

Jack's May report

At the April ANC1D business meeting, the ANC:

- Advised ABRA to approve the renewal of the Class C Restaurant liquor license for the Purple Patch Restaurant.

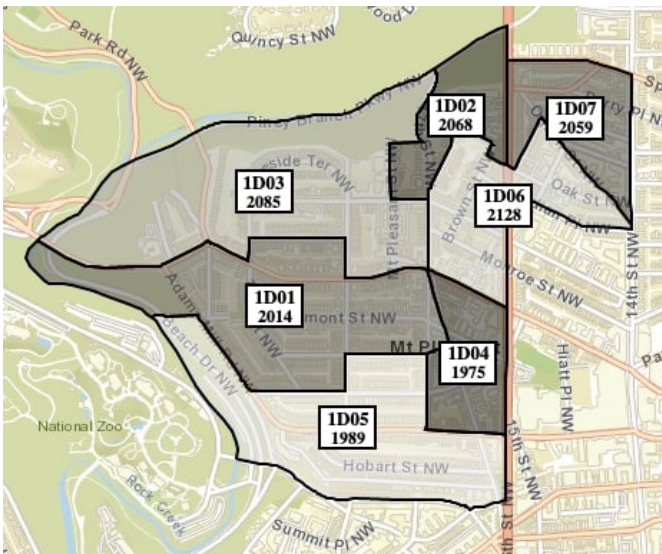
One might ask why the ANC “advises” ABRA (the Alcoholic Beverage Regulation Administration) to **approve restaurant liquor license renewals**, such as for the Purple Patch, this month. Barring anyone showing up to “protest”, renewal is automatic, and the ANC doesn't have to do anything. However, our policy is to advise renewals, as a gesture to the Mount Pleasant business community that this ANC is supportive of businesses that are good neighbors. (And I know of none here that are not good neighbors.)

Indeed, they can come to the ANC for help, when they encounter problems with the DC bureaucracy. This is a profound change from the way things were 20 years ago, when this ANC was notorious for its hostility to Mount Pleasant business establishments. People interested in starting business ventures in Mount Pleasant were warned to avoid this neighborhood, due to the troubles they would encounter here.

That's no longer the case. This ANC supports a business community that serves the neighborhood, and we're here to help, when needed.

I noted last month that **the redistricting of Ward One**, adjusting for the population changes determined by the 2020 census, proposes an important change in the boundaries of the Mount Pleasant ANC. A substantial chunk of Columbia Heights, from Meridian Place north to Spring Road, and from 16th Street to 14th Street, will be grafted onto the Mount Pleasant ANC.

This will, I believe, have unfortunate consequences. This isn't just a residential area being added to Mount Pleasant; included is a portion of the 14th Street commercial corridor.

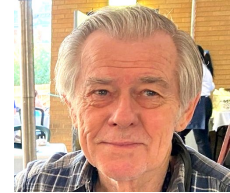


The seven single-commissioner districts of the 2023 Mount Pleasant ANC, with their populations.

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Few of us are familiar with those businesses, but they'll become our responsibility.

I had planned to fight this expansion of the Mount Pleasant ANC when the redistricting plan goes to the District Council (it is now in the hands of the Redistricting Subcommittee). Councilmember Elissa Silverman, chair of the Subcommittee, has said that ANC boundary decisions “should promote stability”. Well, this extension of the Mount Pleasant ANC into northwest Columbia Heights marks a radical deviation from “stability”. This ANC has had boundaries close to the present ones since ANCs were created, 43 years ago.

However, CM Silverman declared this month that the Council would not question, much less challenge, the ANC decisions made by the ward councilmembers – i.e., CM Brianne Nadeau for Ward One. Whatever CM Nadeau wants, that's the way it will be.

CM Nadeau believes that ANCs should have no fewer than seven commissioners. Our ANC, if defined by its current borders, with the population increase since 2010, would have six. Hence CM Nadeau's insistence that the area of Mount Pleasant be expanded to incorporate a few thousand Columbia Heights residents, simply to add one more commissioner to this ANC.

I worry about how much the residents of that corner of Columbia Heights know about the Mount Pleasant neighborhood, especially west of 17th Street. I suspect that few of them ever venture west of 17th, but they'll be called on to judge matters for western Mount Pleasant anyway. Similarly, I worry about how much – or little – we know about that portion of the 14th Street commercial corridor. It's definitely not part of “Mount Pleasant”, and I sure don't want to be imposing my Mount Pleasant centered views on that Columbia Heights neighborhood.

So I foresee a lot of problems on the Mount Pleasant ANC, as it tries to integrate this disparate portion of Columbia Heights into its work. Happily for me, I won't be there, as my term ends on January 2, 2023.

I did try to get our ANC to object to this expansion, but of our commissioners, only Jason Hamacher said he would support my effort to preserve the traditional boundaries of the Mount Pleasant ANC. So I have not even introduced my resolution calling for the Mount Pleasant ANC boundaries to remain unchanged to our ANC for a vote. It wouldn't pass.

DDOT is implementing **bus-only lanes on 16th Street**, in an effort to expedite bus travel and persuade more residents to take the bus. That's admirable, but what DDOT is doing at the

left turn from northbound 16th Street onto westbound Park Road is imposing a significant cost on the residents of this area. Drivers intending to go west on Park Road (not just a neighborhood street, but a “minor arterial” going west across Rock Creek Park) are required to turn right off 16th, crossing the east-side sidewalk, pass through Sacred Heart Plaza, wait at the light for the left turn onto Park Road, then wait for the light at 16th, thereby crossing four pedestrian crosswalks, whereas the direct left turn from 16th Street crosses only one.

This was the required left-turn route for many years, until this ANC succeeded in ending that in 2007, arguing that the roundabout left turn wasn't warranted by traffic flow considerations, and that it imposed a safety risk on pedestrians using the Sacred Heart Plaza for church events, as well as the mercado that sets up there on weekends, and the playground adjacent to the church.

For the past 15 years, allowing the left turn directly onto westbound Park Road has been satisfactory. But DDOT worries that, with the right lane now reserved for bus-only use during the evening rush, and drivers stopped in the left lane awaiting a chance to turn, traffic on 16th would be impeded. So DDOT decreed “no left turn” during the evening rush hour, and directed any left-turn drivers into the pre-2007 pattern, through Sacred Heart Plaza.

My resolution asked that this ban on the direct left turn be only during the bus-lane-only hours. But DDOT, contrary to their own published information, decided to prohibit the direct left turn at all hours, forcing all left-turn traffic through the Sacred Heart plaza.

DDOT has rejected our “advice”, and that of the Columbia Heights ANC, and the pleas of the Sacred Heart Church. The Sacred Heart Plaza, which is also Pine Street, will act as a lane of 16th Street.

DDOT argues that the direct left turn puts 16th Street pedestrians crossing Park Road on the west side of 16th at risk, due to drivers turning left while pedestrians have a “walk” light. True, but that's pretty generally the case, wherever drivers are making left turns. I would say that the more serious risk is that imposed on pedestrians on the east side of 16th, walking north, crossing the Pine Street/ Sacred Heart Plaza turn off 16th. Drivers can take that turn without stopping, and pedestrians walking north may not be alert to cars approaching them from behind.

Furthermore, DDOT knows full well that having drivers take the right onto the Plaza in order to get to Park Road is hazardous to 16th Street pedestrians. For many years, DDOT put bike-rack pedestrian barriers on the 16th Street sidewalk to try to prevent pedestrians from crossing the Pine Street turnoff. Now they've added a curb bulbout to try to slow drivers making that right turn, but still, no stop is necessary, and the risk imposed on pedestrians remains.

Neighbors have no doubt noticed that **all work on the 19th and Lamont park has stopped**, and the equipment that was there has been removed. I am told that the contractor has encountered a permit problem at DDOT. I've heard further that this has been resolved, and work should soon resume.

The May 2022 completion date for the project is, of course, history.

I sought help from Delegate Norton for **the Harvard Street gate into the Zoo**, long a popular route for access to Beach Drive, but closed since early 2020, due to the covid pandemic. Their reply: “The closure is related to parking management procedures implemented since reopening. It has made a marked improvement in park operations and the resulting congestion in the neighborhoods bordering the zoo. Currently, there is not a plan to change the parking operations and gate controls.”

So there's no possibility now for reopening the Zoo gate for access to Beach Drive. As for reducing congestion in the neighborhood, I haven't noticed that. What I see is drivers blocking traffic on Adams Mill Road, as they try to figure out how to get into the Zoo on this side of Rock Creek Park.

I've been doing **this ANC job for 20 years**, and, as I noted a few months ago, I'm not going to run for another two-year term. I no longer have the energy to do the job as well as in the past, and it's time for somebody younger to step in.

There are times when this ANC work is upsetting, especially when residents with strong senses of “entitlement” come with demands, expecting me to deliver whatever it is that they want, and protesting angrily if I can't, or won't, deliver it.

But then I get an occasional note, such as a wonderful one dropped through my mail slot by a group of Newton Street residents, expressing appreciation for my efforts (especially the newsletter). That makes it all worthwhile!

Like almost everyone else, I'm horrified at the imminent **termination of *Roe v. Wade*** by our wretched excuse for a Supreme Court. Being of advanced age, I remember well the days before that decision, and I'm appalled at the thought of having to go back to the dreadful way things were.

This ANC is being asked, of course, to respond to this event, and it's tempting to use the ANC to voice our dismay, as if the ANC will somehow command greater respect than citizens. However, the ANC mandate is DC Government actions that affect our neighborhood. The idea is things specific to our neighborhood – not whatever affects our neighborhood only because it applies to everybody. The “N” in ANC has meaning. If it's not about our neighborhood, then we do not have, in my opinion, legal standing.

Nonetheless, something must be done. Councilmember Nadeau has introduced a bill to the District Council that would create a “human rights sanctuary” for anyone traveling into the District from another jurisdiction for the purposes of obtaining an abortion. Commissioner Sandenburgh proposes that this ANC advise passage of this bill by the District Council, and I'll support that. We cannot stand by and say nothing, not in this vital matter.

The May meeting of the ANC will take place at 7 pm, Tuesday, May 24. 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.