

April report to constituents

Here is news of the April ANC meeting, and the preliminary agenda of the May meeting.

April ANC meeting cancelled

Three of our six Commissioners were out of town on travel in early April. We're legally required to

have at least four Commissioners present in order to do business, so there was no April monthly meeting, and this newsletter will be devoted to happenings in the 'hood.

Robberies

I pay special attention to robberies in Mount Pleasant, because this is the most numerous violent crime in our neighborhood, and because anyone can be a victim, even if you're careful and try to avoid dangerous situations.

The chart adjacent shows the number of robberies reported in Mount Pleasant, month by month, since January 2002. The monthly count goes up and down, depending on what robbers happen to be targeting our neighborhood, and what arrests the MPD succeeds in making.

Twice, now, the Metropolitan Police have been successful in arrests of robbers who had been committing numerous robberies in our neighborhood. The wave of mobile-gang robberies of the winter of 2002-2003 ended after the MPD took down a Silver Spring-based gang, spotted in Columbia Heights with the help of information from observant victims. Thus the frequency of robberies dropped from 13 in March, 2003, to just one in April (and that one a "domestic" incident, not a street robbery).

This winter saw a renewal of the mobile-gang problem. These guys cruise the streets in a car, often stolen, and look for easy victims -- people alone on the street, sometimes waiting at bus stops, sometimes just having gotten off the bus. (We're not alone in being victimized by such mobile gangs; one such gang was arrested this month in ritzy Chevy Chase.) Inspector Hoey put a special

On the night of April 4-5, a single mobile gang committed as many as 18 robberies in Mount Pleasant, Columbia Heights, and Adams Morgan. In every case, I believe, the victim was found alone on a deserted street. Below are the five robberies in Mount Pleasant.

4/5/04 11:05 pm 18th Street & Park Road
4/5/04 11:10 pm 19th & Lamont Streets
4/6/04 4:40 am Mt. Pleasant & Harvard Streets
4/6/04 5:00 am Adams Mill Road & Harvard Street
4/6/04 5:40 am 3100 block Adams Mill Road

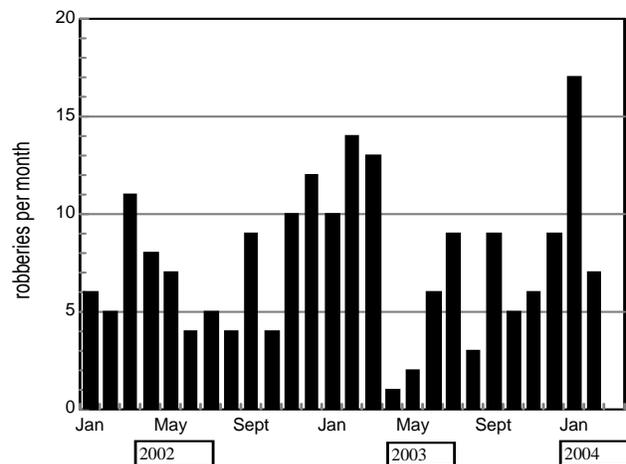
ANC 1D03 NEWSLETTER

Jack McKay, April 21, 2004

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

robbery frequency, Mt Plsnt



Robberies reported in Mount Pleasant, month by month, since January 2002. A gang of mobile robbers drove the rate up in the winter of 2002-2003; their arrest brought the rate down sharply. But there are always more hard young men out there, ready to try this short cut to wealth. This January Mount Pleasant suffered a record number of robberies, despite an enormous and visible police presence. Good police work, employing undercover officers, and guided by excellent information from victims, led to a couple of arrests, bringing the number of reported robberies down from 17 in January to zero in March.

The role of the victim of crime in bringing about an identification of the perpetrator is crucial. Here are results from a RAND study:

- 65% of investigations receive only superficial attention
- clearance depends almost solely on information from the victim
- of cases ultimately cleared with an unnamed offender, almost all are solved as a result of routine procedures, e.g., photo line-up
- "detectives are not the embodiment of Sherlock Holmes, but glorified clerks for the district attorney"

Of homicides that are cleared by arrest, just 2% are cleared by forensic evidence. in the manner of TV detectives.

tactical squad to work on the problem, and just a couple of arrests brought the monthly count of robberies down from 17 to zero. Yes, zero; no reported robberies here during the month of March.

It is extremely unlikely that an officer will be in just the right place at just the right time, undetected by the robber, to catch a robber in the act. Uniformed officers in marked patrol cars are ineffectual at preventing robberies. Note that frequency of robberies in Mount Pleasant rose to a peak in January 2004, despite the very large and visible police presence here since roughly October 2003. Robbers aren't stupid; they go around the corner, out of sight, to do their dirty work. Visible, uniformed police can do little to prevent crime; they only move it from one location to another.

The May ANC meeting will be on May 3, 7:30 pm, La Casa Community Center. Some topics expected to come up:

Restaurant liquor license requirements
ANC vacancy (J. Babcock resignation)
Mt Pleasant Library funding

The **Park Road - Klingle - Walbridge intersection** is troublesome, especially for pedestrians attempting to cross the westbound continuation of Park Road ("taking your life in your hands," says one Park Road resident). Many drivers are confused by the combination of a solid green light and the red right-turn arrow, and unthinkingly run the red, failing to understand that the red arrow prevails over the green light.

I've been pressing DDOT to make some changes to this intersection to mitigate this problem. On April 8 they put up a new sign intended to guide turning motorists – and put up a sign that was completely wrong, telling motorists that they could go to the right from either of the two west-bound Park Road lanes. Warned of this by an alert resident, I marched out with a stepladder and a large plastic bag and covered over that offending and dangerous sign. (The plastic bag is still there.)

I called DDOT, and our Ward One Planner, Callistus Nwadike, came out immediately, accompanied by Traffic Engineer Jean McCall. They agreed that the sign was a blunder, and were grateful for my plastic-bag cover.

While we discussed this issue, the DDOT engineers got a terrific, up-close-and-personal view of the red-light problem. Several cars whipped through the intersection, against the red arrow, as Callistus and Jean watched in alarm. One driver ran the light and threatened to hit a pedestrian in mid-crosswalk. The danger was obvious.

That peculiar light combination, of a solid green and a simultaneous red arrow, simply does not work. (Yes, this arrangement is consistent with Federal guidelines!) DDOT is now thoroughly aware of the problem, and I hope to see changes to this intersection soon.

The District's abominable **Residential Permit Parking** system is due, happily, for some substantial changes. The block-by-block nonsense has the effect, as I've noted many times, of simply shoving all the non-permit cars onto the remaining unzoned blocks. Lately I've been afflicted with cars with Illinois, California, and Texas tags, dumped for days at my front door. Are these visitors whose RPP-block hosts are unwilling to go to the trouble of getting visitor parking permits for their guests? I don't know.

In May, the Mayor's proposal for a revised RPP system will be submitted to City Council. I believe that this will put an end to the block-by-block RPP zoning that is such a troublesome aspect of the current system.

Klingle Road is the hotly contentious issue that seemingly will never die. DDOT Director Dan Tangherlini was pressed hard at the FY2005 budget hearings, by City Council members implying that he has been laggard in implementing their order to rebuild the road. Mr Tangherlini pointed out that this road requires the approvals of both the Federal Highway Administration and the National Park Service to go forward, and these approvals will be possible only if DDOT does the preparatory work in painstaking detail. The Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is currently being developed, and should be complete by January 2005. If the EIS passes muster, and the Federal approvals are obtained, then one could see the road rebuilt by January 2006.

In my opinion, that EIS will be used by the National Park Service to veto the road. The NPS has already said that they cannot permit intrusion on parkland, not even temporarily for road construction, and in 1994 they called for the complete removal of Klingle Road, to protect their parkland. The city-owned right of way for Klingle Road through the park is only 50 feet wide (a standard two-lane ROW is 60 feet), and the road cannot be rebuilt without substantial impact on Park Service land. The EIS will give the NPS plenty of ammunition to prohibit the restoration of the road.

I believe that the only way the road advocates can get any automobile road is by agreeing to a very substantial compromise, offering enough recreational benefits that some road opponents, and perhaps the NPS, may be won over. A year ago I proposed a modification of Option G, a one-lane automobile road and a paved bike/hike path. This would be several feet narrower than the two-lane automobile road, reducing the environmental impact on parkland. The bike path would provide a valuable link for bicycle commuters to the Rock Creek bike path. I propose that the automobile lane be closed to traffic on weekends, as sections of Beach Drive are now, enhancing the recreational potential.

This compromise offers, I think, the only way that Klingle Road will ever again be opened to automobiles. I predict that the "all of the road, all of the time" adamantly demanded by certain road advocates will never come to pass, due to the NPS veto.

This is one of the eight options to be considered at yet another Klingle Road public "scoping" meeting, on April 27, 6:30 pm, at the National Zoo Visitor Center.