pine Street park to turn left onto Park Road.

The pedestrian route remains complicated, as DDOT worries about the safety of pedestrian crossing of the turn off 16th. It's not a sharp turn, so cars can turn at some speed. So DDOT insists on keeping ugly bike-rack barricades in place to try to force pedestrians to make the park roundabout, rather than simply walking straight up and down the 16th Street sidewalk.

Why does this come up now, years later? Well, DDOT is now installing bus-only lanes, taking up, in particular, the curb lane at the Park Road intersection. The traffic engineers at DDOT, still trying to move commuter traffic, evidently decided to promote the Pine Street roundabout for the left turn, again to avoid left-turn cars impeding northbound commuter traffic. We've been told nothing of this, but the Columbia Heights ANC has, and they agree that they do not want Pine Street to revert to being a heavy-traffic left-turn roundabout. The resolution passed by the ANC last month was essentially in support of the Columbia Heights ANC, in

ANC 1D03 NEWSLETTER #215

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their opposition to the DDOT effort to again sacrifice the Sacred Heart park in the interest of expediting commuter traffic flow.

Our restaurants have suffered terribly during this covid-19 pandemic. They've struggled to get by with carryout sales and with the “streateries” erected on Mount Pleasant Street. Lately we noted some hefty penalties imposed on a few of our restaurants:

Marleny's, July 20, 2020, \$1000 fine, “No prepared food with alcohol”.

Haydee's, March 17, 2021, \$1000 fine, “Afterhours service”.

Martha Dear, March 17, 2021, \$1000 fine, “Afterhours service”.

These were violations of special regulations imposed for the pandemic, not violations of the regular alcoholic-beverage regulations. ABRA has issued 14 “emergency rulemakings” for the pandemic, changing the alcohol rules so frequently that it's hard work now to figure out what the rules were at any point in time.

One of these “emergency” rules was this: liquor licensees must “Require the purchase of one (1) or more prepared food items per table”. I presume that's the one that tripped up Marleny's. (A few months after this thousand-dollar fine, Marleny's was put up for sale.) Another “emergency” regulation was this: licensee must “Cease outdoor sales, service, and consumption of alcoholic beverages, excluding carry-out and delivery, at 10:00 p.m., seven (7) days a week, and cease operations at midnight, seven (7) days a week”. I speculate that that's the “afterhours service” violation for which Haydee's and Martha Dear were cited.

I complained to ABRA about the heavy fines, imposed on the spot by the ABRA inspector, not by the ABC Board after a fair hearing. ABRA said that they considered violations of the pandemic regulations – e.g., food service to cease at 10 pm – to be “public health” violations, and so were deserving of severe penalties. The connection between service after 10 pm and the covid-19 pandemic escapes me.

I think our restaurateurs would have found a simple warning sufficient to put a stop to the violations. And, under the present very challenging circumstances, imposing such hefty fines was inflicting great hardship on restaurants trying to survive through an already difficult time.

I was going to ask the ANC to object to these heavy, no-warning fines, but the covid state of emergency appears to be about to end, eliminating the special ABRA regulations, so there seems to be no point in pressing the matter.

The **Near Northwest III Safety and Mobility Study** is under way, seeking “easy” traffic-safety measures to undertake, as well as modifications in favor of non-automobile modes of transportation. The third and final public meeting of this project took place on June 17 (via the internet, of course).

The emphasis was on minor changes – “short term quick-build projects”. There are four intersections in Mount Pleasant where changes are proposed:

- (1) Park Road and (little) Mount Pleasant Street
- (2) 18th Street and Ingleside Terrace
- (3) Lamont, Kilbourne, and Mount Pleasant Street
- (4) Park Road/Klingle/Pierce Mill.

I had anticipated that these proposals, when finished designs, would be provided to the ANC for review. But no, DDOT considers their public meetings adequate “notice” to the ANC of proposed work. If we do nothing, then they’ll proceed as designed. Their deadline for comments is July 15, which means we’ll have only the June 22 ANC meeting for our review of the proposals. In fact, the designs for items (3) and (4) were posted on the internet only on June 16, giving us very little time for review.

The first intersection on the list is **Park Road at Mount Pleasant Street**. That’s “little” Mount Pleasant Street, a block west of commercial Mount Pleasant Street. The change is primarily the prevention of parking for 40 feet distance to either direction from Mount Pleasant Street, with Flexiposts to make sure that no one ever parks there, even to make a quick delivery. (See the current installation at 18th and Newton for an example.) This is designated “immediate implementation”, so I guess it’s on its way.

I’ve exited from Mount Pleasant Street onto Park Road at this location many times, and it’s unnerving, due to limited visibility and the speed of traffic on Park Road. The 40-foot distances are only slightly greater than the current no-parking distances, so this should have little or no effect on parking.

It’s interesting that DDOT is not proposing crosswalks across Park Road. I suspect that’s because it’s not a safe place to cross, despite the Flexipost-defined “bulbouts”. That’s the primary significance of a crosswalk: not that it *makes* crossing safe, but it designates *where crossing is supposed to be safe*.

The second intersection on the list is **Ingleside Terrace and 18th Street**. DDOT recommends that there be crosswalks across Ingleside, and across 18th, at the “point” defined by the convergence of the two streets.

Crosswalks are nice, of course, though the notion that they make street crossing safe is incorrect. They’re supposed to indicate where street crossing is safe. In general, DDOT prefers compelling pedestrians to walk to a “controlled” intersection for safe crossing. The crosswalk across 18th at Newton is such a controlled intersection, with stop signs. Nonetheless, DDOT here recommends crossing at the Ingleside/18th “point”, evidently considering that a safe crossing location.

The crosswalks do entail a loss in parking, as DDOT is now insisting on prohibiting parking within 25 feet of a crosswalk. The purpose is to make pedestrians visible to approaching



Flexiposts, at 18th and Newton

drivers, not hidden behind parked cars. I argue that 25 feet is more than is needed. In fact, the legal minimum distance of parking from a crosswalk is zero; the DC laws prohibit only the blocking of a crosswalk, not parking right up to the edge of one. But DDOT’s decided on 25 feet, and that’s the way it surely will be.

Recommendations (3) and (4) made their first public appearance at the June 17 meeting. We’re still reviewing those, which appear mainly to add pavement markings for bicycles.

Forty-nine years ago, Emily and I decided that we would make Mount Pleasant our home in DC. That was just four years after the MLK riots that caused great damage to 14th Street, so close by that much of the white population here fled, and Mount Pleasant had become majority Black.

Then came the Latino immigration, giving this neighborhood a wonderfully cosmopolitan atmosphere. By 1990 the population of Mount Pleasant was remarkably varied: 35% white non-Hispanic, 36% Black non-Hispanic, 26% Hispanic, 3% Asian/other.

“Diversity” has been the watchword of Mount Pleasant ever since. That was what Emily and I were looking for in 1972, and that remains, I believe, the essence of Mount Pleasant today, as evidenced by the many yard signs proclaiming that all people are welcome here, the many “Black Lives Matter” signs, and, especially recently, the many gay-pride flags. Seeing those symbols makes us happy that we chose Mount Pleasant, nearly half a century ago.

The June meeting of the ANC will take place at 7 pm, June 22. Due to the pandemic, it will have to be a “virtual” meeting, accessible only via the internet, using Zoom software. See the ANC1D website, anc1d.org, for details.