

Jack's October report

At the September 21 ANC meeting, the ANC:

- Advised the ABC Board to reconsider its decision denying a night-club liquor license to Haydee's Restaurant, this time "address[ing] with the deference required by law, all the relevant ANC resolutions and points".
- Advised the DCRA that the property at 1724 Park Road is not to be classified as "blighted".

The **Haydee's Restaurant resolution**, passed by a unanimous vote, was *not* advice to the ABC Board to *reverse* its decision. The message was simply that the Board must treat the ANC resolution with the consideration required by law, namely to "articulate with particularity and precision the reasons why the Commission does or does not offer persuasive advice under the circumstances. . . the government entity must articulate specific findings and conclusions with respect to each issue and concern raised by the Commission." In fact, the ABC Board did nothing of the sort, merely dismissing the ANC resolution with a verbal wave of the hand: "The Board finds that its conclusions below adequately address the points raised by the ANC".

Well, we don't think so. So we're telling them to go back and do what the DC Code requires, explaining why they reject our resolution. The six commissioners agreed that we've got to insist on legally sufficient treatment of our resolutions. It's not about the Board's decision, but the inadequate respect given the ANC's resolution. That got a unanimous vote from the ANC. And, on October 7, the ABC Board agreed to undertake the requested "reconsideration".

Mount Pleasant's vote in the September 14 primary:

Mayor: Adrian Fenty 66%, Vincent Gray 34%

Ward One Council: Jim Graham 54%, Brian Weaver 24%,
Jeff Smith 22%

Council Chair: Kwame Brown 54%, Vincent Orange 38%

At-Large Council: Phil Mendelson 69%

As everyone knows, I worry a lot about **crime in Mount Pleasant**. Not that the crime rate here is especially high – it's lower than anywhere else in Ward One – but it's certainly not zero, and it's three times the crime rate of neighborhoods west of Rock Creek Park. The most common crime is theft from automobile. The most threatening to us is robbery, which may turn into violent assault, or even death.

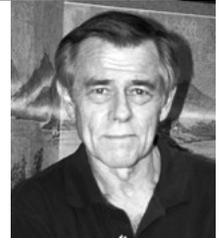
Three-quarters of robberies here are done without guns. But of the four robberies reported in Mount Pleasant in September, three employed guns, including one in the 1800 block of Lamont on September 29, unusually far west in our neighborhood. I hope this use of guns in street robberies isn't a trend. I can find no details on that robbery on Lamont.

It's clear to me that Chief Lanier's police policies are ineffectual at decreasing crime in our neighborhoods. Homicides are down, yes, but homicides are down everywhere, not just in DC. The strongest explanation for the decrease in homicides nationwide is the decrease in lead in the environment brought about by the phasing out of leaded gasoline thirty years ago. That hasn't stopped Chief Lanier

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from claiming credit for the decline in homicides in DC, as if her police tactics were responsible.

If Chief Lanier's police work were effective at reducing violent crime, then robberies ought to be decreasing too, not just homicides. But they're not. Comparing the summers of 2004-2006, when Charles Ramsey was chief of police, to the summertime robbery rates under Chief Lanier, I find a 13% *increase*. As for Mount Pleasant, the summertime robbery rate was 5.5 per month under Chief Ramsey, and is 5.6 per month under Chief Lanier, essentially unchanged. No, we're *not* gaining on violent crime, despite the claims, and despite Chief Lanier's ineffectual "all hands on deck" stunts.

While the decline in homicides is a good thing, it's robbery that most seriously threatens you and me and our families. *There are 75 robberies in Mount Pleasant for every homicide*, and at least one homicide, that of Gregory Shipe in 2005, was apparently the result of a street robbery. Nationwide, middle-size cities close 21.5% of robberies, but the closes just 17.2%. I've been calling for more emphasis on solving robberies, and putting serial robbers out of business, since 2003, and I'm not giving up on that campaign.

Election Day is November 2. I'd be grateful for people coming out to vote for me. True, nobody's opposing me, so maybe I've got a lock on re-election. Nonetheless, people pay attention to how many votes an ANC commissioner gets, as an indication of how much support in the neighborhood he's got. So yes, I need your vote, and it will count!

These are the formal candidates for ANC, whose names will be on ballots:

1D01: no candidate

1D02: Laura Wilson Phelan (Oakwood Terrace)

1D03: Jack

1D04: Gregg Edwards and Phil Greiner (Lamont Street)

1D05: China Terrell (Lamont Street)

1D06: Angelia Scott (Harvard Towers)

Clearly there will be changes on this ANC, as three incumbents are not running for re-election, and a fourth is facing a strong challenge. There are also at least two write-in campaigns under way, by Adam Hoey in 1D02, and John Craig in 1D06. They filed petitions to be on the November ballot, but their petitions failed to meet the legal requirement of 25 registered voters resident in their districts.

The informal ANC meeting of October 5 included a review of the effects of **Fiesta DC** on the neighborhood. I noted the problem of vendor's trucks parked all day around the

neighborhood, many illegally parked and creating traffic flow problems. The Fiesta's sponsors said that the vendors had been told to take their vehicles elsewhere. Evidently they didn't get the message, and this is something that will have to be done better next time. Other problems: blocking Irving Street at the Kenyon intersection cuts off vital traffic to the Harvard Towers building; blocking Lamont between Mount Pleasant Street and 16th cuts off a heavily used parking garage. Lessons learned.

To get into Mount Pleasant from 16th Street, you might want to **turn left directly from 16th Street onto Park Road**, but that has been, *until now*, prohibited. You have had to turn right onto Pine Street, wait for the light at Park Road, then turn left onto Park, and wait for the (long) light at 16th. This circuit is not only slow, but the turn onto Pine Street, shaped like an off ramp, makes that little road very dangerous to pedestrians. That's why the 16th Street sidewalk is barricaded with bike racks, to prevent pedestrians from crossing Pine at 16th. Pedestrians, like automobile drivers, are forced to take the long way around. This has all been done for the benefit of suburban commuters, racing north and south on 16th Street, at the expense of people who actually live here.

For seven years now I've been working at changing that arrangement. Well, there is progress: *the left turn from 16th onto Park Road is now allowed*, and in fact is facilitated with a green-arrow phase to the traffic light cycle. Next, we've got to get those absurd sidewalk pedestrian barricades removed.

At 7 pm on the fourth Wednesday of every month, the **police meet with residents** at La Casa Community Center, 3166 Mount Pleasant Street. If you have concerns about activities on your block, this is an opportunity to talk to Lieutenant Pate and his PSA 301 officers, in English or in Spanish, about neighborhood problems. Just three residents came to the September 22 meeting. "Todo está bien", reported one. Guess that's why few people are coming.

Traffic speeds are a universal complaint here. The District is laid out for traffic into and out of downtown, with little provision for east-west, crosstown traffic. Mount Pleasant is crossed by a number of east-west "minor arterials", e.g., Park Road, Adams Mill Road, Irving Street, and Walbridge Place, so it gets a lot of crosstown drivers, many of them intent on speeding through as quickly as they can. Lately I've been measuring traffic speeds on Walbridge, to see if a speed camera can be justified. I've clocked cars going as fast as 42 mph on that block.

Doing something about it is not so easy. Park Road has similar speed problems, and we've spent a lot of time in futile searches for a solution there. Because these roads are arterials, "vertical" measures like speed humps cannot be used (they're deadly for emergency vehicles). Speed cameras are possible, but expensive, so to get one we've got to prove that there are enough speeders to make the camera worthwhile. In three days of measurement, I've found that 10% of drivers are traveling 10 mph or more above the 25 mph speed limit. That's probably not enough to warrant a camera.

On the evening of September 24, a row house in the 3100 block of 19th Street **caught fire**. The cause: *roofers*. Roof

work is notorious for starting fires in an attic or crawl space, and roofers are supposed to check very carefully for "hot spots" before leaving the job. This crew evidently didn't, and fire erupted under the roof after they left. The homeowner, working at his computer, was unaware that a fire was burning just over his head, above his ceiling.

Very fortunately, an alert neighbor spotted the flames from her window, called 911, and banged on her neighbor's door to tell him that his house was on fire. The fire trucks arrived, I am told, in just a few minutes, and limited the fire to the one house's roof. Water damage was, of course, substantial, in the house and inside the walls. Had the neighbor not spotted the fire early, the damage would have been much worse. Let's hear it for alert neighbors!

In last month's newsletter, I wrote that I expected **the new playground at Bancroft Elementary** to be closed after school hours, to protect the new field and equipment from vandals. Fred Solowey, of the Bancroft PTA, now tells me that they'll keep the playground open to residents, after school and on weekends. There will be no supervision, so it'll be up to neighbors to keep an eye on the playground. We all have our fingers crossed, that the playground can be kept open without harm to the grounds or the equipment.

The 65%-complete plans for **the redesigned Kenyon/Adams Mill/Irving intersection** are in the ANC's hands. The revised intersection will accomplish the following:

- The left turn from westbound Kenyon onto southbound Adams Mill will be allowed.
- There will be bike lanes on Adams Mill Road, on both the steep slope from the Zoo entrance, and Adams Mill from Kenyon to Klinge.
- The bus stop on Irving will be moved to the east, allowing a safe pedestrian route from the Harvard Towers driveway to the bus stop. The jersey walls will be taken away.
- The Irving Street bike lane will be extended to the Kenyon intersection.

As for the left turn from 16th Street, I've been pushing for these changes – mainly, the left turn from Kenyon to southbound Adams Mill – since 2003, my first year on the ANC. Guess we're getting close, seven years on.

Rainfall has been scarce this summer, and many trees in the neighborhood have been showing signs of drought stress. Tropical Storm Nicole took care of the immediate dryness, with a daily-record 4.66 inches of rain at National Airport, probably less here, on September 30. Was this in time to save our trees? For some, I fear it's too late. I've tried to tell people that keeping trees watered, including street trees, is *our* job. The city won't do it, so if nature falls short, then we residents must, or trees die.

Daylight Saving Time ends on November 7. It's hard to believe that just a month ago, on September 24, the high temperature was a record 99 degrees, the highest temperature ever recorded in autumn in Washington.

The next ANC *business* meeting will be on **Tuesday, October 19**. There will be no *informal* meeting in November, due to election day.