

## Jack's March report

At the February meeting, the ANC did the following:

- Advised the Historic Presentation Office (HPO) to declare the plans for the carriage house/garage at 3305-3307 18th Street “compatible with the character of the historic district”;
- Advised ABRA to terminate the settlement agreement (voluntary agreement) at the Purple Patch;
- Advised ABRA to allow a Class B liquor license at the Brown Street Market;
- Advised the Zoning Commission to revise the definition of “penthouse” “to exclude structures which are not on multistory buildings facing city streets”;
- Advised the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development (DMPED) to revise the boundaries of the Neighborhood Retail Priority Area to include the Argyle building, at 3220 17th Street.

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Most of the so-called “voluntary agreements” in Mount Pleasant -(which were not, from the viewpoint of the business establishment, the least bit “voluntary”) have been terminated. One restaurant VA remains in effect, at **the Purple Patch**. That old (2001) VA includes the provision that suppressed live music in Mount Pleasant for years: *“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”*.

Why such a Puritanical prohibition on music and dancing in Mount Pleasant restaurants? Some residents feared that Mount Pleasant could become a noisy, traffic-jammed area like Adams Morgan. In fact, there aren't enough restaurants here, and their seating capacity is too limited, for such an outcome. We've now had live music at several Mount Pleasant restaurants since these bans began to be terminated, beginning in 2008, and the street shows no sign of becoming like 18th Street in Adams Morgan. There are certainly more people on the street late at night than before these changes, but that's all to the good, as people on the street make the street safer for everybody. A dozen years ago, when we were fighting the VA bans, Mount Pleasant Street was deserted at night, and correspondingly unsafe.

Somewhat the Purple Patch VA survived. I tried once before to help Patrice Cleary get that VA terminated, but that effort failed because it wasn't done at license renewal time. Okay, now it's license renewal time, and I expect this time to see the VA successfully terminated.

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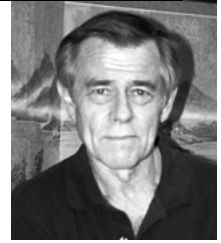
Concerning the **Brown Street Market** – we're trying to get them a liquor license, as seems necessary for financial viability – but ABRA is unyielding. It's in an area zoned residential, and it's been too long closed for the existing license to be transferred to the new owner.

Well, work continues on the shop, and perhaps the new owner can make a go of it without being able to sell beer and wine. The Brown Street Market was a nice little shop for many years, conveniently located for residents in that area. Many people have said they'd like to see it back in operation.

## ANC 1D03 NEWSLETTER #190

Jack McKay, March 18, 2019

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I wrote the resolution advising the Zoning Commission to revise its **absurd definition of “penthouse”**, namely, “a structure on or above the roof of any building”. That means that a deck built on an alley garage is, according to the Zoning Regulations, a “penthouse”, and is subject to a flock of regulations written with real penthouses in mind – houses built on top of houses.

The Zoning Commission responded that the DCRA Zoning Administrator was working on a text amendment to fix this absurdity, and it would be brought to the Commission “once it was ready”. So eventually something more reasonable will come to pass. Unfortunately, “eventually” promises to be many months.

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**“Free2Move” cars** are appearing all over the neighborhood. This is a new brand of “shared” cars, for short-term rental use, like the Car2Go vehicles already here.

Everyone agrees with the shared-car concept. Certainly we want residents to be able to live without owning a car, and the experience of other cities shows that having these short-term rental cars available permits some residents to dispose of their car, or refrain from buying one.

But car-sharing isn't new to Mount Pleasant. Zipcar has been here for close to 14 years, and Car2Go for perhaps 8 years. Anyone who wants to do car-sharing instead of car ownership has already been able to do so. The only difference between Free2Move and Car2Go seems to be the size of the cars. So maybe some residents will be newly persuaded to take up car-sharing, thanks to the larger vehicles.

Zipcar was required to obtain off-street parking places for their cars. But Car2Go, and Free2Move, are “point to point” vehicles, allowed by DDOT rulemaking in 2011. That is, the cars can be parked in any legal spot, including our curbside parking spots, even when zoned RPP. The companies pay a modest fee for time-unlimited free parking – meters, as well as residential – amounting to about \$8 a day.

So, if the new (five months) Free2Move cars do not in fact represent residents who are newly signed up for car sharing, and who are either giving up or not buying a personal automobile, then those Free2Move cars are merely more cars taking up our limited supply of curbside parking spaces. There are 10 of these Free2Move cars now planted in Mount Pleasant, in addition to a dozen Car2Go vehicles, and, because these rentals are generally used for round-trip errands, they'll remain here overnight, when finding curbside parking is most difficult. In short, residents who need a car

for commuting to work, and depend on curbside parking when they come home in the evening, will pay a price.

We'll watch and see. If the cars are well used, providing a useful service for the neighborhood, then fine, ten parking spots turned over to them is not a great loss. But if they just sit in place, occupying curbside parking and doing residents little good, then that's a different matter. Advocates insist that, if they turn out to be so unproductive, then the company will take them away. We'll see.

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I've heard numerous complaints about **traffic backups at the light on Adams Mill Road at the Zoo entrance**. The problem is that the light gives southbound Adams Mill traffic too little green-light time, and way too much red-light time.

I brought this problem to the attention of DDOT, and got quite a quick and extraordinary response. Within hours – on a Saturday! – they investigated, and determined that “the detection unit for the westbound turn lane is malfunctioning, causing delays for other approaches”. They'll revise the timing right away to stop the enormous backups, then repair this malfunctioning detection unit.

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Internet shopping has brought about an increase in the amount of **boxboard** that we collect, and of course this goes into the recycling bins for District pickup. But the boxes have to be flattened – not put into the bins intact. It takes a little work with a sharp knife to slice the tape on the box seams, allowing the box to be folded flat. Then it's ready to go to recycling.

I also stack up a number of such flat-folded boxes and tie them into bundles that can be easily picked up and tossed into the truck. The guys doing trash and recycling collection have a tough job, especially on days of bad weather.

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The god-awful plague of our time is the ready availability of exceedingly lethal weapons – **guns**. The mass murder in Pittsburgh hit close to home for us, because we once lived in that Squirrel Hill neighborhood, not far from the Tree of Life synagogue. And now New Zealand has suffered its nightmare mass murder, facilitated by semiautomatic assault rifles that should never be permitted in civilian hands.

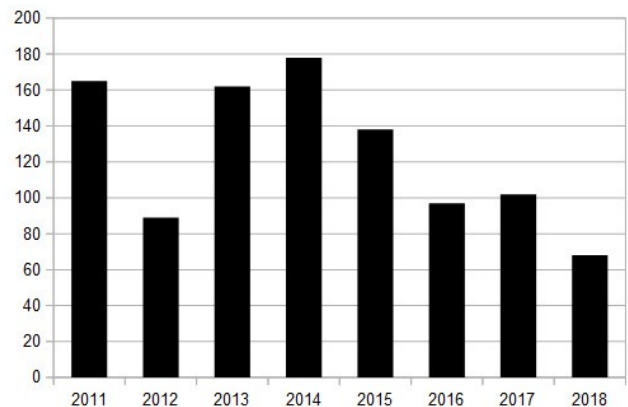
Locally, homicides are less dramatic, but still awful. The usual situation here is a minor dispute among youths or young men that turns into a homicide because somebody brings a gun to the argument. An incident of this type happened not far from us in February, on the 1300 block of Monroe Street. A group of young men had an argument about something – who knows what? – and one of them went away, then returned with a gun, and shot one of his antagonists dead. This was early in the afternoon, not late at night.

The fellow with the gun turned out to be just 15 years old. At that age – I remember being 15 – we do not have rational judgment. But when I was young, we didn't have guns everywhere, so our disputes never escalated to lethal violence.

This has happened here in Mount Pleasant, in September, 2015, when a dispute in the Harvard Towers parking lot turned into a homicide. The victim, and his murderer, were young men, in their twenties. (And neither one was a Mount Pleasant resident.)

The District Government is, correctly, treating this as a public health problem, not a crime problem. Nobody in these incidents was in the act of committing a crime – a robbery, say – no, they were just young men having arguments about something. The District policy is now to identify youths who are candidates for such violence, and to deal with them before the violence happens. This is indeed a case where an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Mt Pleasant theft from auto



The most common crime here is **theft from auto**. We simply must not leave things of value visible in our parked cars. What's aggravating, besides the loss of personal belongings, is the expensive damage done to the car. Happily, the rate of thefts from auto has been decreasing here in recent years. The 2018 total in Mount Pleasant was less than half the count of 2014.

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Councilmember Nadeau arranged for funds in the budget for “improvements” for **the little park at 19th and Lamont**. There will be a public meeting on March 28, at the Library, 6:30 pm, to discuss “the scope and scale of property improvements”.

This has been a contentious issue in the past because, beginning in 1999, the question of this lot was always about a playground – a “Toddler Park”, as it was then known. The residents of the 1900 Lamont apartment house, directly overlooking this park, have made it clear that they want no playground there, fearing incessant, inescapable noise. My position has always been that nothing should be imposed on them over their strenuous objections, just as we should respect any resident's concerns about a loss of peace and quiet. Now, happily for me, the apartment house residents have their own ANC Commissioner – Chelsea Allinger – to speak for them.

Now the discussion is framed as about “improvements”, not “playground”. And the lot certainly needs improvements, having been devastated by erosion in recent years. It's a muddy eyesore, and something must be done to halt the erosion. DPR says that even the trees on that lot are suffering, due to erosion exposing their roots.

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