

Jack's June report

On June 16, the ANC did the following:

- Endorsed an application by Don Juan's Restaurant for a sidewalk café;
- Expressed concern that the redesign of the Mount Pleasant Library would permanently cut off access by fire trucks to the rear of apartment houses behind the library.

The petitions for **Residential Permit Parking for the 1800 blocks of Monroe and Newton, Ingleside Terrace, and the 3300 block of 19th** have been reviewed by DDOT, and all have been approved. RPP will go into effect during the coming weeks.

RPP permits can be purchased on-line, or at the main DMV service center at 95 M St SW, or the Mall in Georgetown Park at 3222 M Street, NW. I've found the Georgetown DMV office to be much more convenient than the C Street office. That Georgetown office has also grown up into a full-scale service center, much larger than the two-window place it used to be.

One problem has cropped up. Recall that I held off on RPP zoning of these blocks until a suitable arrangement could be made for Bancroft Elementary, and the Stoddard Baptist Home. The "day pass" system was going to permit their employees (and other commuters to Mount Pleasant businesses and institutions) to park on blocks west of 18th Street, for a modest fee, about \$2.50 per day. This program was to be implemented by the end of March.

Unfortunately, a few residents complained to Councilmember Graham that it was just terrible to force employees of these institutions to actually pay for parking on our neighborhood streets. Other residents complained to the Councilmember that it was just terrible to "sell" our precious curbside parking to commuters. The Councilmember called a halt to the day-pass system, insisting on a "community meeting" about the proposal, evidently distrusting the assessment of the ANC, which has twice called for such a commuter-parking program, in the absence of any commercial parking in Mount Pleasant. Initially this meeting was to be on May 21, but that was cancelled, and now nobody knows when a rescheduled meeting might take place.

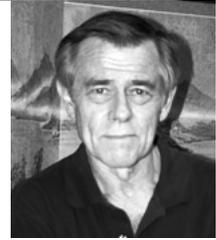
I don't have confidence in "community meetings", because such meetings tend to be dominated by a handful of residents who are aggressively vocal about pressing their opinions in public, whereas many residents find such affairs intimidating and are not comfortable with speaking in public. These meetings can easily be taken over by anyone who is energetic about persuading people sharing his opinions to attend.

As for the **daytime parking passes**, the foundation of this approach is the fact that Mount Pleasant, according to the Traffic Study, has over 500 parking spots vacant during the day – and that's despite the dozens of commuters who have been parking on our unzoned blocks, to go to work at Bancroft and Stoddard. Having all this unused parking space, why not let these commuters use some of it, for what is a very modest parking fee? A number of residents of the soon-to-be-zoned blocks did so only on the basis of this daytime pass

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program coming into effect, so that Bancroft and Stoddard people would still be allowed to park here, for a fee that's no more than twice-daily bus fare.

Unfortunately, because of the complaints voiced to the Councilmember, there will be no provision for daytime commuter parking as RPP goes into effect. I have advised Bancroft and Stoddard to lobby the Councilmember hard for a restoration of the daytime-pass program, so that they will not be left high and dry, with virtually no place in the neighborhood to park. I'll continue to press for this indispensable program, as we had conceived it, months ago.

On May 4, a meeting at the Library focused on the problem of **fire-engine access to the rear of the building**. Recall that in the terrible Deauville fire, no trucks could reach the rear of the burning building, via the narrow alley that runs behind the Library. Hoses were literally run through apartment houses facing 16th Street and out apartment windows to put water on the back of the burning Deauville. Think of the consequences had people been trapped on the upper floors, needing rescue via fire truck ladders.

Much to my dismay, the Fire and Emergency Medical (FEMS) officers, Fire Chief Rubin and Fire Marshal Falls, dismissed the problem of the inaccessibility by fire trucks of the alley sides of several large apartment houses in Mount Pleasant. The monster eight-alarm fire at the Deauville was, they said, a unique event, and no one should worry about it happening again. As for difficulty in getting trucks into alleys, they simply said that they cope with such problems, one way or another (hoses through houses, I guess). In short, if the redesign of the Mount Pleasant Library fails to provide access to the rear of that building, and to the apartment houses sharing that area, well, we're not to worry about it. If there's another big apartment house fire, the fire folks will just figure out a way to fight it, rear access or no.

I considered that an inadequate response, and I guess I expressed myself pretty sharply, much to the irritation of the FEMS officers. The ANC this month passed a resolution affirming our position that the Library redesign should take into account emergency vehicle access to these buildings. I doubt that anything's going to change – the Library redesign will not provide for emergency vehicle access to that area – but we've stated our position.

The recently-completed audit of ANC 6C (Capitol Hill) showed that 82% of their grants were not supported by proper documentation. That's all too typical of ANC grants. Our modest grants program will do better, as everyone here is

well aware of this problem, and we've reversed the funding sequence. Our grantees will get the money only after they provide the required documents.

The audit of our ANC has yet to be released. It was supposed to be completed by the end of January, but the Auditor has found only minor shortcomings -- "late filing of quarterly reports and lack of receipts to support all petty cash disbursements" -- and evidently is in no hurry to send it out. I've put an end to the late reporting, and to the lack of petty cash receipts. We've just received a quarterly allotment with not a penny withheld, our Q4FY08 report having been passed by the auditor without a blemish.

The Auditor is much more concerned with problems at other ANCs. According to the audit for ANC 7A, three checks, totalling over \$12,000, were "altered to include the Treasurer's name or the word 'cash' after the vendor's name, allowing the Treasurer to cash the checks." As for the items supposedly purchased for that ANC with all this cash, the ANC office was burglarized, and everything disappeared. As for that supposed burglary, there's no police report, and the insurance company rejected the claim for the burglary for lack of any evidence concerning the items said to have been stolen. Yes, I think the District Auditor has more serious things to worry about than some imperfections in our ANC financial record-keeping.

I've complained frequently about the **abuse of "Emergency No Parking" placards by District agencies and their contractors**. The 3100 block of 19th Street has been severely abused this month. The Urban Forestry Administration (UFA) of DDOT laid claim to the whole block, both sides, for "tree work", for four days of the week of June 8. Of course, nobody showed up to do the tree work. Placards then reappeared the following week, as again the UFA demanded that all residents remove their cars by 7 AM, Monday through Thursday. Again: nobody showed, no work was done.

Ah, but **Parking Enforcement** showed up, and issued 12 fifty-dollar tickets to residents, at precisely 8:03 am on the morning of Wednesday, June 17. Why they chose that morning, and no other, I don't know. The UFA wasn't coming, not on that day, nor on any other.

I protested to Bill Howland, the director of Public Works, about these pointless tickets, and he agreed to "*void all of the tickets issued*". Councilmember Graham, cc'd on the e-mail to Mr Howland, forwarded it to the Director of DDOT, Gabe Klein, asking if there is "a system in place to prevent this". Mr Klein agreed to "to update our internal policy" to prevent such incidents (in short, no, there's no such system).

The fundamental problem is that it costs District agencies and contractors nothing to demand more curbside space than they really need, for longer periods than they really need.

On June 3 an **enhanced crosswalk** was installed across Park Road at 19th Street, raised a bit above the street pavement, and brightly marked. That's nice, and maybe drivers will be a little more inclined to stop for pedestrians. (Most already do, but it takes only one who doesn't, because he's drunk, or asleep, or distracted by a cellphone, to ruin your life.)

But this improved crosswalk marking won't do anything to reduce **traffic speeds along Park Road**. Only firm speed enforcement will do that. The ANC has called for speed cameras on the 1800 and 2000 blocks of Park Road. Will we get them? That's up to the MPD, not DDOT.

In an ongoing e-mail traffic discussion of traffic speed among DDOT, residents, and the Councilmember, I've brought up the problem of **perverse timing of the stop light on Klinger Road at Adams Mill**. When that light goes green, you've got just 12 seconds to make it to the Walbridge intersection before that light turns red. It's physically impossible to get there in that time without exceeding the posted speed limit. Drivers familiar with that light have learned either to race along Klinger to beat the red, or to cut through the alley paralleling Klinger, bypassing the traffic light altogether.

The Director of DDOT, Gabe Klein, first brushed off my complaint: DDOT "can definitely look at it, and make changes if justified, but I think this argument can be made throughout the city in any number of situations". Then, "I will not be participating in this discussion further, so please remove me from the email chain."

The Councilmember then weighed in: "This is certainly worth a look. If we can make this change without creating another problem then let's do it." That brought a meek reply: "Yes, I definitely agree CM Graham."

Not long ago I wrote that the "storm water fee" on our **WASA bills** was going to be replaced by an "**impervious area**" fee. Uh, no. Turns out that the "impervious area" fees are by WASA, and the "storm water" fees are for the District Department of the Environment (DDOE), collected by WASA via their monthly bills. So the "impervious area" fee is simply a new \$1.24 fee added to our water/sewage bills. The sewer rate was decreased a bit, so the net WASA change is small. But the DDOE has piggybacked its own new, \$2.57 "stormwater" fee on top of the old.

WASA, having just this May imposed its new "impervious area" fee, has already applied to increase that fee, as of October 1. That's in addition to raising the water and sewer rates by ten percent, as of that date. Furthermore, the "impervious area" fee is intended to increase by a hefty 38 percent per year, for the next eight years. And by the way, it doesn't matter how much "impervious area" you've got, all residents will be billed for the same amount, 1000 square feet (one "Equivalent Residential Unit", or ERU.)

Well, suppose you contain your rainwater runoff with rain barrels and "rain gardens". Can you get these charges reduced? WASA is considering that possibility, but their experience with such homeowner-maintained stormwater retention facilities is discouraging. Participants in a pilot program reportedly failed to maintain their rainwater retention equipment properly.

The ANC will have no *informal* meeting in July. The next ANC *business* meeting will be on **Tuesday, July 21, 7 pm**.