

Jack's August report

At the July 17 ANC meeting, the commission:

- * Agreed to support a "stipulated liquor license" for the new owners of the Radius Restaurant;
- * Advised the MPD concerning the implementation of speed cameras in the Mount Pleasant area;
- * Provided a letter of support to the African Hair Gallery on Park Road.

Continuing our policy of making Mount Pleasant a favorable environment for local businesses, the ANC unanimously authorized me, as commission secretary, to provide the new owners of the **Radius Restaurant** with a letter approving a "stipulated" liquor license as soon as needed. I believe that the ownership change will result in a "placarding" of the "substantial change", and a 45-day delay until they can get a liquor license. The "stipulated" license allows them to operate during this 45-day period as if they have the license.

The ANC also welcomed the couple that will build a new restaurant, the **Beau Thai**, in the space to be vacated in August by the temporary library on Mount Pleasant Street. Nothing is needed by them from the ANC at this time, but they were assured that they'll get from us whatever they need, including support for a sidewalk café. I've been encouraging them since last March to choose Mount Pleasant for their new restaurant, assuring them that the awful warfare between the Mount Pleasant Neighborhood Alliance (MPNA) and our restaurants (remember the "voluntary agreement" fights?) is over.

I hope that's correct. Two years ago, some of our restaurants succeeded in having their deeply disliked "voluntary agreements" with the MPNA terminated by the ABC Board. Eighteen months ago, the MPNA was still fighting to have its VAs reinstated, but the ABC Board denied their petitions.

Then, this past May, the Court of Appeals asserted that the ABC Board was wrong in allowing a similar VA termination, on a case in another neighborhood. The technical fault the court found with the Board's proceeding likely affects their decisions here as well, so the MPNA could again try to have its VAs reinstated. And the MPNA could try to impose a VA on the Beau Thai, contrary to my assurances to the proprietors that they would not encounter the neighborhood opposition that has made Mount Pleasant infamous among restaurateurs. This is up to the current leadership of the MPNA. We'll see what they choose to do.

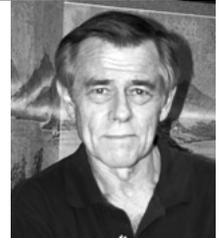
The temporary **Mount Pleasant Library** will close on August 18, and reopen in the renovated 16th Street building on September 12. I'm happy to see that troublesome affair come to a conclusion.

Fiesta DC, a nightmare for Mount Pleasant residents last year, will not take place in Mount Pleasant this year. Complaints from residents were heard downtown, and the Fiesta will be held on Pennsylvania Avenue, where it will be far less disruptive. I hope it does well there, and I hope it stays there. My position on this for Mount Pleasant is simple: never again! The traffic chaos, the blocked roads, and the

ANC 1D03 NEWSLETTER #119

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hordes of men using residential yards as open-air urinals was utterly intolerable.

It's estimated that some 90,000 people came to the Fiesta last year. That's nine times as many visitors as there are residents of Mount Pleasant. Traffic detouring was badly handled, resulting in what Channel 4 News called "an astonishing level of gridlock". I loved having the Fiesta here, but this huge crowd, combined with incompetent management, was far more than our neighborhood could handle, and far beyond anything that residents should have to tolerate, even for just one day.

The current **visitor parking passes** expired July 31, and residents should by now have received their new passes, good through September 2013. If you have not received yours, call Damon Harvey, 671-0493, to request yours. Every household should have one by now.

DDOT is now extending this visitor-pass program to the entire District. It's clearly been a great success here.

The **November election** is less than three months off. There will be substantial changes on the ANC in the coming year, as three of the six current commissioners are not running for re-election. The ANC to be elected on November 6 will have only five commissioners, due to the drop in population in Mount Pleasant. The current candidates:

- 1D01: Frank Agbro, Yasmin Romero-Castillo
- 1D02: Adam Hoey
- 1D03: Jack
- 1D04: Phil Greiner
- 1D05: China Terrell, Arturo Griffiths

Yes, I'm running again, for a sixth term on this ANC. Being retired, I can put a lot of time into the job, and I get a great deal of satisfaction from occasionally being able to help my Mount Pleasant neighbors solve neighborhood problems.

Along with the decrease from six to five commissioners, the boundaries of our single-member districts have been slightly revised. Some of my current constituents will find themselves in 1D05. Some who were in 1D05 will now be in my district. This was necessary to create districts with populations "as nearly equal as possible".

About **speed cameras**: the ANC passed, 4 to 0, my resolution calling for certain measures to be taken, as part of the current MPD speed-camera effort:

- (1) Placement of photo enforcement devices must be only after consultation with the ANC.

The MPD has refused to install the speed cameras we've asked for, on Park Road, and of course has installed that absurd speed-trap camera on Porter Street just on the other side of Rock Creek Park, where the highway-style road design favors high speed. The neighborhood should have some say in where these cameras are put.

The MPD is reexamining our 2009 requests for speed cameras on Park Road. I doubt that we'll get them, but I want the MPD to tell us why not.

(2) Proceeds from speed camera citations must not go into the District of Columbia general revenue funds, and may not be employed to balance the District's budget.

This is an important general principle for speed cameras. If these devices are to have public support, they've got to be clearly for the safety of the public, not just an underhanded way to extract revenues from the public. It is, unfortunately, too late for that, as the District's FY2013 budget is explicitly balanced with \$30 million expected from increased photo traffic enforcement revenues.

On July 5 I toured the area with the MPD bureaucrat in charge of this photo enforcement program, and asked why that Porter Street camera was placed down at the bottom of the hill, where there are no residences and no crosswalks, instead of a block closer to Connecticut Avenue, where there are apartment houses and driveways and mid-block crosswalks. The explanation: that spot, at the bottom of the hill, is where drivers go fastest. In short, the camera placement is chosen for maximum number of speeding tickets issued, not for maximum public safety.

(3) Speed limits to be enforced with speed cameras must be validated as appropriate for the location, based on documented safety considerations.

I asked DDOT for the rationale behind the 30 mph limit on that portion of Porter Street. The freeway-style construction of that bit of road leads to an 85th-percentile traffic speed of 44 mph, an indication of the speed that drivers consider safe. The reply: that's what it's always been, ever since the road was built, and nobody today knows why it is 30 mph. It just is, and nobody (before me) has thought to question its validity. The MPD doesn't question the validity of the speed limits it is enforcing, and it should.

(4) No additional citations may be imposed on any driver until there is written confirmation that a first citation has been delivered to that driver.

That's pretty obvious: a driver may not realize he's gotten a speed-camera ticket for a week or longer, as the ticket wends its way through the MPD/DMV bureaucracy, and the USPS mail. Meanwhile he may drive past that particular camera numerous times, not realizing that he's triggering the thing every time. Yes, there are reports of people surprised by numerous tickets, from a single location, adding up to a thousand dollars in fines. Fair, this is not.

Not that the MPD is going to change its policies due to our resolution. But this has their attention, and I've got them thinking about these problems with their speed-camera program.

I've done some analysis of District vehicular-accident statistics to determine just **how much our safety is enhanced by speed cameras**, assuming that this network of Big Brother devices actually causes a reduction in speeding. The answer is, a reduction of collisions in DC by perhaps two percent.

The number is small because the great majority of accidents in the city, 77%, occur at intersections, and speed is a factor in only 1% of intersection collisions. Overall, speed is considered a contributing factor in just three to four percent of collisions in the District. The speed cameras won't eliminate all of those few collisions that are speed-related, because speed is commonly only one of several factors contributing to a collision, and because some drivers – drunk, on drugs, or afflicted with road rage – won't be deterred by the prospect of a ticket in the mail next week.

The really frustrating problem facing us law-abiding drivers is the disparity between posted speed limits and actual traffic speeds. Just try driving 25 mph on Beach Drive (average traffic speed 30 mph), or on 16th Street (average speed 29 mph). Will you get a fat ticket for driving a few mph over the posted limit, when the drivers all around you are doing the same, and angrily tailgating you if you try to drive under the posted limit? Safe driving calls for *matching* the speed of traffic, but doing so causes one to have to worry about getting dinged by one of those speed cameras.

In my March newsletter I noted that the **Kling Road** issue had arisen again, some Ward Four residents having filed suit to stop the bike-hike path planned for that location. On August 9, the US District Court threw out that suit, on the grounds that “the concrete injuries alleged by Plaintiffs, . . . stem not from the decision to create a pedestrian and cycling trail along Kling Road, but rather from the (separate and) earlier decision to close the road to motor vehicles.”

The proprietor of the **African Hair Gallery**, Ms. Assitou Adje, came to our July meeting and described the harassment she is getting from one nearby resident, who repeatedly files complaints with the District and gets inspectors to visit the establishment. This problem first came to my attention years ago, and I then visited the Hair Gallery, concluding that it's a harmless little shop, one which offers an unusual service to area residents (how many neighborhoods can offer Senegalese hair styling?). So I composed, on the spot, a letter of ANC support for the Gallery, approved on a 2 to 0 vote.

I later asked a resident of the Argyle, adjacent to the Hair Gallery, about the complaints. His reply: “I have no problem with the Hair Gallery. . . . There are problems on that corner but I don't think they are attributable to the Hair Gallery.” Another Mount Pleasant resident, unfamiliar with this longstanding dispute, undertook his own investigation, and concluded that the complaints “are baseless and unfounded”.

Ms. Adje was surprised and relieved to have the ANC come to her support. I'm happy to tell her that yes, she's got friends here in Mount Pleasant, even among residents who would never have any need for her African hair styling.

The next meeting of the ANC will be on **Tuesday, September 18, 2012, 7:00 pm**. (No August meeting.)