

March report to constituents

Here is news of the **March 1 ANC meeting**, and notes of other events in the neighborhood.

Two candidates have been certified for the 1D06 vacancy:

Rick Massumi, of Hobart Street, and Angelia Scott, of Harvard Towers. We are required to hold a special election to fill this vacancy “at the next regularly scheduled meeting”. According to our calendar of monthly meetings, we can have our meeting on the first Tuesday of the month, or on weekends “for special cases”. This is such a special case, and we agreed to have our April meeting on *Saturday, April 2, at the Mount Pleasant Library*, to permit as many residents as possible to participate. The ANC meeting will begin at *2 pm*, and continue until *5 pm*, to allow ample time for voting.

There will also be provision for “symbolic voting” by non-citizen residents, our token of approval for such voting. Recall that this ANC passed, in 2003, a measure endorsing noncitizen voting in local elections. This vote will not count, because City Council has not approved legislation for noncitizen voting. We hope, nonetheless, for a fair turnout of residents participating in this demonstration.

The Alcoholic Beverage Control Board had scheduled a special hearing of the ANC on the matter of the extension of **the single sales moratorium** in Mount Pleasant to take place on March 2, immediately following this ANC meeting. Due to the controversy over violence at Club U, this has been postponed until April 20. I had needed to obtain from the ANC direction for our testimony at the hearing; because of that postponement, our consideration of our official ANC position was put off until the April meeting. We did hear opinions expressed by residents attending our ANC meeting. There’s no mistaking the popularity of the ban, but I question the assertion that this single sales ban, alone, is responsible for improved conditions around Mount Pleasant Street. There have been great changes in our neighborhood over the past four years, and it may be only a coincidence that the improved conditions observed along Mount Pleasant Street came about at about the same time that this ban was imposed.

We passed a resolution calling on DDOT to provide **a bench, and some protection against the weather, for the bus stop on Irving Street just south of the Kenyon intersection**. This bus stop is heavily used by elderly people from the Harvard Towers. You will see them sitting on the guard rail, for lack of a bench, and fully exposed to the weather. This may not be easy to get, because the location is too small for a

The April meeting will be on Saturday, April 2, from 2 until 5 pm, at the Mount Pleasant Library, in order to facilitate voting for the 1D06 vacancy. On the agenda: renewal of the single sales moratorium, equipment for simultaneous interpretation of ANC meetings, Focus Forums, the Bestway/Don Juan’s lot.

Opinions expressed here are those of Dr. McKay alone, speaking for himself, not for the Mount Pleasant ANC.

ANC 1D03 NEWSLETTER #31

Jack McKay, March 23, 2005

The **series street light circuits** have been troublesome here for years, because a single electrical fault takes out not just one light, but whole blocks of street lights. This is the case now around Harvard Street. Last summer the street lights north of Park Road were upgraded to end this problem. This summer, it’s the turn for Mount Pleasant south of Park Road. The **work should begin in April**.

I have arranged for a community meeting with DDOT, to give residents the opportunity to learn the details of the proposed work, and ask DDOT questions about the street lights, and resident parking during the work. This will be on Wednesday, April 6, 6:30 pm, at the La Casa Community Center, 3166 Mount Pleasant Street.

Anticipating testifying before the ABC Board in April, I continue to investigate the **single sales ban**. I don’t care greatly about the ban, one way or the other, but I do believe that all District policies should be periodically evaluated to confirm that they are effective and justified. The end of the four-year “temporary” moratorium is a natural time to undertake such an evaluation. This matters not just for Mount Pleasant, but for Ward Four, where a similar ban is supposed to go into effect (but is currently stalled by a lawsuit).

What’s remarkable is how fierce the opposition to our proposal for this evaluation has been. On the one hand, certain advocates assert that no study is needed because the beneficial effects are already obvious; on the other, they object vehemently to any formal evaluation of the effects of the ban, as if a study could somehow fail to perceive these obvious benefits.

Our draft resolution calls for a study to be led by APRA, the Addiction Prevention and Recovery Agency, as a DC Government group that is familiar with the alcohol abuse problem, and presumably is disinterested in the outcome of the study. Advocates of the ban, including the MPNA, would be included in a panel to observe and guide the study, to assure fairness. (The Ward Four ban calls for an assessment of the “present need and appropriateness” of the ban after four years. That’s just what we’re requesting here.)

standard shelter, and DDOT doesn't provide benches without shelters. We'll see what we can do.

We passed a resolution calling for "**Focus Forums**", to bring the community together to air their views on specific topics, e.g., policing policy, and public health. This is our means of bringing about better ANC communications with the public.

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The traffic signal light at the **Beach Drive Zoo exit** malfunctioned again on Thursday, March 17, as it did last May. This creates huge backups, extending all the way down onto Beach Drive. I called the chief traffic engineer at DDOT, hoping for a quick repair, but without luck. Friday evening the light was still short-cycling the ramp traffic, so I called another contact at DDOT, and this time got a fast response. A repair crew showed up at 6:30 pm and set to work.

There's a sensor that detects cars on the ramp, and holds the signal green for ramp traffic. That sensor wasn't working, so the controller thought there was no traffic on the ramp, and gave that direction only the bare minimum green time (7 seconds), while giving Harvard Street the maximum, 60 seconds. Hence the enormous delays and backups. The crew replaced the light controller, restoring proper operation.

I have advised DDOT that such traffic signal malfunctions ought to be given very high priority, and serviced immediately. It should not have taken more than 24 hours, and several calls from me, to get this signal fixed.

The signal failed again on Monday, March 21. This time DDOT fixed it within an hour of my call.

An **attempted carjacking** took place on Kilbourne Place on the afternoon of February 27. Three sixteen-year-olds from Southeast, here for a basketball game, decided to steal a car for transportation home. Their intended victim ran to his home, and his girlfriend called 911. A resident observing the incident from his car located one of our superb foot patrol officers, Reggie Henderson, on Mount Pleasant Street, and directed him to the would-be car thieves, now trying to escape down the street. Officer Henderson followed the youths until backup arrived, when two of the three juveniles were arrested. Two bystanders on the street confirmed that these two youths had been fleeing the scene and hiding ski masks under their clothes.

As is commonly the case for crime in Mount Pleasant, the perpetrators were not Mount Pleasant residents, but had come from outside our neighborhood. Also as usual, residents do not hesitate to "get involved", not only alerting the police to the incident, but keeping track of the fleeing youths until officers arrived, then assisting in their identification and arrest.

Officer Henderson is, since the arrival of Lt Ewell, a very unhappy and demoralized MPD officer. When I told him that he should "get a medal" for his performance in this arrest, he replied with something bitter. He loves Mount Pleasant, and he's happy working here, so that's not the problem. MPD management is the problem, and I'm doing what I can about that. I don't mean to tell the MPD how to manage their officers, but when our fine foot patrol officers are unhappy, it's a problem for all of us. They are doing a superb job of reducing disorderly conduct, if not crime, on and around Mount Pleasant Street.

The four ANC Commissioners met with Councilmember Graham and top MPD brass, including Inspector Groomes, Commander McCoy, and Assistant Chief Newsham, on March 6, to discuss this problem. Lieutenant Ewell complained that his officers weren't making enough arrests. I noted that these officers are doing a fine job in the community, and if they aren't making many arrests, it's because arrests are not, in their judgment, warranted. We do not want our officers pressed into making "more arrests" in order to make some arbitrary quota set by the Lieutenant. I don't think the Lieutenant yet understands the special challenges of policing in our complex, multicultural, multiethnic community, and I worry that he will push his officers into heavy-handed, aggressive actions that will do our neighborhood great harm.

Readers will recall that there was a terrible **sexual assault of a Walbridge Place resident** last June. Our shock at such a crime in our neighborhood was compounded by the arrest of a neighbor, David Bryant, a resident of Adams Mill Road, for the offense.

The case was set for trial to begin on February 22. After jury selection, but before testimony was to begin, Mr Bryant accepted the tough plea bargain offered by the prosecutor, Alex Grant. Mr Grant was plainly insistent that Mr Bryant accept a deal that will put him in prison for a very long time.

Mr Bryant pleaded guilty to two of the seven felony charges against him, namely first-degree burglary, and first-degree sexual abuse while armed, with aggravating circumstances. The sexual abuse charge alone carries a maximum sentence of life in prison. "Aggravating circumstances", referring to the severe injuries inflicted on the victim (64 stitches), escalates that to life in prison without possibility of parole. In short, the plea bargain arranged by Mr Grant allows for the maximum sentence possible in the District of Columbia.

Judge Bayly pointed out to the defendant that he would not be bound by any plea bargain in setting the sentence, but would be limited only by the law. I take that as a signal that he intends to impose the maximum. Mr Bryant has not helped his case, showing no sign of remorse, nor even much apparent concern about the legal proceedings.

I believe that Mr Bryant's family is horrified, and shamed, that one of their own should have done such a terrible thing. The victim, a marvelously strong young woman, refuses to let this awful incident upset her life. She has scars on her body, but none on her spirit.