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Testimony to the Committee on Public Works concerning Parking Policy

**Jack McKay
ANC 1D
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Good afternoon. I am Jack McKay, a 31-year resident of Mount Pleasant, in Ward One, and currently Chairperson of ANC 1D. I am speaking this afternoon for ANC 1D, pursuant to a resolution passed by our ANC on July 5.

I participated in the Mayor’s Task Force on Parking in 2003. All participants of those meetings agreed that parking policy must be tailored to the needs and conditions of specific District neighborhoods. What’s appropriate for Upper Northwest won’t be suitable for Mount Pleasant, and what’s suitable for Mount Pleasant won’t be suitable for downtown. I will deal with the conditions of Mount Pleasant, only, and I hope that legislation will permit us to have parking regulations suited to our community.

ANC 1D asks that the following provisions be included in any parking legislation:

1. Residential Permit Parking zones should be defined by ANC boundaries, with the residents of each ANC choosing whether or not to be RPP-zoned, and with RPP permits for one ANC valid in all contiguous ANCs.

2. The minimum distance from parked cars to an intersection should be reduced, in residential areas, from 40 feet, to 25 feet.

3. Where commercial parking lots are unavailable, daytime-only parking permits should be made available in lieu of municipal parking. These permits would be valid only two blocks or more distant from a neighborhood business district, and would be available only to persons employed by neighborhood businesses or institutions. The number of permits issued would be limited to one in 20 of the curbside parking spaces in the area. This provision would expire after a two-year trial period.

4. Residents should be permitted to obtain daytime-only parking permits, at minimal cost, for people providing essential residential household services, such as day care, home cleaning, and home contracting work.

Now, to enlarge on each of these points.

1. The contiguous-ANC provision will avoid “boundary” problems. If RPP zoning is by cluster, as proposed by the Task Force, then residents along a boundary will find themselves prohibited from parking even right across the street from their homes. In my neighborhood, residents of Harvard Street could park on the north side of the street, but not the south side, while residents of the south side of Harvard Street could park on the south side of the street, but not the north. With RPP zoning by ANC, and permits valid in adjacent ANCs, there are no such boundary problems.

2. Concerning the parking distance to intersections, I have reviewed parking laws in most of the states of the United States, and nowhere else in the country is 40 feet distance required. Most common is 20 feet from a crosswalk, which amounts to 32 feet from an intersection. Virginia allows parking 20 feet from an intersection. Here in the District, parking is permitted to 25 feet from an intersection, in RPP zones, at night. If 25 feet is sufficient at night, why is it not sufficient during the day? Let’s make it 25 feet in RPP areas, day and night, and thus obtain a few more legal parking spots in our high density neighborhoods.

3. We propose daytime-only parking permits for nonresidents in residential areas such as ours. There are no commercial parking lots in Mount Pleasant, so that is simply not an option for commuters to our neighborhood. When our residential area becomes wholly RPP, employees of our businesses, schools, and institutions for whom bus service isn’t adequate are going to have an impossible problem. We already hear complaints that our schools and businesses have difficulty getting employees, because many people can’t afford to live in our increasingly expensive neighborhood, and they can’t afford frequent parking tickets, so they simply refuse jobs here. Our schools and businesses suffer now, and will have even greater difficulty when Mount Pleasant becomes 100 percent RPP.

In our neighborhood, our parking problem is at night, not during the day. I estimate that 2000 cars leave Mount Pleasant every morning, taken by their owners to their jobs elsewhere. That frees up a lot of curb space. I observe that our residential blocks are approximately 50% occupied during the day, and residents will confirm that, a block or two distant from the commercial strip, there is no difficulty in finding



One residential block in Mount Pleasant, at 7 AM, Monday morning, July 11. Every legal parking spot is occupied, and two illegal spots as well.



The same block, at 10 AM. Now there’s ample parking available, because so many cars have been taken away by residents who commute to their workplaces. There’s little benefit obtained by prohibiting nonresidents from parking here during the day.

parking during the day. Our schools and a number of small businesses and nonprofits altogether add up to perhaps several dozen arriving employees, far fewer than the number of Mount Pleasant residents who leave every morning for their jobs. Why not let these commuters use curb space, in lieu of a commercial parking lot, during the day? Our parking problem comes only in the evening, when those 2000 resident-owned cars come home.

It's been suggested that we invoke RPP at night, not during the day. But then suburbanites could park in our neighborhood and take the Metro downtown. That's not acceptable. Hence, we need daytime-only parking permits, limited to bona fide employees of Mount Pleasant schools, businesses, and nonprofits, and valid only a block or more distant from the commercial strip.

4. Similarly, there is little benefit to residents from limiting parking by household workers during the day. Mount Pleasant residents, the great majority of whom work during the day, depend on household workers for child care, home cleaning, and house maintenance. The two-hour allowance for RPP is in many cases insufficient, so daytime visitor permits are needed. Fees for such permits should be only sufficient to cover costs of program administration, and should not be increased in an attempt to reduce such parking. We need those child care workers and household employees, and there's no shortage of parking for them, so long as they're gone by the time the thousands of residents who take their cars to work come home.

Those are the recommendations of the Mount Pleasant ANC for District parking policy in our neighborhood. We thank you for listening.