Jack's August/September report

At the July 16 meeting, the ANC:
• Advised the Historic Preservation Office to issue a permit for work at 1861 Newton Street (3 to 0 vote);
• Advised the Office of Planning that it endorses the inclusion of two Mount Pleasant buildings in the proposed Meridian Hill Historic District (3 to 0 vote);
• Advised DDOT to repair broken treebox fences along Mount Pleasant Street (3 to 0 vote);
• Advised DPR to remove the tree enclosures in Lamont Park and replace them with benches (3 to 0 vote).

At the August 20 meeting, the ANC:
• Asked the Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB) to postpone any review of the Oakwood Terrace development until September (4 to 0 vote);
• Advised ABRA to approve the application by Radius Pizza for termination of its "voluntary agreement" with the MPNA (4 to 0 vote).

Yes, I'm **combining August and September** in one newsletter. Everything in DC slows down in August, the District Council takes the month off, and Jack and Emily spent a couple of weeks on a rocky, remote island in Canada.

I'm developing a system for **remote observation of ANC1D meetings via the Internet.** This is for residents who cannot easily attend an evening meeting, but who want to watch the development of some particular issue, and don't want to wait until the meeting minutes are published. Another use for this connection is for out-of-town commissioners to participate in monthly meetings, despite their absence.

Initially this was to be "video streaming", as ANC 3F does, but this is not best for our meetings. Our meetings operate around a screen showing our agenda, the text of resolutions, photos and drawings pertinent to resolutions. Video streaming shows people talking, but cannot show, legibly, the text of a resolution displayed on our screen, not in the type sizes we use. That's the key information needed by any observer: what is the ANC resolution going to say? What is the ANC advising some District agency to do?

So instead of streaming, I've set up a *screen-sharing* system, whereby viewers can see, on their own home monitors, exactly what is being shown on our computer, and on the screen in the meeting room. As resolution text is edited, the changes will immediately appear on the home viewer's monitor. The audio of the discussion will accompany the screen view. A webcam will add views of the commissioners, or the audience, when the text on the screen is of less interest.
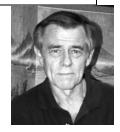
The system will use Skype, mainly because that's something that a great many people have, so nothing new has to be purchased or downloaded to permit viewing our meetings. It's also very economical in use of bandwidth, so no high-speed internet connection is needed. Would-be watchers have to establish "Anc1d Secretary" as a Skype contact, and indicate their interest in viewing an upcoming meeting, to be put on the "group" list. At the meeting, our Skype will call this list of viewers to participate in the meeting.

ANC 1D03 NEWSLETTER #131

Jack McKay, September 8, 2013

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True, that's not as convenient as simply connecting to a web site to view the proceedings, but this was the only way to provide "screen sharing" with the resolution needed for our text to be readable. And the price is right: $10/month for us, free for viewers.

This system was given its first trial at the July meeting, and worked fairly well. At the August meeting, it was put to use in "absent commissioner" mode, Commissioner Hoey being away on a business trip. The video connection is fine, but the audio needs improvement.

As of October, we're going to move our meetings to the library, where there is no conference-audio system. I don't know how I'm going to make this remote-viewing system work there.

The system of **visitor parking passes**, one per household, has been a great success in Mount Pleasant, since its initiation in 2008. It's since expanded to include all of Ward 1. Now the District intends to make it DC-wide.

Just one change will affect us: "The current pass expires September 30, 2013 and unlike previous years DDOT is no longer automatically mailing the pass to residents. Instead, residents will be required to apply for the pass through a simplified, user-friendly method made available through DDOT. In the coming weeks DDOT will be providing details on when and how residents will be able to apply for a VPP."

Tucked away on page 139 of a 143-page DC budget bill:

*Sec. 9029. **Speed camera safety nexus reporting.***

(a) By February 1,2014, the District Department of Transportation ("DDOT") and the Metropolitan Police Department ("MPD") shall transmit a joint report to the Secretary to the Council on speed cameras located in the District or proposed to be located in the District. The report shall include:

(1) A list of each speed camera in the District;

(2) An analysis of the speed camera's nexus with safety; and

(3) If no nexus with safety can be identified, a justification by MPD regarding the speed camera's location.

(b) By February 1, 2014, DDOT shall publish all justifications contained in the joint report pursuant to subsection (a)(3) of this section on its website.

This will be interesting. It appears to me that speed camera locations are selected for maximum tickets issued, not for safety. A notorious example is the speed camera located at a

K Street underpass, nabbing drivers who speed up in that dive under Washington Circle. There are no pedestrians, no cross traffic, no parked cars, so there's nothing to present any reason for strict 25 mph speed control. But this one camera yields a million dollars a month in DC revenues.

Speed cameras are, as this Council measure implies, supposed to enhance public safety. The MPD repeatedly implies that the substantial decline in traffic deaths in DC during the past decade is due to their "photo enforcement" devices. I've looked closely at the data, to see if the speed cameras installed here, beginning in 2001, could possibly be given credit for this decrease in traffic fatalities. To summarize my analysis: no, they cannot.

If speed cameras are causing drivers to slow down, and that slowdown is responsible for much of the decrease in traffic fatalities in recent years, then the proportion of traffic fatalities that are "speed related" ought to be decreasing. *But it's not.* In fact, this proportion is increasing: 28% in 2001, 37% in 2011. Similarly, pedestrian deaths ought to be down, *but aren't*: 11 pedestrian fatalities in 2001, 11 in 2011. And the number of traffic collisions ought to decrease. *But it hasn't*, not by any significant amount: about 18,000 in 2001, and about 18,000 in 2011.

The decline in traffic fatalities, observed not just here in DC but nationwide, is evidently due to the safety enhancements built into cars since about 1999, e.g., air bags. That's why traffic fatalities are down, even though the number of collisions is not. That's why the proportion of traffic fatalities characterized as "speed related" has not changed; in fact, one should expect this proportion to increase, as those safety measures decrease the number of fatalities in low-speed collisions; as it has. That's why the pedestrian fatality count is practically unchanged: air bags do pedestrians no good.

In short, the decrease in traffic fatalities in the District cannot be attributed to speed cameras. No doubt speed cameras enhance safety out on high-speed suburban and rural highways, but there's no evidence that they do any good in the District, where speeds are relatively low, and only *two to three percent* of traffic collisions are attributed to speed.

I have no complaint about red-light cameras. There's no excuse for red-light running. As for speed cameras, if we're going to have them, they should be based on real facts, not a mistaken belief that they're "saving lives". By the way, the infamous Porter Street speed camera is being re-installed, now aimed to the east, toward us, in Mount Pleasant. Drivers to Cleveland Park, beware.

I mentioned in my July newsletter that I thought that **Bancroft Elementary** was "beginning to become truly our neighborhood's school", something it hasn't been, because so many Mount Pleasant residents have chosen to send their children to "better" schools west of Rock Creek Park, or to charter schools. Just ten years ago, Bancroft was a mere 1% white non-Hispanic, in a neighborhood that was then 35% white non-Hispanic. Mrs. Thompson, the principal at the time, complained bitterly that she had almost no children from west of 18th Street.

That avoidance of Bancroft by residents of Mount Pleasant is changing: the white non-Hispanic proportion at Bancroft has increased tenfold, to 10%. That's still much smaller, though, than the white non-Hispanic population of Mount Pleasant, now 50%. Progress is being made, but many Mount Pleasant parents still prefer to send their children to other schools.

I was surprised to hear from a couple of residents that they really wanted to get their children into Bancroft, but could not, because of a policy favoring "out-of-boundaries children with siblings at Bancroft" in the lottery for the pre-school and pre-kindergarten programs. (At kindergarten, all children of in-boundary residents will be accepted at Bancroft.) One wrote that "we are very close to moving out of Mount Pleasant because we did not get into Bancroft". Well, that is a switch! For years I've been told that parents moved out of Mount Pleasant as soon as their children reached school age, in order to avoid DC public schools, specifically Bancroft.

The lottery system for the pre-school and pre-K programs is, says DCPS, "to make seats in these grades available to as many children as possible in a fair and equitable way". For most DC schools, in-boundary children are given preference in this lottery over out-of-boundary children. However, at dual-language schools, including Bancroft, "out-of-boundary with sibling" children are given preference over "in-boundary without sibling". This policy is, says DCPS, "to support the programs' language acquisition goals". Schools like Oyster need out-of-boundary children to increase their proportion of native-Spanish speakers to levels needed to maintain "dual language" status. Bancroft does not appear to have a problem having a sufficient number of Spanish-speaking children. At last count, Bancroft is 75% Latino, and 59% English language learners. Surely they don't need to bias the lottery to find more native-Spanish children, at the expense of the children of English-speaking Mount Pleasant residents.

The current lottery results admitted 16 "out-of-boundary with sibling" children to Bancroft, while 20 "in-boundary without sibling" children were wait-listed (as were a phenomenal 183 "out-of-boundary without sibling" children).

I have an appointment with the principal of Bancroft to discuss this problem. I'd prefer to see Mount Pleasant residents given preference over all out-of-boundary applicants, because there's no problem here in attracting native-Spanish children, and our first priority ought to be, I think, to encourage the development of Bancroft as our neighborhood school.

Some residents of **Rosemount Avenue** have asked for a "No Exit" sign on their street, to try to deter numbskull drivers who turn up Rosemount, thinking that that's a route across the park, or something. Then they get caught at the dead end, and sometimes damage parked cars as they attempt U-turns. A sign at the Klingle Road entrance might dissuade these drivers. Would anyone object to such a sign? If not, then I'll put in a request.

The next meeting of the ANC will be on **Tuesday, September 17, 2013, 7:00 pm.**