

Jack's November report

At the October meeting, the ANC did the following:

- Advised the Alcoholic Beverage Regulation Administration (ABRA) to renew liquor licenses for the Raven Grill, Haydee's, Don Jaime's, the Marx Cafe, and Suns Cinema;
- Advised DDOT to rescind its repeal of the 25-foot intersection parking law and submit that repeal to public review;
- Advised DDOT to consider a number of safety improvements for the 1600 block of Irving Street.

Years ago, this ANC was viewed as hostile to our neighborhood business establishments. Most significantly, Mount Pleasant restaurants were barred from offering live music. The election of 2002 brought about an entirely new set of ANC commissioners, and since then, this ANC has been supportive of local businesses. In 2008 the live-music ban was broken, and in 2012 the Beau Thai opened, assured by commissioners that they would find support, not harassment, from the ANC. The goal was to encourage the development of a commercial strip that would serve the needs of the neighborhood.

When liquor licenses come up for renewal, we “advise” license renewal – not necessary, but a gesture to the Mount Pleasant business community that this ANC is here to help, as long as they're good neighbors. Hence, the resolution this month **endorsing renewal of several tavern licenses**.

I continue my (perhaps quixotic) battle to recover the parking spaces lost in August when DDOT, without warning, deleted the paragraph in the Municipal Regulations that **permitted residents, on RPP blocks, to park as close as 25 feet from an intersection**, though the no-parking signs are placed 40 feet from an intersection. The Commission passed my resolution which calls on DDOT to rescind that change, temporarily, and to republish that as a *proposed* change, allowing public review before the change is made.

The resolution does not judge the merits of 25 feet versus 40 feet distance, but merely calls for that proposed change to be published anew, allowing the 30-day review that is appropriate for such a change in the law. If DDOT allows this (unlikely), then we could have a fair discussion of whether 25 feet is adequate distance or not.

Caution: we residents are now getting parking tickets for parking that was, until mid-August, legal. *And it's no longer possible to cite the 25-foot parking law in a denial of such a ticket. That law is gone, by DDOT decree.*

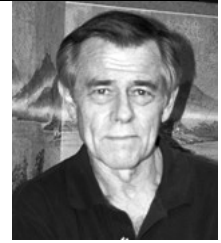
Early on the morning of November 4, **gunshots** were fired in an apartment at 3118-3120 16th Street. Police arriving found two men shot, one of whom died later that day. A third man had made his way, bleeding, around the block to the 7-Eleven on Mount Pleasant Street, where people called an ambulance.

This naturally has some residents upset, fearing such violence so close to home, and worried for their own safety. But the specific characteristics of this violent incident show that this is not a threat to the safety of the general public in Mount Pleasant. Third District Commander Stuart Emerman told me that the MPD believes “that *everyone involved in this*

ANC 1D03 NEWSLETTER #197

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incident knew each other”. The shootings occurred at around 6:30 in the morning, which suggests that the three or four men involved were sharing that apartment. (It's not an uncommon thing here, for unrelated men with low incomes to crowd into small apartments and share the cost of rent.) Three men were victims, one of them the renter of the apartment; I don't know if one of those men was a shooter, or if the shooter was a fourth man involved, who fled. We await information from the MPD.

Whatever the reason that these men were in that apartment early in the morning, it's clear that this was some personal dispute which culminated in gunfire. As is so frequently the case in DC lately, the shots were not fired in the commission of a crime – robbery, say – but were incidental to an angry argument. Hence, dreadful as this incident was, no one else in Mount Pleasant should worry about becoming another victim.

Of course something has to be done about **personal disputes turned by guns into homicides**. That's not an easy problem to solve. Guns are all too easily available, brought into the District from gun-friendly suburbs. As the chief of police in Milwaukee said, in some neighborhoods it's more dangerous to be caught without your gun, than to be caught with an illegal gun”.

So if we can't stop the guns, what can be done? That's the basis for the Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement, established in 2017 to deal with the causes of violence such as this. ONSE people try to identify residents who are especially likely to be involved in violence, as perpetrator or victim, and work with them to fend off that violence; “violence interrupters”, they are called.

ONSE is active in Columbia Heights, and across 16th Street into Mount Pleasant. I don't believe they had any knowledge of this group on 16th Street. But it's what the District is attempting, in order to prevent such violence, given that deterrence by the threat of legal punishment all too frequently fails to prevent the shooting.

Is this an indication that crime is increasing here in Mount Pleasant? No, it's not. Nor is the crime rate here at all high, not in comparison to the rest of the District.

Consider robberies, the crime of violence that most often threatens innocent residents, victimized by strangers on the street. I've calculated the number of robberies this year, to early November, and divided by the number of residents in each ward, to get a measure of the magnitude of the robbery threat to residents in each area.

Our Ward 1 tops the list, unfortunately. But within Mount Pleasant, the 2019 robbery rate, per thousand residents, is less than half the ward-wide number. Only Ward 3 – upper Northwest, west of Rock Creek Park – has a much lower robbery rate, while upper Northwest east of Rock Creek Park, Ward 4, has a modestly lower robbery rate.

Yes, crime happens, and one has to be “street smart” in Mount Pleasant. But our violent-crime rate is the lowest in Ward One, and is well below the rates found in the rest of the city, excepting only the wards of Upper Northwest.

Robberies, 2019 to date, per 1000 residents:	
Ward 1	4.02
Ward 7	4.02
Ward 5	3.47
Ward 6	3.39
Ward 2	3.00
Ward 8	2.97
DC average	2.85
Mt Pleasant	1.88
Ward 4	1.56
Ward 3	0.40

About 15 years ago, the District changed the chemical used to sterilize water. An unintended consequence of the change was the sudden leaching of lead into our water – the lead coming from the lead pipes in very common use in DC. Yes, this was similar to what's happened more recently in Newark, New Jersey, and Flint, Michigan. Make a change, in all innocence, and suddenly the city's drinking water is contaminated with lead.

This led to a large effort here in 2004-2005 to **replace those lead water pipes with copper**. I thought almost everyone in Mount Pleasant had made the change, but evidently not so, and perhaps now is a good time to undertake that change. There's a District Government program that offers financial assistance to residents undertaking the change.

The District has financial responsibility for any part of the water line that is in “public space”. For many of us, that's a large part of the water line; in my own case, it's 45 feet from the property line to the water main, out under the street. The remaining distance to the house was our responsibility, and we readily had that changed to copper at the same time that the city was doing the public-space portion.

The District financial assistance program is for residents whose public-space portion has been changed to copper, but the private-property portion is still lead, the property owners evidently having decided against paying for that change back in 2004-2005.

How do you know if your private-property portion of the water line is lead? Well, it should be easy to tell whether that water line coming into your house is copper or not. In addition, there's an on-line map showing every building in the city, with an indicator showing whether the water line is all or partially lead: <https://www.dewater.com/servicemap>. It's not very reliable, because they just don't have accurate or complete data, so in the end you've got to have your own water line examined.

The on-line map shows rather numerous lead water lines in the 1800 block of Lamont (north side), and the 1800 block of

Monroe (south side). But again, the on-line map is not reliable.

If your private-property portion is lead, and you want to change it to copper, then the District will pay half the cost, or more, if your household income qualifies you for greater support.

La Clinica del Pueblo, with offices on Mount Pleasant Street (where the ANC used to have its meetings), put on a marvelous **Fiesta del Barrio** in 2018, and again in 2019, offering free health services to all comers. The ANC has provided financial support to both of these events. Support for the 2018 event totalled about \$2500, and for the 2019 Fiesta, \$4400. We think that money is well spent, providing health services to Mount Pleasant residents who otherwise might be able to afford none.

There are very strict rules governing ANC use of its public funds, and it's been difficult to find causes that satisfy those rules. That's why our annual stipend of about \$12,000 has accumulated in our bank account, now exceeding \$100,000. Residents ask why don't we give away more of that away. But it's not that easy. Several past ANC commissioners have eagerly proposed to spend our funds down to zero, only to discover that very few funding opportunities meet all the strict requirements (e.g., it must serve all of the residents of Mount Pleasant, not just some subset of them).

Years ago, this ANC was less careful in its use of grants to support neighborhood organizations, and an audit of this ANC in 2004 found that more than eighty percent of our grant funds had been improperly used, or inadequately documented.

We're happy that the Clinica Fiestas appear to meet the requirements. Even for this case, we must be careful that our funds are used only for allowed purposes: e.g., no food, no entertainment. So, rather than just giving La Clinica the money, the ANC has paid only for specific (allowed) things.

The Historic Preservation Office (HPO) has long objected to anything “modern” being installed on our houses – including solar panels. A substantial number of Mount Pleasant residences have succeeded in getting permits for **rooftop solar panels**, by installing them on locations invisible from the street, sometimes at significant cost in effectiveness.

Growing pressure for the use of renewable energy has caused the HPO to yield, modestly, on the visibility of panels from the street. Revised “sustainability” guidelines, soon to be implemented, will no longer insist that such panels be totally invisible, but instead will require only that they be less obvious: “If visible from public street view, use low-profile panels set flush with the roof and in a complementary color with the roof finish to avoid a discordant appearance”.

Historic preservation is in direct conflict with the new emphasis on the use of renewable energy, instead of fossil fuel. I'm happy to see historic preservation compelled to yield, however slightly.

The next meeting of the ANC will be on Tuesday, November 19, 7:00 pm, at the Mount Pleasant Library.