

Jack's November report

At the October 20 meeting, the ANC:

- Approved the financial report to the DC Auditor for the fourth quarter of FY2015.
- Approved an ANC budget for FY2016.
- Approved a contract for a “Communications Associate”, and agreed to hire Ms Lily Najera for that task, for a 6-month period.
- Agreed to a “no objection” letter to ABRA for a “stipulated” liquor license to permit entertainment at Marleny's Restaurant.
- Passed a resolution advising the District Council, and the Council Committee on the Judiciary, to approve a bill that would treat the homicide surge as a “public health crisis”.
- Passed a resolution advising the MPD to implement a speed camera on the 2000 block of Park Road.
- Passed a resolution expressing approval of the Homeward DC Program.
- Tabled, until the November meeting, a resolution advising DDOT to convert one westbound lane of Klingle Road, west of the Adams Mill Road intersection, into a bicycle and pedestrian path.

The ANC passed, 5 to 0, my resolution advising the Council to act favorably on Councilmember Kenyan McDuffie's bill to **“treat the current spike in homicides as a public health crisis”**. Chief Lanier commented recently that these homicides, like the one at the Harvard Towers in September, are predominantly between individuals, and don't involve gangs. It's about hotheaded young men settling their personal disputes with guns. McDuffie's bill would, among other things, “establish a new Office of Violence Prevention within the Department of Health to prepare and implement a strategy for a public health approach to violence”. The emphasis is on identifying potential perpetrators of gun violence, and persuading them to refrain. Clearly deterrence by the threat of prison time isn't adequate.

I testified to CM McDuffie's committee on October 21. He was very pleased to see our support. We were the only ANC to show up and testify in favor of his bill.

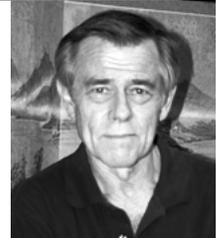
The ANC also passed my resolution advising the MPD to implement a **speed camera for the 2000 block of Park Road** (the last block, heading into Rock Creek Park). DDOT engineers agree that “a speed camera would be the most effective solution for slowing traffic” on this block. I'm not a great fan of speed cameras, but this is one block with a problem, with limited visibility, and a tendency for drivers to go through at speed, Park Road being a cross-town “minor arterial”, not merely a neighborhood residential street. Furthermore, residents on the east side of the road commonly park on the west side, and must walk across the street to get to their parked cars. (Nobody's going to hike all the way up to the traffic light intersection, wait for the “walk” light, then hike all the way back down.)

There's a new person in charge of speed cameras at the MPD, one Lamont Hilton. He wasn't aware of this longstanding Park Road problem, but will now look into it.

ANC 1D03 NEWSLETTER #154

Jack McKay, November 8, 2015

Jack McKay
3200 19th St, Tel. 462-8692
jack.mckay@verizon.net
<http://DCJack.org>



Everyone's noticed that the westbound lanes on Klingle Road, west of the Adams Mill Road intersection, have been closed for some time, as Pepco and Verizon work on underground utility conduits there, following the Pepco mineral-oil leak into Rock Creek. So Klingle Road traffic has been confined to a single lane in each direction.

That single lane westbound has in fact been sufficient for handling the amount of traffic on this road, even with the confusion caused by diverting westbound traffic onto the eastbound side of the road. There is no need for a four-lane highway from the Adams Mill Road intersection to Porter Street (where the road necks down to a single lane anyway).

Residents of Mount Pleasant have long complained, with justice, about poor access by foot or bicycle to Rock Creek Park. Park Road is extremely dangerous for pedestrians and bicyclists. I use the route through the Zoo, but that's too often closed, and is inconvenient for residents north of Park Road. Klingle Road is pretty unpleasant too, being too wide, and built like a freeway. (One safety rule for bicyclists: avoid roads that have no parked cars.) The men posted at the intersection to guide traffic said that they have had to turn away numerous people who wanted to walk down that closed section of Klingle to reach the park.

So I've suggested to DDOT that Klingle, west of the Adams Mill intersection, become one traffic lane westbound, with the lane adjacent to the mural wall converted to bicyclist and pedestrian access, down to the Beach Drive turnoff. This protected lane would provide safe access to the park, safe enough that one could take kids down on their bicycles, to ride on the bike path, and to reach the portion of Beach Drive that is closed to traffic on weekends.

The response from the bicycling specialist at DDOT was, “Why didn't we think of that?” Councilmember Nadeau said it was a “very interesting idea – I've also heard concerns about access to the park via bike (and foot) from this part of the Ward”.

The ANC was, however, not enthusiastic about it, for reasons obscure to me. I guess they need to go look at the place and ponder the situation. So my resolution was tabled until the November meeting.

I think this change would be entirely in keeping with the current effort to promote bicycle commuting, as well as recreational access to Rock Creek Park. Surely Klingle Road can be made to serve pedestrians and bicyclists, and not just automobile drivers. (“No Pedestrians”, decrees the sign at the entrance to the westbound lanes of Klingle Road.)

Fifteen years ago we went through a rather harsh neighborhood dispute about what to do with the “greenspace” in front of the 1900 Lamont apartment house. Some residents wanted, understandably, a playground there. Residents of the adjacent apartment house were naturally concerned about lots of noise right under their windows, and objected. The playground advocates prevailed, winning the conversion of that lot to a public park, but with the unintended consequence of the lot becoming a dog exercise area (as we warned, at the time, would happen).

Recently an on-line survey polled residents about their preferences for this park. “Playground” was the far-away winner, reopening that long-ago dispute, in all its bitterness. Much of that is directed at me, presumably because it's recalled that I opposed the “Toddler Park” back then. It's assumed that I'll be an opponent again, though I point out that “*anything that's okay with the apartment house residents is okay with me*”. Evidently the playground proponents assume that the apartment house residents will again oppose the playground. Perhaps so, but wouldn't it be nice to work with them to agree on something acceptable to all? A modest playground might well be acceptable to the apartment house residents, which means it would have my support.

My resolution, introduced at the request of a 19th Street neighbor (not a resident of the apartment house), called merely for any plans for the park to be “offered to the public, and to this ANC, for a full review, prior to any decisions or commitments”. That seems to me to be pretty reasonable, but some people took this to be an effort to oppose any changes to the park, and objected. One commissioner worried that the resolution would reveal to DPR the dissension within the community about that park, and thus might prevent any funds being allocated to park “improvements”. So the resolution was tabled until the November meeting.

My house is directly adjacent to this park. People commonly assume that my proximity causes me, too, to object to the playground. Not so; **I wouldn't mind a playground there**. My house is so well sound-insulated that playground noise wouldn't be a bother to me. Last week a big wood chipper was in use next to the park, chewing up a large limb fallen from an oak tree, and producing a 90 dB sound level on my porch – loud! But inside my house, the sound level was a barely audible 60 dB. That's what double-glass windows will do for you.

My position 15 years ago, and my position today, is that I don't much care what is done with that park. I'm interested only in defending the apartment house residents from anything they consider objectionable. Residents may recall the upset when Bancroft proposed putting its soccer field right across the street from homes on the 3400 block of Mount Pleasant Street. Those residents objected, and Bancroft agreed to put its soccer field where it wouldn't be so close to these neighbors. That's what all residents want, and have a right to: *peace and quiet in their own homes*.

As in the case of Bancroft's soccer field, if my apartment house neighbors object to a playground – and, 15 years ago, they surely did – then I must support them. *All residents,*

including apartment house dwellers, deserve peace and quiet in their homes. If the playground proposal cannot assure that, then I have to oppose the playground. That was the case 15 years ago, and that seems again to be the case today.

Playground proponents have demanded that I, as ANC commissioner, should recuse myself from any considerations of this park. I'm tempted to do that, if only because that might put a stop to the harassment of me for my fence and side yard, adjacent to the park. However, as one resident pointed out at the ANC meeting October 20, they're depending on me to represent them, and I would be failing in my responsibility to them if I abstained on this issue.

Harassment? On October 30 a DCRA inspector showed up at my door, investigating a “complaint” that my wood-stake fence is “illegal”. That fence has been there for 41 years, and there's never been any complaint about it, except from playground advocates looking for any means possible to punish me for getting in the way of their playground notions. I gave the DCRA inspector a full tour of the fence situation, and haven't heard from him since.

What next? I don't know, but I'm not budging from my position. We all have a right to peace and quiet in our homes. This is in fact official District policy: *every person is entitled to ambient noise levels that are not detrimental to life, health, and enjoyment of his or her property*. That's “every person”, not “everyone except apartment house residents”.

The official harassment has only strengthened my resolve to support my apartment house neighbors. No one has admitted to having filed the complaint, and the playground proponents have not disassociated themselves from that tactic.

Residents sometimes think that ANCs are given lots of cash to hand out as “grants”. Well, not really. I prepared a budget for our commission for FY2016, under which 78% of our annual funding is committed to commission operations, such as paying the interpreters at our monthly meetings. The 22% surplus allows just \$2000 for “public purpose expenditures”.

Commissioners want to use our surplus funds for the public good, certainly, but that's not easy. ANC funds may not be used for food, nor for entertainment, nor for anything that could be considered “subsistence”, and must benefit the whole neighborhood, not just part of it. For example, our giving \$229 to the Mount Pleasant Business Association to buy toys to give to children at the Holiday Party last December was disallowed by the auditor, who reasoned that giving a toy to a child benefited only that child, not the whole neighborhood. That's absurd, of course, but that's what we have to deal with.

Our entire donation of about \$1800 to the Business Association for the Holiday Party was disallowed, mostly for reasons of inadequate documentation. That's not at all unusual. A recent audit of the Columbia Heights ANC resulted in the rejection of 78% of their grants. That's fairly typical, and is one reason why half the ANCs in the District don't do grants. The rules are just too onerous.

The next meeting of the ANC will be on Tuesday, **November 17, 7:00 pm, at the Mount Pleasant Library.**