

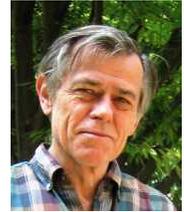
May report to constituents

Here is news of the **May 1 and 15 ANC meetings**, and other happenings in Mount Pleasant. A second May meeting was held, in part to catch up on a backlog of resolutions, but also to help the three new commissioners understand our agenda determination process. At these meetings, the ANC:

- Established an *ad hoc* committee to work on Fair Housing issues, with Joe Esparza and Jane Zara as co-chairs.
- Advised Parks and Rec to devote resources to the re-establishment of recreational facilities adjacent to Sacred Heart at 16th and Park, where facilities once available to the community have been lost to Bell/Lincoln schools.
- Advised changes at the Historic Preservation Review Board, to make their proceedings more accessible to the public, and to provide an appeal process that is not controlled by preservationists.
- Advised DDOT to provide better ANC notification of permit applications by contractors to occupy streets with dumpsters for months on end, and to compensate the neighborhood for such long-term occupancy.
- Agreed to “protest” liquor license renewals by eight Mount Pleasant restaurants, not because we object to their having liquor licenses, but so that the ANC will be a participant in the negotiation of new “voluntary agreements” with these restaurants.
- Called on the District to preserve its property possessions, seeking public uses for such space, versus selling off “surplus” properties.
- Established a fund for investigating “best practices” for dealing with the problems of entertainment districts immediately adjacent to residential neighborhoods.
- Advised the MPD to restore the partnership of the police and the ANC in conducting the monthly PSA meetings.

ANC 1D03 NEWSLETTER #57

Jack McKay, May 30, 2007



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The **next ANC meeting** is on Tuesday, June 5, 7:00 pm, La Casa Community Center, 3166 Mt Pleasant Street. For an agenda, see anc1d.org.

One morning, I saw a little girl running happily along a sidewalk a few steps ahead of her nanny, rapidly approaching an alley. A car was descending that alley, and my heart stopped, because there was no way that the driver of that car could see the little girl, hidden by the retaining wall along the sidewalk, and the child could not possibly see the approaching car. There was no time to shout a warning.

Happily, the driver stopped in time. But I hear many complaints of drivers **using our alleys as if they are streets**, driving too fast, and blindly speeding out onto sidewalks, oblivious to the possibility of pedestrians.

Our alleys are not roadways. The speed limit in alleys is 15 mph (DCMR 18, 2200.7). Furthermore, the law requires drivers in alleys to “stop the vehicle immediately *prior* to driving onto a sidewalk” (DCMR 18, 2207.1). That means, please, stop **before** crossing the sidewalk, not after you’re already across it. Given the poor visibility at alley exits, you cannot possibly be sure that no pedestrians (or pets, or small children) are coming without stopping carefully to look, and to be seen.

Our alleys should not be automobile highways, and pedestrians on our sidewalks should be safe from drivers using them as if they were. Even at low speed, your ton of steel can do terrible hurt to a child’s body.

Park Road is closed until mid-July, for much-needed resurfacing. The signs indicating the road closure have been, to put it mildly, inadequate. All day long there’s a little parade of drivers heading down the hill from the Klingle/Walbridge intersection, discovering the barriers at the bridge over Piney Branch, then turning quick U’s and heading back up the hill.

I have been pressing DDOT to make substantial changes to the signs, to put up a clear barrier at the Klingle intersection, and to cut back on the green-light time for westbound Park Road, given that the road is closed for weeks to come. DDOT has been uncooperative, perhaps because this project is being led by a Ward Four group (Ward Four begins at Piney Branch). I thought we would get the shortened light cycle, anyway, with the green-light time for westbound Park Road reduced, and the green-light time to Klingle increased, given the doubled traffic burden on that road. Much to my dismay, DDOT actually increased the Park Road green-light time, so that traffic going onto that closed-to-through-traffic road now gets a bountiful 35 seconds of green. I hope to get that fixed, and Councilmember Graham has endorsed my insistence that they do a better job with their signs, too. (Wednesday morning, as I take this newsletter out for printing, I see that improved signs are now in place.)

Mount Pleasant’s restaurants have to renew their liquor licenses this summer, and this is the opportunity to bring about some relaxation of the **total ban on live music and live entertainment** imposed seven years ago by the Mount Pleasant Neighborhood Alliance (MPNA) “voluntary agreements” (VAs). Clearly many Mount Pleasant residents would like to have such entertainment close to home, as evidenced by the support for the organization Hear Mount Pleasant (HMP), dedicated to the return of live music to Mount Pleasant.

The MPNA is fighting back by yielding token amounts of live music: Sunday “brunch”, from noon to 3pm, and 12 special events a year, from 9pm to 11pm. The Marx Café, for one, has agreed to this, advised by their lawyer that efforts to do better would fail. While I’m no fan of live music with my dinner, I think two hours once a month, and Sunday afternoons, is a pittance, far short of what a great many Mount Pleasant residents want (not me, but my younger neighbors).

Three restaurants, Haydee’s, Don Jaime’s, and Don Juan’s, have petitioned to have their voluntary agreements terminated, as a necessary first step towards a less restrictive VA. No one intends for the restaurants having no voluntary agreements at all, and assertions that these restaurants are seeking complete freedom to do whatever they want are wrong. VA termination merely clears the way for the writing of new voluntary agreements in conjunction with the renewal of their liquor licenses. I expect the ANC, at the June meeting, to support these VA terminations, on the understanding that new VAs will be written.

There has been much discussion of what should be in these new voluntary agreements. The MPNA refuses to divulge the contents of their new VAs, asserting that their VAs will be revealed to Mount Pleasant residents only upon ABC Board approval, that is, when it’s too late to change anything. In contrast, HMP has publicly posted its draft VA and invited neighborhood comment. Initially, their draft VA had no limit on live music; now, responding to public commentary, they appear to be considering allowing live music only until midnight during the week, 1 AM on Friday and Saturday nights. That sounds pretty reasonable to me.

Parking tickets for parking between the no-parking-to-intersection signs, and the intersection, continue to be troublesome. The law – which is confusing, indeed – says that cars with RPP stickers, on RPP blocks, **can park to 25 feet from the intersection**, versus the 40 feet which otherwise prevails. The signposts are placed at the 40-foot marks, of course, so parking enforcement personnel have to understand that parking beyond the signpost is not necessarily a violation.

I succeeded in having my MPD-issued ticket dismissed, the DMV inspector accepting my explanation of the law. Our Parking Enforcement aides (the ones patrolling in the little white cars) seem to be slower in comprehending this subtlety. In fact, when I brought this to the attention of Bill Howland, director of DPW (Parking Enforcement aides work under Public Works, not the MPD), he was unaware of the change, and thought that this “moratorium” on enforcement of the 40-foot regulation was only at night. I’ve given him the correct information – “at all times”, “around-the-clock”, states the new law – now I’ll see if we can get the message to the folks in the little white cars.

One young resident is in some trouble due to her active support of live music in Mount Pleasant restaurants. Someone – who? – sent a message to this rental resident’s London landlord of her activities for Hear Mount Pleasant. That person replied with a threat that, if she did not cease her “visible and strong position” in support of live music in Mount Pleasant, **her rent would be raised in retaliation**. Freedom of speech does not, evidently, extend to renters who support live music.

The matter of the **Rosemount Avenue windows**, deemed “incompatible” by the Historic Preservation Office (HPO), is now on hold, while the HPO assesses the consequences of a lawsuit concerning windows in Takoma Park.

The owners of the Rosemount house are obtaining estimates for the cost of replacing their windows to meet the demands of the HPO. It appears that suitably “authentic” windows will cost them well over \$20,000, over four times what they spent for their vinyl replacement windows. The HPO objects to their front door, too, even though that door is entirely invisible from the street. Nothing is safe from the HPO inspector’s demands.

The long-sought **traffic study** for Mount Pleasant is now under way. At a kickoff meeting on May 24, the DDOT contractor listed intersections where he planned to do traffic counts. I noted that doing traffic counts during summer vacation would be quite misleading, and furthermore would contribute little to discovering solutions to our traffic problems. We have, I said, three layers of traffic to consider: the crosstown-arterial traffic, trucks and cars racing through Mount Pleasant just as fast as they can go; the business-district traffic, a conglomeration of delivery trucks, shop patrons, and employees; and us residents, wanting to get to and from our homes. We need to take a systematic view of our traffic patterns and parking regulations, and come up with a coherent plan. We also have to make our streets safer and more comfortable for pedestrians, we have to provide better routes for bicycles, and we’ve got to make it very convenient to use public transit, too. These objectives won’t be achieved by simply counting cars at intersections and fiddling with some traffic-light timings.