

March report to constituents

Here is news of the March Advisory Neighborhood Commission meeting, what we plan for the April meeting, and notes about other events in our part of Mount Pleasant.

Highlights of the March ANC meeting

Treasurer's report: Commissioner Muller (1D05) reported that the problems with the financial reports inherited by this ANC from its predecessor have been resolved. Errors were corrected in the last four quarterly reports turned in by the preceding ANC, going back to the spring of 2001. Two quarterly reports, overdue from 2002, and the report for the last quarter of calendar year 2002, due now, were corrected and completed. Thus the ANC financial records are now up to date. We're indebted to Peter for his hard, painstaking work in clearing up this situation.

There is no indication whatsoever of financial impropriety by the preceding ANC. Their record-keeping had simply been negligent. The District withholds the quarterly funds for each ANC in the absence of quarterly reports, so we are about to receive three quarters' worth of funding.

New Commissioner: No one ran in November for SMD 1D04. Jenny Babcock, of 1627 Lamont Street, was recently persuaded to petition to fill the vacancy. With only one candidate, there is no special election, and the certification of her petition and her qualifications by the Board of Elections and Ethics is sufficient. We did appoint her to the vacant seat, so that portion of Mount Pleasant is now properly represented. We also named Jenny to chair the Grants Committee, to oversee the small grants that the ANC can offer to the community.

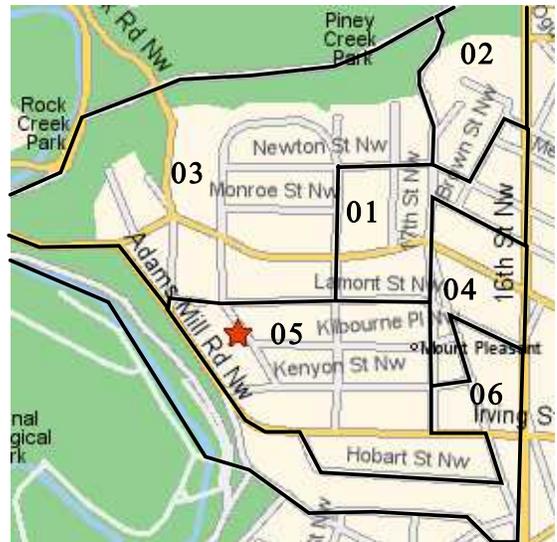
Our Ward One Councilmember, Jim Graham, arrived later in the meeting, in time to swear Jenny in. The ANC oath of office calls for each Commissioner to work for what is best *"for the District as a whole"* -- not just for the Commissioner's own district, nor just for Mount Pleasant. While we naturally think first of what is best for our neighborhood, we are legally required to make decisions based on what is best for the District of Columbia, whether or not that is what is best for our home neighborhoods.

Business District: Elinor Hart, of Mount Pleasant Main Street, is working hard on an application for a DC Main Streets grant for Mount Pleasant. Our business district is at a crossroads: the nearby Columbia Heights development zone could be a boon, providing new customers, or it could be a disaster, drawing away our customers with powerful competition. A DC Main Streets grant could help the business district prepare for this development, adapting as necessary to make it a benefit. We would all benefit from a more upscale, more prosperous business district, and we would all be harmed by a decline of our business district. The ANC unanimously approved a resolution in support of the Main Streets application.

Columbia Heights development: Larry Clark, of Donatelli and Klein, and Nigel Gragg, of Gragg Associates (and a Mount Pleasant resident), described their Columbia Heights development, occupying two large lots at 14th and Irving. Their buildings will add perhaps 1000 new residents, just two blocks from our business district. We need to make our Mount Pleasant Street business district sufficiently attractive that people will readily walk the couple of blocks from these Columbia Heights developments,

ANC 1D03 NEWSLETTER

Jack McKay, March 25, 2003



Map of the Mount Pleasant single-member-districts. SMD 1D04, between Mount Pleasant Street and 16th Street, and Lamont and Monroe Streets, has been vacant, but is now represented by Jenny Babcock.

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

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The ethnic mix of Mount Pleasant: we are 33% white non-Latino, 32% Latino, 26% black non-Latino, 8% Asian and "other".

One of the wonderful characteristics of Mount Pleasant is that everyone "belongs" here, and no one, of any ethnic group, is an "outsider". The Mount Pleasant ANC has, however, been unsuccessful at representing all the varied populations of Mount Pleasant. The ANC, and the people who attend ANC meetings, come predominantly from the "white non-Latino" group (yes, including me).

But everyone deserves a place at this table. We ask that more people from the other populations of Mount Pleasant please come to our meetings, join our committees, and participate in our neighborhood government. You are not merely welcome -- we *need* your participation, so that we understand the issues and concerns of *everyone* in Mount Pleasant.

The next ANC meeting will be on Monday evening, April 7, **7:30 pm**, at La Casa, 3166 Mount Pleasant St.

7:30 Call to order

7:45 Treasurer's report

8:00 Guest presentations:

Herb Leonard, WMATA, idling buses on Mount Pleasant Street

Nina Planck, Mount Pleasant Farmer's Market

Robert Frazier, Mount Pleasant Festival

8:45 Community Forum

9:15 Committee reports

9:40 Unfinished Business:

ANC budget

Payment for La Casa use

10:00 New Business

10:30 Adjournment

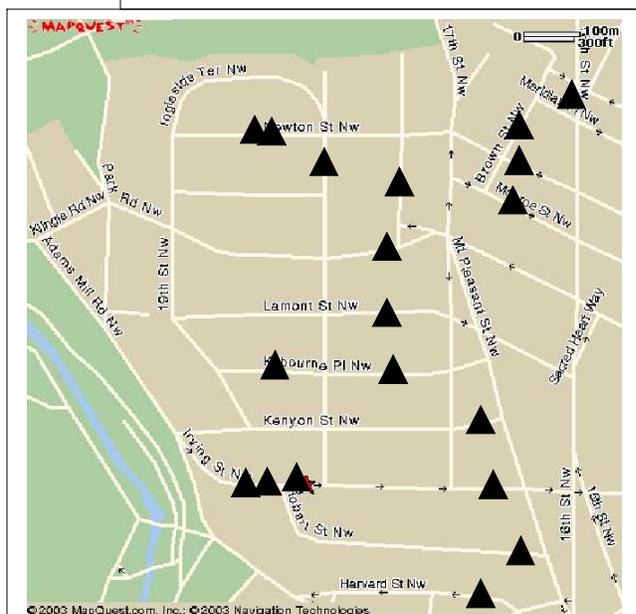
and from the Metro station, to patronize our neighborhood businesses.

Crime in Mount Pleasant: Several high-ranking police officers attended the meeting, including Fourth District Commander McCoy, PSA 410-414 Captain Bigelow, and PSA 414 Sergeant Pearce. Commander McCoy endorsed the conclusions of my analysis of crime in Mount Pleasant. I find that *the perception of increased crime of late is due to a jump in street robberies, from an average of twice a week a year ago, to about three times a week now.* This increase is due to a couple of roaming gangs, coming from as far away as Silver Spring, cruising down 16th Street in stolen cars and diving into the residential side streets to look for easy victims. They are preying not only upon our neighborhood, but other residential areas along 16th Street. The Metropolitan Police have made some arrests and are working hard to shut these gangs down.

Some people have been frightened by reports of crime in Mount Pleasant, certain e-group posters in particular giving the impression that this is some fearful crime wave putting us all in mortal danger. ("*These are violent crimes folks and it's only a matter of time before some of these robberies become murders!*") shrieks one. "*Now is the time to be up in arms about the job Chief Ramsey and our MPDC is doing. This is an outrage!*")

Such fear and panic are unwarranted. This is the inner city, east of Rock Creek Park, and we have always had to be alert and street-smart. The recent increase in robberies calls for continued alertness and caution, not fear. Nor is it fair to blame the Metropolitan Police for these troubles. When the economy turns down, joblessness goes up, and more people turn to crime. The MPD can't overcome such large-scale societal and economic forces.

Ramona's zoning: the ANC unanimously endorsed a petition by Ramona's Salon to change the zoning of 3101 to 3109 Mt Pleasant Street from high-density residential to mixed-use commercial, as the rest of the street is already zoned. This will allow the small businesses in those buildings to expand modestly.



Approximate locations of street robberies in Mount Pleasant, February 20 through March 22. Many of these robberies are done by small gangs in cars, using 16th Street for access to our neighborhood.

I am concerned about an apparent increase in Latino gang activity in the neighborhood. More on this next time.