

## July report to constituents

Here is news of the **July 5 ANC monthly meeting** and the **July 22 special ANC meeting**.

We continued to wrestle with the 1636 Irving Street seven-condominium conversion problem. At the July 5 meeting, we agreed to seek advice from a lawyer knowledgeable of DC zoning regulations. I have argued that we should give up fighting this building, which is, for better or worse, a done deal, and proceed to the more important problems facing us, namely the possibility that any row house can be expanded to 60% lot coverage, 40 feet tall, even if that turns a row house into an “apartment building” overshadowing its neighbors. At the July 22 special meeting, the ANC voted four to one to permit Commissioner Rich Wysocki to withdraw his resolution calling for an appeal of the DCRA decision. That essentially ends the ANC’s dealings with this problem.

I will be introducing resolutions calling for changes at DCRA, so that we never again discover such a problem only after construction is complete.

-- Jack

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At the July 22 special meeting we also dealt with the issue of **traffic calming** (i.e., speed humps and the like). Cars driving too fast through our neighborhood is a universal problem. Pretty much every street, and every alley too, is afflicted with cars moving at speeds higher than we think safe for a residential neighborhood.

There is a process specified for requesting traffic calming measures, devised in 2002 with the guidance of the Howard University Transportation Research Center. This procedure requires (1) a traffic study, to quantify the speeding problem and design appropriate traffic-calming measures; (2) a community meeting to review the recommended measures, followed by approval of the selected measures by a supermajority (65%) of the residents of the affected area; (3) approval of the measures by the ANC. That last step is necessary to assure that traffic calming measures on one street don’t just transfer traffic problems to some other part of our neighborhood.

The ANC approved my resolution, which says, quite simply, “*Resolved*, that ANC-1D advises the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) to follow the *DDOT Traffic Calming Policies and Guidelines* in implementing traffic calming measures in Mount Pleasant, with necessary deviations in case of emergency.” DDOT has been pressured by certain groups to disregard its own guidelines. I propose that traffic calming measures be taken according to the well-designed process of their own guidelines, and not by simply yielding to political pressure.

## ANC 1D03 NEWSLETTER #35

Jack McKay, July 26, 2005

Devenia Roberts, elected to 1D02 last fall, has never been sworn in as a Commissioner, has never been to any of our meetings, and has done none of the duties of an ANC Commissioner. Unfortunately, she has also refused to send a formal letter of resignation, leaving us in the unfortunate position of having a wholly nonperforming Commissioner.

**The special ANC meeting of July 22** was required by law to give her the opportunity to rebut our claim that her ANC seat ought to be declared vacant so that someone else can run for it.

Our certified mailing to her, telling her of this meeting, has gotten no reply, and of course she didn’t appear at the July 22 meeting. We will now ask the Board of Elections to formally declare the seat vacant. This will start a “petition period”, during which any interested resident of her district may petition to be a candidate for the vacant seat.

1D02 is the northernmost portion of Mount Pleasant, including 16th Street from Oak Street to the Woodner, Oak Street, the west side of Brown Street, the north side of Newton from Brown to 17th, and Oakwood Terrace.

Just over a year ago, in June 2004, a Walbridge Place resident awoke in the night to find a man standing in her bedroom. She feigned sleep, hoping he would just steal something and go away, but he attacked her, inflicting bloody head wounds with a table lamp. Then he assaulted her, inflicting dreadful suffering for two long hours.

Our shock at this incident was compounded by the arrest of an Adams Mill Road resident, David Bryant, for this crime. Initially I hoped this was a case of mistaken identity, the police charging him only because he was a registered sex offender who lived nearby. But in time it became clear: Mr Bryant had done this terrible crime, on a young woman who lived only a short distance away.

In February, on the day the trial was to begin, Mr Bryant pleaded guilty to first degree burglary, and first degree sexual assault while armed. The judge, John Bayly, made it plain that the plea bargain did not require him to give Mr Bryant a light sentence. True to his word, **on June 28 Judge Bayly sentenced Mr Bryant to life in prison**.

That draws to a close this tragic incident in our neighborhood. This was a case of a single very disturbed man, and was not typical of or characteristic of any segment of our community. During these court hearings I saw from Mr Bryant no sign whatsoever of remorse for his deed, nor pity for his victim. He seems to be incapable of empathy.

The victim is doing marvelously well. As the prosecutor said, she is not a rape *victim*, she is a rape *survivor*. And she still loves living in Mount Pleasant. Her strength is an inspiration to us all.

On July 14 I testified to Carol Schwarz's Committee on Public Works and the Environment about **residential parking policy**. A reform of our wretched Residential Permit Parking system is on the way, but coming very slowly, as DDOT struggles to decide which reform measures they could implement by DDOT rule-making, and which require Council legislation. I think Councilmember Schwarz called this hearing just to get the process moving.

DDOT is pursuing what they call "performance pricing" – that is, charge fees for all parking, and set those fees to try to match parking demand to the parking space supply. For example, DDOT proposes **metered parking in residential areas adjacent to business districts**, i.e., much of Mount Pleasant. These would not be ugly parking meters in your front yard, but would be a single payment kiosk on each residential block. Nonresidents would put money in the kiosk to have a parking ticket printed out, then put that time-stamped ticket in their cars, visible to Parking Enforcement aides. Residents would not have to pay for parking. I doubt that this will be well received.

DDOT will also propose graduated RPP fees: \$25 for a household's first RPP permit, \$50 for a second, \$100 for a third – and no household will be allowed more than three. The theory is that people will own fewer cars, and thus take up less parking, because of these escalating fees. But owning a car is already a big expense, our insurance costs alone dwarfing these RPP fees. Furthermore, in high-density neighborhoods such as ours, car ownership is a substantial inconvenience, because of the nighttime parking problem. If those factors don't already minimize car ownership (and half the households in Mount Pleasant own no car), why will these RPP fees do so? Basically, people who own cars, despite the high costs and difficult parking, do so because they feel their cars are necessary. Thus, these DDOT fees will only be costly to residents, while doing nothing to alleviate our parking shortage.

I offered my own proposals (endorsed by the ANC), but I think I'll have to leave those until next month's newsletter, having used up too much space on this rant about the DDOT proposals.

As of July 10, our PSA has a new leader, **Lieutenant David Sledge**, a 23-year District resident and 20-year MPD veteran. He's worked his way up through the ranks, making sergeant in 1990, Lieutenant in 2004. He started off in the Second District (west of Rock Creek Park, easy duty), then went to the Sixth (east of the Anacostia, tough duty). Most recently he's been the Lieutenant for the eastern portion of PSA 302, that is, lower Georgia Avenue, a pretty rough neighborhood, plagued with drugs and poverty. He told me that he's had to deal with as many as three homicides in a day, which is more than Mount Pleasant sees in three years.

Our crime rate is far lower than what Lt. Sledge has been dealing with in the Anacostia and Park View neighborhoods. But Mount Pleasant presents its own special difficulties, including a large immigrant population (38% of Mount Pleasant residents are foreign-born), homeowners with very high expectations of policing, and nearby high-poverty neighborhoods that are a source for young toughs who come to Mount Pleasant to do robberies and break-ins.

Lt Sledge's replacement in 302 is Lieutenant Sherman Lankford, who comes from Capitol Hill to join Lt Robinson in our adjacent PSA. We now have three superb Lieutenants serving Columbia Heights and Mount Pleasant.

The **Kingle Road** Draft Environmental Impact Statement is out, finally, and a public hearing was held on July 21. Will this short-cut to Woodley Park ever be rebuilt? It's up to the National Park Service, which can permit the use of parkland for the road only if "there is no prudent and feasible alternative to using that land".

The deck was stacked on this Environmental Impact study by the elimination of the Green Space and the Bicycle, Recreation, and Facility Management options from consideration, based on the District Council's legislation calling for the reopening of the road. Then the environmental repairs to the area were linked to the road; if no road, then no repairs to stormwater damage, nor reconstruction of retaining walls. The Kingle Creek park environment is, in effect, held hostage for the road. Given only "build the road" (in various configurations) options, versus "do nothing, and leave an awful mess", and no recreational options, of course the road options look good.

Personally, I favor the combined bike path and road option, which provides a good recreational path at the expense of making the road one lane, one way. I would also close the road on weekends, as portions of Beach Drive are closed today, becoming recreation-only. But this is entirely out of the ANC's hands, so what I favor matters not a whit.

Will the National Park Service allow the rebuilding of the road? I know the Director of Rock Creek Park, Adrienne Coleman, is unenthusiastic about the road. Or will the NPS hold out for a "green" option? We'll see.

On a personal note: on July 3, Emily and I celebrated 40 years of marriage. Most of those years have been spent right here in Mount Pleasant. Emily reminds me often of how clever it was for her to have brought me to DC, thirty-plus years ago. I can't imagine living anywhere else.

The next ANC **monthly meeting** will be on **Tuesday, August 2**, 7 pm, La Casa Community Center, 3166 Mt Pleasant Street. On the agenda: liquor license transfers, the ANC budget, the District Comprehensive Plan, traffic calming for the 1600 block of Monroe Street.