

## Jack's July report to residents

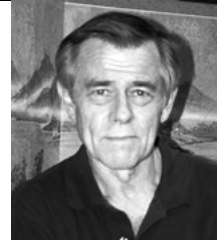
Here is news of the **July 1, 15, and 23 meetings**, and other happenings in Mount Pleasant. The ANC:

- ◆ Agreed to support “midmonth meetings” of the ANC. Our regular monthly meetings are burdened with ANC business. The midmonth meetings will be aimed at providing for more public input and informal discussion of neighborhood issues. The first, on July 15, dealt mainly with low-cost housing.
- ◆ Advised DDOT to give priority to repairing sidewalks on the east side of Brown Street, between Newton and Oak.
- ◆ Advised DDOT to hold off on its planned work on the 1600 block of Park Road, because their plans fail to correct the problem of a narrow, signpost-cluttered sidewalk.
- ◆ Initiated an ANC effort to deal with the explosive problem of bedbugs.
- ◆ Supported ANC surveys of neighborhood issues and concerns.
- ◆ Requested a delay in the plans for renovation of the Mount Pleasant Library. True public input to these plans has been lacking, as the Library arranged only the usual public meetings which bring out only the library “establishment”.
- ◆ Advised DDOT that any revisions to the Kenyon/-Adams Mill/Irving intersection should allow for a future reconfiguration of Harvard as the east-west arterial, instead of Irving.
- ◆ Advised the District Council to reject the bill making the single-sales ban in Mount Pleasant permanent, calling instead for measures to deal effectively and economically with the troublesome population, and also advised the ABC Board to permit a temporary cessation of the current ban in order to determine the present-day need for it.
- ◆ Advised the DC Public Library to arrange for rental of nearby space to replace the Mount Pleasant Library, while the latter is closed for renovations.
- ◆ Advised the Office of Planning to establish a Special Planning Area for Mount Pleasant east of 17th Street.
- ◆ Advised DDOT to have its contractor present its traffic study results and analyses without making selections or judgments. (I voted “no” on this.)
- ◆ Advised DC Council to mandate security plans for large apartment buildings.
- ◆ Proposed that the DCRA develop a public database of apartment rental increases and deficiency corrections.
- ◆ Advised the DC Public Library to delay any closing of the Mount Pleasant Library until the ANC and the neighborhood have had an opportunity to review the renovation plans.

## ANC 1D03 NEWSLETTER #71

Jack McKay, July 27, 2008

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A sure way to political popularity is to endorse **bans on the sale of “singles”**, that is, six-packs divided up by liquor stores to be sold a bottle at a time, perhaps to indigent alcohol-addicted men who haven't the cash for more than one. Mount Pleasant has had such a ban since 2000, imposed via “voluntary agreements”. Underlying this issue is the practice of homeless shelters in the area of putting their “clients” out onto the street during the day, where they have little to do but occupy park benches and drink cheap alcohol, and have no access to toilet facilities. There being no public toilets, they use secluded spots in alleys and gardens. This is indeed a noxious problem, and bans on “singles” are intended to put a stop to this behavior.

The trouble with singles bans is that they do *not* stop such men from any such bad behavior. No one believes that alcohol abusers will become sober, well-behaved citizens, simply because “singles” are no longer readily available. In fact, the true goal of the ban, never admitted to by ban advocates, is merely to make these unpleasant men go away, perforce to somebody else's neighborhood. As one Park Road resident noted, once the singles ban went into effect in Mount Pleasant, eight years ago, the men afflicting his residence “evaporated”. “They went away, and we don't see them any more,” he testified. That's nice for him, surely, but those men are no doubt still out there someplace, drinking and littering and urinating. Is it proper public policy for us to solve our problem of badly behaved men by simply sending them off into somebody else's neighborhood?

I think not, and this ANC agreed, passing unanimously a resolution objecting to Councilmember Graham's bill to impose a permanent single-sales ban in Mount Pleasant. Other Ward One ANCs agree that this is bad public policy, and not one of the four ANCs supports single-sales bans, despite the substantial population of indigent alcohol abusers throughout the ward.

The resolution calls on the District to devise a better means of dealing with this troublesome population, perhaps by establishing daytime shelters, where these men can take their ugly behavior off our streets and out of our parks, and where they will have access to toilet facilities. Other jurisdictions are experimenting with such Chronic Inebriate Shelters.

It's also possible, of course, that the great changes in the area over the past eight years have rendered the singles ban here unnecessary. How is one to know, other than by suspending the ban, and observing the results? The expiration of the

current ban, this October, is an opportunity for such an experimental suspension of the ban.

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On July 8, Park Road resident Alice Swanson was **killed on her bicycle by a trash truck** at 20th and R, near Dupont Circle. This was an all-too-common “right hook” bicycle collision: the truck driver, failing to see the bicyclist on his right, turned right, and she went under his wheels.

How do we prevent such tragedies? Bicyclists (and I'm one) must be very, very careful about passing any vehicle on the right, especially when approaching an intersection. In DC's congested traffic, it's easy for bicycles to be passing the cars, and if the driver isn't alert to a bike on his right, a sudden right turn means a collision. Drivers alongside bike lanes must be alert to bicyclists coming up from behind, in, unfortunately, a driver's “blind spot”. Drivers should know also that right turns are to be made from “as close as practicable to the right-hand curb”, and that means from *within the bike lane*, if there is one. If being in the bike lane prevents bicyclists from passing on your right, as you're about to turn right, fine.

The District contributes to the problem by terminating bike-lane markings at intersections, as if there is no bike lane in the intersection. The driver turning right has no visual cue that there's still a bike lane there. West-coast cities are beginning to mark bike lanes through intersections, so that the driver might notice, within the intersection, that his right turn is crossing a bike lane. I'm pressing for the same technique here, with CM Graham's endorsement.

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**Sexual assaults** in Mount Pleasant are rare, but this incident took place at 4 AM on July 10, in the 3300 block of 18th Street: “C-1 on the date times and location reports that S-1 apparently retrieved a set of door keys that C-1 had accidentally left in the top lock of her door. After S-1 gained entry into C-1's unit he made his way back to her bedroom area, C-1 fought back S-1 who attempted to engage her in sexual intercourse against her will. C-1 then bit S-1's right hand finger and S-1 stopped the assault and ran out of the location taking the listed property from the location. C-1 refused any medical attention.”

How does such an intruder know that he's going to find a woman home alone? I'd guess that this is a case of stalking. Burglars here generally enter homes during the day, when no one is expected to be at home, not at 4 AM. Police are wondering if this has any connection with three other such early-morning attacks in Northwest DC.

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Last March, the Urban Forestry Administration of DDOT said that **the enormous oak tree on Park Road**, just east of 19th Street, should be taken down, because repair work on the rock wall would damage its roots. We objected to the loss of this priceless tree, and DDOT/UFA and DPR (Parks and Rec) agreed to go think about how to fix the wall and keep the tree. On June 25 we met again, and the District changed its tune. Now they argue that, with careful excavation for a replacement wall, the tree won't be harmed.

I think they're right, this time. That tree is supported by a huge root structure going up that hillside, and the wall is

providing little, if any, real support. If the wall is taken down with reasonable care, the tree will be undisturbed. DPR is bringing in an “expert stone mason” to consult on removing and rebuilding the wall without threatening the tree.

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There's a growing plague of **bedbugs** in the area. These were once almost unknown in the US, but the tremendous growth in international travel has brought them back. Bedbugs have nothing to do with one's care in housekeeping and cleanliness. Once inadvertently brought into a house, they will thrive, no matter how spic-and-span your house is. My Latina cleaning lady, who is quite the perfectionist in cleanliness (the clutter in our house distresses her) has an terrible infestation of bedbugs, brought in on a child's playpen purchased at a thrift shop.

Once in your house, bedbugs are extremely hard to get rid of. They nest in every crevice, every wall, every bit of furniture, and will not be killed by ordinary spraying and fumigation. It's an expensive nightmare to locate and exterminate every bedbug hiding spot. That means that we have to be very careful not to bring them in. Experts warn against, for example, opening a suitcase on a hotel bed when on international travel, or on your bed after returning.

Frugal living may also contribute to the spread of bedbugs. Our Department of Health visitor, Girard Brown, told of people carefully sealing their bedbug-infested clothes into plastic bags and putting the tightly closed bags in a dumpster, only to see other people opening the bags to salvage the clothes. Used furniture, like my Colombian's playpen, can spread the plague. A brand-new mattress may arrive with a bedbug infestation, if brought in a truck stacked alongside a used mattress being taken away.

It's a terrible and growing problem, and it's not just about poor people in shabby homes. Bedbugs are back, here in Mount Pleasant and in our adjacent neighborhoods. Be very careful that you don't accidentally get them into your house. Exterminating an infestation is a nightmare.

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As ANC Treasurer, I turned in the **quarterly financial report** to the auditor on July 2, just two days after the end of the quarter. The auditor agreed that this was a record for ANCs, 58 days ahead of the due date. Also a novelty, I did the report as a single CD, with scans of all of the required documents: checks, bank statements, invoices, receipts. Should anyone care to review this ANC's fiscal reports, I'll burn a CD for you, too. It's a public record.

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While delivering my June newsletter, I encountered a Newton Street resident who was having a really bad day. His landlord had, among other oversights, failed to pay the water bills, and the city had shut off their water. New to the neighborhood, he didn't know whom to call on for help. I directed him to **Councilmember Graham's office**, and within a few hours the water was turned back on. I don't know what I would do if I didn't have Mr Graham to step up for residents in situations like this.

The next ANC meeting will be on <b>Tuesday, September 2</b> , 7:00 pm, La Casa Community Center, 3166 Mt. Pleasant St. (No August meeting.)
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