

Jack's October report

On September 15, the ANC did the following:

- Endorsed an application by the Pupuseria San Miguel for an expansion of its little restaurant;
- Reminded the ABC Board that this ANC is no longer a party to the “voluntary agreement” with the Bestway Supermarket, and asked the Board to dismiss the current complaints of VA violation without fines;
- Requested a one-month postponement of the Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB) hearing of 3430-3432 Brown Street, to allow the ANC time to study this issue.

On October 6, the ANC:

- Asked the ABC Board to deal with the charges of “voluntary agreement” violations by Don Jaime's Restaurant without fines;
- Advised the HPRB to consider numerous changes to the current design for the expansion of the Mount Pleasant Library.

In September I wrote of this report from MPD Inspector Jacob Kishter: “On August 13, 2009 at 1:13 A.M., in the 3200 block of Adams Mill Road, Northwest, a **robbery and an assault was committed with a handgun** where the subject fired multiple gunshots at the victim. . . . the subject was located and arrested . . . and will face criminal charges of robbery and assault with a dangerous weapon (handgun).”

This MPD description was seriously misleading. Rather than being some kind of fight on the street, this was a case of a guy firing seven 9-mm rounds through a resident's bedroom window, as she sat nearby. Inspector Kishter added that “the involved parties knew each other and it was not a random act”. No, not really; as the police report said, “she knows [the man] from the neighborhood”. She didn't even recall the guy's name. As for “will face criminal charges of robbery and assault with a dangerous weapon”, no, he won't. The only charge filed so far by the U.S. Attorney is a mere “misdemeanor theft”. That's the only charge that seems likely to stand up to a “beyond a reasonable doubt” test in court.

I'm following the outcome of this incident as closely as I can. That's not easy, because the U.S. Attorney responds to virtually any inquiry with an uninformative “We cannot discuss matters that are under investigation”. The neighborhood, in his opinion, does not need to know anything more about this exceptionally violent incident. I think it does.

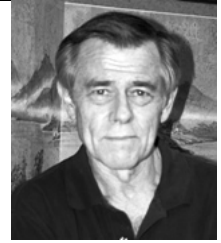
On October 8, Councilmember Graham held a meeting at Bell-Lincoln concerning the **burned-out Deauville building**. (The ANC provided the equipment needed for simultaneous English-Spanish interpretation.) Briefly: the Councilmember is working on helping the National Housing Trust acquire the property, for \$3.5 million. That purchase may take place by next spring, after which it will take about two years to build a new building, intended for “workforce housing”. Meanwhile, the Deauville residents, mostly Latino, remain displaced, and their absence contributes substantially to the suffering of the Latino markets and restaurants on Mount Pleasant Street.

On October 7, the first community meeting of the **Klingle Valley Trail** project was held, at the Zoo. That's right – it's

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now a “trail”, no longer “Klingle Road”.

A few die-hard road advocates showed up, but to no avail. The enabling legislation states that “the right-of-way *shall* remain closed to motor vehicle traffic”. That's the end of it; after 18 years of bitter dispute, no one on the District Council is about to re-open that hotly controversial matter.

As I noted six years ago, because the road advocates insisted on all of the road for cars, all of the time, with no recreational provision, they were likely to end up with none of the road, none of the time. And so it has come to pass.

In perhaps three years, there will be a bicycle and pedestrian trail through the very beautiful Klingle Valley. I think that will be marvelous.

The renovation and expansion of the **Mount Pleasant Library** continues to be problematic. I think everyone agrees that the renovation of the interior is much needed, and would itself not be troublesome. The problem is that the DC Public Library has decreed that all libraries shall have at least 20,000 square feet of floor space, and the existing building has only 17,000 square feet. Hence, a physical expansion is necessary, and that's where the disputes arise.

Residents of the adjacent apartment houses complain that the expansion will block emergency access to the rear of those buildings for fire trucks, should there be another fire like the Deauville fire of March, 2008. Historic preservationists complain that the expansion is too modernistic, and is incongruous with the Italian-villa style of the old building. The long ramps needed for wheelchair access appear to be contrary to ADA length and rise regulations, and threaten to make the place a noisy playground for skateboarders.

On September 24, the Commission of Fine Arts punted on the matter, delegating “final approval to the staff”. The Historic Preservation Review Board appears to be about to do the same. (Can you imagine them allowing any resident to build a big, modernistic addition to a row house?) The ANC protested the HPRB's inclination to decide the matter at its September 24 meeting, insisting that we had a right to review the latest design for the library, provided to us only a few days before their meeting. The HPRB agreed to postpone its decision until its October 22 meeting. The ANC, working closely with Historic Mount Pleasant, has compiled a lengthy and detailed list of complaints about the current design.

I'm worried about the possibility of derailing the whole project. I can imagine people downtown declaring that, if Mount Pleasant is going to be this troublesome about the

library project, let's cancel the project and use the money somewhere else. On the other hand, the complaints are substantial, not just quibbling over details. I do wish the DC Public Library would agree to a renovation of the interior only, abandoning the 3,000-square-foot expansion.

On October 9, the Washington Post had a story leading with **the conversion of north Mount Pleasant to Residential Permit Parking (RPP)**. With the title "Hide Car Here", the article described residents keeping their cars registered in their home states, evading the District's registration law by "hiding" them on unzoned blocks. RPP-zone a block, and those non-DC-tag cars become very visible. I've estimated that 20% of the parking space on our unzoned blocks has been taken up by these out-of-state cars, many put there by residents who live blocks away. As one such registration scofflaw posted on the City Paper Website, "AAAAHHHH! My car is parked on Ingleside Drive and I want to keep it there! Nooooooooooooo!" (Clearly he doesn't live on this block.)

The conversion of Monroe, Newton, Ingleside, and the last block of 19th Street to RPP is now complete. Residents have noted a substantial decrease in parking congestion, day and night. One evening recently I counted 19 vacant parking spots on the 1800 block of Newton, something that would never have been seen before RPP.

The original plan was, of course, to permit automobile commuters to Mount Pleasant jobs, in particular those at Bancroft Elementary and the Stoddard Baptist Home, to purchase daytime-only parking passes, allowing them to park on RPP-zoned blocks. The commuters aren't our problem, because they go home at night (and overnight workers aren't bothered by RPP). Unfortunately, the day-pass program vanished, even after "1DD" signs went up to show where the day passes could be used. No one will admit responsibility for the abrupt termination of the program, but it's dead. This is a great hardship for Bancroft and Stoddard, a hardship which I never intended to impose.

Councilmember Graham is considering the possibility of a renewed day-pass program, but he won't proceed without clear approval from residents. On September 21, a community meeting on the topic of parking was held, but that meeting, dominated by Bancroft advocates, did not yield the proof he wanted. So on October 1 the Councilmember held another meeting, this time for only residents of the newly zoned blocks. About 21 residents appeared (representing just 7% of the 296 households in the affected area), and again, the outcome was ambiguous. The Councilmember has now created a working group of seven residents to consider the matter, and make a recommendation.

Also important is the matter of what blocks are open to commuters with daytime passes. The original program simply allowed day-pass commuters to park on any 1DD block. Naturally, the people at Bancroft and Stoddard (our largest employers) would tend first to fill up blocks near those establishments. As I said at the September 21 meeting, they're welcome to park on my block, south of Park Road, and walk to their jobs. That's fair. But how do we spread their parking

around, so they're not all on Newton Street? I have proposed a variation on the DDOT program, assigning these permits to specific blocks, so that no block would see more than 20% of its parking space taken up by commuters. Right now, I'm not optimistic about any sort of day-pass program for Mount Pleasant commuters. The complaints to Councilmember Graham last spring, asserting either that it was terrible to make Stoddard and Bancroft commuters pay for parking, or that it was terrible to "sell" our curbside parking to any commuters, I think are responsible for the termination of the day pass program promised by DDOT.

I hear much about **drugs on Monroe Street**. Eleven years ago, helping our cousin Sonia move into 1827 Monroe, a neighbor helped us carry some furniture, then sat down on the steps and lit up a crack pipe. That seems to be an aspect of Monroe Street, and of much of Mount Pleasant, namely that drug usage is common and casual. The common image of drug users as crazed addicts robbing and stealing to get their next fix is not accurate.

In August, a young woman was arrested on Monroe for drug possession, and brought to trial in October. I gather that she had tested clean for drugs, and so the U.S. Attorney dropped the charges. I last saw the young lady happily on her way home, free, her little daughter dancing cheerfully alongside. I thought that was an admirable outcome to the incident.

More troubling is the case of a Monroe Street resident charged last December with "possession with intent to distribute" (cocaine). I believe he's now pleaded guilty to *attempted* possession, et cetera, and will face sentencing in November.

Despite the crack-smoking neighbor (who no longer lives here), and the frequent complaints of drugs on Monroe, I never worried about the safety of my cousin's daughter growing up on that block. She's certain to encounter drugs at school (now in Bethesda), and I trust her mother to have taught her to resist that temptation.

The September 29 issue of the New York Times, Science section, reported on a study of **bird mortality due to roaming housecats**, coincidentally in the DC area. In Bethesda, where cats are few, 55% of fledgling birds survive to maturity, about the same as in nature. But in Takoma Park, where housecats are common, *only 10% of fledgling birds survive*. That is, roaming housecats kill 80% of the fledgling birds that would otherwise survive to maturity. And don't believe the myth that cats help with rat control; "cats don't predate on rats, especially the rather large varieties seen in our cities."

The last 80-degree day of 2008 was October 16. **Looks like the last 80-degree day of 2009 was October 9.** The first 80-degree day of spring comes just about exactly six months later, in mid-April. Summer's over, and it's a long haul until balmy weather returns. Ah, but here's the silver lining: the cool weather has put a stop to mosquitos.

The next ANC <i>business</i> meeting will be on Tuesday, October 20 . The ANC's next <i>informal</i> meeting, if held, will be on November 3 .
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