

Jack's April report

On April 21, the ANC did the following:

- Advised approval by the Board of Zoning Adjustment of a zoning variance for 3150 17th Street;
- Approved the quarterly ANC financial report to the auditor, and a budget for the current fiscal year;
- Endorsed a proposal by DDOT for bike lanes on Adams Mill Road;
- Supported an effort by Mount Pleasant resident Byron Peck for a new mural on the Heller's building;
- Advised the Mayor, CM Graham, and the DC Public Libraries Board to follow the recommendations that emerged from the public meetings concerning renovation and expansion of the Mount Pleasant Library;
- Advised DDOT to keep the "cobra" lights on the 1600 block of Park Road, and omit the proposed Washington Upright lights. (I voted "no" on this.)

In 2006, I proposed **bike lanes on Adams Mill Road** to the District's Bicycle Advisory Council, but that proposal went nowhere. This month I was surprised to receive, out of the blue, papers from DDOT in which, quite independently, they proposed bike lanes on Adams Mill Road. This is in conjunction with the revision of the Adams Mill/Kenyon/-Irving intersection to permit left turns from westbound Kenyon onto southbound Adams Mill. Adams Mill Road, currently two lanes southbound, will become one lane southbound, to make room for bike lanes on either side of the street. South of the Kenyon intersection, the sidewalk on the Zoo side of Adams Mill Road will be eliminated (that sidewalk ends at the Kenyon intersection anyway, stranding pedestrians) to provide space for uphill and downhill bike lanes. The southbound bike lane will continue past the Zoo entrance to the continuation of Adams Mill Road through Lanier Heights.

Automobile traffic flow will be little affected, because there will still be two lanes southbound at the intersection, one continuing on Adams Mill down the hill, the other becoming Irving Street. These bike lanes will provide improved bicycle access to the Zoo, and to the Rock Creek Park bike path.

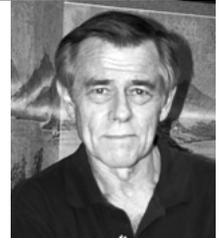
The outcome of the **Mount Pleasant Library** dispute appears to be the addition tacked onto the rear of the building, instead of to one side. Remarkably, at the library meeting on March 26, when Councilmember Graham asked people if they would be willing to give up the addition and have the funds used instead for a satellite library somewhere else in Ward One, virtually everyone agreed. The Councilmember was taken aback at the generosity displayed by Mount Pleasant residents (though some residents had more self-interested reasons for opposing the expansion). Nonetheless, the DC Public Library is evidently unwilling to abandon its expansion plans, fearing that any attempt to shift the funds to another project would result in the loss of those funds.

We have, however, brought to light the need for additional library access in other parts of Ward One, which has only this one library. Libraries provide services vital to lower-income residents, such as computers and Internet access, early

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childhood learning, and English language learning assistance. This has to be within walking distance, for the 50% of all Ward One households that do not have cars. But virtually all of Adams Morgan, for example, is more than half a mile away from our library. The DCPL is now well aware of this problem, as is Councilmember Graham, so there's hope for a future effort to deal with this need.

A resident complained of his **car being broken into**, and the police evidently not taking the crime very seriously, for example, not bothering with fingerprints. Well, that's the harsh reality of life in the District. I felt the same way the first time I was a victim of a car break-in. There are 23 such break-ins in the District *every day*. Police patrols won't prevent these crimes, which are quick smash-and-grab affairs, over in seconds, and the perpetrators are smart enough to wait until no one is in sight to do them. Fingerprints? That's TV mythology. Even if a CSI-style crime scene crew took prints, the District isn't going to pay the cost of searching for a match. The crime is too insignificant, as is the probability of actually finding a match to any prints on file.

GPS systems are favorite targets for thieves these days. One was snatched in this case, even though it had been put away, out of sight. I'm told that thieves even look for suction-cup marks as clues that there's a GPS hidden away inside a car.

Violent crimes, such as **armed robberies**, are uncommon in Mount Pleasant, but do happen. Here's the outcome of an incident of about a year ago:

"On Sunday evening, January 13, 2008, the victim was in his car leaving to go to dinner at his father's house. As he began to pull out from his parking space on [the 1800 block of] Kenyon Street, NW, the defendant knocked on his window and asked the victim for some money. After the victim gave him some change, the defendant displayed a black handgun and told the victim to get out of the car. A neighbor across the street saw the defendant blocking the victim's car, and called out to him to make sure everything was okay. The defendant then told the victim to move over and got into the driver's seat. An unknown accomplice entered the back seat and the defendant drove off.

"With the victim held captive in his own car, the defendant drove to Alexandria, VA, where he stopped at a 7-11 to get money from the victim's ATM card. While the defendant and his accomplice argued about who should go into the store, the victim escaped and ran to a nearby gas station to get help. The defendant and his accomplice drove off, and later used the victim's ATM card to withdraw money from two ATM

machines. The defendant was caught the next day in the victim's car in Prince George's County, MD.”

Why do I bring this up now? Because the perpetrator, one Reginald Ford, was just sentenced to 30 years in prison for carjacking, kidnapping, and robbery.

Another issue exposed by the library expansion debates is **emergency access to the rear of apartment buildings** on that block, between Lamont and Irving Streets. This was a severe problem during the Deauville fire, as fire vehicles could not reach the back of the building to fight the fire. I understand that fire hoses were literally run through the Park Marconi apartment house, down hallways and through an apartment and out apartment windows, to try to put water on that awful fire.

Councilmember Graham has arranged a meeting, set for May 4, with the Fire Marshal, to address this problem of poor access to the backs of buildings on this block. Most of the city has alleys to provide rear access, but this portion of Mount Pleasant does not.

Virtually all of Mount Pleasant – 43 blocks, of about 50 total – has been zoned for **Residential Permit Parking (RPP)**. We residents of zoned blocks enjoy a number of advantages, such as the right to park on any zoned block in Ward One, 15 feet of additional parking space adjacent to intersections, and permanent visitor's passes. That's in addition to more parking space for us, because commuters and residents with out-of-DC tags can't park through the day on our blocks.

Among the few blocks remaining unzoned, the 1800 blocks of Monroe Street, Newton Street, and Ingleside Terrace, and the 3300 block of 19th Street, have a severe parking problem. The recent Traffic Study found that parking space on those blocks of Monroe and Newton was 92% occupied during the day, whereas nearby RPP-zoned blocks were only 61% occupied. I've observed that the *majority* of cars parked on Monroe and Newton during the day have non-DC tags. These cars do not belong only to commuters, coming to work at the Stoddard Baptist Home, or at Bancroft Elementary, then going home at night. I estimate that *25% of the parking space on these unzoned blocks is taken up by the cars of DC residents whose cars are not registered in the District*, and so cannot get RPP permits. They park on these unzoned blocks, then walk to their homes on RPP-zoned blocks. Residents of these unzoned blocks see all too many of these “warehoused”, out-of-state cars, sometimes left parked in place for days and weeks on end.

Thanks to the hard work of some 11 residents, petitions for RPP zoning of these unzoned blocks are well under way. Much to the credit of the residents of this area, some will sign up for RPP only because arrangements have been made for *daytime parking permits*, so that employees of Stoddard and Bancroft can continue to park in the area, despite RPP zoning. It's admirable, I think, that residents are willing to allow commuter parking on their streets. Nowhere else in the District is this done. Commuters are expected to find commercial parking lots, period.

One might think that Bancroft and Stoddard employees would be grateful that the residents aren't just getting regular

RPP zoning, with no provision at all for them. However, the proposed fee for parking, less than \$2.50 a day, is considered unbearable by many Stoddard personnel, and by a few residents. They want to be able to park on our neighborhood streets for free, as they've been doing for years.

Their complaints have reached Councilmember Graham, at whose instigation DDOT has abruptly retracted its proposed daytime-pass program. DDOT now wants “a chance to discuss this pilot program with the community before we provide any specifics regarding implementation”, never mind that they provided specifics six months ago, and the ANC advised them at that time “to implement this program as soon as practicable”. RPP signs west of 18th Street have been relabelled “1DD” to show where these daytime passes will be valid. The day-pass system was supposed to be in operation a month ago. Now, suddenly it's all gone, while DDOT calls for a “community meeting” to discuss this effort.

Said meeting will be at Bancroft Elementary, on May 19, 6:30 pm. Let's have a good turnout of residents to tell DDOT, the Councilmember, and Stoddard and Bancroft, that residents want the benefits and privileges of RPP on these unzoned blocks, and the Stoddard and Bancroft people should be grateful that there's going to be a day-pass program that will allow them to continue to use our streets as commuter parking lots, for a fraction of the cost of parking at, say, the DCUSA parking garage.

Efforts continue to save the **very large oak tree** on Park Road at 19th Street. Parks & Rec sought contractor bids for repairing the rock wall while preserving the tree, and found that no contractor would guarantee that the tree would survive removal of the wall for reconstruction. Neighbors' sentiment now favors merely patching the wall around that tree, instead of tearing it down and rebuilding it, to avoid losing the tree.

I completed our quarterly **financial report** in April, and turned it in to the District Auditor on April 23. We spent about \$2000 in the quarter, mostly for personal services, such as management of the ANC microgrant program.

I also completed, and the commission approved, an **ANC budget** for the fiscal year. This consists of funds paid out (we're halfway through the fiscal year), and funds promised by ANC resolutions. Unhappily, this budget shows a very large deficit for the year, our expenditures adding up to roughly twice as the District allots us for operations. The microgrant program is the cause of this cost overrun, as we may spend \$15,000 in managing \$5000 in grants. Take away that \$20,000 in grant expenditures, and we're in modest budget surplus, instead of massive budget deficit.

I'll oppose any effort to repeat this grants program next year. We don't have the time, the funds, or the skills for it.

The ANC will have an *informal* meeting on **Tuesday, May 5, 7:00 pm**, at the La Casa Community Center. This will be mainly for community dialog. Topics will include Statehood, public property stewardship, bike routes, and the commercial corridor. The next ANC *business* meeting will be on **Tuesday, May 19, 7:00 pm**..