

March report to constituents

Here is news of the March ANC meeting, and of the **cancellation** of the April meeting.

Highlights of the March ANC meeting

Neil Richardson summarized the status of the Mount Pleasant Historical Trail, which will be a self-guided tour of Mount Pleasant and its history. Mark Huck reported on the activities of Historic Mount Pleasant, the volunteer group that works on keeping the architecture of Mount Pleasant consistent with its early, ca. 1920 appearance.

The ANC took up my **robbery closure rates resolution**. Robbery is a crime of violence which threatens all of us, and which occurs with distressing frequency. Typically there will be one or two per week in Mount Pleasant – a mix of purse snatches, street robberies, and armed robberies of our businesses. Sometimes there will be many more than average, as happened in late January, when suddenly we were suffering five robberies a week.

The Metropolitan Police have responded vigorously to this problem. Uniformed officers can do little about robberies, because the bad guys just wait until the uniforms are out of sight. Inspector Hoey, who is making a fine mark in our District, put a plainclothes tactical squad to work at the problem, attempting to lure the perpetrators with decoys. I do not have the details, but I do know that a couple of arrests have been made, one with superb cooperation from residents at the Argyle. Just two arrests made a huge difference: instead of five robberies a week, we have had just one robbery in six weeks (a purse snatch on Mount Pleasant Street).

This illustrates the point that robbers are generally repeat offenders: if they get away with one, then they'll decide that it's an easy way to make a living, and they'll come back and do it again. Hence, arresting one robber prevents numerous future robberies. Tracking down and arresting robbers is easily the best way to reduce the frequency of robberies.

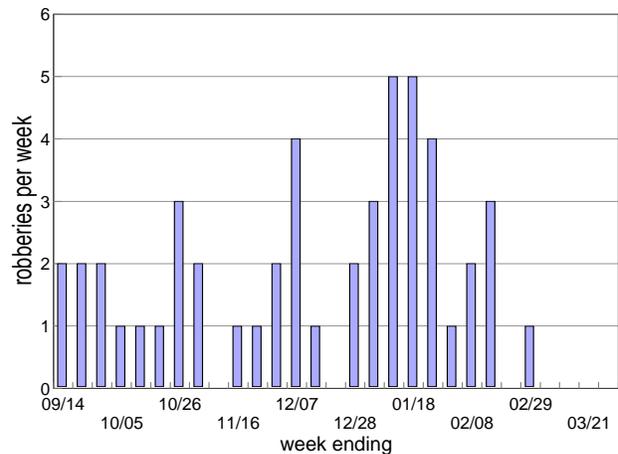
The District is evidently deficient at this. The rate at which reported robberies are closed by arrest is about 10%, which is about half of what is typical for comparable cities. My resolution calls for an explanation from the MPD of our very poor closure rate, and asks them to propose means of bringing our closure rate up to par.

The ANC spent 45 minutes haggling over the wording of my resolution, finishing with the rather

ANC 1D03 NEWSLETTER

Jack McKay, March 29, 2004

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



Robberies per week in Mount Pleasant, for the past six months. The frequency of robberies surged in January. Just a couple of arrests in February by Inspector Hoey's robbery task squad caused the frequency of robberies here to drop to nearly zero, demonstrating the effectiveness of arrests in preventing future robberies.

My resolution to bring about an increase in the robbery closure rate, as revised and passed, 5-1, by the ANC:

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

Whereas the best means of halting such robberies is to arrest the offenders and prevent them from repeating the offense;

Whereas the robbery clearance rate in the District is far below the average for comparable cities, i.e., approximately 10%, versus 21%, severely compromising the deterrent to robberies;

Therefore, be it resolved that ANC1D requests the Metropolitan Police Department to provide robbery clearance rate statistics to the public for this year and the previous five years; and, furthermore, let it be

Resolved that to the extent that this rate is below the average rate for comparable cities in the northeast according to the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting database, ANC1D calls on the MPD to explain why this particular rate is lower than the average rate for comparable cities, and calls on the MPD to propose measures, possibly including measures to be taken by the public, for bringing the robbery clearance rate in line with the average robbery clearance rate for comparable cities in the northeast.

wordy result in the box (that 84-word final clause is stultifying). Nonetheless, the sense is preserved: we should be able to double the rate at which the District closes robberies by arrest. The average robber should be able to get away with only five robberies before being nabbed, versus the present average of 10. That should also discourage would-be robbers from even starting on this course.

The resolution passed by a 5 to 1 vote, the single "no" vote coming from Commissioner Sale, who complained that the resolution was "vague in its purpose". I think the purpose is perfectly clear: *let's find out what the District is doing wrong about tracking down and arresting robbers, and let's fix it, potentially yielding a doubled rate of success.*

We considered the problem of **lead in our water**. It is clear now that the origin of the lead problem is the change from chlorine to chloramine for water disinfectant in November 2000. The chloramine is much more corrosive than chlorine, causing dissolution of lead from lead service lines (LSLs) connecting most Mount Pleasant homes to the water main, and from the lead-based solder used in our internal copper plumbing. The readings at my house are 23 ppb (first draw) and 36 ppb (second draw). The first draw corresponds to lead coming from my pre-1986 (when lead-based solder was banned) copper plumbing, and the second draw to lead coming from the lead service line.

It is clear that replacement of the lead service lines is *not* a complete solution to the problem, because we will still have the lead from our own plumbing. Hence we must all take precautions to deal with lead in our water, by using filters, and by avoiding drinking water that has sat for hours in our plumbing. It should be realized that these first-draw and second-draw lead numbers, taken purposely after the water has sat in the pipes for 6 to 8 hours, do not mean that all of our water will have such lead values. If the water has sat in the pipes for a much shorter time, as will usually be the case, then the lead levels will be proportionally lower.

Nonetheless, we clearly want to have our lead service lines replaced, as soon as possible. Residents of Monroe, Newton, and Ingleside have had their LSLs replaced (the city side only, the contractor being very slow about doing the homeowner's sides), but *no further replacement work is scheduled for Mount Pleasant in 2004.*

In addition to wanting our lead service lines replaced more quickly, we want to avoid having our streets nicely repaved, only to be dug up for LSL replacement. Street repaving is planned for Mount Pleasant north of Park Road in 2004, in conjunction with the work on our obsolete and unreliable street light circuits. I propose to use that imminent street-light work as an argument for expediting the LSL replacement work. (Every neighborhood in the District will be competing to be first to have their LSLs replaced.) Hence I offered a resolution calling on the District to hasten the LSL replacement, in order that it precede the street-light work on our roads.

The ANC haggled interminably over the phrasing of this resolution as well, showing no mercy to the residents who sat through this debate. No one argued with the purpose, of course. This time was spent on minor matters of wording. Eventually, the text shown in the box was decided upon, and the resolution passed unanimously.

Aside from this resolution, I've spoken myself to DDOT, in charge of the street light work. They too want to see the LSL replacement work coordinated with the street-light work, so we don't repave our roads only to have them torn up for LSL replacement. Even better, of course, would be getting expedited LSL replacement for the whole neighborhood.

Jack McKay 3200 19th St NW, DC 20010 462-8692 jack.mckay@verizon.net	There will be no April ANC monthly meeting. We won't have a quorum, due to travel by Commissioners.
This is the lead service line replacement resolution, as passed 6-0 by the ANC: Whereas virtually all of the homes west of Mount Pleasant Street are connected to the water mains with lead pipe service connections; Whereas according to WASA maps, most lead content readings in Mount Pleasant are in the range of 30 to 300 parts per billion, well above the EPA 15 ppb action level; Whereas many reading greatly exceed 40 ppb, a level which can indicate imminent and substantial endangerment, based on toxicological studies focused on young children; Whereas no further lead pipe replacement work is contemplated by WASA in Mount Pleasant this year; Whereas all of Mount Pleasant's streets will be excavated in 2004 and 2005 for street light work, and the service line replacement would best be done before, or in conjunction with, that street work; let it be Resolved that the Mount Pleasant ANC calls on the DC Water and Sewage Authority to increase its rate of replacement of lead service connectors in Mount Pleasant, to the maximum feasible rate.	

We considered a resolution calling for **full funding of the Housing Production Trust Fund**. The HPTF is a fund to provide loans to developers for the production of new, low-cost housing. (HPTF money does not go to renters or homeowners.) Eighty percent of HPTF funds must be used for housing affordable by people with incomes less than half the median of the area (i.e., under \$45,000 for a family of four).

One can hardly object to such an admirable program, and yet, City Council has seldom put any money at all into the HPTF since its establishment in 1988. If this program is so good, why is it that City Council has declined to fund it, year after year? Presumably the HPTF has simply lost out to other, "higher priority" programs in the annual budget wars.

We had been told that the District budget would show a surplus in FY2005, and therefore that the HPTF ought to be fully funded this year. This was not so. The FY2005 DC budget starts off with a \$292 million deficit, simply to continue existing programs without change. The budget must be balanced with some combination of program cuts and increased taxes or fees. Full funding of the HPTF implies that its \$40M cost must come out of other programs. Upkeep of our schools? Teacher salaries? Road maintenance? Summer jobs? Homeless shelters? Property tax relief? Lead water line replacement? We have utterly no way of knowing what programs will be cut as a consequence of "fully funding" the HPTF.

Furthermore, no HPTF funds have ever come to Mount Pleasant, and I doubt that any ever will. Elinor Hart disagreed vehemently with that, but I think we face a powerful obstacle. The Department of Housing and Community Development, which administers the HPTF, has a list of "13 areas for targeted investment", and Mount Pleasant is not on it.

Given the very high property values in Mount Pleasant, it is very difficult to produce any new "affordable" housing. That notion implies that the owner of a property will be willing to build new apartments and rent them out for much less than could be gotten on the open market. Consider the experience at 1851 Lamont, a property that was designated for "affordable" housing, and which consequently sat vacant and neglected for years. Only when the District decided to sell the property at "market rates" was it finally restored. I'm all in favor of "affordable" housing, especially right here in Mount Pleasant, where we need it to preserve our neighborhood variety. I strenuously oppose turning Mount Pleasant into an east-of-the-Park version of Chevy Chase. But we have to face the realities of the marketplace.

Drug Arrests on Monroe Street: Our Lieutenant Grogan posted this on March 23: "This message is in reference to the seven drug arrests at 1833 Monroe Street, Northwest on Friday, March 19, 2004 at 9:30 PM. The Officers Ricks, Quiles, Earl Brown, Morales and Duclos responded to a call for subjects selling drugs in front of the above address.

"The officers arrived on the scene and observed seven subjects standing around a clear plastic white ziplock bag containing a white rocklike substance that was on the ground. Officer Ricks recovered the bag and conducted a field test for drugs that came back positive for cocaine base. The officers then stopped all seven subjects.

"The officers observed another clear ziplock bag containing white rocklike substance and two large clear ziplock bags containing a green leaflike substance. The items were field tested and came back positive for cocaine base and Marijuana. All seven subjects were placed under arrest, charged with Possession with intent to distribute cocaine and Possession of Cannabis. The case was assigned CCN# 037-383. The officers included in their arrest paperwork the fact that Bancroft Elementary School is located within 1000 Feet of the arrest.

"The officers responded to court to paper the case on Saturday, March 20, 2004. However, the United States Attorney Screener decided to 'No paper' the case due to the officers being unable to prove that any one defendant had constructive possession of the narcotics.

"The subjects arrested were: Mr. Gregory Lomax II of 1807 Kilbourne Place, NW; Mr. Carlos Bates of 1943 Vermont Avenue, NW; Mr. Eric Woodfolk of 1869 Monroe Street, NW; Mr. Dwayne Davis of 1943 Vermont Avenue, NW; Mr. Terrance Jamal Mobley of 129 Florida Avenue, NW; Mr. Charles Mobley of 129 Florida Avenue, NW and Mr. Anthony Wood of 4324 23rd Place, Temple Hills, MD.

"The case was 'no papered', but this will not slow the officers and officials assigned to PSA 410 in their efforts to address the illegal sales of narcotics within the area."

Note: "No papered" means that evidence was insufficient, in the opinion of the U.S. Attorney's Office, to bring charges. Nonetheless, the MPD will keep the pressure on, and perhaps these fellows will decide to conduct their business elsewhere.

These are the "priority areas" for the Department of Housing and Community Development, where rehabilitation and development of rental properties will be supported. Mount Pleasant is not on the list, and is very unlikely, I think, ever to see any HPTF funding.

Anacostia, Bellevue, Columbia Heights, Congress Heights, Georgia Avenue, N.W., H Street, N.E., Howard University / LeDroit Park, Ivy City / Trinidad, Minnesota / Benning, Near Southeast, Pennsylvania Avenue / Fairlawn, Shaw, Takoma.

MPD sweep on Mount Pleasant Street. On March 24 a squad of MPD officers marched up and down Mount Pleasant Street, quizzing the shopowners about their security measures, and establishing a highly visible "presence" intended to intimidate would-be troublemakers, including the drug dealers up around Park Road, and Latino gang members down around Irving.

That's good, but the squad also did just what we feared when the ANC called for "strict enforcement" of all laws: they initiated a harsh confrontation with the Latino men hanging about in front of the 7-11. No doubt some of these men are ill-mannered nuisances, guilty of harassment of residents and urination in the alleys and the like, but many are not, and of course the officers had no way of telling the guilty from the innocent. Here's one report:

"A man who was coming home from work yesterday was standing outside 7-11 on the almost spring afternoon waiting for his brother who was shopping inside. He was screamed at to move on and belittled publicly by an officer. Another man was shouted down as a liar when he was trying to explain to the officer that he had talked previously with an MPD superior about concerns about being harrassed in front of 7-11. At another corner, a man was stopped and searched, with officers going through his wallet.

"Do police officers in Bethesda stop people for ID, or shout people off the street to move on when they are standing on the sidewalk sipping coffee and chatting?"

"Yesterday's show of force was alarming, irresponsible and provoking. Several officers I spoke to said that 'this is what your ANC Commissioner' wants, this is what you asked for."

I protested to the MPD that this operation did little good about crime, and did serious harm to members of our Latino community. The MPD will make changes, and I don't think ugly incidents like the above will happen again. The 7-11 loiterers are a problem, to be sure, but this problem has to be approached with intelligence and cultural sensitivity.

The Neighborhood Investment Act is, according to early reports, zeroed in the proposed FY2005 budget, perhaps a casualty of the funding, albeit partial, of the HPTF. Curiously, this program, which would have benefited Mount Pleasant, had similar goals: "housing code enforcement, and receivership of slum properties, the acquisition, preservation, and redevelopment of 15 to 20 multifamily properties in the area to preserve affordable housing, especially for immigrant families, rent stabilization measures, and the improvement of the Mt. Pleasant Street commercial corridor." We seem to have sacrificed a program that would have contributed to affordable housing in Mount Pleasant, in favor of one that will not.

It seems to me that we lack the competence to judge the funding of the HPTF, and, with no use of those funds in Mount Pleasant, we lack standing as well. Hence I abstained, though it would have been very easy to put forth a politically popular "yes" vote. The resolution passed by 4 to 1, Commissioner Sale voting "no", agreeing with my reasons for abstaining.

The Mayor's FY2005 budget calls for 50% funding of the HPTF, \$20M. That seems like a fair compromise, considering the large deficit that the city is facing, and the harsh cuts being proposed to balance the budget, e.g., Medicaid program cuts, and the elimination of the Neighborhood Investment program.

That's all for another month. -- Jack

Residential Permit Parking strikes again. A year ago, after the 1800 Lamont dispute, I got Dan Tangherlini, Director of DDOT, to agree that all changes in RPP zoning should be submitted to the ANC prior to invocation, so that we could confirm that all had been properly done (the 1800 Lamont petition was substantially deficient). I was dismayed to see that RPP signs went up on the 1800 block of Kilbourne in February, with no warning to the ANC.

I confronted Mr Tangherlini with this, and his Chief of Staff Steve Asher, and they have instructed their staffs that ANCs should be advised of all such RPP changes. Perhaps now the order will stick. Mr Asher faxed me the petition for 1800 Kilbourne, and it does seem to be in order. So yet another block of Mount Pleasant has gone RPP, causing the non-permit cars parked there to be pushed onto the next non-zoned block, 19th Street. RPP doesn't solve the daytime parking problem; it merely shoves it onto one's neighbors.

Residents of RPP blocks should be aware of the rules of RPP:

- Child care workers, such as after-school caregivers, are required to "make other arrangements" for coming to the neighborhood; they are "commuters", and are not to come to Mount Pleasant in their personal cars.
- Household workers, such as cleaning people, the same. They are to be instructed to come to your home by bus.
- Home contractor's employees, such as the three working on my house lately, similarly are prohibited from coming in their personal cars. Only the contractor's commercial-tags truck is allowed to park here during work.

Many times I have asked what the residents of RPP blocks actually do about their household employees. Do they tell them to come by bus or Metro? Or do they tell them to go find parking on their neighbors' unzoned block? If the latter, what will they do when every block in Mount Pleasant is zoned for RPP?