

## Jack's November report

The October meeting of the ANC could not officially take place, for lack of a quorum. That's two monthly meetings in a row that failed because only three of the six commissioners showed up. Consequently, we made the November 1 "informal" ANC meeting a formal business meeting, to deal with matters held over from the September and October meetings. Even at this meeting, only four commissioners attended. We haven't seen all six commissioners at an ANC meeting since last March. I do not understand this lack of dedication to the job to which we've been elected.

At the November 1 meeting, the ANC endorsed the moving of the Creative Minds Public Charter School into the building at 3224 16th Street. The ANC's concerns about schools at this location has always been about traffic congestion due to parents picking up or dropping off their children.

Because the ANC had its monthly business meeting on November 1, there will be no ANC meeting on November 15.

Early on the morning of October 19, Adams Mill Road resident Ben Mufti was **killed by a large branch falling from a tree**. It wasn't a terribly large branch, maybe four inches in diameter, but it came down from a great height, striking him on the head as he innocently walked towards the Kingle Road bus stop.

The Washington Post called me, fishing for some suggestion that this was someone's negligence. I don't think so. Branches fall from trees all the time. Sometimes a parked car gets dinged, but usually one just finds the branch on the sidewalk, no harm done. Such weakened branches are usually culled out by bad weather, coming down during windstorms, not in calm, zero-wind weather. This one came down on a windless morning, in the pre-dawn darkness, at the precise moment, unfortunately, when Ben happened to be passing directly under the tree.

As for the branch being a visible hazard, these elm trees had been examined quite recently, part of Bill Panici's regular maintenance of Mount Pleasant elm trees. For that matter, I had been up and down the steps to the porch of the house only a week before, passing right under this branch to deliver my newsletter. I noticed nothing to be worried about. As I told the reporter, we could eliminate this hazard only by eliminating our street trees, and that's not about to happen.

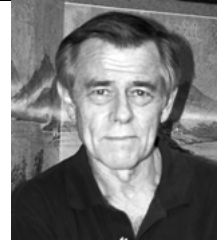
But this is a great sadness, a young man suddenly struck down, through no fault of his own. It is a warning that we should all keep an eye on our nearby street trees for branches threatening to fall, especially where children play on the sidewalk.

For nine years now I've been working for a reconstruction of the **Kenyon/Irving/Adams Mill intersection** that would permit the left turn from westbound Kenyon onto southbound Adams Mill. The turn is prohibited, but a great many residents do it anyway, or evade that prohibition by coming down the alley paralleling Kenyon and making the left from there. But that's illegal, too, and for good reason: cars coming down the right lane on Adams Mill are concealed from view by cars in the left lane stopped for the light.

## ANC 1D03 NEWSLETTER #110

Jack McKay, November 7, 2011

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The revision of the intersection is near at hand, possibly to begin in January, or when winter weather permits. There's a bit of a hiccup right now as DDOT first agreed to move the bus stop on Irving at Kenyon to the Harvard Towers driveway, then abruptly announced, at the end of August, that that couldn't be done, the bus stop had to remain where it is. A couple of commissioners are unhappy with that decision, and DDOT has unfortunately failed to provide a clear rationale for it.

My position is simple: I want to see that intersection reconstruction come, permitting that long-sought left turn, and I don't want this issue of the bus stop to interfere with that project. I'm working on getting a clear explanation from DDOT for the change, so that the issue can be put to rest and the project can go forward. Move the bus stop, or don't move it, whichever makes sense. But don't let that mess up the larger project.

At the November 1 meeting, Gregg introduced a resolution complaining about the DDOT decision. Seeing that he didn't have the votes, he moved that his resolution be tabled indefinitely, and that was agreed to.

Just last July, we were setting some very uncomfortable high temperature records, including record-high daily high temperatures, and record-high daily low temperatures, e.g., a "low" of 84 degrees on July 23. In October, we saw the reverse, **temperatures setting record lows**. On October 3, the high for the day was just 52 degrees, tying the record for the date. On October 4, a high of 53 degrees, again, tying the record for the date. Normally the daily high for these dates is a pleasant 73 degrees. Not this year, as we went from record-hot to record-chilly.

Then, on October 29, came a trace of snow – not much, but this was well ahead of the normal date of first detectable snow. And a pair of temperature records – more records that we really didn't want to set – a record-low high for the date of 42 (22 degrees below the norm), and a record-low low for the date of 34 degrees (12 degrees below the norm).

Enough already! Let's have some just-plain-average weather for a while, please. From November through February in DC, that's quite bad enough.

The terrible Deauville fire of March, 2008, caused a great deal of damage to the **Meridian Hill Baptist Church**, on the opposite side of a narrow alley between the apartment house and the church. Since then, the church has been unusable, and it's been sitting there, for sale, ever since.

There is now a purchaser of the property, and a plan to convert the property into condominium dwellings. Doing that while preserving the very impressive church frontage is clearly difficult, but the developers seem to have come up with a satisfactory plan. Currently the plans are under review by the Historic Preservation Office. In February, the Board of Zoning Adjustment will consider an application for a zoning variance, allowing a smaller rear yard and open court than are mandated by the zoning regulations. (Shades of the Mount Pleasant Library!)

The ca. 1927 church frontage would be kept intact, the great pillars and stone steps and all. Wrapped around this frontage would be a new structure comprising 55 residential units.

The developers appear to be coming to a satisfactory agreement with the Historic Preservation Office, and Historic Mount Pleasant. It seems to me that they've done well at preserving the architecturally impressive frontage, and building around it in a "harmonious" manner. So I expect the historic preservation issue to be resolved shortly, without ANC involvement.

As for the zoning matter, where the ANC opinion will be important, the zoning variances requested are modest, and amount to no significant change from the current layout. The rear yard, for example, would actually be increased from the current 5 feet to 11 feet, though that remains short of the 26 foot zoning minimum, thus requiring a variance.

I consider this a conversion of a nonproductive property to a productive one, providing residential housing, and property tax revenues to the District, in a situation that is, because of the preservation matter, challenging. On the whole, this is good for Mount Pleasant, and good for the District, so I'll do what I can to support this development, on both the historic preservation and zoning variance matters.

I've warned repeatedly of the **burglaries** afflicting Mount Pleasant. The July burglary wave evidently came to an end with a raid in August on a house in nearby Columbia Heights, where a good deal of stolen property was recovered. That particular band of burglars concentrated their attentions on north Mount Pleasant and Crestwood (just to our north).

But in September, the burglary count shot up again, from a normal five in August, to 10 in September, then 15 in October. These burglaries are confined to Mount Pleasant, none of our adjacent neighborhoods showing such surges.

A break in this burglary wave may have come, thanks to an alert resident. It's a bit early to draw any firm conclusions, but there hasn't been a row-house burglary reported since October 25.

The burglary problem was the main topic at the PSA meeting of October 26, and Lieutenant Pate noted that, while he's aware of the problem and is doing all he can, it's really up to us to protect ourselves. Keep your back doors locked!

Ted Jones, an Irving Street resident, asked that a neighborhood listserve be set up for residents to communicate about crime and public safety matters. I've set that up: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/psa301>.

**Fall leaf collection** is here. Collection in our neighborhood will be on November 7 through 19 (now!), and December 5 through 17. Bagged leaves will be collected, and composted, as well as loose-raked leaves. Put them in treebox spaces before December 5 for collection. Not out in the gutter, please! That just causes clogging of gutters and storm drains.

The days are growing short, as we approach midwinter. The **earliest sunset** occurs about December 6, when sunset takes place at a quarter to 5 pm. After that date, sunset begins to come a little bit later each day, but the days continue to grow shorter because sunrise comes even later each morning.

I've mentioned that those awful Asian Tiger mosquitos, the things that make it hard to spend time outdoors in mid-summer, were brought here in 1987 from Asia in a shipment of used tires, sent to Baltimore for recycling. Now we'll never get rid of the things, which are much more aggressive and unpleasant than our ordinary mosquitos. Well, here's another plague, brought from another continent: **the West Nile Virus**, which has killed millions of birds, and more than 1300 people, since it first appeared in North America. Apparently a commercial aircraft inadvertently brought virus-infected mosquitos from the Middle East to New York in 1999, and now the virus is found from coast to coast.

Crows are especially susceptible to West Nile, and have almost disappeared from here. I recall, years ago, making noise out in the back yard to try to scare away the great flocks of crows that occasionally congregated in our trees, making a fierce racket. Now it's a rarity to see even a single crow, and those big flocks of crows are long gone. West Nile did that, reducing the population of crows nationwide by close to half. Crows aren't pretty songbirds, but I still think it's a shame that they're practically gone.

Would you like to compost your food scraps, but you don't have a place to do the composting yourself? A Harvard Street resident of Mount Pleasant has set up an "urban composting made easy" operation. "**Compost Cab**" provides compost bins, and collects your food scraps once a week for transfer to "one of our nearby not-for-profit urban farm partners" for composting. He reports "around two dozen subscribers" in Mount Pleasant, and would be pleased to increase that count. To find out more, visit his web site, <http://compostcab.com>, or e-mail [info@compostcab.com](mailto:info@compostcab.com).

Things I didn't know: 50 years ago the **Washington Redskins** were the lone, all-white pro football holdout, the team owner, George Marshall, resisting all pressure to have black players on the team. Then, in 1961, President Kennedy used the leverage of the construction of the new stadium, now RFK Stadium, to force the team to be open to black players. American Nazi Party members marched outside the new stadium with placards saying "Keep Redskins white!", a bizarre phrase. The first black Redskin – another bizarre phrase – was Bobby Mitchell, in 1962. I remember those ugly times of segregation and bigotry. The "good old days", these weren't. Good riddance to them, and we're not going back.

The next *business* meeting of the ANC will be on **Tuesday, December 6, 7:00 pm**. The next *informal* meeting is scheduled for **January 3, 2012, 7:00 pm**.