

## Jack's June report

At the May meeting, the ANC did the following:

- Agreed to spend up to \$700 for the replacement of burned-out bulbs in the “fiesta lights” strung across Mount Pleasant Street;
- Advised the Department of Transportation to proceed with the Mount Pleasant Street streetlight upgrade, employing LED lamps of the lowest feasible Correlated Color Temperature (CCT);
- Advised the District Council to impose a limit on the time a car can be left parked on public space, perhaps 45 days;
- Advised the Council to consider the recommendations raised by the DC Fiscal Policy Institute’s “Untie DC’s Hands” letter;
- Advised the D.C. Historic Preservation Review Board to support the proposed back addition project at 1745 Harvard Street;
- Endorsed a request by non-profits to park a mobile technology training lab on Mount Pleasant Street in June.

A DDOT contractor is starting work on **replacing the streetlights along Mount Pleasant Street**, from Park Road to Harvard Street. This is the long-awaited conversion from the “cobras” overhanging the street to the styles appropriate for a historic district – mainly, the “Washington Uprights” that already line our residential streets.

That's nice, I suppose, though I'm sure there will be problems with the specific locations of some of the new streetlights. There will be 44 of them, replacing 22 existing lights, and no doubt some of those in new locations may be awkwardly placed. But this doubling of the number of streetlights has to be done, to provide sufficient illumination of the street and sidewalks. The lamps in the existing streetlights are 400-watt high-pressure sodium-vapor (HPS) lamps, whereas the lamps in the new streetlights will be 120-watt or 150-watt LEDs.

DDOT calculates an average illuminance of the street of about 2 foot-candles. That's about what there is right under our current side-street streetlights; bright, but not oppressively so. The current light level on Mount Pleasant Street is about 5 foot-candles. It doesn't appear that there's going to be a problem of excessive brightness (as was observed on a block of Adams Mill Road in 2014, before DDOT replaced the 250 watt HPS lamps with 150 watt units, at the ANC's request).

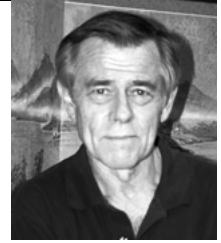
I mentioned in the May newsletter that there was a problem with the LED light “color”. These LEDs naturally produce a very “blue” light, considered “cold” and unpleasant by many people. (Our new alley lights are 5000K LEDs.) Responding to complaints about the harsh quality of this blue-white light, streetlight manufacturers have developed lights that are less blue, decreasing the “cold” appearance of the light. DDOT planned to install 4000K LEDs here – not as blue as the new alley lights, but not as “warm” as the developing standard for LED streetlights, a color temperature of 3000K.

The ANC protested the use of 4000K LEDs, worrying that these would be found objectionable by many residents, and wanting to do better. And on May 30 we received word from

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Jack McKay, June 11, 2017

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DDOT that they would instead install 3000K LEDs, essentially the state of the technology at present.

The light from these streetlights will be a pure white, lacking the blueness of the 5000K lamps, but also very different from the yellow-orange color of the current HPS streetlights (color temperature 2200K). I expect that the change from yellow-orange to white will bring about some complaints. But there's really nothing wrong with white light, which will yield much more accurate colors of anything illuminated. The 3000K LEDs are simply the best that can be done at this time, and I'm sure we'll become accustomed to white light, instead of yellow-orange, on Mount Pleasant Street.

I offered the resolution proposing that the District Council **impose some limit on the time a car can be left parked, unmoved, on the street.** Years ago there was a limit, just 72 hours. That caused difficulty because residents going away on business trips or vacation could easily exceed that limit, and return home to find their cars labeled “abandoned”. In 2003 the District Council rewrote the abandoned-car regulations, eliminating that too-short time limit, and now a car can be left in place for months.

The law that eliminated the 72-hour limit also defined the criteria for an “abandoned” car, namely, that “at least 2 of the following apply”:

- (A) The vehicle is extensively damaged, including fire damage;
- (B) The vehicle is apparently inoperable, including a vehicle missing its transmission, motor, or one or more tires, and which is not undergoing emergency repair;
- (C) The vehicle serves as harborage for rats, vermin, and other pests; or
- (D) The vehicle does not display valid tags or a valid registration sticker.

In practice, it has become very difficult to have an apparently abandoned car identified as such, and removed. I've found that one generally has to wait for the registration to expire before a car can legally qualify as “abandoned”, and be towed away. That may, of course, be many months.

My resolution proposes that the Council impose some limit on curbside parking, perhaps 45 days. Aside from truly “abandoned” cars, it's not reasonable for residents to “warehouse” their cars on our residential streets. We can't afford such inefficient use of our all-too-limited curbside parking.

The much-anticipated **Paisley Fig** is now planning to open in the Heller's Bakery site in late summer or early fall. Their

sister operation, the Room 11 Restaurant and Bakery, just received a glowing review in the City Paper.

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Commissioner Karaffa's **Comprehensive Plan resolution**, introduced in February, and tabled in March and April, was tabled again at the May meeting. It became evident upon his first presentation of the resolution that community feedback was needed. Stuart is planning community meetings on the topic, most importantly, on Saturday, June 17, 11:30 AM, at the Library. (Stuart wants people to sign up to attend the meeting, via <http://tinyURL.com/ANC1DTownHall>.)

Stuart's resolution is in support of a statement of "priorities" deriving from the Greater Greater Washington (GGW) organization. The general theme of these "priorities" is "increased density", based on the notion that a massive building boom will reduce the cost of housing in DC. Among the rather troubling recommendations of this "priorities letter" is this:

*Clarify zoning authority. Through the Comprehensive Plan, the District should affirm that the Zoning Commission has the purview to allow increased density for Planned Unit Developments that supersedes the levels in the Comprehensive Plan's maps in exchange for community benefits.*

In short, give the Zoning Commission a blank check for "increased density", above and beyond whatever is already in the Comprehensive Plan. This is the GGW philosophy: cram as many households as possible into as small an area as possible, thus creating neighborhoods so compact that everything anyone needs is within walking distance, residents take the subway or bus to work, and nobody owns a car. Here's what the InTowner newspaper had to say about this provision:

*Under the guise of promoting affordable housing, some developers hope to remove protections for neighborhood densities designated in the DC Comprehensive Plan. . . . This far-reaching proposed change would give the Zoning Commission's five unelected members the final word in the approval of major PUD [Planned Unit Development] projects and would preempt the ability of residents to legally challenge developments that do not adhere to the Plan's land use map for their neighborhoods. [InTowner, March 2017]*

That is, build high-rise apartment houses everywhere, and don't let residents who object fight back. And if you can't do that (historic preservation precludes such a thing in the row-house portions of Mount Pleasant), then change the zoning regulations to allow more density, by putting more households into each row house. Already our row houses are being chopped up into multi-unit condominium structures, three and four families being housed where previously there were only one or two. It's no wonder that a number of developers are happy to support this proposal.

It was no surprise to me that this notion ran into fierce resistance from residents, most of whom agree that the density we've got is quite high enough. I'll vote against Stuart's resolution, and I believe I have one ally on this commission. I will need another vote if Stuart's resolution is not to pass.

The ANC agreed to advise the District Council "to consider the recommendations raised by **the DC Fiscal Policy Institute's "Untie DC's Hands" letter**". A few years ago, the Council accepted the recommendations of a Tax Revision Committee, and put a number of tax reductions into the DC Code, to be implemented over coming years, as District finances permits. Some of the tax cuts serve residents of modest income, by increasing the basic exemption and the standard deduction. In a compromise worked out with the business community, certain business taxes would also be reduced, to encourage more businesses to establish operations in the District, rather than in lower-tax suburbs.

The Fiscal Policy Institute's "letter" called for postponing the business tax cuts, as well as an increase in the estate tax exemption. As inviting as that sounds – tax businesses and wealthy residents, not you and me – that's reneging on the deal struck in 2014, and suggests that the whole tax-reduction list would have to be renegotiated, not only this year, but in years to come.

I argued that the business tax reduction, putting DC business taxes on a par with our suburbs, was well warranted, and we should not be second-guessing the work of the Tax Revision Committee. Furthermore, the tax reduction amounts to only one-third of one percent of the DC local-funds budget, hardly enough to warrant re-opening the budget agreement of 2014. The estate tax exemption was even smaller.

In the end, Commissioner Jon Stewart and I agreed on a compromise resolution, stating that "the automatic tax cuts represent sound policy generated by a sound process, and they should be phased in over the next few years, in the recommended order". That was sufficient to allow me to vote for the resolution.

That "advice" to the District Council was, of course, a total waste of time and effort. The Council isn't going to reopen a previously negotiated agreement because our ANC says it should. The effort at the Council to postpone the business tax reduction failed by a 4 to 9 vote, and the estate tax exemption change failed by a 3 to 10 vote.

I argue that this ANC should spend its time only on neighborhood issues, and not waste time on citywide matters. We represent just 1.6% of the District's population, and carry very little weight on citywide matters. On neighborhood matters, our "advice" can make a difference – see, e.g., the streetlight LED change – whereas on citywide matters, our "advice" accomplishes nothing.

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Later this summer, the first phase of the Beach Drive road project will be completed, and then Beach Drive will be closed from the Park Road/Tilden Street north. This will result in a new **"detour" route for Beach Drive traffic**. Traffic detoured to 16th Street southbound may turn onto Park Road, and pass through Mount Pleasant to reach the newly reopened portion of Beach Drive. We'll have to see how much traffic that imposes on the neighborhood.

The next meeting of the ANC will be on <u>Tuesday, June 20</u> , 7:00 pm, at the Mount Pleasant Library.
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