

## March report to constituents

Here is news of the **March 7 ANC meeting**, and other happenings in Mount Pleasant. At the March meeting, the ANC:

- Agreed to an additional expenditure of up to \$650 for software and hardware for the laptop/projector system.
- Agreed that it has no objection to the issuance of a Class D liquor license (beer and wine) for the Pupuseria San Miguel, allowing the restaurant to obtain a “stipulated” liquor license during the protest period.
- Passed a resolution calling for improved street sweeping in the commercial corridor.

## ANC 1D03 NEWSLETTER #43

Jack McKay, March 27, 2006

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Next ANC meeting: 7 pm, April 4, La Casa.  
Possible topics: nonvoting ANC delegates; ANC Web policy; ANC committee policy; pay phone access; Webcasts of ANC meetings; ANC staff hire; Kenyon/Irving bus stop.

Perhaps you saw the news that an MPD officer died at the wheel of his car on Thursday, March 23. He was off duty, out of uniform, and in his personal vehicle, but when he spotted a car he suspected (correctly) was stolen, he started following that car, down 11th Street in Columbia Heights, while calling on his cellphone for assistance. Then, without warning, his heart exploded, and he was dead.

This was not just any MPD officer. It was **Sergeant Gerry Burke**, one of the best on the force. He didn't merely patrol Columbia Heights; he lived here, and was a loyal member of the community. I recall bumping into him, out of uniform, shopping at the Columbia Heights Giant, just like any other resident. He knew the people, and was skilled at identifying juveniles causing trouble, so he could later take them aside and give them personal guidance. He clearly cared about his neighborhood, and his community.

As Inspector Burke wrote, “Sergeant Burke literally lived, worked and died in his patrol service area (PSA 302).” He was only 39, and was engaged to be married. What a pity.

One Chad Williams, a lifetime DC resident, UDC and AU graduate, Fulbright scholar, Marine veteran of the Gulf War, former aide to Kevin Chavous, and urban housing specialist, will challenge Jim Graham for **Ward One City Council-member**. Mr. Williams promises to make this a serious race.

Small triumphs: I finally got DDOT to remove that useless eyesore of an **“alley renovation work”** sign on the west end of Lamont Street, two years after the work was complete.

The resolution concerning **street sweeping** pertains to Mount Pleasant Street, 16th Street, and the blocks of Park Road, Lamont Street, and Irving Street between 16th and Mount Pleasant. Initially the resolution was to apply to all of Mount Pleasant. The current street sweeping method involves working around parked cars, as best as can be done. This resolution calls for all cars to be removed from the streets to be swept, and for offenders to be ticketed.

No doubt improved street sweeping is desirable, but the requirement that cars be moved to clear the streets is a huge problem. DPW won't do only a block or two at a time, because it's inefficient for them to move the machinery around for small portions. They would require that several blocks be cleared of parked cars by 7 AM on sweeping day. Then the problem is, where do the residents move their cars to? Our streets are jammed at that hour.

Perhaps we can follow this to devise a more practical arrangement, one which wouldn't put undue burdens on residents who must park on the street overnight. I wasn't willing to impose a harsh street-sweeping regimen on the neighborhood without thoroughly working out the details, and getting clear agreement from residents that the burden of moving cars would be acceptable, in return for better street sweeping. So I insisted that this resolution be limited to the commercial strip, where the problem of street litter is most severe. The only residential-parking block affected is the 1600 block of Park Road. Gregg Edwards agreed to take any heat from any unhappy residents of that block.

The District Department of Transportation, arguing that the curb cut and driveway behind the Bestway had never had a permit (how many of us can put our hands on permits for work done decades ago, by previous owners?), first blocked the driveway with jersey-wall barriers, then this month sent heavy machinery in to **destroy the Bestway's curb cut and driveway**. What, I ask, is the public emergency that called for such drastic action? How much did the District spend to destroy this driveway, and why? This is another example of District officials doing the bidding of a few local residents who have lots of political influence.

It generally takes the District months, or years, to respond to our requests, if they ever do. Rebuilding the Kenyon/Irving intersection, repaving 19th Street, adding a sidewalk along Irving Street, takes years from conception to completion. It takes me months to get trivial things done, like moving two misplaced no-parking signs to their correct location, and removing the long-outdated “alley construction” sign from Lamont Street. Other requests from the ANC, e.g., stop signs on 18th crossing Kilbourne Place, are ignored. Yet DDOT can rush out with work crews, trucks, and a backhoe to destroy a curb cut and driveway, serving a few residents across the street who are annoyed by once-a-day truck noise.

The **Argyle Convenient Store** remains closed, the work held up by the Public Space Office of the Department of Transportation. On February 3, Public Space had routinely issued a permit for the construction of a wheelchair ramp at the store entrance. On February 6, Denise Wiktor, DDOT Public Space Manager, and Park Road resident, observed the work under way and promptly brought about the revocation of the permit, arguing that Public Space (not the Argyle) had erred, and had issued the permit improperly.

One argument heard for the revocation of the permit was that approval by the Historic Preservation Review Board was needed, but in fact the Argyle already had HPRB approval. The other argument was that ANC review of the permit application was required, which was news to us. That might technically be correct, but the Public Space Office issues countless permits for routine work without even telling us, much less awaiting our “approval”.

We received notice, such as it was – a single entry on a spreadsheet printout of 26 permit applications – on February 23. Wishing to expedite the work, we voted out a resolution on February 24 calling on Public Space to issue the permit “as quickly as possible”. I personally sent that resolution in to three officers of the Public Space Office on February 26.

Weeks passed. On March 20, concerned by the absence of any visible progress, I called the Public Space Office, and discovered that the worker bee assigned this job was still sitting on the permit, waiting for a reply from this ANC. She knew nothing of our reply, which had been sitting on other desks in the same office for three weeks.

On March 23, Public Space finally issued the permit for the handicapped-access ramp at the Argyle. No changes whatsoever were made to the design. This just put Wayne Gleason of the Argyle back to where he was on February 3, permit in hand, ready to pour concrete. Seven weeks were lost due to this regulatory blundering about.

As soon as that wheelchair ramp is in place, Rocky Rakani’s Argyle Convenient Store will re-open for business.

**Bulk Trash Now Collected Only From the Front of Residential Properties.** “As the spring-cleaning season approaches, the Department of Public Works (DPW) is announcing a change in its popular bulk trash removal service. Beginning this week, residents requesting bulk trash collection are being directed to place the items in front of their property only. In the past, bulk trash could be set out at the same point of collection used for the resident’s regular trash—alley or curb side. The change is, in part, a response to complaints that the large trucks used to pick up bulk items are too big or too ungainly to fit through narrow alleys and can sometimes damage residents’ property.”

**Adams Mill Road** begins at the Kingle Road intersection, runs south to Kenyon, then down the hill to the traffic light at the Zoo, where it intersects Harvard Street. The MPNA, oddly, insists on calling that downhill stretch “Harvard Street”, denoting the location as “the intersection of Irving and Harvard Streets”. No, Irving Street does not intersect Harvard, anywhere.

I pointed this out to an MPNA officer last September, enclosing a photograph of the street sign at this intersection, which clearly says that the downhill street is “Adams Mill Road”. Perhaps coincidentally, shortly thereafter that street sign was replaced with one saying “Harvard Street”. That’s bizarre; even the surveyor’s chart shown in the MPNA’s “Irving-Harvard Triangle Renewal Project” newsletter in October shows clearly that this is Adams Mill Road, not Harvard Street. I’ve checked the original charts at the District Surveyor’s Office, dating back to 1917, and this bit of road has always been Adams Mill Road, never Harvard Street.

DDOT has agreed that this is Adams Mill Road, and that the original signpost was correct. I’ve been told that the restoration of the Adams Mill Road sign is on the list of jobs for the sign division. But five months have passed, and the erroneous sign remains.

**Daylight savings time** begins on April 2, heralding the long sunny afternoons of spring and summer. “Spring forward, fall back.” Next year, due to a change in the Federal law, DST will begin three weeks earlier, on March 11.

I have taken on the task of acquiring a **computer and projector system** for the ANC, so that our resolutions can be displayed on the wall for everyone to see, as we work (or fumble) with them. We tried this hardware for the first time at the monthly meeting on February 7. As important as is the view given the audience, so that they can see what we’re doing, was our ability to see edits to a proposed resolution, as they were made. Happily, a young visitor from the Pleasant Plains neighborhood was willing to operate the laptop for us. Since that meeting, I’ve added a wireless keyboard and mouse, so that any one of us can do the on-screen editing, as we labor over the text of a resolution.

That computer and projector system, along with the audio public-address and recording system, and the simultaneous-interpretation gear, makes for a lot of electronic hardware to haul about.

The audio system allows better audience participation, and yields high-quality CD recording of our sessions, which can be offered to anyone who wants to revisit any meeting. The computer and projector system allows the audience to see what is going on, as well as facilitating our working with the text of resolutions. The simultaneous-interpretation equipment permits residents with limited English to participate fully in our meetings. We’re the only ANC in the District with such a sophisticated meeting electronics system. For that matter, no DC Government agency can match what we’ve done.