

## Jack's May report

At the April 16 meeting, the ANC:

- Approved the quarterly financial report to the auditor;
- Approved spending up to \$75 for cleaning supplies, for a volunteer Spring clean-up day.

The **special election** for at-large Councilmember was peculiar, of course, due to very low turnout. In Mount Pleasant, the principal results were:

Elissa Silverman, 707 votes (46%)  
 Patrick Mara, 335 votes (22%)  
 Matthew Frumin, 209 votes (14%)  
 Anita Bonds, 170 votes (11%)  
 Perry Redd, 55 votes (3.6%)

These results closely tracked Ward One as a whole. That may say more about who turned out for this special election than about the neighborhood. Last year, for the election featuring Barack Obama vs. Mitt Romney, more than 6000 votes were cast in our two precincts. The total vote this year was only about one-fourth of that. The lines of people waiting to vote at the Bancroft polling place last fall stretched down Newton Street and around the corner. For this election, there were no lines at all. Just march in and vote. Hence, it's hard to draw any conclusions about Mount Pleasant from the vote totals.

This MPD tweet appeared on April 22: "**Robbery @ 18th & Park Road**, NW LOF: 2B/Ms, 5'10-5'11, 165-185lbs."

Curiously, no one can find any evidence that this robbery actually happened. The MPD statistics list no robbery at that time and place. The robberies here in April:

04/10/13 3509 - 3640 block of 16th Street  
 04/17/13 16th Street and Pine Street  
 04/22/13 3000 - 3099 block of Mount Pleasant Street  
 04/26/13 3408 - 3430 block of Brown Street

The 16th and Pine incident isn't even in Mount Pleasant, but is across 16th Street at the Sacred Heart shrine. The others are, as almost always is the case, on the eastern edge of Mount Pleasant. That's why the supposed robbery at 18th and Park, west of 17th, was remarkable. But I can find no evidence that it actually happened.

Mount Pleasant is, by the way, far from being a high-crime area. Here are robbery statistics for the first four months of 2012 and 2013, in terms of robberies per 1000 residents, for the seven police districts, and for Mount Pleasant (PSA 408).

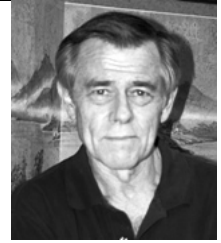
	2012	2013
6D	3.26	3.85
5D	3.05	2.80
3D	2.56	2.74
7D	3.41	2.61
1D	2.64	1.92
4D	1.50	1.84
PSA408	1.34	0.76
2D	0.69	0.41

The only police district with a lower robbery rate is the Second District, which is west of Rock Creek Park, where crime is so infrequent that the police there are derided as "squirrel chasers" by MPD officers with tougher assignments. The Third District, just across 16th Street from us, has a robbery rate more than three times ours. The overall robbery rate in the Fourth District, extending from here to the Maryland border, is more than twice ours.

## ANC 1D03 NEWSLETTER #128

Jack McKay, May 12, 2013

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It's notable also that the robbery rate has decreased here, this year versus last. A better comparison is over a decade. The rate of violent crime (including robberies) in Mount Pleasant has decreased by half since 2003, and the rate of property crimes here is half what it was in 2002. Thefts from auto, the most common crime here, are half what they were ten years ago.

Most of the serious crime in our neighborhood takes place close to 16th Street, so we residents whose homes are west of 18th are living in what is, for the District, an extremely low-crime area. Anecdotes will sometimes frighten residents, and of course one has to be cautious in any inner-city neighborhood. But Mount Pleasant is most definitely *not* a high-crime area.

Aside from serious crime, nuisance-grade offenses have long been a significant concern here. For example, urinating in alleys is certainly offensive, but rarely results in an arrest, and doesn't appear in the crime statistics. I have long supported having foot patrol officers on and around Mount Pleasant Street to deter such behavior. Encountering one of our officers recently, I asked about the disorderly-conduct problem that has long been a plague, especially around Lamont Park. He agreed that the rate of complaints about bad behavior here is far lower than it was only a few years ago, the frequency of calls to complain about such things decreasing from ten a day, to perhaps one or two.

From the Bancroft News: "The **Bancroft playground** is a main attraction in the neighborhood and attracts a number of visitors as the weather gets warmer. In an effort to ensure the safety of our students, we will be opening the playground to the community from 3:15-3:45 pm. After 3:45 pm, the playground will be open to the after school program only. After 6 pm, we will reopen the playground to the broader community. Thank you in advance for your cooperation and commitment to keeping our students safe."

Way back in September, 2010, I wrote in my newsletter that "There are plans coming for a **development on the vacant lot at the convergence of 17th Street and Oakwood Terrace**. . . It appears that no zoning variances will be needed, and ANC 'permission' will *not* be required. I'm sure some neighbors will be unhappy at seeing this wooded lot built on. So let's have a conversation about it".

In December, 2010, the Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB) unanimously approved the conceptual design, with only a few modifications requested. During the following two years, evidently nothing happened. But such an HPRB

approval has a two-year expiration date, so the architect/-developer, Carmel Greer, is now requesting a routine extension of that 2010 approval. In order to keep the neighborhood informed about her project, she e-mailed the ANC on April 29 to request a hearing on the topic.

Carmel also, to her credit, e-mailed at least one neighbor about it. This set off quite a bit of neighborhood consternation. Because there had been nothing happening to bring this development into the public eye since the fall of 2010, it appeared that this was a sudden surprise, rather than merely a routine continuation of the existing state of affairs.

Many of the residents of Oakwood Terrace were unaware also of the design approved by the HPRB (and endorsed by Historic Mount Pleasant). Some thought that Carmel planned only a single house, and were dismayed to see three row-style buildings, comprising four dwelling units, planned for the site. So the developer's well-intentioned effort to have a public, neighborhood hearing on the topic turned into an ill-tempered uproar.

The requested ANC hearing became a neighborhood meeting with Carmel at Bancroft on May 9, including two ANC commissioners, representatives of Historic Mount Pleasant, and Tim Dennee from the Historic Preservation Office. But a number of residents refused to participate, wanting something more formal and "official". It appears that Adam Hoey, the commissioner whose district includes Oakwood Terrace, will have that meeting on May 16.

I certainly understand why residents are dismayed, because a green slope will be lost. But residents ought to be aware also that fighting this on historic preservation grounds simply won't work. The HPRB is empowered to consider only architectural details in its decisions. Its instructions do not include allowing for public support or opposition. If a development meets the "compatibility" standard of historic preservation, then the permit must be approved by the HPRB, whether the neighbors are supportive or not. That's the historic preservation law in the District.

Nor does ANC approval affect the HPRB's decision. The only question the HPRB can consider is, is the development "compatible" with the historic district? The Historic Preservation Office staff say yes, it is. So does Historic Mount Pleasant. It's not likely that the HPRB would take an ANC's contrary opinion, over those judgments by historic preservation specialists.

The HPRB will meet on May 23, and may then consider this request for a renewal of the 2010 approval of the plan.

There have been no DCRA permits issued for any work, and Carmel confirmed that no permit applications had yet been submitted. Hence, no actual work can take place here for many months.

Included in the DCRA evaluation of permits is compliance with zoning regulations. That's the crucial step: is the project in compliance with zoning, or will a zoning variance be needed? Carmel says that no variances will be needed, but of course one has to await the DCRA Zoning Administrator decision on that.

If no variance is required, then construction may proceed "as a matter of right", and unhappy residents will just have to put up with it. If a variance is needed, well, that's a very different situation. Then, *and only then*, does "detriment to the public good" become a consideration.

The **Adams Mill Road/Kenyon project** continues. As I noted in last month's newsletter, the scale of the construction on the section of Adams Mill Road between the Zoo entrance and the Kenyon/Irving intersection surprised, and dismayed, everyone, including me.

The ANC reviewed project drawings several times. Right up through the 65% completion drawings, Adams Mill Road was a single level, and no barrier between the two lanes was needed. It was only in the final, 100% drawings that the two-level roadway was invoked, and that change brought about the barrier. This very substantial change to the design between the 65% and final drawings was not pointed out to us by DDOT, and wasn't obvious from the engineering drawings provided. Silly me, I thought DDOT was just filling in the details of the 65% design, not invoking a really major change in that design.

The reason for that change was to save the large trees on the park side of the road, including the 120-foot oak towering over the road that I mentioned in last month's newsletter. Somebody misread my text to say that the tree was 120 years old, and consequently near old-age death. I have no idea how old that tree is. It looks healthy to me, and these oaks commonly live to be more than 500 years old. The destruction of this great tree, as was initially planned in order to elevate the southbound lane of Adams Mill to match the height of the northbound lane, would have been a grievous loss.

So we have the two-level roadway, and the barrier to prevent errant drivers from going over the edge of the uphill side and crashing down on the lower, downhill side. Blame it on Mount Pleasant's steep terrain.

All we wanted was that left turn, safe and legal, from Kenyon Street onto southbound Adams Mill. Nobody imagined that that would turn into this large and controversial job.



*Artist's conception of the Adams Mill Road entrance to Mount Pleasant, upon completion of the project. Note the low, stone-clad barrier on the left, waist high, looking much better than the concrete barrier there now.*

The next meeting of the ANC will be on **Tuesday, May 21, 2013, 7:00 pm.**