

Jack's November report

At the October 19 ANC meeting, the ANC:

- Endorsed the current DDOT design for the Kenyon/Irving/-Adams Mill intersection, allowing the left turn from Kenyon to southbound Adams Mill, and adding bike lanes to Adams Mill Road;
- Advised DDOT to assure that the redesign of this, and the intersection at the Zoo entrance, not preclude "the possibility of eastbound traffic on Harvard Street";
- Called for a pedestrian signal light for crossing 16th Street at the Woodner;
- Advised the MPD, and the District Council, to find out why other cities achieve higher robbery clearance rates than does the District, to see how that rate might be increased.

Speaking of **robberies**, little attention is being paid to the fact that robberies in the District have *increased* under Chief Lanier, from 3500 per year under her predecessor, to 4000 per year now. Meanwhile, the rate at which robberies are "cleared by arrest" remains low, just 16% in 2009, compared to the average of 21-22% for other cities the size of the District. Because the guys who do street robberies don't stop at one or two, but do dozens, once started, the best way to stop future robberies is to track down and arrest the robbers.

There were five robberies reported in Mount Pleasant in October, an average number. On November 1, there was a robbery right outside my own house, at 19th and Lamont. The victim, taken around the area in a police car, was evidently able to spot the perpetrator, who was arrested just a block away. Good work by the police, and an admirable effort by the resourceful victim.

Last June I reported on the **assault and robbery** of an elderly resident walking along Lamont Street just off Walbridge Place. His gang of young attackers fled when a courageous resident driving by jumped from her car and demanded that they "leave him alone!"

Well, these thugs have been arrested and are in court. Evidently they attempted to pawn a ring stolen from the victim, and were identified via security filming. Two of them are said to be nearby residents.

About that election . . . thanks to all who voted for me, for another two years as your ANC representative. The results (not yet entirely complete):

1D01: no candidate on the ballot; 116 write-in votes.
Yasmine Romero and Ben West were rival write-in candidates.

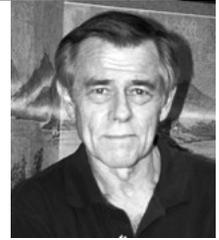
1D02: Laura Wilson-Phelan, 180 votes; write-in, 18
1D03: Jack McKay, 423; write-in, 34
1D04: Gregg Edwards, 103; Phil Greiner, 92; write-in, 6
1D05: China Terrell, 361; write-in, 16
1D06: "Stormy" Scott, 140; write-in, 67

Thus there will be three incumbent commissioners returning for another term, and three new people. This Commission will also be strong in female membership, and non-Anglo-male membership, especially if Yasmine Romero wins in 1D01. Good for us, we'll have a multiethnic ANC that

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Jack McKay, November 7, 2010

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resembles our multiethnic neighborhood.

There are some who say that ANC election results mean little because so few residents vote for commissioners. Not so! A total of 2461 votes were cast in our two precincts for Mayor, 2492 for Councilmember, 1863 for ANC. The ANC vote total is a respectable 75% of the vote count for Mayor and Councilmember.

My own count of 423 votes was more than were received by any other ANC candidate in Ward One. Thanks to all who voted for Jack, and I think that impressive vote count will help me be effective downtown.

Speeding traffic is a universal complaint here, especially on our busy "minor arterials", Park Road, Adams Mill Road, Irving Street, and Walbridge Place. Too many drivers on those routes see our neighborhood as just an obstacle on their way to somewhere else.

I've been wrestling with this problem since I began this ANC work, and one reason for getting a thorough traffic study here in 2007 was to address the speeding problem. Unhappily, neither those traffic engineers, nor anyone else, has been able to offer a good solution. The usual traffic-calming methods, such as speed humps, are not allowed on arterials. We spent months exploring road-design methods of traffic calming for the 2000 block of Park Road, and neighbors could not agree on an acceptable technique. Councilmember Graham naively thought that putting bike lanes on that block would slow traffic; they didn't.

In October, responding to complaints by residents of the 1800 block of Park Road of excessive traffic speeds, DDOT set up a speed-measuring apparatus on that block. The result was a bit of a surprise: "vehicles are traveling within the speed limit in this area", so nothing need be done to reduce traffic speeds. The 85th-percentile speed (85% of cars moving at this speed, or less) was just 30 mph westbound, 28 mph eastbound. Only about 1% of the cars, according to the DDOT measurements, were exceeding 35 mph.

How does that square with observations of excessive speed? In fact, to a pedestrian standing on the sidewalk, cars seem to be moving faster than they really are, especially when they're trucks or big SUVs. This perception is enhanced when there is no barrier of parked cars separating pedestrians from the traffic, as is the case on the south side of Park Road, and the west side of Walbridge Place.

My recent traffic speed measurements on Walbridge yield an 85th-percentile speed of 34 mph, not much different from the

speed observed on Park Road. (My measurement technique will tend to yield higher speeds than DDOT's method.)

Yes, the speeds are disturbing, even if they are not high enough to warrant DDOT intervention. The fundamental problem is “arterial” streets passing through a residential neighborhood, and there's nothing we can do to change that. (East-west arterials in this area are scarce.) My suggestion to residents is to put up those “child running” figures alongside these roads, and perhaps those will slow traffic a bit, advising (the cautious drivers anyway) that yes, this is a residential area, with children and pets around, so please be careful.

Crews have been seen at work lately installing orange cables in Mount Pleasant's underground service tunnels. That's **fiber-optic conduit**, being installed by Verizon for their high-speed FiOS network. I'm told that the actual optical fiber will be installed right behind the conduit. These fibers still have to be run to our houses. Then – someday – that fiber will be “lit” for a high-speed data line to our homes. No, I have no idea when this will come to pass.

At the “informal” ANC meeting of October 19, Mr Grant Epstein showed plans for **the renovation of 3324 18th Street**, that huge, dilapidated mansion at the corner of 18th and Monroe. The lot is large, and zoning allows up to 13 or 14 dwelling units. The developer currently plans 12 units.

This worries neighbors who foresee a dozen or more additional cars competing for scarce curbside parking. Ordinarily, this construction would call for one off-street parking space for every three units, or four spaces. As modest as that number is, because Mount Pleasant is a Historic District, there is no requirement for the developer to provide *any* off-street parking.

As it happens, the developer is proposing four parking spots off the alley, and a couple of cars could be put in the existing driveway. I have suggested, and the developer agrees, that one of those off-street spots could be a Zipcar spot, to encourage residents of this building to get by without cars.

This project will go before the Historic Preservation Review Board on November 18. I plan to support it.

We approach **the 20th anniversary of the Latino disturbances** – I hate to call them “riots” -- of 1991. Those troubles were initiated by a police officer shooting a Latino at Lamont Park, as her attempt to arrest him for public drinking escalated into a loud and angry conflict, neither able to understand the other's language.

The Metropolitan Police have made great strides in building good relations with our Spanish-speaking community, largely by working hard to field officers fluent in Spanish. As I've noted before, our recent PSA meetings have included native-Spanish-speaking officers, who engaged residents directly in their native language. Interpreters cannot provide the same level of comfortable communication with Spanish-speaking residents. Dialog in Spanish is indispensable for persuading our Latino neighbors that the police are their partners, not their oppressors.

The Federal “Secure Communities” program threatens this still-fragile MPD partnership with the Latino community.

People who obsess about “illegals” miss the point. Effective police work requires the cooperation of the community in the identification of troublesome residents. Residents may know, for example, who is doing street robberies, or automobile break-ins. If they don't come forward to the police with what they know, then those criminals remain free to strike again. And if residents fear going to the police, because they or their friends might find themselves under scrutiny by Immigration, then they won't go to the police with what they may know about criminal activities in their community.

The Washington Post recently printed a story about a Maryland resident who called the police for help with her domestic dispute, only to find herself on the verge of deportation to Central America, to be separated from her husband and US-born daughter. Incidents like that will poison community policing with the immigrant community. The District Council knows this, and unanimously called for the District to stay entirely out of this Federal program. Chief Lanier has never understood this, and has been a fervent advocate of “Secure Communities” in the District, wanting to quickly deport immigrants merely *charged* with crimes, without having to bother with criminal trials and convictions.

The first pass of **DPW leaf collection** here is under way now, from November 8 through November 20. That's too soon, most of the leaves are still on the trees! The second pass, December 6 through 18, is most important. Rake leaves *into the treebox space* – not into the gutter! Piles of leaves in gutters clog gutters and jam up storm drains, and wet leaves can make for slippery conditions for cars parked on slopes.

Councilmember Graham is pressing his parking bill. The original bill would not come into effect until February, so he's offered an “emergency” bill to bring his **new parking regulations** into effect right away. I am not happy with the notion of reserving half of RPP-zoned blocks for “Ward One only” vehicles, eliminating the two-hour allowance for visitors. But I favor the provision allowing all residents full residential parking privileges, whether their own block is RPP-zoned or not. The bill provides for ANC opt-in, and I'll support Mount Pleasant's participation in this program.

This month marks **the 150th anniversary of the election of Abraham Lincoln**. Lincoln won with just 40% of the popular vote because the Democratic Party, the defender of slavery in those years, was split in two, dividing that party's vote. I was surprised to learn, in recent reading, that some hard-line Southerners actually welcomed the split in the pro-slavery party, knowing that that would throw the election to the slavery-opposing Republicans. (How these political parties have changed!) They understood that a Republican victory would cause Southern states to secede, and an independent Confederacy would end any threat from the North to slavery in the South. Some even hoped that, after secession, new slaves could be imported from Africa.

The next *informal* meeting of the ANC will be on **Tuesday, December 7**. The next ANC *business* meeting will be on **Tuesday, December 21**.