

Jack's April report

At the March 15 ANC meeting, the ANC:

- Advised WMATA and DDOT to determine the feasibility of moving the bus stop on Mount Pleasant Street at Irving from the north side of the intersection to the south (Gregg's resolution);
- Advised DDOT to explore the feasibility of moving the loading zone on Irving Street, just west of Mount Pleasant Street, to Mount Pleasant Street, for better access by trucks, and to businesses on Mount Pleasant Street (Yasmin's resolution);
- Tabled a resolution advising reform of the Board of Zoning Adjustment. (Gregg's resolution, my motion to table.)

On April 5, the Commission held a meeting for informal dialog with residents. The principal topic was the matter of a request by Haydee's Restaurant for a nearby loading zone.

In my March newsletter I noted that **the Raven Grill** had been charged with serving drinks after the 3 AM closing time. Like the ABRA inspector who found people in the Grill, drinking from plastic cups at 3:20 AM, I simply assumed that whatever they were drinking was alcoholic. Well, maybe not. The plastic (as opposed to glass) cups are used at the Grill for ice water and soda, not alcoholic beverages. All six of the people present at the time had legitimate reasons for being there at that hour. The ABRA inspector didn't bother to check any of the plastic cups to confirm that they had indeed contained anything alcoholic.

So my statement that "this was a technical violation, no question" was quite wrong. *There's no real proof here of any violation at all.* The door was locked, the people in the tavern had good reasons for being there, and there's no evidence that anything they were drinking was alcoholic.

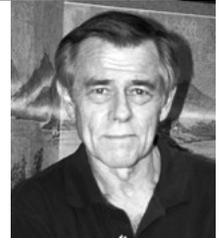
The ABC Board held a hearing on March 9. The DC Government, despite being reduced to weakly asserting that they had only to prove their case to a "more probable than not" degree, wants to impose a \$2000 fine and 5-day suspension. The only fair outcome, in my opinion, would be a complete dismissal of the charges. I hope my ANC resolution of February 15, advising the ABC Board that the Raven's "record of responsible management should be taken into account in the consideration of the current incident", helps bring that about.

In February, the ABC Board terminated the "voluntary agreements" that the MPNA had with Haydee's and Don Jaime's Restaurants. In March, they completed the job, **terminating the MPNA VA with Don Juan's Restaurant.** The Board's decision cited ANC resolutions going back to 2006, calling for an end to the MPNA bans on entertainment in Mount Pleasant restaurants. Among other points, "the Board agrees with ANC 1D that creating more activity in the streets will improve public safety". That's been one of my main reasons for supporting late-night entertainment in Mount Pleasant restaurants. Residents coming home late at night, on the bus or on Metro, are safer if there are people on the street. Currently, Mount Pleasant Street is way too dark and deserted late at night.

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Jack McKay, April 10, 2011

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The Hear Mount Pleasant VA will continue in force, and the members of that group, aware that they now have responsibility for the neighborhood supervision of our restaurants, are organizing to be effective in that role.

The **2010 census data for the District** were released to the public on March 24. More accurate than the American Community Survey samples I noted in the February newsletter, the census data show that Mount Pleasant is now 50% white non-Hispanic (vs. 35% ten years ago), 25% Hispanic (down from 31%), 19% black non-Hispanic (down from 27%). In short, more white, less Latino, less black. I hope we can continue with a neighborhood that is a welcoming "home" to all, and dominated by no one ethnic group.

Twenty years ago the average family income in Mount Pleasant was 11% *lower* than the DC average. Today, it's 13% *higher* than the DC average. A house on Lamont Street is currently on the market for \$1.25 *million*. When Emily and I moved here, 37 years ago, we never imagined such changes.

The data also show that the population of Mount Pleasant has decreased during the past decade, from 11,794 in 2000 to 10,459 today. One interesting consequence of that is that, with the redistricting of political boundaries that follow the census, Mount Pleasant will warrant just five ANC commissioners, not six. This is already a small Commission, half the size of our neighboring ANCs.

Perhaps we could shift ANC boundaries to add a bit of Columbia Heights, across 16th Street, to our neighborhood. I see increasing similarities, and increasing interaction, between us and our neighbors across 16th. The Metro station, and the DCUSA development, attract a lot of Mount Pleasanters to 14th Street, and Columbia Heights residents do come to Mount Pleasant, for our shops and restaurants. This could be a realization of one of my dreams as an ANC commissioner: to bring Mount Pleasant, and nearby Columbia Heights, together, as one neighborhood, not two.

That construction work that has made **Rock Creek Parkway** into a mess of orange barrels and metal plates – "Pavement reconstruction, rehabilitation, and resurfacing for approximately 1.2 miles of the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway from Beach Drive to the P Street Bridge" – is supposed to be complete by February of 2012. Well, I hope they do better than that job on the GW Parkway "humpback" bridge just north of the 14th Street interchange, which was supposed to be finished by February 2010, over a year ago, and seems to be nowhere near completion.

Our ANC has a **brand-new Web site** (anc1d.org), built by Ben Siegler, Newton Street resident and e-business proprietor. This is a state-of-the-art system, employing Drupal, a “content management system”, which allows commissioners to keep the site updated, even if they aren't expert in Web coding. The commission agreed to put me in charge of the new site. I'm determined that, when the current commissioners move on, including me, the Web site can be handed off to new commissioners without a hiccup.

Ben, by the way, has gotten a close-up view of our ANC and working with its commissioners. His assessment: “you couldn't pay me enough” to be an ANC commissioner.

The Gray Transition Team reported something we already knew all too well: “Most **Supercans** used for weekly solid-waste collection in the outer ring are past their useful life and many are damaged beyond repair. Residents are unwilling to pay for replacement cans as current District policy requires. As a result they continue to use damaged cans or use plastic bags and other non-secure alternative containers. This contributes to spillage, and attracts rats and illegal dumping. Recommendation: Provide \$4.5 million to replace Supercans, and develop a longer term solution for this recurring issue.”

Unhappily for this situation, the District Government hasn't even had replacement Supercans for purchase by residents. The Fenty administration, in a fit of cost-cutting, cut the budget for stocking replacement recycling bins and Supercans, something which the Director of DPW, Bill Howland (a truly fine public servant), admitted “wasn't one of my best decisions”. Mayor Gray has restored funds, so new containers are on the way.

I replaced my severely rat-penetrated Supercan months ago. And I put bricks on the lid of my new Supercan to try, with not a lot of success, to keep the rats out. We don't want to be feeding the little monsters. So if your Supercan is one of the many with gaping holes – please, put in a request (call 311) for a new one. Our alleys are all-you-can-eat buffets for rats.

On March 28, the Washington Post printed a crime-scare piece headlined “**Property crime shows alarming rise in the District**”. Don't believe a word of it. The Post compared the current winter's crime counts with last winter's, and found that the property-crime count is higher, e.g., 53 burglaries in Dupont Circle this year, versus just 15 last year. That's a crime wave, right? Wrong! Last winter – remember those February snowstorms? – crime rates dropped to record-low values, so simply returning to normal is a big increase. This winter has been very mild, with little snow, and seventy-degree days in February. So guess what, the thieves and burglars aren't having their noxious activities limited by bad weather. The property-crime count in the District during the first three months of 2010 hit a record low, 26% below the average for that time of year; in 2011, the property-crime count increased, but remained 18% *below* the six-year average. To the Post, that's a “surge” in property crime. To me, it's merely a return to ordinary rates, after an extraordinary reduction due to terrible winter weather. Shame on the Post for that irresponsible, scare-mongering report.

Haydee's Restaurant has been pressing us to get them a loading zone in front of their building. To this end, in February we passed a resolution calling for an inquiry into all the loading zones along Mount Pleasant Street, to see if the current allocation is reasonable; in March, we passed a resolution suggesting that the bus stop at Haydee's be moved to south of the Irving Street intersection, a move that would make room for a loading zone; and in March, we passed a resolution advising DDOT “to explore the feasibility of moving the existing loading zone on Irving Street, west of Mount Pleasant Street, to Mount Pleasant Street”.

Well, you would think that would be pretty good, considering that moving bus stops and loading zones about is not trivial work. One doesn't just go to DDOT with a “permit application” for the change. Create a new loading zone, and parking spaces disappear, sure to irritate somebody. Move a loading zone, and those who liked the original location are sure to complain. The essence of our resolution last month (my writing, Yasmin's motion) called for DDOT to “investigate the feasibility” of moving the existing loading zone closer to Haydee's. I think that's a prudent approach, allowing time for all persons concerned to learn about the proposal, and object to it, if that's their wish. Haydee's doesn't agree, dismissing our effort as merely a “study”, and complaining bitterly that the ANC has failed them, because it's been a whole three months, and they still don't have their loading zone.

In 2008, we won live-music privileges for Haydee's, after a very long battle. In 2010, we supported their application for a sidewalk cafe, and their controversial application for a night-club license. Just last month they won, with our help, termination of their “voluntary agreement” with the MPNA. But that is forgotten, because now Haydee's wants a loading zone, the ANC hasn't gotten it for them, and it's all my fault.

April 4 was the 43rd anniversary of **the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.** That was one of those moments of such shock that you will remember forever exactly where you were when you heard the news. That was followed by four days of rioting and the devastation of the 14th Street corridor. This caused the exodus of many residents from east-of-the-Park neighborhoods, including Mount Pleasant. When we started looking for a house here in 1972, four years after the riots, most realtors refused to list houses in Mount Pleasant. When we moved here from Pittsburgh, in 1974, the friend who helped us move looked around and asked worriedly, “do you know what you're doing?” Those were tough times, but we've never once, never for even a moment, regretted our decision to make our lifetime home here.

April 12 marks 150 years since **the first shots of the Civil War**, the bombardment of Fort Sumter, in the harbor of Charleston, South Carolina. Two Union soldiers died, the first deaths of the Civil War, with some 620,000 to come. In proportion to the total U.S. population, this is equivalent to more than six *million* deaths today.

The next *business* meeting of the ANC will be on **Tuesday, April 19, 7:30 pm**. The next *informal* meeting will be on **May 3, 7:30 pm**.