

April report to constituents

Here is news of the **April 2 meeting**, and other happenings in Mount Pleasant. The ANC:

- ◆ Advised DDOT to consider putting 16th Street “below grade” as it passes Columbia Road and Harvard Streets, allowing pedestrians, bicycles, and east-west traffic to cross over the 16th Street traffic*;
- ◆ Advised Parks & Rec to provide advance notice to ANCs of the removal of trees in parks*;
- ◆ Asked the National Park Service to keep the recreational segments of Beach Drive closed to traffic until approximately sunset, instead of opening the road to cars at 7 pm, as they do now*;
- ◆ Endorsed the order from Peter Nickles, acting Interim Attorney General, for permits to be issued to Don Juan's Restaurant for a trash housing and concrete pad on the 17th Street frontage*;
- ◆ Advised against the proposal by Councilmember Graham that the rebuilding of Klinge Road be funded entirely by the District, to avoid Federal funding delays, and advised that the \$9M saved be used for affordable housing instead*;
- ◆ Engaged the services of Mount Pleasant resident Neil Richardson, as the ANC's “Executive Director”;
- ◆ Advised DDOT to consider access problems to the bit of road joining 17th Street and “little” Mount Pleasant Street, should Park Road be made one-way;
- ◆ Advised legislation preventing “eviction by neglect”, where apartment house owners goad residents to leave by permitting noxious conditions to prevail.
(* My resolutions)

On April 23, the ABC Board released its long-awaited decision on **live music in Mount Pleasant restaurants** (Haydee's and Don Jaime's, anyway). Live music, entertainment, and dancing will be permitted until 11 pm Sunday through Wednesday, until midnight Thursday, and until 1 am Friday and Saturday nights. Hear Mount Pleasant and the ANC were instrumental in bringing about the revival of live music in Mount Pleasant restaurants.

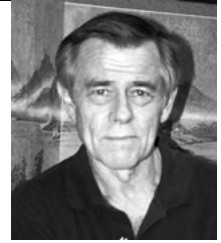
Now we will find out: will live music turn Mount Pleasant into noisy congestion, like Adams Morgan? (I think not.) Or will these offerings put more people on Mount Pleasant Street late at night, so that it will no longer be deserted, desolate, and dangerous? (I think so.)

On the north side of Park Road, just east of the 19th Street intersection, there's an **enormous oak tree** towering over the road, roughly 80 feet tall, with a trunk over four feet in diameter. Late in March I heard that the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) had decided to cut that great tree down, in order to rebuild the rock wall alongside the sidewalk. On April 9 we met with DPR, the Urban Forestry Administration, and John de Taeye from Councilmember Graham's office, to discuss saving that priceless tree. Only DPR thought it was reasonable to take the tree down.

ANC 1D03 NEWSLETTER #68

Jack McKay, April 29, 2008

Jack McKay
3200 19th St, Tel. 462-8692
jack.mckay@verizon.net
<http://DCJack.org>



All have agreed to look for a way to save that tree, perhaps by building a reinforcing wall abutting the existing but crumbling wall, avoiding having to dismantle that wall. This would intrude on the sidewalk, and it might be necessary to move a streetlight to provide for adequate sidewalk width. I think that's a small price to pay for saving what might be the largest tree in Mount Pleasant.

Two residents have wanted to add **basement apartments with front entrances** along Irving Street. The Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB) has rejected such applications in the past, complaining that the front entrances would mar the “historic” appearance of the row. This ANC advised approval of permits for these two residences, and I argued at the January HPRB meeting that it was not reasonable to force basement apartment dwellers to enter their homes via back doors accessed through alleys. That's demeaning, and potentially unsafe.

The preservationists agreed to consider the problem more carefully, and in April the Historic Preservation Office (HPO) came up with guidelines for acceptable basement entrances in Mount Pleasant. Instead of the principle that any changes to a row-house front are bad, the HPO surveyed the numerous existing basement apartment entrances here and agreed that anything consistent with those entrances would be acceptable. At the April meeting, the two Irving Street permit applications were approved, marking a welcome flexibility in applying preservation regulations to our neighborhood.

For years I've been pressing for a reconstruction of the **intersection of Kenyon, Irving, and Adams Mill**, mainly to permit the very popular left turn from westbound Kenyon onto southbound Adams Mill Road. Lots of people do that, despite the “no left turn” signs prohibiting the maneuver. (Some people exit via the alley to make the left onto Adams Mill, ignoring the “no left turn” sign specifically prohibiting that even more dangerous turn.)

DDOT has completed the design of a revised intersection. This will permit the left turn, and much more. The sharp right turn from northbound Adams Mill onto Irving will be rounded, allowing trucks and buses to make that turn (currently prohibited, but trucks do it anyway, riding up over and damaging the curb). A sidewalk will be built on the south and west side of Irving Street, allowing safe pedestrian passage from the Harvard Towers driveway to the Irving/Kenyon bus stop (and taking out the jersey wall barrier, now in place for pedestrian safety). The sidewalk on the west side of Adams Mill Road, coming up the hill from

the Zoo, will be extended to the intersection, and a crosswalk marked across Adams Mill Road on the north edge of the intersection. That's much better than the current awkward route for pedestrians, crossing Kenyon, then crossing Irving, then down the hill, then crossing Adams Mill at the Zoo entrance. I don't know when this work will start.

A certain **Parking Enforcement** aide has been giving us unwarranted trouble. This aide was ticketing cars legally parked according to the 25 feet to an intersection rule, and adamantly refused to accept my citing to her the text of the law. Then I found that she was issuing "obstructing a crosswalk" tickets for cars that intruded, ever so slightly, into the white stripe denoting the edge of a crosswalk. Technically that might be a violation, but by no means was this obstructing anything. I protested this excessive enforcement to the Director of DPW, who agreed that this was improper.

I'm helping two residents deny these bogus "obstructing crosswalk" tickets, and I've got two bogus "within 40 feet of intersection" tickets of my own, in the denial process. If other residents encounter problems with this extremely aggressive Parking Enforcement aide, please let me know. Parking in Mount Pleasant is tough enough, without such unreasonable tickets.

While checking other parking tickets for similar absurdities, I came across one car on 19th Street with an "RPP violation" ticket. This puzzled me, because the car had a perfectly valid RPP sticker. It seems that this Enforcement aide (not the one responsible for the other tickets) had simply confused one car with another, and ticketed the wrong car.

On April 20, the Washington Post printed a major Metro story claiming that **burglaries are "on the rise" in the District**. Don't believe a word of it. The Post commits the usual simple-minded fault of comparing just two data points – this period, this year, versus the same period, last year – and claiming that those two points define a "trend". All other data points during the years are ignored.

It happens that the Post's comparison quarter, the first quarter of 2007, was a period of exceptionally few burglaries, 26% below the average rate for the past four years. Any comparison to that one anomalous quarter will look like an increase. The first quarter of 2008 is in fact an "average" quarter, in terms of burglaries, being an insignificant 6% below the average. But 6% below average is a lot more than 26% below average, so the Post claims that burglaries "have surged 21 percent". That may be correct arithmetic, but it's bad logic. This is a bogus statistical analysis, intended only to scare people and sell newspapers.

Through this point in April, Mount Pleasant has counted three burglaries (one on Irving Street, one on Kenyon, one on Park Road). We average five in a month, and April promises to be pretty much an average month, whatever the Post says.

Robberies remain down, since the successful actions taken by the MPD in February to nab the guys responsible for most of them. There have been just two so far in April (one at 18th and Lamont, the other on Mount Pleasant Street), compared to our monthly average of six. Reports of a robbery on April

6 in the alley between Newton Street and Ingleside Terrace appear to be incorrect.

Thefts from auto continue to be our most common crime problem (nine so far in April). The police are focusing resources on the problem. "On 4-2-08 at about 4:30 hours, in the area of 11th and Kenyon St, NW, members of the 3D Focus Mission Unit arrested a juvenile who entered a vehicle and took possession of items that were inside. The juvenile did not get far, because this was a Bait car that officers had under surveillance to combat this type of offense. Officers moved in and quickly placed the juvenile under arrest without incident." -- Cmdr McCoy, April 2

Klinge Road is a hot topic again, 17 years after stormwater washed out three-quarters of a mile of this road on the west side of Beach Drive, in Rock Creek Park. Nothing has changed; the advocates and opponents line up as several times before. I've largely kept hands off this issue, arguing that it was pointless, because the Federal Government was never going to allow the road to be built through national parkland.

I was wrong on one count. I thought the National Park Service (NPS) would be the Federal obstacle. In fact, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has been the bureaucratic obstacle, insisting on revision after revision of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The draft EIS was completed in July, 2005. This January, three years after the start on the EIS, the FHWA called for yet another rewrite.

Councilmember Graham, frustrated by the Federal obstructionism, has proposed that the District pay the full cost of the road, making up the 80% contribution from the Feds out of District funds. Mayor Fenty, who supported the road as Ward Four councilmember, agrees. What was once to be a \$1M District project has ballooned into an \$11M expense, for a mere three-quarters of a mile of road, now costing as much per mile as an eight-lane interstate highway. The ANC objects, noting that there are far better uses for these District funds, advising specifically support for affordable housing.

Laurie Collins, the most fervent advocate of the road, dismisses the renewed opposition with this comment: "We went through a fair and democratic process, and we won. Take your little balls and jacks and go home."

For years there's been small-scale **drug-dealing on Monroe Street**. We do not have any good way to address such minor-league drug dealing. Prison time only makes the offenders grow worse, and it's remarkably hard to stop such operations (there are over 60 known open-air drug markets in DC, including a very large, notorious, and busy one around Perry Place, right across 16th Street). But lately those who have been behind this dealing have been joined by a number of young toughs from outside the neighborhood, swaggering about, irritating residents, and drawing more drug-dealing traffic to this block. That's not tolerable, and the police are focusing resources on the problem. Two residents were arrested on April 23, not for drugs, but for "failure to obey" police orders, as part of this crackdown.

The next ANC meeting will be on Tuesday, May 6, 7:00 pm , La Casa Community Center, 3166 Mt. Pleasant St.
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