

February report to constituents

Here is news of the February ANC meeting, and a preliminary agenda for the March 2 meeting.

ANC 1D03 NEWSLETTER

Jack McKay, February 20, 2004

Highlights of the February ANC meeting

This meeting began with a presentation by the youths of **YARG**, the Youth Action Research Group. These days we have to worry a lot about our teens being drawn into gangs or drugs or other troublesome activities, and this ANC was happy to give a hearing to a group of youths intent on keeping straight.

Mr Carlos Graupera of Bancroft Elementary spoke for his grant request to support an admirable program, "**ROOTS of Peace**", with the purpose of teaching "conflict-resolution strategies and values of a peaceful community". Considering the high risk of Bancroft children (70% Latino) being drawn into gangs, this seems an admirable undertaking, as worthwhile as anything we have funded.

Mr Graupera asked for only \$500, in the mistaken belief that that was our limit. This was not enough to fully fund this project, and I proposed increasing the grant to \$650, still a very modest grant. Unfortunately Commissioner Sale declined to vote, asserting that he had not received an advance copy of the grant request, and Commissioner Bitondo decided to vote against the grant, claiming that I was showing favoritism to Bancroft, because of my six-year-old there. I reject that accusation; this grant is not about Bancroft, but is about promoting nonviolent conflict resolution among our children via our neighborhood school.

Thus there were but four votes in favor, and our rules require five for grants exceeding \$500. We then passed the grant award for the original amount, \$500, for which four votes was sufficient.

We voted also on an "**Art on Call**" grant request, for \$1500, to support a local artist in a project to put little brass sculptures, depicting various periods in the history of Mount Pleasant, in the ancient fire call boxes that are scattered about the neighborhood. I voted "no", because I think our money should be used for projects more substantial, more oriented towards doing good for the people of Mount Pleasant, than this. The other five commissioners disagreed with me, and the grant passed.

I think it shameful that we will spend \$1500 of taxpayer money to place ornaments around the neighborhood, but won't give \$650 to a project to teach elementary school children how to settle disputes without violence.

We voted in favor of a **grant of \$2000 to Mount Pleasant Main Street for graffiti removal**. Most of the walls cleaned up last summer and fall remain

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Opinions expressed here are those of Dr. McKay alone, speaking for himself, not for the Mount Pleasant ANC.

Councilmember David Catania, leading a City Council review of ANC performance on February 17, had **high praise for our ANC**:

- We have "put the robbery closure rate on the [City Council] radar screen". I discovered the District's poor performance in robbery closures by arrest, and now City Council is following our lead. As Mr Catania said, robbers are generally serial offenders, so getting any robber under arrest is effective for prevention of future robberies.
- Mr Catania is glad to see this ANC's support for Bancroft Elementary, which he called "a gem" – "you're lucky to have it". He had words of praise for the principal, Fay Thompson, as well.
- He approves of our recent venture to build a good working relationship with Columbia Heights: this "makes a lot of sense".

Other ANCs could learn from our example, he said. I'm especially pleased, of course, because all three of the matters Mr Catania mentioned are my initiatives.

Residential Permit Parking strikes again. The mother of my favorite six-year-old, a homeowner on Monroe Street, has lately been forced to park elsewhere because of the lead pipe work. She parked around the corner, on 18th – and promptly received a ticket for RPP violation. She is most certainly a Mount Pleasant resident, so why is she fined for parking on a Mount Pleasant residential street? Especially when WASA has forced her off her own block? The District's RPP system is absurd.

Very soon now, a revised RPP system will emerge from the Mayor's office. Let us hope for something much better than what we have now.

Topics to be considered in the March 1 ANC meeting, 3166 Mt Pleasant Street, 7:30 pm:

- lead in the water (we are requesting WASA attendance)
- unlicensed pay phones
- robbery closure rates
- Habana Riviera liquor license
- Housing Production Trust Fund
- ANC audit
- Mt Pleasant Library name

graffiti-free, but of course some is reappearing. We need to have stocks of color-matched paint on hand to cover over graffiti promptly. This will pay for that.

We proceeded then to deal with the issue of **robbery closure rates**. As I noted in last month's newsletter, I've discovered that our rate of closing robberies by arrest is dismal – about 10%, just half the rate achieved by other large cities. I had prepared a resolution (see box) calling on the MPD to explain why the closure rate is so low, and calling on all parties, including the public, to work together to bring it up to a respectable level. Rather than introduce this resolution myself, I offered it to Commissioner Grant, in view of his role as Chair of the Crime and City Services Committee.

To my great dismay, Commissioner Grant forgot this. And because he had said that he would revise the resolution, I had not brought my original version to the meeting. Thus we were unable to proceed with my robbery rate resolution.

Commissioner Sale then offered his resolution dealing with the same issue. The main point of his resolution was to add the robbery closure rate to the MPD "score card", thus attempting to force a change via pressure on management. I think we have to look at the whole process: exactly why is our closure rate low, and how can we citizens, as well as the police, contribute to making it higher. I do not believe in simply demanding that police management do the job, a demand which implies that police incompetence or mismanagement is the cause of the problem. We have no evidence to support that accusation, and it's unreasonable to arbitrarily demand a higher closure rate, when we do not yet know why the current rate is so low.

I did succeed in the removal of a clause tying Chief Ramsey's salary to an improvement in the robbery closure rate. I still thought the resolution inadequate, and preferred my own version, which offers a cooperative approach to the problem, not coercive. Hence I voted "no", but the Sale resolution passed over my objection.

A few days after the ANC meeting, Commissioner Grant and I met with Inspector Hoey, the highest-ranking officer in the Park Road MPD substation, to discuss the problem of robberies in Mount Pleasant. The Inspector agreed that we are raising a legitimate and significant issue, and will welcome changes to enhance the robbery closure rate. Our MPD officers are as frustrated as we are that 90% of robberies go unsolved.

My proposed **resolution to bring about an increase in the robbery closure rate**:

Whereas, robberies in Mount Pleasant are a continuing and serious problem, several robberies a week being the norm;

Whereas, the best deterrent to such robberies is a significant likelihood of arrest after the fact;

Whereas, the proportion of robberies closed by arrest in the District is far below the average for comparable cities, i.e., approximately 10%, versus 21%, severely compromising the deterrent to robberies;

Be it resolved, the Mount Pleasant ANC requests the Metropolitan Police Department to explain this low robbery closure rate, and to propose measures for increasing it to a level comparable to that of other cities, including measures potentially to be taken by the public.

Parking has been restored on Adams Mill Road. It's been years since that tree fell and initiated the collapse of the Adams Mill wall. The repair of the wall is complete, and most of those infernal jersey walls that cut off parking along the block were removed early this month.

I've proposed allowing parking on Klingle Road. There's no need for two lanes on westbound Klingle, and six or seven new parking spots could be had, between Park Road and Rosemount Avenue.

Some of the residents of that block object, much to my surprise, asserting that there would be very disruptive traffic congestion and noise and accidents if Klingle were reduced to a single lane westbound. But Adams Mill was also two lanes wide from Kenyon Street north, for many years, and was successfully transitioned to a single lane. Traffic on Adams Mill Road is more than twice that on Klingle, yet there's no problem handling that traffic load with a single northbound lane. So if there's no problem caused by parking on Adams Mill, then we can be sure that there'll be no problem caused by parking on Klingle.

The best solution to our severe overnight parking problem is, it seems to me, to find more parking space.

Issues I have put on the agenda for the March 1 monthly meeting:

- 1) **Expedited lead service line replacement in Mount Pleasant.** Street excavation and resurfacing is planned for our neighborhood, for the street light upgrading, and it makes no sense to do that work, then later come back and tear up the roads for the lead pipe replacement. For that reason, Mount Pleasant should be scheduled for immediate lead pipe replacement.
- 2) **Increasing the robbery closure rate**, by finding out why the District's rate is so low, and then addressing those causes, with any cooperation needed from residents and business owners.
- 3) **Adding "Columbia Heights" to the name of the Mt Pleasant Library.** This seems only fair, since we're asking them to rename their Metro stop for us.