

Jack's January report

On December 17, the ANC did the following:

- Endorsed a “special exception” to permit rear stairs, a deck, and a terrace at 1845 Ingleside Terrace;
- Called for DC Government agencies to accept ANC resolutions via the Internet, vs. fax or mail, and agencies to send their notifications to ANCs via the Internet;
- Supported the proposal for a locally elected District Attorney for DC (my resolution);
- Agreed to give a contract to the Mount Pleasant Latino Association to design an emergency access corridor behind the Mount Pleasant Library;
- Requested the contractor's documentation for the Small Area Plan for the commercial strip;
- Advised the Chief Technology Officer to assure that all District agency hearings that are video-recorded are made Web-accessible;
- Called for all DC agencies to make their written hearing transcripts available to ANCs at no charge;
- Advised DDOT to construct a public bulletin board in Lamont Park;
- Advised the Office of Planning to support enhancements to the parks on Mount Pleasant Street that would promote social interaction, vs. simple loitering, in these parks;
- Advised DDOT to undertake the conversion of Mount Pleasant Street to a “pedestrian encounter zone” and “bicycle boulevard”.

On January 5, the ANC held an “informal” meeting.

On December 10, I met with Councilmember Graham, Commander Kucik, and U.S. Attorney's Office Executive Assistant for External Affairs Albert Herring, to talk about that dreadful violence on Adams Mill Road, **seven bullets fired into a resident's occupied bedroom**. The meeting did not go well. Mr Herring made no excuse for downgrading this violent assault to a mere “misdemeanor theft”, and blamed the failure of the prosecution entirely on the victim's failure to appear at trial. Worse, he expressed crude contempt for the victim, evidently considering her unworthy of a serious defense. He was equally contemptuous of me, for my efforts on her behalf. It was pretty ugly.

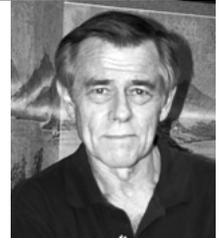
As I pursued this matter, I found that people in the U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) are explicit about their being Federal officials, working for the Justice Department, not for the District. They are not answerable to us, nor to our elected officials. One may ask, why are serious criminal prosecutions in the District handled by a Federal appointee, rather than a locally chosen District Attorney? Evidently the authors of Home Rule did not trust the District with the enforcement of its own laws. For anything more serious than disorderly conduct, “criminal prosecutions shall be conducted in the name of the United States by the United States attorney for the District of Columbia”.

In 2002, the people of the District voted overwhelmingly for local control over the enforcement of DC laws, supporting a *locally elected* District Attorney. The U.S. Congress has refused to allow that. In November, Delegate Norton

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introduced, for the fourth time, a bill to provide for a locally elected D.A. If there was ever a time to press this issue, it's now, with the current favorable Congress. The ANC passed my resolution endorsing a locally elected District Attorney for DC, and asking the District Council to re-energize its efforts to that end.

I noted in the December newsletter that a Monroe Street resident was convicted of “**attempted possession with intent to distribute**” crack cocaine, 40 grams of the drug being found on his person. I was asked, how much crack is 40 grams? A lot, such that this person was more than just a small-time street dealer? A bit of research revealed that crack is sold on the street by the “rock”, and a “rock” averages 0.15 grams. Thus, 40 grams amounts to 270 rocks, and has a street value of perhaps \$4000. Evidently Superior Court Judge John Mott considered that to warrant only a suspended sentence.

The young man is occasionally seen these days on Monroe Street, but he's just visiting his children, while required by the terms of his sentence to reside in a halfway house somewhere else. He's under a one-year suspended sentence, 18 months probation, five years' supervised release, 100 hours of community service, and more.

Our law enforcement efforts expend way too much of their resources pursuing inner-city drug dealing, while neglecting robberies and preventing violent crime. **The District's record for closing robberies by arrest is poor, just 17% of robberies being solved**, whereas the average for other middle-size cities is 26%. I've been complaining about this deficiency for seven years, and no one has yet explained why the District solves one-third fewer robberies than other cities its size. Not only does that leave more robbers on the street, it encourages young men to take that path to easy money.

Robberies, classified as crimes of violence, can too easily turn into serious physical harm, even death. Four years ago Kenyon Street resident Gregory Shipe was shot dead on Irving Street, presumably as he was being robbed, and the robber's gun went off. An accident, or intentional? We'll never know, because his killer has never been caught.

There are five or six robberies each month here, almost all of them east of 18th Street. Most are done with only a threat of violence, not an actual weapon, but on the evening of December 26, there were two robberies with a gun. The first was at 11:10 pm on the 3300 block of Mount Pleasant Street (between Park Road and Newton), the second 40 minutes later, on the 1700 block of Newton Street. The police tell me that there's “no information at this time that indicates that

these were committed by the same [perp]”. So there are two armed robbers working Mount Pleasant? That's not good.

A pair of robbers on Ingleside Terrace also used a gun. At 11:30 pm on January 6, “a male was walking with his laundry, when two [men] approached and demanded his laundry. The [victim] complied. The suspects went through the pockets of his laundry and made off with \$200 in cash.” That's three armed street robberies here in two weeks, way more than normal.

There's been lots of publicity lately about the decrease in homicides, down in the District by 70% from a peak in 1990, and down 28% since 2004. The Metropolitan Police are quick to take credit – “we're making an impact,” says Chief Lanier – but they're silent about the fact that **robberies in DC are up by 42% since 2004**. If the decline in homicides were due to improved police practices, surely robberies would be down as well; but they're not. Furthermore, the drop in homicides is not just in DC, but is nationwide, and began 13 years ago, not just recently. This decline in the murder rate is wonderful, but recent changes in MPD practices cannot be its cause. If these changes are so beneficial, why are robberies increasing?

As of December 21, **the Lieutenant in charge of our Police Service Area (PSA)** is Micah Pate, previously the Lieutenant for Columbia Heights and Shaw. On the same date, Inspector Jacob Kishter was promoted to Third District Commander.

At the January 5 informal ANC meeting, I asked people if they wanted the monthly PSA meeting to be at La Casa Community Center on Mount Pleasant Street, or back at the Library. Sentiment strongly favored La Casa. The monthly Mount Pleasant PSA meetings are now scheduled for the fourth Wednesday, at La Casa Community Center.

On December 19, we were hit with a **17-inch snowfall**. DC has snows exceeding 12 inches just once every 10 years. Ordinarily, the District gets just an inch and a half of snow in December, and 18 inches in an entire winter. I think we've hit our quota for the year. Unfortunately, January and February are generally snowier than December.

Most residents are good about clearing the snow from the sidewalks adjacent to their homes. The DC Code is explicit: residents must “within the first 8 hours of daylight after the ceasing to fall of any snow or sleet”, clear *all* the sidewalks along their lots, side as well as front, if you're on a corner lot. This law applies to renters, too, who cannot pass this buck to nonresident landlords. If you're one of those who waits for the winter sunshine to do the job – please don't. Let's be respectful of our neighbors who have to walk, to shops or bus stops or the Metro, and clear our sidewalks promptly.

January is always our coldest month. In 2009, the lowest temperatures of the year were recorded on January 16-17, a high of 18 followed by a low of 8. **The lowest temperature so far this winter was 16 degrees on the morning of January 3**. I hope that's the worst of it.

An Ingleside Terrace couple were shocked to find \$100 “expired vehicle registration” tickets on their parked car. Why was there no notice from DMV that their registration was expiring? They speculate that their getting a new

registration sticker, in order to add RPP, caused the District computers to think that they had already renewed the registration, and so no notice was sent. If that's so, then many residents of the newly zoned blocks could have this problem. But regardless of the reason, it's not a good idea to depend on notification from DMV about your expiring registration (or inspection). Sometimes the notifications come, but sometimes they don't, and the DMV's failure to send the notification doesn't save you from hefty tickets.

DDOT continues to try to identify the owner of **that awful steel plate in the middle of the Park/Klingle/Walbridge intersection**. The latest is word from one branch of DDOT that “currently at this location there are no steel plates”. Oh, really? We're just imagining that slab that's been in the middle of the intersection since last March? My guess is that the contractor who dug that pit didn't bother to tell DDOT about it. Does anybody recall what work led to that pit, and the plate, and who therefore might be responsible for it?

I have mentioned that **the Mount Pleasant Forum** has been the best Internet location for finding out about, and discussing, events in the neighborhood. I post all ANC actions there. The Forum went down in mid-November, and didn't come back until mid-December. Besides a month of downtime, the Forum lost over a year's worth of postings. Now it's again in operation, and I hope people will return.

There's no word on when CM Graham will have his “community meeting” to decide whether to have **daytime parking passes** for commuters to Mount Pleasant or not. Whatever the outcome of such a meeting, I will support daytime passes for Stoddard and Bancroft people, and anybody else coming to jobs in Mount Pleasant. We have to do something to make up for the absence of a commercial parking lot. Furthermore, there's ample parking space during the day, and daytime passes were promised as part of the RPP zoning of Ingleside, Newton, and Monroe. The intolerable parking situation on these blocks that prevailed before RPP zoning will not return, because the cars that were owned by Mount Pleasant residents but were parked on these blocks because they lacked RPP permits, commonly because the cars didn't have DC tags, are gone, and daytime passes won't let them come them back.

A pedestrian was killed crossing 16th Street at Park Road at 1:20 AM on December 28, hit by a southbound driver who ran the red light at high speed. We worry a lot about pedestrian safety crossing 16th Street, but there's not much that can be done about drivers blasting through red lights.

People park along the top of the half-block of Lamont Street between the 1900 Lamont park and Walbridge. And why not, as long as they're not blocking either alley entrance? Well, one MPD officer has a problem with it, and has issued tickets claiming “**prohibited parking in approach to intersection**”. Bogus, I say: an alley entrance is *not* an “intersection”. I've protested to Lt Pate, who will investigate it. Seems to me that this MPD officer hasn't enough real work to do.

The next ANC *business* meeting will be on **Tuesday, January 19**. The ANC's next *informal* meeting, if held, will be on **Tuesday, February 2**.