

Jack's July report

On July 21, the ANC did the following:

- Endorsed the application by the Rosemount Center for an increase in its maximum number of staff from 85 to 89, and of children enrolled from 147 to 163;
- Increased the budget for ANC grants program management from \$3000 to \$10,000;
- Advised the ABC Board to treat the Pupuseria San Miguel “gently”, for its occupancy violation;
- Advised the DC Charter School Board that the proposed move of the Capital Cities Charter School upper school into Mount Pleasant should not be permitted without discussion of potential problems with the ANC;
- Advised DDOT to implement the daytime parking pass system without further delay; and
- Advised the DC Public Library that the ramp proposed for handicapped access to the Library is problematical.

Residents were disturbed on the evening of July 5 by a **police helicopter circling overhead**, shining a spotlight onto rooftops along Park Road. Responding to a call from a neighbor, the MPD arrested three men at a residence on Park Road, finding the third hiding on the roof, and charged them with burglary.

This is not, I think, an ordinary house burglary. The residence in question was itself the target of a police drug raid in January, 2008, which resulted in the seizure of a 9 mm semi-automatic, with “serial number obliterated”. The run-down house is not the sort of place that a burglar would choose to invade for valuables. More likely, these three men targeted that house, believing that it contained something of special interest to them.

Residential Permit Parking (RPP) is now confirmed for the 1800 blocks of Monroe and Newton Streets and Ingleside Terrace, and the 3300 block of 19th Street. My advice last month was unnecessarily complicated. Anyone who has a car currently registered in DC now has only to call the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) and request RPP to be added to the current registration. The fee (\$15/year) will be prorated over however much time is left on the current registration.

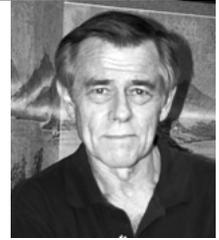
The Day Parking Pass program is still on indefinite hold. Last April, Councilmember Graham abruptly halted the plans that were in place for this program to be in operation last spring, insisting on “reviewing what DDOT has in mind”, and calling for “a community meeting on this” (April 13). That “community meeting” was set for May 21, but at the last moment was cancelled. I marked all the posters I had put up that the meeting was “postponed indefinitely”. A couple of residents complained tartly that that was inaccurate, because the meeting was to be “rescheduled”. Today, two months on, there's no sign of any such rescheduling, and no hint of when this meeting might take place. I think “postponed indefinitely” was an accurate description.

Now the start of school is approaching, and there's utterly no hint of when, or if, the Day Parking Pass program might reappear. What will the Bancroft teachers do in September? I introduced, and the ANC unanimously approved, a resolution

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calling on DDOT to implement the Day Parking Pass program “without further delay”. But I am not optimistic that anything will be done, as the Day Pass effort now seems to be entangled in political arm-wrestling downtown.

The neighbors alongside **3225 Walbridge** complain, with much justice, about the awful condition of that property. The owner owes \$30,000 in back taxes, and still won't let the property go to someone who might maintain it properly.

The front porch of this row house has completely collapsed. This is an absurdity of Historic Preservation in DC. If you want to make improvements to your house, and maybe remove a covered porch (as many residents have), you'll have Historic Preservation all over you, demanding that you keep your property looking just as it did sixty or seventy years ago, as misty nostalgia for pre-1950 America prevails over what homeowners want. But if you abandon all maintenance, and let rain destroy your front porch, Historic won't lift a finger to stop you. The law specifically assigns the Historic Preservation Office responsibility for preventing “demolition by neglect”, but they ignore that responsibility, instead punishing homeowners who not only maintain but try to improve their homes.

In 2006, then-Councilmember Carol Schwarz arranged for allowing **parking to within 25 feet of an intersection**, instead of 40 feet, for RPP-permit cars on RPP blocks. It's been a struggle to get the Parking Enforcement people, and the MPD, to understand that it's legal to park up to 15 feet beyond the no-parking-to-intersection signposts, placed 40 feet from intersections.

I thought I had this under control, but recently an MPD patrol officer with nothing better to do issued a ticket to us. (Emily often comes home late, and finds parking only in that 15-foot spot.) I complained loudly about this ticket, and Commander Kucik of the Third MPD District (Ward One, essentially) asked me for the materials describing this law, so that all MPD officers in this area could be suitably informed. It's a waste of their time, and ours, for them to issue parking tickets to legally parked cars.

The **Pupuseria San Miguel** is a nice little shop, serving pupusas and cerveza. They got themselves in a bit of trouble, though, by adding tables and chairs in their little restaurant without first applying downtown for permission. (Their Certificate of Occupancy is for just 12 seats.) The proprietors speak very limited English, and no doubt didn't realize that they couldn't add seats without first getting approval.

I sponsored a resolution advising the ABC Board to treat the Pupuseria “gently” for their transgression, and spoke for them at the ABC Board's hearing. The Board agreed to fine them modestly – \$250 – and to require them to apply for a “substantial change” for additional seats.

Speaking of restaurants, **Don Juan's Restaurant is getting its permit for a sidewalk café**, six tables at the corner of Lamont and Mount Pleasant. My resolution expressed ANC support for this café, with the proviso that adequate clear space be maintained for pedestrian passage between the tables and the bus shelter. Alberto Ferrufino still has to get Historic Preservation Office approval for his sidewalk café. I believe this will be routine.

I'm pleased to support our Latino entrepreneurs, and they appreciate having their Anglo neighbors speak up for them in dealings with the District bureaucracy. It hasn't always been so. Lately the residential voices that have in the past so harshly opposed anything Mount Pleasant Street merchants wanted to do, have gone quiet. Nobody opposed the sidewalk café for Don Juan's, whereas a couple of years ago there would surely have been opposition, on the usual grounds of noise, disturbance, parking, et cetera. Not this time.

There is an effort to “**revitalize**” **Mount Pleasant Street**, which is suffering from decreasing business, due to competition from the 14th Street development, and the moving of the Latino population out to suburbia. The Office of Planning has been leading the effort, and has held two public meetings, in April and June, to gather residents' input on how the Street can be revitalized. An Advisory Committee has been formed, including representatives from a number of Mount Pleasant organizations.

That's fine, but I have become increasingly unhappy with the absence of any information emerging from this Committee. The goal of the effort is supposed to be a Small Area Plan (SAP), intended to enhance the commercial environment and stimulate business. Okay, we're several months into this process, so when is this SAP going to be formed, and what will it likely incorporate? Exactly how are we going to revitalize Mount Pleasant Street? It isn't just a matter of what residents want, but has to be based on what's going to make financial sense, drawing investment to Mount Pleasant businesses, and new customers to Street merchants. Unfortunately, this Advisory Committee has offered no information about what direction it might be taking, or even what they're talking about. Adding to the concern is the suggestion that a draft SAP is just a couple of months off.

Two resolutions were ready to be offered at the ANC meeting, each expressing, in different ways, dismay at the way this process is going. But I believe that an active exchange of e-mails during the days before the ANC meeting delivered the message that the Office of Planning, and this Advisory Committee, have to do a better job of communicating their work to the Mount Pleasant public. So the ANC agreed to consider neither of these two resolutions, trusting in the participants to improve their communications. To that end, I've set up a Google group for their use, a “listserve” that will also be visible to all, on the Web. In

addition, **the August 4 “informal” meeting of the ANC will focus on this revitalization undertaking.**

Homicides in Mount Pleasant are very rare; none in 2008, one in 2007. The 2007 homicide was inside the Woodner Apartments, evidently a dispute between two men in an apartment. On July 7, one Lester Jackson, 70, was found dead inside his apartment in the Harvard Towers, “blunt force trauma”, **Mount Pleasant's first homicide of 2009**. There was no sign of forced entry.

As in the 2007 homicide, there's nothing here that represents a threat to other residents of Mount Pleasant. It's not like the Shipe killing of 2005, believed to be a random street robbery that turned, unintentionally, into a homicide.

On July 20 we received notice that the **Capital City Charter School** intends to move its upper-school operations to 16th Street, into the buildings previously used for the Stokes Charter School, and more recently the César Chávez Charter School. I'm inclined to welcome Capital City to the neighborhood, but I do wish that they had spoken to us some time ago about this proposal. At Gregg Edwards' motion the ANC objected to the late notice of this change, advising the Public Charter School Board to refrain from approving the change until the ANC had a chance to discuss this with the school. The principal concern is traffic tie-ups around the school.

I intend to support the change in location, and I'll argue that upper-school students entail relatively little traffic trouble, whereas elementary school children tend to be dropped off and picked up by their parents, a characteristic that led to troubles during the Stokes period. But this could have been worked out months ago, and needn't have been left until the last minute. Surely Capital City would like to be up and operating in the new facility in September.

I've complained before that our **ANC grants effort** was a mistake. The initial budget called for \$5000 in grants, and \$3000 for program management. Our expenditures for program management have already exceeded \$6000, and there's much more to be done. On July 21 the ANC increased the management budget to \$10,000, which I surely hope will suffice. That's *twice* the amount disbursed in grants. The total being spent on our grants program will be as much as \$15,000, amounting to 85% of this ANC's annual allocation. We should *not* be doing this.

Third District Commander Kucik recently reported this: “For the past several months the Third District Vice Unit has been conducting an investigation into the drug dealing in the area of 14th and Perry Place, NW. As a result of the investigation, 15 adults have been indicted for distributing narcotics, arrest warrants have been issued for 5 additional adults, and one juvenile has been implicated.”

That nearby area has long been notorious for drug dealing, so this is no surprise. What's more interesting is a report from Lieutenant Vines that **vice attempted drug buys on Monroe Street here – and failed.**

The ANC's *informal* meeting will be on August 4. The next ANC *business* meeting will be on **Tuesday, August 18.**