

Jack's June report

At the May meeting, the ANC:

- Approved a sole-source contract with one Adam Pyburn for the construction of a new ANC website;
- Advised ABRA to terminate the Settlement Agreement (“voluntary agreement”) with the Purple Patch restaurant;
- Advised the BZA to approve the request for a “special exception” to permit a back deck at 1632 Hobart Street.

As I finish up this newsletter, before sending it off for printing, news coverage of the **massacre in Orlando** is dominating television and the internet. Many times I remark on how much better the world is than it was when I was a child, before civil rights, before women's rights, before gay rights. Then something awful like Orlando happens, to remind me of how far we remain from that ideal world of justice, equality, and *safety*, for all.

Only three of the five commissioners attended the May 24 meeting. At my recommendation, only things that could not be postponed to the June meeting were considered, everything else being put off until we could have better attendance. Three is a quorum, but still, controversial topics are better handled with all five commissioners present.

At the March meeting, the ANC agreed to pay Career Path DC “an amount not to exceed \$3500” for **the removal of gum from Mount Pleasant Street sidewalks**. This was after paying about \$400 last May for the repair of the “gum buster” machine owned by Mount Pleasant Main Street.

So I was pleased to see a crew at work on May 25, scrubbing away sidewalk gum. But I was dismayed to see that they weren't using the Main Street “gum buster”. The operator had some reason for using a different machine. This is not a big deal, but did we waste \$400 of DC taxpayer funds to repair a machine that won't be used?

The anc1d website needs to be rebuilt, and at the April meeting, the commission “approve[d] a budget of \$1500 for web site enhancement”. The budget agreement did not identify any website contractor to do the work; it merely agreed that funds should be set aside for the task.

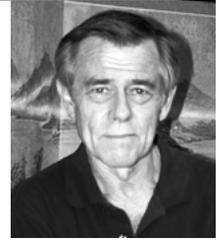
Unfortunately, one commissioner took that budget agreement as permission to select a contractor himself, and to commit the ANC to that contractor with an \$800 up-front payment. I objected that approval of a budget was not authorization for any one commissioner to hire a contractor to do the work, nor to commit ANC funds to that contractor. The DC Code governing ANCs is clear: *“No expenditure of any amount shall be made without the specific authorization of the Commission”*. Agreeing on a project budget is not “specific authorization” for committing the ANC to any contract, or contractor. If we're going to give the job to a certain contractor, the Commission should agree to that, and that should be done in a public session, not in private.

Despite my protests, one commissioner forced the selection of a particular website contractor, one Adam Pyburn of Durham, North Carolina, and effectively forced payment, too, paying Mr Pyburn \$800 on his own account, when I resisted providing an ANC check.

ANC 1D03 NEWSLETTER #161

Jack McKay, June 13, 2016

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As Treasurer of ANC1D, I have responsibility for how this commission handles its finances, and I'm the one who has to go to the District Auditor with justifications for our financial dealings. I've been Treasurer for seven of the past eight years, and during these years only 2.6% of our expenditures have been “disallowed” by the Auditor. Compare the average disallowance rate for all ANCs, 8.8% in fiscal 2015. There are strict rules for handling public funds, and I make sure that those rules are observed.

I cannot tolerate being forced by any commissioner to mis-handle ANC funds, in this case, choosing a sole-source contractor, and committing the ANC to payment to that contractor, without explicit consent by the commission, obtained at a public meeting where residents can see what the ANC is doing with public funds, and why. I had planned to resign as Treasurer at the May meeting, but the poor attendance caused me to postpone resignation to the June meeting. The commission will have to choose a new Treasurer immediately, and all five commissioners should be on hand for that.

I mentioned in my May newsletter that a Park Road resident **“wants to remove a portion of an alley wall** so that she can put a parking pad in her back yard, easily accessible from her home”. That description was unfortunately inaccurate. The Historic Preservation Office (HPO) agenda said “alter rear stone wall and provide parking area in rear yard”. But the actual plans make no mention of “parking”: it is a “driveway addition”, not a “parking area”.

The resident's daughters explained that the problem is not “parking” – the 92-year-old resident does not drive – but access, as it has become increasingly difficult to get the aged woman from her back door to the alley. (The front entrance, high above Park Road, is completely unsuitable.)

It's well known that one of the most-feared aspects of old age is becoming isolated, trapped in one's own home, unable to go anywhere. Losing the ability to drive a car is an important factor in causing old-age isolation. Here in the city there are buses, but those are impractical for this resident, who could not possibly walk to the nearest bus stop. There is Metro-Access, which provides limited mobility services to the elderly and the disabled, but it's got to be able to come to within walking or wheelchair distance.

That's what this Park Road matter is about: how to provide vehicular access, such that this resident will be able to be transported to and from her home, for, for example, medical services. And because this is about access, not parking, the

problem could not be resolved by converting the carriage house on the lot to a parking garage.

In the end, it comes down to this: *which is more important, the ability of this resident to come and go from her home, despite her old-age disabilities, or the integrity of the rock wall along her back alley?* According to Historic Preservation, the esthetics of rock wall are more important than the welfare of the resident. It's a nice-looking wall, to be sure, but I think the well-being of homeowners should take priority over the cosmetics of the exterior of the home.

Of course the residents will have to prove that fair access requires the driveway. If they can do that, then historic preservation really must yield to fair access for the aged and disabled.

Mosquito season is upon us. I've mentioned that Asian Tiger mosquitoes have breeding habits different from those of our ordinary mosquitoes. Evolved in a forest habitat, these are "container" mosquitoes, laying eggs in small cups, not in pools of stagnant water. In this respect, the Asian Tiger mosquitoes, *Aedes albopictus*, are similar to the dreaded yellow fever mosquito, *Aedes aegypti*. We see few *aegypti* mosquitoes at this latitude, but the Asian Tigers are numerous. Both of these mosquitoes carry nasty tropical diseases, including dengue, chikungunya, and Zika.

The experience of a Miami mosquito inspector is pertinent: "Responding to a South Miami couple's call about rainwater sitting in an abandoned swimming pool next door, [Inspector] Vasquez found larvae for the West Nile mosquito, but no *Aegypti* -- until he walked through the complaining residents' own front yard . . . where [*Aedes aegypti*] Larvae were growing in a clay pot the size of a Dixie cup and in a planter's saucer." (Business Week, June 1, 2016).

That's why it's so important for us residents to patrol our yards for such small container-like objects, dumping the water from them after any summer rain. The Asian Tiger mosquito problem cannot be effectively addressed with conventional pesticide sprays, but requires us residents to minimize their breeding sites.

Curiously, the Miami resident with the mosquito complaint rejected the inspector's observation that her mosquitoes were coming from her own little containers, not the neglected pool next door. She refused to believe that these *Aedes* mosquitoes are forest-dwelling "container" mosquitoes, not the stagnant-water insects that we're familiar with. Stubborn!

On March 25 a **speed camera was installed on Park Road**, in that last block before the bridge over Piney Branch Parkway. As of early June, the machine remains "under review", awaiting "a decision". Meanwhile it's ineffectual at slowing traffic, of course. It's got to be in action, and well signposted, if drivers are to be persuaded to slow down. Waiting for this to come to pass is very frustrating.

Parking in Mount Pleasant is tough – there just aren't enough curbside spots to go around, because this neighborhood was laid out when car ownership was uncommon. Finding a legal place to park, if you get home from work after around 8 pm, can be impossible. One of my early

accomplishments was ending the rush-hour parking ban on Park Road, opening up about 60 parking spots for overnight parking. But there still just aren't enough.

In 2013, a misguided ANC commissioner brought about the elimination of four parking spots on 18th Street, just above Park Road. Drivers exiting the alley on the west side of 18th had a problem with visibility for drivers coming down 18th, as all too many morning commuters do. So the no-parking space required above that alley exit was increased by DDOT from the legislated distance for alley exits, 5 feet, to 25 feet.

Well, okay, I understand the problem there. But DDOT didn't stop with that one spot, but expanded the no-parking zones to 20-24 feet on both sides of that alley exit, and across 18th Street, for the alley on the east side of the street as well.

That's four parking spots lost, where the problem justified the loss of only one, or perhaps two.

I continue my lonely struggle to retrieve two or three of these lost parking spaces. Oddly, I'm encountering resistance from the commissioner for the east side of 18th Street, who seems to think that no one minds the loss of those parking spaces. It would be helpful for residents who would like to see two or three of those spots restored to communicate their concern to the ANC, via ancl1d@googlegroups.com.

Speaking of parking – there's space on **Klingle Road**, west of the Walbridge Place intersection, for three curbside parking spots, which would surely be useful for visitors to Klingle Road residents. Parked cars there would also slow traffic, and would provide a buffer between the sidewalk and the passing traffic. There's no traffic need for two lanes westbound on Klingle; Park Road, which once was two lanes westbound, gets along just fine with a single lane.

Should I revive my long-ago effort to add a few parking spaces on Klingle, between the Walbridge intersection and the bus stop? I need to hear from the nearby residents.

Theft from auto is the crime that most frequently plagues Mount Pleasant residents. In 2015, for example, there were 132 thefts from auto reported in Mount Pleasant, compared to 32 burglaries and 29 robberies. It's just too easy to break into a car on a quiet street, and rarely are the offenders caught.

Remarkably, the theft from auto count is sharply down this year. Last year, there were 49 such thefts through the end of May, but this year, only 21 have been reported. Is this an anomaly, or a real change? Let's hope for the latter.

We continue to work at eliminating those old "**voluntary agreements**" that have long been a useless torment to Mount Pleasant restaurants. The VA for Marleny's Restaurant was terminated on May 11. At the May meeting, the ANC voted to support the request by the Purple Patch for the termination of theirs, inherited from the previous restaurants at their location. The VA for Corado's Guatemalan Restaurant is currently being "placarded" for a hearing scheduled for June 13, when I expect that their VA will be terminated.

The next meeting of the ANC will be on <u>Tuesday, June 21</u> , 7:00 pm, at the Mount Pleasant Library.
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