

October report to constituents

Here is news of the **October 4 ANC monthly meeting**, and other happenings in Mount Pleasant. At the monthly meeting, the ANC.

At the October meeting, the ANC:

- Appropriated \$200 for miscellaneous expenses associated with two open-air, “meet the ANC” sessions in Lamont Plaza
- Authorized the expenditure of up to \$2500 for the purchase of equipment for providing simultaneous Spanish-language interpreting at ANC meetings
- Advised the Historic Preservation Review Board to approve the permit application for the renovation of 3508-3510 16th Street (the corner of Oak and 16th); Historic Mount Pleasant was asked to first review the project, as we establish a practice of asking their opinion on such matters
- Agreed to hold the next ANC meeting on Saturday, November 5, in the Mount Pleasant Library, in conjunction with the special election to fill the vacancy in 1D02
- Agreed on rules for the special election, and on having a “symbolic vote” of noncitizen residents of 1D02
- Advised the Alcoholic Beverage Regulation Administration to consider changes of ownership “substantial changes”, thus triggering ANC notification of any such change
- Considered asking DDOT to add a stop sign on Monroe Street at Brown, where there have been five side-on collisions in three years; this resolution was tabled after a resident declined to support it
- Advised the DCRA to provide notice to ANCs of all applications for zoning decisions, so that the fiasco of the seven-condo project at 1636 Irving Street will not be repeated
- Advised DDOT to provide us with notifications of public space permit applications, as required by the DC Code, a law which the Public Space Office ignores
- Authorized reimbursement to Commissioners of up to \$50 a quarter for personal newsletters (*Note: I will accept no such reimbursement*)
- Advised the HPRB to provide Commissioners with full documentation of permit applications at least ten business days ahead of our monthly meetings, giving us an opportunity to review the proposed projects
- Asked petitioners for ANC opinions to submit their requests at least ten business days ahead of a monthly meeting.

ANC 1D03 NEWSLETTER #38

Jack McKay, October 25, 2005

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On Friday, October 7, the MPD arrested a **trio of juvenile robbers** (14 to 16 years old) in Columbia Heights, believed to be responsible for numerous robberies in Mount Pleasant and Columbia Heights. These three led police to the ring-leader, an 18-year-old, who admitted to 21 robberies “that he could recall”. As I’ve noted before: (1) the guys doing the robberies are youths, even children; (2) they are not Mount Pleasant residents, but come here from the low-income areas to our east; (3) they don’t do just one or two robberies, but many. Chief Ramsey says that it’s a game for these teenagers, as they compete to see who can do the most robberies.

The best way to prevent future robberies is to track down and arrest those who have done robberies, because they won’t stop until they are stopped. The District’s rate of closing robberies by arrest is only 14%, well below the 23% average of large cities nationwide. What we need is not more police, but more detectives, with more time and resources to spend on tracking down robbers.

Chief Ramsey has formed a squad of 14 detectives to focus on robberies. He’s also established a new policy of cash rewards for information leading to the arrest and conviction of robbers. Forensics, like DNA and fingerprints, are rarely helpful in tracking down criminals, contrary to the image given by TV. With rare exception, criminals are caught after the fact only because someone who knows something comes forward. If it takes cash rewards to persuade such people to speak up, then that’s money well spent. Let’s see these predators caught and put away long before they can count 21 robberies to their credit, and before another Mount Pleasant resident becomes a homicide victim at their hands.

There will be a **special ANC election** to fill the vacancy in 1D02 (Oakwood Terrace, Brown Street, and north along 16th to the Woodner). We’re pleased to see two candidates running for this seat, Mitchell Backfield and Karl Hoffman. Because it’s hard for people to come to weekday-evening meetings, **we’ll hold our November meeting starting at 3 pm on Saturday afternoon, November 5, in the Mount Pleasant Library, the voting taking place from 3:30 to 4:30 pm.** I hope for a good turnout. It will be good to have this portion of Mount Pleasant represented on the ANC.

There will also be a “symbolic vote” by noncitizen residents of 1D02, as we continue to promote participation in neighborhood matters by our immigrant neighbors.

On the agenda: a stop sign for Monroe at Brown; the timing of east-west traffic lights across 16th Street; liquor license renewals.

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| <p>The ANC approved reimbursement of up to \$50 a quarter to Commissioners for expenses in putting out their own newsletters. I do not accept, and will not accept, any ANC funds for this newsletter. It costs me about \$65 a month just for printing, all of which comes out of my own pocket. (This is my 38th newsletter, and this cost does add up.) I voted for the reimbursement because I felt that Commissioners unable to afford to pay for their own newsletters ought to be helped.</p> | <p>Many times I've said that the very popular "broken windows" notion of crime doesn't work here. (One of the two originators of that idea says that it remains, 20 years on, "a speculation".) Robbers are not coming here because there is disorderly behavior on Mount Pleasant Street, and hence a "permissive" atmosphere. No, robbers come here from east of 16th Street because (1) we're close enough to be easily reached, on foot, or on bicycle (especially important for juvenile robbers); (2) we're far enough away that people here won't recognize the intruders, and won't know where they live; (3) we're the "rich folks", with incomes well above those of Columbia Heights and points east. We also tend to be what the MPD calls "soft targets", that is, we're not likely to fight back.</p> |
| <p>Fall leaf collection will be done in this area between October 31 and November 12. DPW wants us to rake our leaves into the treebox space, not bagged, but loose, so that their vacuum trucks can suck them up. Do <i>not</i> rake leaves into the gutter, where they plug up the gutters and storm drains. There will be a second sweep of leaves between November 28 and December 10. (The first sweep tends to come too early, well before the leaves have come down, while the second tends to come very late, after the leaves have turned into sodden piles.)</p> | <p>That's not to say that disorderly conduct on Mount Pleasant Street is to be tolerated. It's to say that dealing with that problem will do no good at all towards solving the much more serious problem of robberies. The disorder problem is best dealt with by our foot patrol officers, who can impose street discipline by their authoritative presence, backed up with the threat of arrest if the offender doesn't behave.</p> |
| <p>Being interviewed by a reporter is always worrisome, because you don't know what few words of yours they will use, nor in what context they will place your words. The Washington Post story of September 25, quoting Gregg Edwards and me, led to some neighborhood upset. The reporter focused on the newcomer-vs.-oldtimer difference, which is not what I would have done. I said that we suffer "not from a permissive street culture, but from criminals drawn to the area 'because they know they can find easy victims here.'" The MPD agrees, but with the expression "soft targets" for "easy victims". Continuing, I said that robbery "is a far more serious problem than the disorderly conduct on Mount Pleasant Street, and the two problems are not connected." No doubt about it; drunks are a great nuisance, for sure, but a kid with a gun can kill you.</p> | <p>I encourage people to call Lieutenant Sledge (390-5569, cellphone) when there's a disorderly-conduct problem, hoping for a quick relay of the call to the foot patrols. Calling 311 just doesn't work, because the response time is much too long. Recently MPNA has established a "Live Link" system, which provides cellphone links directly to officers on the street in Mount Pleasant, ready to respond. This is operative between 6 pm and 10 pm, seven days a week. The phone numbers: 689-4277 for a foot patrol officer, 689-4278 for a squad car officer. You must call 311/911 first. I think this is an admirable effort, and let's see if this will be effective in reducing the problems of disorderly conduct on the Street.</p> |
| <p>Further, we longtime residents are "more understanding [of the Latinos on the street] than the people who arrived more recently, and who have suburban expectations instead of urban, inner-city expectations". We oldsters remember when Mount Pleasant Street was really grim, and we tend to perceive how much better it is, while some (not all) of our newer residents know nothing of the bad old days, and some have little experience with the inner city, and so are naturally more sensitive to the problems remaining today.</p> <p>Gregg Edwards, in his separate interview, said something rather abrasive about people wanting a "cultural Disneyland". He told me that he meant his words to apply to a few residents who are especially aggressive about their demands, not to all newcomers to Mount Pleasant. I later persuaded Gregg to post an explanation and apology to the community for his very unfortunate choice of words.</p> | <p>We've been seeing too many rats lately. Merrit Drucker, head of the DC Clean City Initiative, and I have been discussing what to do. I believe that we've got to take a wide-scale view of the problem, and undertake a systematic program of rat suppression, as opposed to doing a patch-work of Band-Aid fixes here and there. We've got to attack not only where the rats are feeding, but where they are nesting, and take action over a large enough area that we're not merely pushing the rats from one location to another. I'm meeting this week with a Department of Health rat expert to devise a rat abatement strategy.</p> |
| <p>Daylight savings time ends this coming weekend. Don't forget to set your clocks back one hour the evening of October 29. Then sunset will be arriving at around 5 pm. I'll miss those long days of summer, with sunlight until 9 pm. A month from now, we could be shoveling snow.</p> | <p>The Rosemount Center has reopened, after a complete rebuilding of the physical plant, and a year of disruption for construction. It now has vastly improved facilities. <i>El Centro Rosemount</i> is not merely a day-care center, but provides in-home assistance and parent training services to families with infants. It is now considered the ideal model nationwide of two-language infant/toddler and preschool services.</p> |
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