

Jack's July report

At the June meeting, the ANC:

- Approved a request to DDOT for more bike-locking stanchions on Mount Pleasant Street;
- Advised the Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB) to approve the conceptual design for a driveway to the rear of 1843 Park Road.

I have mentioned in previous newsletters the request for a **driveway to the back door of 1843 Park Road**, to provide access for vehicles needed to serve the aging (92 years!) resident. The problem, of course, is that enlarging the gate to the alley to automobile width will require removal of a portion of the old stone wall lining that back yard. (Because these houses are sited high above Park Road, the back yards function as their principal entrances.) Historic preservation considerations alone would prohibit the removal of any portion of that old wall.

The District's historic preservation law has no provision for special needs; if a resident becomes disabled, by accident or by old age, there is no exception in the law to allow for changes to permit the resident to remain in the home.

However, Federal laws regarding equal access supersede the District's historic preservation law.

Sentiment expressed by residents at the ANC meeting was heavily in favor of allowing the proposed work, on the grounds of fair access to serve the resident. Historic Mount Pleasant worried that approval would serve as a "precedent", and I modified my resolution to refer explicitly to the "fair access" exception to historic preservation. The Commission then approved my resolution by a 4 to 0 vote.

At the HPRB meeting on June 30, the Board expressed great sympathy for the problem of "aging in place". Mount Pleasant has been a Historic District for 30 years now, and an increasing number of residents are having to face the problem of living in houses not designed to accommodate the elderly. Their judgment: *"The Board approved the concept as consistent with the purposes of the preservation law, with the conditions that the gates be solid, to be reviewed by staff, and the stone removed from the wall to be salvaged and carefully stored so that the wall could be restored later. Vote: 6-0."*

The **speed camera on Park Road** is now officially in its 30-day "warning" stage, and in early August, will begin producing tickets, no longer just warnings. I expect drivers to reduce their speeds as they realize that that speed camera is watching. That certainly works on Connecticut Avenue north of Chevy Chase Circle, and it can certainly work here. The point to the exercise is to slow drivers down, not to issue tickets. Drivers who keep their speed below 35 mph will get no tickets; anyone who exceeds 35 deserves one.

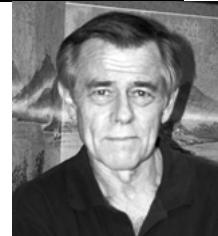
Residents want to know when the long-anticipated **road work on Beach Drive** will begin, knowing that that project will have consequences here. The latest: "after Labor Day". The initial phase of the project is adjacent to Mount Pleasant, from the Broad Branch intersection to the P Street exit.

All of our ANC commissioner terms expire this year. Candidates for ANC can pick up nomination petitions now, to

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be on the ballot in November. Petitions, with 25 signatures of registered voters within the pertinent single-member district, are due at the Board of Elections by August 10. Yes, I'm going to run for another term, and I've been bothering residents, seeking signatures for my petitions. Two of the five Mount Pleasant ANC seats have, as of 7/15, no applicant.

Mount Pleasant residents have long complained that **there is no easy, safe access into Rock Creek Park**, especially for children on bicycles. How does one get kids on bikes down to Beach Drive, on weekends, when much of Beach is closed to traffic?

Well, not easily. Klingle Road descends into Rock Creek Park, but it's a four-lane highway, hazardous for adult bicyclists, seriously unsafe for children, and guarded by a "Pedestrians Prohibited" sign at the Adams Mill intersection. Yes, one can cross to the south side of Klingle and use the sidewalk, but that's narrow, causes conflicts between bicyclists and pedestrians, and leaves one at the wrong end of an automobile ramp onto Klingle. (BTW – it's Klingle Road from Adams Mill down to the cloverleaf, where Klingle turns off and heads up the hill to the south, and the straight-ahead road becomes Porter Street.)

For several months last year Klingle was reduced to a two-lane road, while Pepco construction equipment took over the westbound lanes. It became quite clear during this time that Klingle doesn't need to be a four-lane highway. I suggested to DDOT that one westbound lane be converted into a bike/hike path, for bicyclists and pedestrians, giving residents a safe route into Rock Creek Park, accessing the bike path that runs under the Klingle Road overpass. DDOT thought that was a pretty good idea, and this month offered a preliminary plan for bike lanes on Klingle.

Their plans begin with a "protected" bike lane on westbound Klingle, a five-foot-wide lane separated from traffic by flexible posts. This would not only reach the cloverleaf, where bicyclists can turn off and reach the RCP bike path, but would continue up Porter towards Connecticut Avenue.

In addition, the proposal provides a similarly protected bike lane on eastbound Klingle, towards the Adams Mill Road intersection. Shortly before that intersection the road would revert to two lanes eastbound, one for the right turn onto Adams Mill, one to continue straight on Klingle.

Then, for good measure, the DDOT proposal puts bike lanes on both sides of the 1900 block of Klingle, between the Adams Mill and Walbridge intersections. These would be

ordinary painted bike lanes, with no barrier posts separating the bike lane from traffic.

There's no parking on that block of Klingle, so the bike lanes take away no parking. The bus stops remain as they are now. On the whole, this should have little effect on that block of Klingle Road.

This is a very preliminary plan at this time. DDOT will assess the effects on traffic, and wants to hear from residents if there are any concerns about it. Response has been, so far, favorable.

I believe this is the long-sought safe access into Rock Creek Park for Mount Pleasant residents. I'm told by men working there that, while that westbound lane was taken over by construction equipment, residents came on foot, wanting to use the lane for access to the park. This is a chance to make that a reality, for pedestrians, and especially for young bicyclists, needing safe access to the Rock Creek Park bike path, and, before long, access to the Klingle Valley Trail.

A nasty incident on Newton Street: "*At approximately 7:00 PM [on July 14] in the 1800 block of Newton Street, NW, a group of juveniles ranging in age from 10 to 17, robbed an adult male. They beat him badly and took his wallet and cell phone. Concerned citizens who observed this happening quickly called 911. Officers quickly responded and located 4 juveniles running in the south alley of the 1800 block of Newton Street, NW. The juveniles had the victim's credit cards and cell phone. They also had blood on their clothing. All 4 were arrested.*"

For perspective, before people worry that there's a robbery wave hitting Mount Pleasant – the robbery rate here is lower than anywhere else in DC east of Rock Creek Park. The rate here is half the average for the District, and less than half the rate that prevailed here a decade ago. Yes, one must be cautious here, not careless – this is the inner city, not suburbia – but this is by no means a high-crime neighborhood. Cross 16th Street, and the robbery rate doubles.

That particular dynamic, of bands of children ganging up on hapless pedestrians, has plagued this neighborhood for many years. For some teenagers, this is a sport, an after-school game. In the past, these juveniles have come mainly from east of 16th Street, so blocks of Mount Pleasant adjoining 16th have been especially vulnerable. Lately there have been incidents on the southwest corner of Mount Pleasant, the juveniles perhaps coming from south of Harvard Street.

A **burglary was committed on Walbridge Place** in July, by the popular method of crashing in a back door, in the early afternoon, when residents can be expected to be away. What's notable is how few burglaries there have been of late – in June, not a single one! The current burglary rate in Mount Pleasant is half what it was last year, and just one-fifth the rate of just five years ago. No, crime in Mount Pleasant is not increasing. Don't let the occasional incident, however ugly, make you think otherwise.

The **quarterly police meeting** will be on July 27, 7 pm, La Casa Community Center, 3166 Mt Pleasant Street. Come, if you're worried, and talk this over with our Lieutenant Pate.

Work is well under way in the renovation of Bancroft Elementary. Well, here's a problem: there's an election coming up in November, and for many Mount Pleasant residents, **Bancroft is the voting location**. What to do? I've suggested that the Stoddard Baptist Home might serve as a temporary, substitute voting location. I'm sure this would complicate operations at the Home, but the people at the Home seem to be ready to offer their facility to the Board of Elections.

Some progress is being made on the "Full-Service Restaurant and Bakery" to go into the **Heller's Bakery** site. They've applied for a tavern liquor license, and the place will be known as the "Paisley Fig".

Right now the holdup seems to be a matter of historic preservation, as the new owner would like to rearrange things for efficient use of the small area. Historic preservationists object, wanting the building to look just as it did in 1950. I intend to support the new entrepreneurs, both for the tavern license, and for permission to change the frontage as needed.

Water those recently planted street trees! The District won't do it, and we can't depend on natural rainfall. Casey Trees advises "Ensure your tree receives 25 gallons of water per week, equal to 1.5 inches of rainfall . . . Add a 25-gallon slow-release watering bag. Fill it up just once a week."

A startling statistic, cited by NBC News: **the average home gets about ten bogus, scam calls every week**. The latest on my home phone was one warning vaguely about legal action by the Treasury Department, and instructed me to call quickly so they could "help" me.

A more serious scam call comes from someone claiming that your child, or grandchild, is in trouble somewhere, and desperately needs some money sent. That NBC report showed how a scammer could "spoof" the identity of someone known to you, so Caller ID doesn't reveal the scam.

My somewhat stern policy on telephone calls is that if Caller ID doesn't indicate someone I know, or I otherwise can deduce that the call is legitimate, I don't answer the phone. If it's a legitimate call, they'll leave a voicemail message. Rarely does a suspect call turn out to be legitimate.

The **ANC1D website** has been rebuilt, as was necessary to suit changing internet practices; the old site didn't work well with tablets and smartphones, and those are increasingly the way people access websites. I don't understand why the ANC had to go to North Carolina to find a contractor to do the job, but that's what was done. Of course he doesn't know Mount Pleasant, and the images he used to decorate the site would have one think this was Chevy Chase. I was able to get a couple of images replaced, one to show Latino school-children, another to highlight our African culture. I think there's still room for improvement; our website must endorse the multicultural, multiethnic, multilingual nature of Mount Pleasant. Everyone is welcome here; no one is an "outsider" in this neighborhood; and the ANC website should show that.

The next meeting of the ANC will be on Tuesday, July 26, 7:00 pm, at the Mount Pleasant Library.