

Jack's June report to residents

Here is news of the **June 3 meeting**, and other happenings in Mount Pleasant. The ANC:

- ◆ Reviewed ANC budgeting and accounting. As of May 3, I'm ANC Treasurer. Coincidentally, on May 15 we were advised of a routine audit of our books, for the period 2005-2008. Our last audit was four years ago, and we're due.
- ◆ Presented the ANC budget for fiscal year 2008. This proposed budget (a planning document, not necessarily actual spending) is posted for public review, for ANC approval at the July meeting.
- ◆ Advised DDOT to implement "quickly" a "visitor pilot parking program" in Mount Pleasant, and to plan a "day pass program" for Mount Pleasant teachers, employees, and contractors.

Having become ANC Treasurer, I prepared our **fiscal report** for the second quarter of FY08 (Jan-March 2008), as well as a reply to the auditor's request for a number of FY07 financial documents. Both were turned in to the ANC auditor, Mr. Lynard Barnum, on CDs – no paper, everything electronic. Mr. Barnum says that we're the first ANC to provide reports in this manner.

The ANC revised its **budget for FY2008**. The budget is in modest surplus for "operating" expenses, but digs into savings to cover services provided by Mount Pleasant resident Neil Richardson, whose contacts in the District Government will be invaluable for increasing our effectiveness. The budget is available for public review during June, anticipating ANC approval at the July meeting.

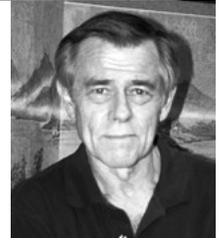
Councilmember Graham, after attempting unsuccessfully to overcome CM Mary Cheh's anti-**Kling Road** measure in the May 13 preliminary Council vote, tried again at the June 3 final vote on the budget bill. His motion this time would only prevent funding of the bicycle/pedestrian path, leaving the "shall not be re-opened to the public for motor vehicle traffic" provision intact. The Councilmember's measure is in precise opposition to this ANC's resolution of May 6, unanimously supporting the funding of the bike/hike trail.

Mr Graham had obtained a \$9.6M cost estimate from DDOT for the bike/hike path, and he and his two allies (Muriel Bowser and Carol Schwarz) made much of it. No one pointed out that it was unreasonable for the cost of the bike/hike path to have increased eight-fold since the 2003 Berger study, while the cost of the automobile road had not. Furthermore, the cost that matters is the *marginal* cost of a bike/hike path versus a minimal repair of the environment, including the paving of an access road for service trucks to reach utilities in the valley. In 2003, the difference between the bike/hike trail and the minimal "no build" was merely \$270,000. Even allowing for increased costs during the past five years, the real cost of a bike/hike trail, versus the minimal "no build" alternative, is *less than \$1M*, not the \$9.6M that our Councilmember is complaining about.

ANC 1D03 NEWSLETTER #70

Jack McKay, June 22, 2008

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The District Council soundly rejected Mr Graham's last-ditch effort to head off the proposal to convert Kling Road to a bike/hike trail, by the same 10 to 3 vote that rejected the Councilmember's motion on May 13.

This battle is *over*. Even Councilmember Graham observed, in offering his motion, that "the handwriting is on the wall". The Council wants this 17-year dispute to end, and evidently the only way to end it is to yield to the National Park Service, give up on the road, and build a bike/hike path instead.

This newsletter is funded entirely by me, out of my own pocket. The contents are my responsibility alone. With the help of a neighbor, I deliver 720 copies around my district, every month. It's my way of telling all my constituents, including those who don't monitor Internet sites, what the ANC is up to, what I'm doing, and what else is going on in our neighborhood. I know of no other ANC commissioner in DC who does a monthly, delivered-to-your-door newsletter.

This is an election year, and yes, I intend to run for another term as your ANC commissioner. I expect strong opposition, due to my positions on, for example, Kling Road, and live music in Mount Pleasant restaurants.

Speaking of live music, Haydee's is now offering mariachi bands; has anybody noted any consequent problems in the neighborhood? I have heard of none. The ban on live music and dancing in Mount Pleasant restaurants was really an attempt by a few residents to impose their views of what a proper restaurant should be. But if you don't like live music, or people dancing, then don't go to restaurants that offer either. If you do, then you now have that choice, right here in Mount Pleasant.

The **Mount Pleasant Traffic Study** has completed its survey of "existing conditions". At my insistence, they worried about commuter cut-through traffic (on 17th Street, for example), and about congestion around Bancroft as parents in cars await their children. They seemed to conclude that cut-through traffic is not as bad as residents report, and they have ideas for dealing with the school congestion problem.

Councilmember Graham worried a great deal about a surge of heavy traffic through Mount Pleasant due to the shopping developments in Columbia Heights, and tried to get the Traffic Study to address this theoretical problem. Testifying (as an individual, not for the ANC) before his committee last December, I asserted that there was in fact little to worry about, much less change our traffic patterns for. There won't be much traffic from west of Rock Creek Park, because those

residents will prefer going to suburban shopping centers. What traffic from the west there will be will come at off-peak hours, when our roads have capacity to spare, because people avoid going shopping in the midst of rush hour.

Mr. Graham, persuaded by my testimony and DDOT predictions of modest traffic increases, agreed that “wait and see” would be better than rushing into changes. This relieved the Traffic Study of having to worry so much about predicting future traffic through Mount Pleasant, and allowed them to focus on the traffic and parking problems we've got right now, such as traffic speed, commuter traffic on side streets, and congestion around schools.

At the Traffic Study community meeting on May 21, Mr Graham agreed that “wait and see” had been good advice. There's been no evident increase in traffic through Mount Pleasant since the opening of the Target in early March. The much-feared avalanche of east-west traffic has simply not materialized. The Columbia Heights shopping area is a great success, the Target and other shops enjoying good crowds, but these shoppers are arriving on foot, and via Metro, not in cars. The 1000-car Target garage has never been even half full, and is generally only one-fourth used, while Metro patronage at the Columbia Heights stop is up by 24% during the week, 39% on weekends, versus a year ago.

At 6:45 AM on Sunday, June 8, two men boarded a Metrobus at 16th and Newton, pulled out a shotgun and a knife, and proceeded to **rob the bus passengers**. I think that's an especially scary crime of violence, which has been little noticed.

As of June 19, there have been four robberies in Mount Pleasant (including the above), all of them east of 18th Street.

Parking is a sensitive topic here, because there's not enough of it, especially at night. The ANC resolution is my attempt to balance competing, legitimate needs for curbside parking.

The “**visitor pilot parking program**” is coming soon, authorized by legislation by Councilmember Graham. Currently a resident must visit the nearest police station and apply for a permit for any visitor. The visitor permit is good for only 15 days, and these permits are *not* valid for household employees, e.g., after-school day care workers, or contractors working on your house. Just last month a contractor called on emergency for pumping out sewage backing up into a Lamont Street basement during May's heavy rains was ticketed for Residential Permit Parking (RPP) violation. That's absurd.

The new “pilot” visitor parking program will simply issue a visitor parking permit to every household on an RPP block, valid until the end of the year. The homeowner can simply lend this permit to visitors. Furthermore, it will be valid for contractors, or day care workers, or other household employees, so that they can park on RPP blocks. A similar program is already under way in Ward Four.

This should reduce the pressure on our non-zoned blocks. Currently, residents of RPP blocks must tell their household employees to go park on the nearest unzoned block and walk. Residents of unzoned blocks are justifiably unhappy at

having their blocks used as parking lots for the benefit of the residents of the zoned blocks. This is one reason why our unzoned blocks are jam-packed during the day, while our zoned blocks have space aplenty. The visitor parking permit program will surely take some of these cars off the unzoned blocks, and put them on zoned blocks.

Data from the traffic study confirm this crowding of non-RPP cars on our few unzoned blocks. By midmorning, RPP-zoned blocks are 36% vacant, while unzoned blocks are just 12% vacant, presumably due in part to commuters to Mount Pleasant. This is not fair to the residents of those unzoned blocks (e.g., Newton, Monroe, Ingleside), who find their blocks practically full, while parking is relatively easy on their neighbors' RPP-zoned blocks.

Clearly either all of the neighborhood, or none of it, should be zoned, as the Parking Task Force recommended four years ago. Why not zone everything? Because this would impose hardships on people coming to Mount Pleasant to work in our schools, shops, and nonprofits. Do we really want to tell Bancroft, Stokes, and Sacred Heart teachers, for example, that they may not park on our streets, even though there are hundreds of vacant parking spots available during the day?

Our parking problem comes at night, not during the day, because an estimated 4,000 Mount Pleasant residents take their cars to work every morning. Hence, **daytime-only parking permits**, as proposed by the ANC resolution, would serve our schools quite nicely, for example, while imposing little hardship on us residents. If all those non-RPP cars were spread evenly around the neighborhood, instead of being packed on a few unzoned blocks, the vacancy rate of our zoned blocks would decrease only slightly, from 36% to 32%. Surely we residents of zoned blocks can live with that.

The “day pass” parking proposal is modeled on so-called “performance parking” programs implemented in other cities. People commuting to Mount Pleasant could *purchase* daytime-only parking permits, for perhaps \$75 a month, a fee higher than mass transit, to avoid undercutting the latter. The revenues from this parking-permit program would be shared with the neighborhood.

Our resolution calls for neighborhood-wide RPP (assuming that the residents vote accordingly), but *only* after a daytime parking permit program is developed. DDOT has expressed a willingness to investigate this new model for making the best use of limited curbside parking space.

Nighttime parking is, of course, an entirely different problem. Cars parked here overnight can be assumed to belong to residents, or to their guests. Our parking problem comes when those 4,000 cars taken by residents to their jobs come home after work. RPP doesn't help with that problem.

By the way, in Japan, a new car can be registered only after an owner proves access to a private, off-street parking place for the car. They don't permit cluttering up streets with parked cars. No, nobody's considering such a policy here.

The next ANC meeting will be on **Tuesday, July 1, 7:00 pm**, La Casa Community Center, 3166 Mt. Pleasant St.