

Jack's December report

There was no ANC meeting on November 15, and the first-Tuesday meeting of December became the business meeting for this month, as we maneuver around the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. At the December 6 meeting, the ANC:

- Objected, again, to the transfer of Mount Pleasant from MPD District 3 to District 4;
- Opted out of the “enhanced” Residential Permit Parking (RPP) program.

This so-called “**enhanced**” RPP is intended to prevent residential parking from being hogged by customers of nearby businesses, using the two-hour allowance for cars without Ward One RPP permits. The law will require that 50% of every RPP block, in Ward One only, become “enhanced” RPP, that is, Ward One RPP-permit cars only, with no two-hour allowance for anyone without the permit.

Maybe this is a big problem in Columbia Heights, adjacent to the DCUSA development (where it is already in force). It's not a problem in Mount Pleasant, especially on blocks distant from our Mount Pleasant Street businesses. But the law would require this 50% setaside on all Mount Pleasant RPP-zoned blocks, so visitors to our homes would have to figure out which half of a block was “regular” RPP, and which was “enhanced” RPP. It's really a trap for the unwary visitor, and because this would be the case only in Ward One, DC residents from outside Ward One might well be completely unaware of such a weird provision.

Jim Graham's formulation of this law (yes, it's his creation) allowed each of the Ward One ANCs to choose to participate. But in September, DDOT decided to make this an “opt out” program, rather than “opt in”, and the program would be imposed here unless the ANC explicitly said “no”.

Hence my resolution was needed, if we were to avoid this program. My resolution to “opt out” of “enhanced” RPP passed by a 5 to 1 vote (Gregg Edwards voting “no”).

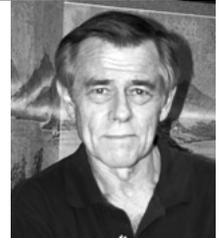
There's no doubt that Chief Lanier will have her way, and will **shift Mount Pleasant out of the Third MPD District** (Ward One) and into the Fourth (Ward Four, mostly). Her rationale for making this change is nonsense. The claim is that 3D is overburdened with crime and calls for service, so some of the workload must be shifted to the Fourth District, where the crime and calls counts are lower. That's fine for Columbia Heights north of Monroe Street, which is being shifted from 3D to 4D, and will take a lot of crime and calls for service with it. But Mount Pleasant? This is the lowest-crime area of 3D, contributing less than one percentage point to the crime and calls counts, so moving us to 4D makes little difference to the totals.

The liabilities are, I think, considerable. The police in adjacent Columbia Heights, between Harvard and Monroe streets, will be working out of a different police headquarters, under a different commander, using different radio frequencies, than the police on our side of 16th Street. Much of the bad stuff that happens here is due to guys coming from across 16th Street to do their burglaries and robberies here. Close coordination and communication between the police on

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either side of 16th Street is crucial, and will be impaired by separating these police into two different districts.

Not that our resolution will make any difference. Chief Lanier is determined to make these changes, unbothered by the nearly unanimous opposition to the Mount Pleasant transfer, voiced at a community meeting here on June 16. Councilmember Graham has also voiced strong opposition to this plan, but the Chief ignores our District councilmembers, arrogantly rejecting their concerns on the grounds that she's expert at police matters, they're not. She has a fantastic popular approval rating, and uses that to prevail over any elected officials who dare to question her tactics.

The vote on my resolution was 5 to 1, China Terrell alone voting “no”.

I have warned several times of the wave of **row-house burglaries** that has afflicted our area, hitting a peak of nine burglaries in two weeks at the end of September and beginning of October.

In November, this crime wave came to an end. There were just three burglaries in November, the normal monthly count for a month, and just two to date in December. No, I don't know what terminated this crime wave. An arrest by the MPD? An encounter with a resident? I don't know, but I'm optimistic that this particular burglary wave is over.

Burglaries may be down, but **thefts from auto** are up: 22 in November, compared to the normal of ten in a month. Thefts from auto are up sharply also in Adams Morgan (PSA 303) and Columbia Heights (PSA 302).

On November 29, I testified to the District Council about the **ANC redistricting** process, with two simple messages. One, the task forces assigned to conduct the redistricting in each ward ought to be fairly representative of that ward (a legal requirement!). Ours wasn't, with only one task force member (of 11) from Mount Pleasant, and none from the neighborhood west of 18th Street. I had to battle hard, as a non-member of this task force, to preserve our part of the neighborhood from being split off into a little mini-ANC.

Two, ANC areas ought to be defined first, according to what people think makes good neighborhood sense, then divided into single-member districts (SMDs). The current process puts SMDs first, with the ANC boundaries then changed to suit the SMDs, even if contrary to sensible neighborhood boundaries. This reversal of priorities led to an attempt to transfer a chunk of Columbia Heights, the area across 16th Street from the Woodner, into the Mount Pleasant ANC, not

because anyone there wanted to be included in the Mount Pleasant ANC, but simply to make the SMD population counts come out right.

The District Council didn't care, shrugging off both my complaints. But I hope to be around for the 2020 census, and then I'll be waging this battle again. Right now, the Council just wants to put this whole ANC redistricting thing to bed, so they can ignore the business for another decade.

Broad Branch Road, used by some residents as a convenient route to upper Northwest, was closed last April due to a collapsing drainage culvert. Then it was sort-of reopened in June with a steel plate covering the culvert, wide enough for just one car, requiring stops at either end to allow cars to cross over one at a time. This hasn't worked very well. Drivers on one end can't see cars on the other, so they too often discover each other in the middle of that one-car-wide stretch. DDOT posts a weird partial-one-way scheme, so the road is supposed to be one-way inbound during the morning rush, one-way outbound in the evening, two-way the rest of the time. But the signs are confusing, so all too many drivers go the wrong way over the bridge, at the risk of traffic coming in the correct direction. It's a mess, to be sure.

Repair work to the culvert was delayed by negotiations with the National Park Service. The latest word is that the rebuilding of the road, a project once scheduled for last July, will begin in mid-December, resulting in Broad Branch again being completely closed to traffic for a month or more.

Burglaries happen all over Mount Pleasant, but **robberies are very much concentrated on the east side of the neighborhood**, within a block or two of 16th Street. There have been 16 robberies in Mount Pleasant in the past two months, a rate somewhat higher than the average of four to six per month. Thirteen of the 16 occurred east of 18th Street; two took place on 18th Street; and just one took place west of 18th. That was on the evening of November 22, on the 1800 block of Park Road: "two men attacked a pedestrian, knocking her to the ground, then fled with a cellphone."

I understand that the victim was walking on the north side of Park Road. The homes along that block are high above the sidewalk, unlike the homes on the south side, which are easily accessible from the sidewalk. I ask residents to keep their porch lights on at all hours, to provide visibly safe refuges for anyone on the street feeling threatened. The victim in this case, had she been on the south side, could possibly have turned up to a well-lit front porch to escape. Even if no one happens to be home, the would-be robbers don't know that, and may think that their intended victim is close to help, if not at home.

Keep your porch lights on, and make your front porches visible refuges for anyone in trouble. One aspect of our neighborhood is that people will always come to the assistance of anyone in trouble, without hesitation. I recall one purse-snatching incident a few years ago, where a number of Monroe Street residents took out in pursuit of the perpetrator, chasing him to Mount Pleasant Street where he was arrested. And there was the man assaulted on Lamont Street, off Walbridge, and a woman passing by in her car

stopped, jumped out, and caused the offenders to halt their attack and flee. That's our neighborhood!

Four out of five **robberies** in the District remain forever unsolved. Once in a while, usually because of a sharp-eyed victim, there's a break. On November 5, a robbery was committed in the 1700 block of Hobart. Shortly afterwards, one Derrick Hawkins was arrested for the crime, and has been in jail ever since. I understand that there's been a plea bargain accepted, and sentencing will take place in February.

Of the 39 robberies perpetrated in Mount Pleasant this year, only six involved the use of a gun. Hateful as robberies are – they are classified as crimes of violence, whether weapons are used or not – better that they should not include the use of guns, which can so easily turn a robbery into a homicide.

An example is the never-solved killing of Gregory Shipe on Irving Street in September, 2005, presumed to be the classic "robbery gone bad". Two men were seen shortly afterwards, running east on Irving Street toward 16th Street. That's the robbery pattern here: come west across 16th to do the crime, then run east, back across 16th, to escape. The MPD redistricting being imposed on Mount Pleasant by Chief Lanier, putting east and west sides of 16th into two separate MPD districts, won't help in dealing with such crimes.

The **earliest sunsets of the year** came around December 6, with sunset at 4:46 pm. Now we're gaining, very slowly, on the time of sunset, though we won't see sunsets after 5 pm until early January. These days of early darkness make bicycle commuting really difficult and dangerous.

Re the ANC **redistricting**, there's an effort by the ANC to the north of us, 4A, to claim a portion of Ward One for their commission. Ward Four, including the Crestwood neighborhood, just on the other side of Piney Branch Parkway, extends into Rock Creek Park. This unpopulated bit of parkland continues on down Beach Drive to Klinge Road, according to the current ward boundaries. The redistricting of the wards, completed last July, made a small truncation of that parkland extension, terminating Ward Four at Piney Branch Parkway. The parkland between Piney Branch and Klinge Road (the overpass over Beach Drive) is, or will be as of January, in Ward One.

But the Ward Four ANC redistricting report ignored that change and specified an ANC 4A boundary extending to Klinge Road, just so that one ANC 4A commissioner could use ANC "great weight" to support her efforts to reopen Klinge Road to automobile traffic. This is the same commissioner who, for that same reason, successfully fought my effort to make Park Road the Ward One/Ward Four boundary, so that we might have some say in dealings with that crucial link of Mount Pleasant to Cleveland Park. Park Road through Rock Creek Park remains entirely in Ward Four, from the Piney Branch overpass to Beach Drive.

The Office of Planning spotted that discrepancy, as did I, and this ploy will presumably fail, because ANC boundaries are supposed to be consistent with ward boundaries.

The next <i>business</i> meeting of the ANC will be on Tuesday, January 17, 2012, 7:00 pm.
