

Jack's September report

At the July ANC1D business meeting, the ANC did the following:

- Recognized Salvadoran-American Day as an important cultural holiday for the Mount Pleasant neighborhood and advised DC agencies to approve permit applications for a community-organized celebration, with the proviso that east-west traffic on Irving Street not be obstructed.

The **July meeting of ANC1D** was brief, illustrating how slow things get in midsummer in DC. There was no August meeting of ANC1D – there never is – as most DC **Government agencies go into summer recess.**

I skipped the July **newsletter**, there being little to report on. And there was no August newsletter, there being even less news to put into a newsletter.

Now it's September, school has started, and the new year has begun. Perhaps we should make September 1 our New Year's Day. Long ago, March 1 was the first day of the new year, corresponding roughly to the arrival of spring. Then that was shifted to January 1, roughly the beginning of the return of the sun to the northern hemisphere.

I think it would be more sensible, for the modern era, for the new year to begin on September 1, as summer ends and we all go back to school or work.

The new **DDOT visitor parking policy** was opened to a couple of ANCs, including ours, for test runs. I found the system poorly structured, and poorly documented. The essence of the new system is to be entirely on line. The resident applies for the parking pass, and is given a code number for the pass. The visitor applies on line as well, providing the code number as confirmation of the resident's request. Then one or the other prints out the pass, for display on the car. Presumably the Parking Enforcement patrol officers can obtain confirmation of the validity of the pass, again employing that code number to link to the DDOT data on file.

The system is designed mainly with the one-time passes in mind – the passes that one currently obtains in a visit to an MPD station. What's more concerning to me is the system for the household visitor parking pass (VPP), currently provided to residents' households annually. The system for that appears to limit the use of the pass to one visitor at a time (well, we've given only a single pass). The resident applies for a 365-day pass, the virtual equivalent of the VPPs distributed to us annually. Further, the resident specifies the visitor who is authorized to use the pass. If a resident has only one user – for after-school child care, say – then that one user can be signed up for the year.

That's the way I think it's supposed to work, anyway. DDOT commits the common sin of having people who developed the software system write the instructions for the general public. People who are closely involved in the development of such a system are generally not good at writing introductory documentation, because they make too many unconscious assumptions about what a new user will know, and will not need to have explained.

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Lamont Street resident Alice Kelly, formerly of DDOT management, participated in the June ANC meeting, and noted the very confusing instructions for the on-line system. She said DDOT needs to provide a “visitor parking pass for dummies” page. The existing on-line instructions are ambiguous, and confusing.

In any case, this VPP system is here, now implemented city-wide. Our existing visitor parking passes are good through September 30, after which this on-line system must be used.

I needed to have a couple of **contractors** here for brief service calls. I didn't attempt to employ the on-line visitor-pass system, but used the opportunity to get clarification from DDOT as to what we were supposed to do. Here's DDOT's explanation:

“The contractor must create an account and register to park through the ParkDC Permits website or on the ParkDC Permits mobile app available from the Apple Store or Google Play. A Contractor Permit costs \$10 per day. Contractors can be approved for a Contractor Permit for as long as needed.”

My sense of this is that it simply won't happen – this is far too awkward for contractors making service calls. They'll simply park where they can and take their chances on parking tickets.

Visitors can, of course, park legally in an RPP spot for up to two hours. Mount Pleasant has no “Ward One only” parking areas, such as are found in Columbia Heights. I'm responsible for that, as I objected to the so-called “enhanced residential permit parking” proposed for our neighborhood.

Elle Restaurant, in the old Heller's Bakery building, has become one of Mount Pleasant's most popular restaurants. Right next door to Elle is what was Old School Hardware, until it closed up a year ago, much to our dismay. Now Elle has filed for expansion into the vacant building, increasing their seating capacity from 99 to 148. I'm pleased to see that, and I'm confident that the ANC will endorse the expansion.

A longstanding traffic problem here is **commuter cut-through traffic**. One especially troublesome route is along Newton Street in front of Bancroft Elementary, popular with commuters coming west from 16th Street, or up 17th Street from the Piney Branch Parkway. I speculate that it was such a commuter who brought about an exceptionally nasty incident the morning of September 8 at Bancroft, as children were arriving for the school day.

The incident began with an aggressive driver trying to push past the crossing guard at the 18th and Newton intersection. The courageous guard blocked the way of the driver,

admonishing him for failing to stop at the stop sign, and for failing to stop at her direction. Then, wrote a witness, “the driver then proceeded to drive at high speed down Newton St. directly in front of the school. When they reached the intersection of 18th St. NW and Newton St. NW, I think some parents may have blocked their way and/or surrounded the car to tell them to slow down.”

The angry driver then backed rapidly up in front of the school, stopping in the alley facing Bancroft. Then he and a passenger got out and began a noisy altercation with parents protesting his speed and aggressive driving. The driver then got back into the car and drove away at high speed, turning south on 18th (as cut-through drivers generally do).

I'm sure the car has been identified, and the MPD may be able to take action against the driver. I understand that some pedestrians videoed the incident, and our Lieutenant Markiewicz has requested to see any videos, to determine what action may be warranted. Captain Jenkins of the MPD writes that the police “do not take this issue lightly and will investigate the matter appropriately”. I believe he means it. What can be done about the commuter cut-through problem, and specifically this route past Bancroft? Newton is currently designated a “slow street” for “local traffic only”, a restriction that is clearly ineffectual.

Work on the **improvements to the 19th and Lamont park** is supposed to begin soon. I watch out my next-door windows eagerly, hoping to see some sign of the work beginning, but there's been nothing. Way back in July, we were notified that a contractor has been identified, and the job would begin with a community meeting. That was in mid-July, and we're a month past “the next couple weeks” that was promised.

The plan is to take five or six months to do the work, opening the improved park to the public next spring. The initial phase of the work will likely be the removal of 18 of the 39 trees growing in the park. Many of these are junk trees that have sprung up naturally in the long-neglected park, and won't be missed. .Others – well, we'll see.

The **2020 census results** are being released, and shortly the District will begin the adjustment of the ward boundaries to account for the new numbers. The eight wards are required to have nearly equal populations. I think that will result in no significant change to our own Ward One boundaries.

The adjustment of the ward boundaries will be followed by consideration of our single-member districts (SMDs). Each SMD is to contain about 2000 residents. Ten years ago, the decreased population of Mount Pleasant resulted in a reduction of our ANC from six to five commissioners. I expect the new population numbers to bring about a return to six Mount Pleasant commissioners.

By the way, I've notified the other commissioners that I do not intend to run for reelection in 2022. I've been doing this for nearly 19 years, and it's time I moved on to a new phase in life. So that's two ANC1D positions that will be open seats in November 2022.

The **covid-19 pandemic** continues, and we're all sick of the disruptions and inconveniences caused by the plague. In early 2020, our ANC meetings went “virtual”, as indoor public

gatherings of residents, such as our monthly meetings, were prohibited.

We currently will be permitted to continue with virtual meetings through February of 2022. Will the pandemic by then be sufficiently controlled that we can resume our regular public meetings? I doubt it.

Certainly we should resume public meetings as soon as the pandemic rules, and the DC state of emergency, permit. But a number of people have remarked on the convenience of remote access to our virtual meetings, allowing them to attend and participate in, our meetings, without having to go to the Library and wait patiently for their topic of interest to come up.

So there is exploration of how to continue remote access to our ANC meetings, even after we return to public sessions. This is not trivially brought about. Our public meetings include, of course, a loudspeaker, projecting the audio to the audience. And there are five microphones for the commissioners, as well as the wireless “remote” for audience speaking to the group. We have to worry about the microphones picking up the loudspeaker output and creating a feedback loop (resulting in painfully loud feedback squeals). We prevent that by careful positioning of the loudspeaker and the microphones (and cautioning users of the remote mike to refrain from standing in front of the loudspeaker).

Now, with audio going out to the “remote” listeners, who must turn on their audio if they want to can address the ANC, there are numerous such feedback loops created. Ideally the at-home people listen via earphones, not via their computer speakers. (Note how many times you see television people with funny little white things hanging from their ears, in this era of remote participation. Those are earpods permitting them to hear the audio, while keeping that audio out of their microphone systems.) If they don't choose to use earbuds, well, turning on their microphone creates a feedback loop, and, potentially, audio trouble.

So while we do want to promote “remote” participation in regular, public ANC meetings, setting up a system to allow that without causing troublesome audio feedback is not something done simply. We hope for assistance from the Office of ANCs in bringing remote participation about.

Burglaries have become infrequent in Mount Pleasant, decreasing from 81 for the year a decade ago to just 19 in 2020. This year began at an even lower rate, just seven recorded in the first seven months of 2021.

Then came August – and *seven burglaries reported in that month alone*. All these burglaries are in the same area: three in the 3200 block of 16th Street, three in the 3200 block of 17th Street, one in the 3100 block of Mount Pleasant Street. Somebody is evidently “working” the area.

The September meeting of the ANC will take place at 7 pm, September 21. 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.