

Jack's April report

At the March 19 meeting, the ANC:

- Spent an hour and 20 minutes on a public discussion of the Harvard Triangle/Adams Mill Road project;
- Agreed to a contract with eGovernment Solutions, Inc. for ANC website maintenance;
- Called for repairs to Lamont Park;
- Requested neighborhood “walk-throughs” with numerous District agencies;
- Agreed to undertake “an updated strategy in 2013 on how to best communicate with each other and the public”;
- Advised DDOT to stop work on the Harvard Triangle/- Adams Mill Road project “while alternatives to the present design are evaluated”.

I seem to be writing too often about neighbors **dying unexpectedly**. My next-door neighbor, Betty Ayomike. My neighbor up the row, Charlie Bryant. And now a nearby neighbor on Park Road, Patrick Dolan, on March 13.

Perhaps the best thing in life is to find a lifetime partner, one who doubles your joys, and halves your sorrows. One of the hardest things in life is losing such a partner.

Thefts from auto have been a plague here, and in many other DC neighborhoods, forever. It's just too easy to bust into a car, snatch whatever's there, and run off. No clues are left behind, and the police don't invest much effort in trying to solve such a minor crime. Thieves breaking into cars are usually caught only when an alert neighbor happens to spot one in the act.

Mount Pleasant averages about 10 such thefts a month. That's about half the rate of 10 years ago. In March, there was a flurry of thefts from auto, totalling 21 for the month. That's more than the 10 “normal”, but not spectacularly so. What was remarkable was a rash of 9 of these on one night, that of March 27-28:

- (1) 3402 - 3451 block of Mount Pleasant Street
- (2) 1800 - 1899 block of Monroe Street
- (3) 1800 - 1899 block of Newton Street
- (4) 3200 - 3233 block of 19th Street
- (5) 1800 - 1899 block of Monroe Street
- (6) 3200 - 3233 block of 19th Street
- (7) 3200 - 3233 block of 19th Street
- (8) 1800 - 1999 block of Ingleside Terrace
- (9) 1700 - 1799 block of Kilbourne Place

Nine in one night – most of them within a few blocks! That's something I've never seen before. This was more vandalism than theft, as the perps damaged cars that were unlocked, and cars that contained nothing of value. As for the rest of the month, aside from this one-night rampage, there were 12 thefts from auto, which is about average for a month.

A Monroe Street resident was given an official warning of having **“an insufficient number of trash containers”**.

There's a regulation that says this: “If containers are used for the storage of rubbish, or a combination or rubbish and food waste (garbage), a sufficient number shall be provided to store such solid wastes which may accumulate on the

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premises during the usual interval between collections”. In short, overflowing containers (recycling, in this case). This is the first such warning or citation I've ever seen.

What's bizarre is that the overflowing containers weren't this homeowner's, but belonged to his neighbors. I guess we all have to be careful about overflowing trash containers.

It's irritating to hear claims that the Founding Fathers guaranteed the citizenry the **“right to bear arms”**. Well, not exactly. The Bill of Rights applied solely to the Federal Government, while state and local governments were exempt from its restrictions. That's not much of a “right”, when all levels of government but one can freely disregard that right.

The Bill of Rights was extended to the states only in 1868, with the passage of the 14th Amendment, with its “equal protection” and “due process” clauses, intended to prevent the states of the Confederacy from denying these rights to freed slaves. The states of the Confederacy initially refused to ratify this amendment, but were coerced into ratification, told that their elected representatives would not be accepted in the House until they did.

Even then, the extension of the individual rights of the Bill of Rights to the states came only gradually, as court cases determined which rights could be “incorporated” under the provisions of the 14th Amendment. Even the famous District of Columbia vs. Heller case in 2008 did not accomplish “incorporation” of the Second Amendment because DC, as a federal enclave, was considered to be inherently subject to the amendment. It was a Chicago suit in 2010 that led, finally, to the “incorporation” of the Second Amendment.

Hence, the right of an individual to bear arms, far from being guaranteed by the authors of the Bill of Rights in 1788, became an actual personal “right” only in 2010. Gun advocates today should be thanking Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, not Founding Father James Madison, for their constitutional right to bear arms.

Children of a Rosemount Avenue resident tested high for **lead in their blood**, a very worrisome thing. The culprit turned out to be lead paint. Practically all of our houses are old, with interior paint from decades ago, before lead was banned in paint (1978). In this case, evidently the slow deterioration of that paint caused a buildup of lead-containing dust on the bottom floor, and ordinary cleaning of the floor didn't remove it.

The DDOT project to improve **the Kenyon/Irving/Adams Mill and Harvard/Adams Mill intersections** is about halfway to completion (September). The scale of the work on Adams Mill Road, between the Kenyon/Irving intersection and the Zoo entrance, surprised everyone, including me. It's pretty formidable, and many residents are upset about it. But there are good reasons why this road work is so extensive, and when it's all done, it will make for an attractive entrance to Mount Pleasant from the south.

Here's why the work on that short bit of road is so substantial, resulting in the installation of a concrete barrier down the middle of the road.

- 1) the "bullnose" of steep slope between Adams Mill Road and Irving Street had to be pushed back by about 20 feet to permit the left turn from Kenyon, and to round the hairpin turn to stop cars and light trucks (SUVs) from riding rear wheels up onto the sidewalk;
- 2) because of the slope of Adams Mill Road, this left Adams Mill a couple feet lower than Irving Street at the intersection, a height difference that compelled the raising of Adams Mill Road to match Irving Street at the corner;
- 3) initially both lanes of Adams Mill were to be raised the same amount, but that would require a very tall retaining wall on the steep slope towards the park, and the foundation of that wall would have undercut some enormous trees, including a 120-foot giant of an oak; so
- 4) the downhill lane of Adams Mill Road, being lower than the uphill lane, a median barrier was necessary to prevent errant motorists from driving off the edge of the higher lane onto the lower level.

This is the fundamental complication: in order to save trees, the road is being rebuilt to two different levels, uphill and downhill. The barrier between the two lanes is essential.

DDOT has responded to residents' dismay at this concrete jersey wall construction. It's hard to tell now, but when it's done, the barrier on the uphill side, entering Mount Pleasant, will be only 34 inches tall. Pedestrians on the sidewalk, and people in cars, will easily see over that wall to the parkland beyond. The median barrier will be clad with stone veneer, so it will look like a natural stone wall, not ugly concrete.

Some residents have complained that the modification of the hairpin curve to allow trucks to round that bend without riding up onto the sidewalk was for the benefit of truckers. No, it's for the safety of pedestrians on the sidewalk. Some complain that making that turn truck-safe will result in hordes of trucks taking this route. No, there's no reason for trucks anywhere to take this route to get to Irving Street, and where in the world would they be coming from? Furthermore, the roadway into Mount Pleasant is being reduced from two lanes to one, which will certainly not encourage more traffic. For good measure, DDOT will continue to prohibit trucks on northbound Adams Mill Road from making the turn onto Irving, or even onto Kenyon. It's about the safety of pedestrians, not the convenience of truckers. Visitors ought to be able to walk the sidewalk down to the Zoo without fearing cars and SUVs riding wheels up onto the sidewalk.

As for "trucks", this isn't for tractor-trailers, or even moving-van size vehicles. The concern is pickup trucks, delivery vans, and the light-truck SUVs that are so popular these days as personal automobiles. Truck-based SUVs, such as Ford Expeditions and Toyota Tundras, have been unable to make that turn without riding rear wheels up onto the sidewalk.

Another consequence of the two-level construction is the need for tall street lights. The appropriate choice for a historic district is the Decorative Teardrop, basically an elegant version of the cobraheads currently installed along Adams Mill Road.

There's much upset about this surprisingly extensive construction. A meeting with DDOT is set for 7 pm Tuesday, April 9, at the Mount Pleasant Library.

I'm certain that it will look much better when it is done, and the alternative to the two-level design and the barrier was to destroy some priceless trees. How many years does it take for an oak to grow to 120 feet?

A brood of **17-year cicadas** is due to emerge this spring, and may be found here. These "periodical" cicadas are different from the every-summer "annual" cicadas. The periodical cicadas appear in May and June. The annual cicadas show up in July and August.

These large insects do little harm to vegetation, merely living long enough to mate, eating very little, then dying. They're quite noisy, as the males sound their drums to attract females.

Periodical cicadas appear in 3, 11, and 17-year cycles. Those are prime numbers, which means that different broods of these periodical cicadas will rarely emerge any one year.

This isn't in our neighborhood, but it's too absurd to pass up. In January, an 18-year-old in Northeast DC accosted a woman walking her Yorkshire Terrier, and **robbed the woman of her dog**, at gunpoint, asserting that "Yorkies cost a lot of money". Running away with the dog, he dropped his cellphone, which led police directly to his identity. He was also on release from other charges, and was wearing a GPS tracking device, so police could readily confirm that he was at the right spot, at the time of the crime. And – while he was running away, the dog got away from him and ran home.



This is a view of the trunk of that **120-foot oak**, on the steep slope adjacent to Adams Mill Road. If that southbound lane had been elevated to match the northbound lane, a high retaining wall would have been necessary, and would have compelled the destruction of that tree, and others on this slope.

The next meeting of the ANC will be on **Tuesday, April 16, 2013, 7:00 pm**.