

November report to constituents

Here is news of the **November 5 ANC monthly meeting**, and other happenings in Mount Pleasant.

At the November meeting, the ANC:

- Authorized an expenditure of up to \$800 for interpreter services during the next three months. We cannot afford professional interpreters, so we're fumbling around with a couple of options for nonprofessional interpreters. *We will be the first and only ANC in the District to provide simultaneous Spanish interpreting at our monthly meetings.*
- Certified the election of Mitchell Backfield to fill the vacancy in 1D02, the far northeast portion of Mount Pleasant, from Oakwood Terrace to the Woodner. Mitchell has been a resident of the Woodner since May, 2003. The vote was seven for Mitchell, three for Karl Hoffman. (A mere ten votes! Well, it's hard to get people to come out for an ANC special election.) There was also one noncitizen vote cast, also for Mitchell.
- Passed a resolution calling on DDOT to increase the east-west green-light times at Newton, Monroe, Park Road, Lamont, and Irving Streets, mainly to give pedestrians more time to cross the street, but also to reduce east-west traffic congestion. (This turns out to be already in progress; see box.)

This was a Saturday monthly meeting, in order to make it easy for residents to come vote in the special election. I should mention that the DC Code requires that our special elections take place at a regular monthly meeting, so it was necessary to arrange for our monthly meeting to shift from Tuesday to Saturday for this event. It's all very awkward. I'm told that this provision of the Code is all a misunderstanding, but it's in the Code, so we have to do it this way.

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Jack McKay, November 30, 2005

Jack McKay
3200 19th St NW, DC 20010
462-8692
jack.mckay@verizon.net

Schoolteachers at the Elsie Stokes Charter School, on 16th Street just below Park Road, and Sacred Heart Elementary on Park Road, use the playground next to the Shrine of the Sacred Heart, and they've had just 20 seconds in which to hurry their bands of little children across five traffic lanes of busy 16th Street. I have asked DDOT **to allow more crossing time across 16th Street**, pointing out that the Columbia Heights/ Mount Pleasant Traffic Study stated that the traffic lights along 16th currently give more time than is needed to north-south commuter traffic, and not enough for east-west in-town traffic.

I'm very pleased to report that this has been done, at three intersections now, with more to come. As of November 10, the pedestrian walk time at the Park Road and Lamont Street crossings has been increased to 25 seconds, which should be a significant help to those teachers trying to get their bands of kids safely across. As of November 22, the all-important Irving Street crossing, where so many of us use to get to the Metro Station, also has increased pedestrian time. The Oak Street and Spring Road crossings of 16th will also get increased pedestrian crossing times. I don't know if I can claim credit for these changes, but I'm quite pleased, however they came about.

The next **ANC monthly meeting** will be on **Tuesday, December 6**, 7 pm, La Casa Community Center, 3166 Mt Pleasant Street. On the agenda: HPRB review of 1869 Park Road, ANC liquor license policy, ANC by-laws amendment (officer elections), ANC Web site policy, the Kenyon/Irving bus stop, ANC FY06 budget. *Simultaneous interpretation into Spanish will be available.*

Many residents have commented on the absence of pavement markings at **the intersection of Park Road, 17th Street, and Mount Pleasant Street**, and on the confusion of the two westbound through lanes that abruptly become a single lane on the west side of the intersection. The pavement markings are on schedule to be restored, and I pointed out to DDOT that the problem of two lanes becoming one would be eliminated if the right lane on westbound Park became a right-turn-only lane, only the center lane proceeding straight on. One of my DDOT contacts, familiar with this intersection, thought that was a good idea, and the repainting may include that arrangement, ending the conflict of right-lane traffic shoving its way into the center lane in the middle of the intersection.

Our policy of allowing **symbolic votes by noncitizens** in ANC special elections was written up in the October 28 issue of the Washington Hispanic: "*Esta será la segunda vez en la historia del Distrito de Columbia que los residentes no ciudadanos tendrán la oportunidad de participar de una jornada cívica, que aunque será de manera simbólica representa el interés de la comunidad residente no ciudadana de participar en la toma de decisiones que afectan a su comunidad.*" "This will be the second time in the history of the District of Columbia that noncitizen residents will have the opportunity to participate in a civic event, which, though symbolic in manner, represents the interest of the noncitizen resident community in the taking of decisions that affect their community." (My poor translation, sorry.) The first time was, of course, our special election for 1D06 in April.

There **were 15 robberies in Mount Pleasant in October**, three times our normal rate of five or six in a month. Other neighborhoods in this area are also complaining of increased numbers of street robberies, but nothing like the tripling of the usual robbery rate seen here.

In most of these robberies, the victim was alone. Robbers prowl the streets until they find someone who is vulnerable, that is, an “easy victim” (my term), or “soft target” (the MPD term). The police advise people to avoid walking alone on deserted streets, but of course there are times when one has no choice.

Some residents tell me that they carry little or no cash, for fear of being robbed. This may not be a good idea. The robbers may think you’re lying to them when you claim to have little cash, and resort to violence. The case of the Dupont Circle waiter last year was such an incident; when the man said that he had no money, the 15-year-old robber shot him dead. Or consider this November 28 report: “An assault occurred at 16th & Park Rd Nw at approximately 6:30 pm. Two complainants report that they were approached by two suspects. One suspect stated ‘Give me the money or I’ll cut you.’ Complainants said that they didn’t have any money and the suspects began to punch them about the head. Case closed with the arrest of two juveniles.”

This seems to be the current plague: violent teenagers, frequently armed with knives or guns. In November, the police reported the arrest of four groups of youths, charged with some 90 robberies, carjackings, and killings. Every one of the 30 arrested was a teenager, some as young as 14.

A detective from the 3D robbery detail attended the PSA meeting on November 8. I have complained repeatedly about the low rate at which the District closes robberies by arrest, currently 14%, versus the big-city national average of 23%. The detective asserted that he thought his crew of just five detectives was “getting the job done”. I question that. This district has suffered over 1000 robberies so far this year, which I think is a very heavy workload for just five people.

Mount Pleasant’s robbery count in November appears to have decreased to the normal. Perhaps the surge in October was merely a statistical aberration. Or perhaps some of those arrested by the MPD were responsible for the robberies here. This is the behavior of robbery statistics here: there will be an increase, then some arrests, whereupon the rate will decrease for a while. But sooner or later, some new robbers show up, and the frequency of robberies increases again. It is a never-ending battle.

I have long been pressing DDOT to rebuild **the Kenyon-Adams Mill intersection** so that the very popular left turn, from westbound Kenyon onto southbound Adams Mill, would be legal. This is prohibited because traffic in the right lane on southbound Adams Mill does not have a stop at the light, and may be obscured from view by traffic stopped in the center lane, creating a dangerous situation.

This improvement was written into the Columbia Heights/Mount Pleasant Traffic Study, at my instigation, and DDOT has prepared a redesign of the intersection to permit the left turn. Unfortunately, DDOT now says that they may not be able to get Federal funding to support this project, because there aren’t enough traffic accidents at this location. We won’t know until next summer if DDOT can fund this project or not.

An alternative is to revise the traffic light configuration so that both southbound lanes of Adams Mill Road are stopped, thus making the left turn safe and allowable.

Times and locations of some of the 15 robberies of October.

As is always the case, most of the robberies occur on the eastern end of Mount Pleasant.

- 10/1/2005 1:45 am robbery - 3300 block 17th St
- 10/1/2005 9:30 pm robbery - Brown St & Monroe St
- 10/3/2005 1:33 am robbery –1600 block Monroe St
- 10/6/2005 10:00 pm robbery - 1700 block Hobart St
- 10/6/2005 6:20 pm robbery –3200 block 16th St
- 10/5/2005 9:30 pm robbery - 1700 block Kilbourne Pl
- 10/10/2005 2:50 am robbery - 1600 block Hobart St
- 10/14/2005 10:30 pm robbery - 1600 block Lamont St
- 10/15/2005 12:50 am robbery - Argonne Pl & Harvard St
- 10/21/2005 8:28 pm robbery – attempt 1600 block Park Rd
- 10/28/2005 11:35 pm robbery - Adams Mill Rd & Harvard St

There was a **shooting on 16th Street** on November 6: “Complainant reports that while walking with a friend on the 3100 blk of 16th St NW [at about 3 AM] they were approached by two suspects. One suspect pointed a gun at the complainant and stated “Give it up” and then fired his weapon striking complainant in the forehead and right knee. Suspects were last seen running on the 1400 blk of Irving St .”

I tried to bring this up at the MPNA/PSA meeting in November, but no one showed any interest. Inspector Burke tells me that the victim was “very intoxicated”, and fled the scene after receiving medical treatment. I think it’s distressing to have anyone shot on our streets, even someone who is perhaps not the finest of citizens.

Two Department of Health **rat inspectors** came out on November 3 to review our rat problems. There’s no space here for details, but suffice it to say that the city, limited to putting poison in rat burrows, cannot solve our rat problems for us. We should set traps, and eliminate rat havens and feeding places, ourselves. I’ve trapped four this year in my own back yard.