

April report to constituents

Here is news of the **April 2 ANC meeting**, and notes of other events in the neighborhood. It's been a hectic month. To summarize the meeting, briefly: **Angelia ("Stormy") Scott** was elected to the 1D06 vacancy; the ANC passed a resolution redefining the means of handling public input during meetings; Michael Choi, of the Bestway Market, presented plans for fixing up that location; the ANC called for a study of the ban in Mount Pleasant of the sale of single containers of alcoholic beverages; and we initiated a project to provide simultaneous Spanish interpretation for ANC meetings, and ANC-sponsored Forums.

ANC 1D03 NEWSLETTER #32

Jack McKay, April 25, 2005

Jack McKay
3200 19th St NW, DC 20010
462-8692
jack.mckay@verizon.net

An **overzealous Parking Enforcement officer** has lately been tormenting Mount Pleasant residents. Not much can be done to make him ease up; DPW replies that he's simply enforcing the laws. I'm working on changing the law, so the minimum parking distance to an intersection in a residential area will be 25 feet, not 40 feet. But that requires District Council action, and so will take time. You can help: write to Councilmembers Jim Graham and Carol Schwarz.

The DC Code specifies, absurdly, that ANC special elections must take place "at the next regularly scheduled meeting". Anticipating this, we agreed in January that our monthly meetings could be held on weekends "for special cases". So we had our April meeting on a Saturday afternoon, at the Mount Pleasant Library, specifically to make it easy for people to come vote.

The outcome of the special election was **23 votes for Angelia (Stormy) Scott, 14 votes for Rick Massumi**. Councilmember Jim Graham performed the swearing-in ceremony on the spot, and Stormy took her place at the table for her first vote, on the resolution requesting the Board of Elections to declare the vacancy filled.

Stormy Scott brings us much-needed diversity. We four middle-class professional males do our best, but there's no substitute for a true representative of other Mount Pleasant groups on the ANC. Stormy will give us the points of view of African Americans, women, and low income residents. A resident of the Harvard Towers (at the intersection of Harvard and Adams Mill, at the east exit of the Zoo), a District-owned residence for the elderly and the disabled, she's a world apart from us homeowners. She's also quite forceful about expressing her opinions, and I'm sure she'll make our meetings very interesting.

The 1D06 special election featured "**symbolic voting**" by **noncitizens**. The ANC supported, in September 2003, voting rights for all residents, citizens and noncitizens alike. The District Council is nowhere near passing such voting rights, but we provided this "symbolic" voting as a gesture to Mount Pleasant's immigrant community, showing that we consider them full members of our neighborhood, whether they have gone through the rigorous and expensive process of acquiring citizenship or not.

This gesture was very well received by the Latino community. One man appeared with his whole family in tow, all dressed in their Sunday best. He said that being allowed to vote, even if only symbolically, made him feel "truly American". It was, for him, a great honor. We're very pleased to have done this.

The noncitizen vote was small – four for Stormy Scott, three for Rick Massumi – but significant, given that the votes were not going to count, that many in the immigrant community were unaware of the vote, and that others fear to come, worrying about being questioned about their immigrant status. Also, the weather on Saturday afternoon was awful, a cold, windy rain. That seven people came out to vote under such conditions is, I think, a success.

The **widening of the 3400 block of Mount Pleasant Street** was supposed to be complete by now, the residents enjoying much improved curbs and sidewalks, and the roadway wide enough for both-sides parking without risking being scraped by trucks squeezing through. But not so: the road remains a wasteland, because Pepco appeared at the last minute, bringing the project to a halt, while they thought about burying their power lines deeper. They won't even start work until early May.

I have complained before, and now complained loudly again, to DDOT about the ability of District utility companies to stop road projects cold, at great cost to DDOT and great inconvenience to the residents. Last summer it was Washington Gas doing this, stopping a project on Brown Street for months. Now it's Pepco, and who knows when they'll get out of the way and let the DDOT contractor finish his work. Why, I ask, didn't they do this work months ago, while Washington Gas was doing similar work on this block?

DDOT offers no good answers. A middle-level DDOT manager called me, though, off the record, to thank me for telling the truth to DDOT officers. DDOT engineers are frustrated, too, at having their project schedules trashed at will by the utility companies.

Someday the road work will be done. But even Jim Graham couldn't get Pepco to budge. "We have a terrible backlog at this time," they complain. But it's the residents who have to put up with another month of an unpaved ruin of a road.

We considered again the matter of the **“moratorium” on the sale of single containers of beer** in Mount Pleasant. This ban expired in December, and the ABC Board is considering the motion by the MPNA to extend it for another four years.

There are legitimate reasons for people wanting to buy singles. Some really cannot afford six-packs. Others, if they take a six-pack home, will see their purchase disappear, courtesy of their roommates, or their own weak willpower. For some Mount Pleasant residents, being prohibited from purchasing singles is a significant burden.

The law says that “the proponent(s) of a moratorium must establish . . . that the present conditions in the moratorium area . . . justify an extension of the moratorium.” The proponents claim that the imposition of the ban did good things four years ago, but that is not proof that the ban remains necessary today. We cite four reasons why conditions have changed in Mount Pleasant, possibly rendering the ban unnecessary: (1) the forcing of many low-income people out of Mount Pleasant by high rents and condominium conversions; (2) increased staffing and outreach to alcohol-troubled people by Neighbors’ Consejo; (3) MPD foot patrols, and innovative techniques for dealing with drunks; and (4) a large decrease in the numbers of homeless residing on our streets.

Given these changes, is the single-sales ban still justified? The ANC calls for a careful, unbiased study to determine if it is, or not. That proof that present conditions justify the extension of the ban is required by law, and by common sense. Those who firmly believe that the moratorium is still necessary have nothing to fear from such a study.

Michael Choi, representing **the Bestway Market**, presented his plans for improving that location. It’s been a problem for years, being the backside of the market, and Don Juan’s Restaurant, but in plain view of the neighbors across 17th Street. It’s most unfortunate that our business district lacks alleys, complicating matters of trash storage and truck deliveries for businesses on both sides of Mount Pleasant Street.

Mr Choi and one 17th Street resident have been negotiating about this problem location for many months, via Councilmember Graham’s office. I perceived that that process was doomed to failure, because the resident insisted that all Mr Choi’s “public space” violations (the lot is legally a portion of the roadway) be resolved before she would even talk about making the lot look appealing. It seems to me that there is a clear bargain to be struck here: we will support Mr Choi in requesting permits for his use of “public space”, if he in turn agrees to fix up that lot and make it a pleasant view for the 17th Street neighbors (and everyone else passing that way).

The ANC agrees that matters such as this, which affect everyone, not just the two parties, should be negotiated in public, through community organizations, not in private, by individuals. Mount Pleasant Main Street has now taken the lead in negotiating with Mr Choi. The ANC expects other neighborhood groups to participate, including the Business Association, All-Ways Mount Pleasant, Historic Mount Pleasant, and the Mount Pleasant Neighborhood Alliance.

The ANC will neither approve nor disapprove Mr Choi’s plans until the process of negotiation with neighborhood organizations is complete.

ANC business meeting, May 3, 7:00 pm, 3166 Mt Pleasant Street. Preliminary agenda: Simultaneous interpretation of meetings, and ADA-compliant audio; Extension of the Single Sales Moratorium in Mount Pleasant; Formation of Shopping District Committee; Signage of legal parking boundaries; Revision of parking to intersection minimum distance; Traffic study for Mount Pleasant; DDOT conflict of interest policy; ANC vacancy-filling election procedures; ANC records recovery and evaluation.

I cut-and-paste from my March meeting poster to make the April poster, changing the date to April 2, and the time from the usual 7 pm start to 2 pm. Well, you know how such word-processor operations go. I changed “7 pm” to “2 pm” in the body of the poster, but overlooked a “7 pm” in the header. A sharp-eyed constituent called me about the mistake, and I quickly replaced my posters, five days ahead of the meeting.

That little error was an opening, however, for one prominent Mount Pleasant resident to do her utmost to try to **sabotage our meeting**, and **void the special election** as well. She bombarded the Board of Elections with complaints that, because of this little error, our meeting was improperly “noticed”, and therefore we should be compelled to postpone it, and forced to put off the filling of the 1D06 vacancy until July.

Not one person in all of Mount Pleasant was in fact confused about the meeting time. The correct information was on my flawed poster, right below the header with the error, and those flawed posters were replaced with corrected ones five full days before the meeting. Only someone who read only the header of one of the flawed posters, and not the text, and who did so only a full week before the meeting, and not during the five days before the meeting, could possibly have been misled.

The Board of Elections suggested that we simply keep our polls open until a bit after 7 pm, just in case some poor deluded soul thought that that was when the voting would start. We did so, but of course no one in all of Mount Pleasant was the least bit confused, and not one person appeared at that hour. This was, truly, much ado about nothing. Why the harassment over such a triviality? I believe it’s revenge for positions we have taken.