

Jack's May report

At the April 15 meeting, the ANC:

- * Considered, then tabled, a resolution for “parklets” on Mount Pleasant Street;
- * Considered, then tabled, a resolution endorsing an application by Mount Pleasant Main Street to be a “Friend” of Lamont Park;
- * Approved the ANC's quarterly financial report to the DC Auditor.

Adam Hoey's “parklet” resolution would endorse a proposal to **convert, temporarily, two curbside parking spaces along Mount Pleasant Street to miniature parks**. The idea is to make our little commercial strip more attractive, hoping to draw more residents as customers. This certainly seems worth a try, and I've long been a supporter of more space on Mount Pleasant Street for pedestrians, and less for cars, in order to make the street more inviting to residents.

But some of our local business owners are extremely sensitive to any reduction in parking space, worrying that customers unable to park near their shops will take their business elsewhere, a loss perhaps exceeding any gains from the enhanced pedestrian environment. I think the ANC needs to hear a clear statement from the affected businesses that they're willing to try this experiment before we endorse the concept. Our business community does not speak with a single voice, so it's hard to be sure that they're all in agreement on anything.

The ANC agreed that more details about the project were needed before it could be endorsed. (Adam was not present at the April meeting – China introduced his resolution, in his absence – and my attempt to have him participate via Skype failed, due to an inadequate internet connection on his end.) This proposal will come up at the May meeting.

Adam's second resolution was for an ANC endorsement of **Mount Pleasant Main Street's application to be a “Friends of the Park” organization for Lamont Park**. (As a favor to him, in his absence, I introduced this resolution.) The commission wanted further details about this proposal, that is, exactly what MPMS proposed to do as a “friend” of the park. This will be taken up at the May meeting.

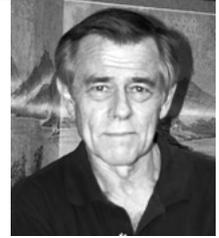
The District Council has already initiated action to **change the date of that way-too-early April primary**. Councilmember Evans has introduced a bill that would have this primary on “the first Tuesday after the first Monday in June”, instead of the first Tuesday in April. The presidential primary would be separate, taking place in March.

Councilmember Evans' bill also proposes an “open primary”, with all candidates for Mayor and Councilmember pitted against each other, regardless of party, and voters allowed to vote for any candidate, regardless of party. This makes sense because the Democratic Party primary amounts, in the District, to a general election, the winner of that primary nearly certain to be elected in November. This change would allow Greens, Republicans, and Independents to have a meaningful vote for these offices.

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Absentee and provisional ballots have now been counted, leaving the **April primary election results** unchanged.

The Mount Pleasant vote percentages (of about 2300 votes cast here, 29% of the registered voters):

For Mayor:	Ward One Councilmember:	At-Large Councilmember:
Bowser, 46% Wells, 20% Gray, 20% Shallal, 7% Evans, 5%	Nadeau, 62% Graham, 37%	Bonds, 36% Bennett-Fleming, 35% Settles, 15% Rubio, 11% Valentine, 2%

There's been some scary talk lately that we're all going to have to go to the DMV and get new, “**Real ID**” driver's licenses. Well, maybe not, or at least not right away.

The Federal Government has produced new requirements for driver's licenses as identification cards, worrying that current state practices are insufficiently rigorous. So DC has had to improve its methods for producing cards, and for confirming an applicant's identity.

Will you need a “Real ID” license, and if so, when?

- If you use your driver's license as an ID card for access to an access-controlled Federal building, then you'll need this “Real ID” card by mid-July, this year.
- If you use your driver's license as an ID card for “semi-restricted” Federal facilities, then you'll need the “Real ID” by January, 2015.
- If you use your driver's license as an ID card for getting through airport security, then you'll need this “Real ID” by January, 2016 – maybe.

But for all these purposes, a current passport will be accepted. The “Real ID” will never be required for voting, registering to vote, or for applying for or receiving Federal benefits.

So for most people, there's no hurry. When your driver's license expires, you'll have to make an in-person DMV visit, with the multiple proof-of-identity materials required by this “Real ID”. By the way, the Georgetown DMV Service Center, which I have always found to be convenient, reopened on April 29. Also convenient (and featuring a small parking lot) is the Southwest Service Center, at 95 M Street SW.

There's been considerable anxiety about the three **proposals for changing school boundaries, out-of-boundary**

procedures, and in-boundary rights. Most Mount Pleasant residents are currently in-boundary for Deal and Wilson, and that won't change. The Bancroft southern boundary, currently Irving Street, is proposed to shift to Harvard Street, a change which is sensible, and, I believe, popular. Bancroft will remain a “feeder” school for Deal and Wilson.

As for the three application procedure proposals, I believe that they are all doomed. Proposals A and C compromise in-boundary residents' rights to in-boundary schools. People in-boundary for Deal and Wilson strongly object to any compromise of their right to send their children to those schools. Proposal B makes the fewest changes, but also fails to solve the essential problem, which is excessive demand for those two most-popular schools.

In my opinion, none of these proposals will be implemented, in part because of the outcome of the April primary election. I believe that the next mayor, whether Bowser or Catania, will discard these proposals and start all over.

The fundamental problem is that Deal Middle School and Wilson High School are perceived to be so much better than any others in the area. Parents with “feeder” rights to those schools object, understandably, to any sacrifice of those rights, including the proposal for a lottery that would compel some parents to send their kids to schools other than Deal or Wilson. Parents residing out-of-boundary for these schools object to being denied access to Deal and Wilson, and it is unjust to tell such parents that, because they live on the wrong side of 16th Street, they and their children are just out of luck. As the Northwest Current editor put it: “Parents with access to a high-quality school want predictability; those assigned to a poor-performing school want access to a better one. *The latter parent is surely no less deserving.*” (Italics mine.) How are we to be fair to both?

But the result, given the huge disparity between those Ward Three “good” schools and all the others, has been over-crowding at Deal and Wilson. The solution to the problem has to be improvement of east-of-the-Park schools, so that parents will readily send their children to those schools, rather than ferrying them across the Park to Tenleytown. I have yet to see a credible course of action to accomplish that.

The middle school for Mount Pleasant ought, by proximity, to be the Columbia Heights Educational Campus (CHEC), right across 16th Street from us. But CHEC has a Great Schools rating of just 4, on a scale of 1 to 10, whereas Deal is rated 8. More than half the students at CHEC score Basic or lower on reading, whereas Deal students are 83% Proficient or better. No wonder Mount Pleasant parents prefer to send their middle-school kids to Deal.

Similarly, the closest high school is Cardozo. But Cardozo's Great Schools rating is a dreadful 2 out of 10, whereas Wilson is rated 6. Even more discouraging is the “college readiness” score: 6 of 10 for Wilson, compared to an awful 1 of 10 for Cardozo.

No parent in the city, east or west of Rock Creek Park, should be told that they must send their children to CHEC and Cardozo, and that they're allowed no access to Deal and Wilson.

The important question is, how do we upgrade schools such as Cardozo, to be comparable to Wilson? I've seen no credible answers to that. But that is what we absolutely must do. Our neighbors in Columbia Heights deserve no less.

Residents should recognize that our ANC oath of office requires us to judge matters “from the viewpoint of the best interest of the District of Columbia, as a whole” – not according to what's preferred for our own neighborhood, or by our own constituents. A resolution calling for Mount Pleasant residents to continue to have preference for Deal and Wilson, while tacitly dismissing the needs of the rest of the District, including our Columbia Heights neighbors, would be contrary to our oath of office.

The **zoning regulations review** is approaching an outcome similar to that which I predict for the school revisions. The public comment period has been extended to September 15, due to the strong public resistance to the proposed changes. As I wrote in my March newsletter, the general public has not been involved in this years-long process, because few residents have the time and interest to attend evening “community” meetings. The process has been dominated by a handful of urban-design advocates who do have the energy and interest to attend such meetings. So the revised regulations implement what are now the orthodox “smart growth” ideas of increased density and decreased dependence on automobiles. Sensible as these recommendations may be, the general public has not yet been persuaded that these changes are right for the District.

So, with the incumbent Mayor a lame duck, and someone new taking over in January, I expect this whole process to be put on hold, like the school-boundary revision process, so that the new Mayor can take control of it.

Yes, **it's been a soggy spring**, with 18 inches of rain so far this year. That's about 40% more than average.

On May 9 DPW sent out word that all **old-style Supercans and recycling containers left on public space (i.e., in alleys) will be confiscated**, as soon as May 12. DPW has had difficulty distinguishing between “Take Me” Supercans and others, and so has undertaken this draconian approach, based on the law requiring residents to remove their trash and recycling containers from public space between collections – no exceptions! I have protested that this is going to be a significant hardship here, and that a few days' warning is not sufficient. But your old Supercan may already be gone, whether you wanted it taken away or not.

This month marks, by the way, **40 years since we moved from Pittsburgh to Mount Pleasant**. We chose Mount Pleasant because it was mixed-race, black and white, an unusual characteristic back then. We continue to believe that Mount Pleasant should be a welcoming home to anyone – black, white, Asian, or Latino; wealthy, or not; gay, or straight; immigrant, or nth-generation American. No one here should ever feel that they're outsiders in somebody else's neighborhood.

The next meeting of the ANC will be on Tuesday, May 20, 7:00 pm, at the Mount Pleasant Library.
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