

Jack's May report

At the April meeting, the ANC did the following:

- Advised ABRA to approve the liquor license renewal applications for six Mount Pleasant restaurants.

Despite accomplishing little actual ANC business at the April meeting, the meeting went on right up to our mandatory adjournment time, 15 minutes before the Library's 9 PM closing time. The Director of the Mayor's Office of Latino Affairs, Jackie Reyes, wanted to speak to our audience about their funding and plans for 2019. Unfortunately, and as happens too often, the "not more than ten minutes" requested turned into more than half an hour. What with Public Discussion and routine monthly matters, the meeting didn't get to **the Oakwood Terrace proposed development** until 8:25 pm, leaving just 20 minutes for a presentation of the plans by the architect and questions from the audience.

I wish we could have taken that half hour given to Director Reyes and employed it instead for discussion of the controversial Oakwood Terrace development. That will be a main topic at our May 21 meeting, when we will have more time for a serious discussion.

On April 10 we received notice from the Historic Preservation Office (HPO) of plans for the construction of two "flats" on the spit of land **where Oakwood Terrace meets 17th Street**. (A "flat", in DC zoning terminology, is a building with two dwelling units. Mount Pleasant is zoned RF1, for "residential flats".) This was a revival of a proposal of 2013, which turned hotly controversial at that time. Understandably, some residents would prefer that that steep slope remain undeveloped and green, rather than built up.

Our normal procedure with historic preservation matters is to consider the application only after the HPO staff report is available, as that indicates what will likely be the proposed DC action. (This is what ANCs do: we "advise" concerning "all proposed matters of District government policy".) The HPO staff report for this development would, according to the regular schedule, appear on Friday, April 19, and the Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB) would consider the matter at its meeting on the following Thursday. Our ANC meetings are scheduled for the Tuesday following the posting of the HPO staff report and preceding the HPRB meeting. Hence, this topic was put on the ANC agenda for our April 23 meeting.

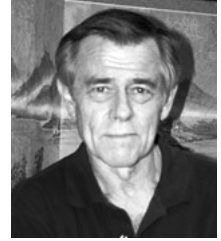
I learned, though, that the HPRB consideration would be postponed until its May meeting, so ANC consideration would not be appropriate until our May meeting, when the HPO staff report will be available. So ANC *review* of the Oakwood Terrace application was postponed until May. However, we could proceed with a *viewing* of the proposed development at the April meeting, with no ANC decisions until the May meeting.

One might think that this was a reasonable approach, putting information about the proposed development out to the public as soon as possible, and thus giving Mount Pleasant residents a month to consider the design, prior to the May ANC meeting. Curiously, this effort to inform the public about the

ANC 1D03 NEWSLETTER #192

Jack McKay, May 13, 2019

Jack McKay
3200 19th St, Tel. 462-8692
e-mail: jack@dcjack.org
<http://DCJack.org>



proposed work elicited a wave of demands that the ANC not bring the matter up at all in April, as if it would be preferable to keep the details hidden until the May meeting.

But this is the Oakwood Terrace development, which was bitterly controversial in 2013, and immediately turned bitterly controversial again. Certain nearby residents complained angrily about the ANC presentation by the developer at the April meeting, even though no ANC decision would be made until May.

A little bit of history: in 2013, when the developer asked for time to present her plans at an ANC meeting, I declined that request, arguing that her presentation should, as for other historic preservation issues, await the HPO staff report, so the ANC could respond to the HPO recommendations on the topic to the HPRB. This elicited angry claims that I was attempting to conceal the development from the community. So this time I endorsed the early presentation to the community, allowing residents a month to review the proposed development before the ANC's May meeting, and any ANC decision on the matter. And that brought angry claims that this was somehow favoring the developer.

I go to great lengths to **keep my constituents informed** about the ANC, and developments in the neighborhood. I'm the only commissioner who puts out a monthly newsletter, 720 copies, hand-delivered to every address in my district. (And paid for by myself – no ANC funds.)

Each newsletter includes the date, time, and location of the upcoming ANC meeting. So it was rather dismaying to hear this at the April meeting: "*What happened here is yesterday, or today, we heard about this meeting. We had no idea about this meeting. And this is just outrageous.*"

Evidently this resident doesn't see that ANC meeting notice at the end of every newsletter, which I deliver to his house the week prior to the ANC meeting. Okay, so I've moved the meeting information to the *front* of the newsletter. And I'll put it in bold print. Perhaps then he'll see it.

The **Oakwood Terrace developer**, Carmel Greer, took a bit of time to show her proposed two-flat design. It's also posted on the ANC1D website, with a link from the discussion on NextDoor. Comments can be posted on NextDoor, or sent to us.

The next meeting of the ANC will be on Tuesday, May 21, 7:00 pm, at the Mount Pleasant Library.

The only issue on the table is historic preservation. No zoning matters are involved, and evidently the development can proceed “as a matter of right”. No doubt some residents would prefer that the lots remain undeveloped, but that seems not to be a possibility. Only the details of the architecture are currently in question.

ANC “advice” is limited to advising the HPRB concerning their judgment of the historic district compatibility of the proposed construction. The ANC does not have “approval” authority; nobody cares whether the ANC “approves” the project, or its design, or not.

The District's historic preservation law is clear: the purpose of the law, concerning new construction, is to “assure that new construction and subdivision of lots in a historic district are compatible with the character of the historic district”. If the proposed design meets this compatibility criterion, then the HPO must issue the permit.

Residential Permit Parking (RPP) has been approved for the 2000 block of Park Road, though DDOT seems to be in no hurry to put up the signs. Any unzoned block collects cars which, for whatever reason, do not have Ward One RPP. Some residents own cars which have not been registered in DC (despite the law requiring such registration within 30 days of taking up residence in the District), and they find curbside parking by locating the remaining unzoned blocks, then walking to their Mount Pleasant homes. Many renters, I'm sure, keep their cars registered in their home states, perhaps figuring that their residence here is only temporary.

That was a small problem when not much of Mount Pleasant was zoned for RPP. But as the number of unzoned blocks decreases, the concentration of these non-permit cars on those unzoned blocks increases, placing an unfair burden on nearby residents. Any non-RPP-permit car that's been parked on the unzoned portion of Park Road will no doubt be moved to some remaining unzoned block.

Fearing a wave of new competition for the limited supply of curbside parking, Rosemount Avenue and Pierce Mill Road have petitioned for RPP zoning. I endorsed those petitions, as the local ANC commissioner, and the petitions were on their way to DDOT on May 6.

Kling Road has a problem in that there is no parking on that block, and so the residents cannot petition for RPP zoning. That their block isn't RPP-zoned is immaterial, there being no parking anyway, but of course the residents want to be able to get Ward One RPP permits, so that they can park, as they must, on the streets near their homes. That's allowed, under a certain provision of the regulations, and I'm asking DDOT to allow Kling Road residents RPP privileges. This will also be a subject of an ANC resolution at the May meeting.

Higher-speed wireless internet service is promised by the transition to 5G – fifth generation cellphone technology. Fundamental to 5G is physically small cells (the “cell” in “cellphone” is the area serviced by one pole-mounted transceiver). Several 5G units will be required to cover Mount Pleasant. These will be electronics boxes, a couple of feet tall, mounted on existing utility poles.

I've been notified that there will be one such 5G unit on a streetlight pole in the alley behind 1826 Ingleside Terrace. It will be an unobtrusive box, and certainly residents will want the high-speed internet service.

It's been **45 years** since Emily and I moved into our Mount Pleasant home. We came from Pittsburgh, and we had to do the move ourselves, there being a trucking strike which had moving companies shut down. I rented two big U-Haul trucks, and Bill Ely, who bought our house in Pittsburgh, drove one, while I drove the other.

I recall Bill looking around the neighborhood and saying, in a worried voice, “Jack, do you know what you're doing?” Bill was not impressed with our new neighborhood. The house we bought had been a rooming house, with 16 people crammed into it. For years after we moved in, we had people come to the door and ask if we had rooms to rent. Such was Mount Pleasant in 1974.

A contractor on 19th Street mentioned to me that his customer was worried about crime in Mount Pleasant, referring specifically to a **murder that took place in the alley above Park Road, west of 19th Street 25 years ago**. But that awful incident was not a matter of a criminal doing criminal things, but a seriously mentally ill man perpetrating insane violence.

Here's the story. In early 1993, a man from Maryland was cruising the streets of Columbia Heights and Mount Pleasant, gunning pedestrians down *at random* from his car. The first shootings, in February, were in Columbia Heights. The police shrugged those off as drug-war shootings, all too common at the time – the District counted 453 homicides in that year – and dismissed the protests of the relatives of the victims that they had no connection to drugs. Then, in March, a young resident of Mount Pleasant was shot dead as she walked her dog in an alley above Park Road. This victim could not possibly be dismissed as a drug-conflict participant, and police realized that something extraordinary was going on.

In the space of two months, 15 residents were shot at by this man, four of them shot dead. Police patrols blanketed the area, but could never be in exactly the right place, at the right time. The break came on April 19, 1993, when the shooter happened to run a red light at Kenyon and Sherman, catching, purely by chance, the attention of an off-duty police officer on Sherman Avenue. He followed the driver, who fled into the parking lot of what was then Atlantic Plumbing. This turned out to be a trap, there being no way out but the way in.

Found on the back seat of the car was the 20-gauge shotgun that James Swann had been using to shoot pedestrians. And that was the end of that, after two months of terror.

Why was this guy from Maryland shooting people here, far from his suburban home? He had “voices” in his head telling him that people in the “civil rights” neighborhoods of DC were responsible for the killing of Malcolm X in 1965, and he was seeking vengeance. Judged not guilty by reason of insanity in 1994, Swann was committed to a mental institution, where he remains.

For more on this, see my website: <http://dcjack.org/>.