

Jack's October report

At the September 18 ANC meeting, the ANC:

- * Advised ABRA to approve the liquor license application by the Beau Thai Restaurant, with an endorsement for a sidewalk café;
- * Agreed that a zoning variance for 3602 16th Street can be granted "without substantial detriment to the public good".

Mount Pleasant has the lowest crime rate in Ward One, but crimes, including **street robberies**, do happen, and caution is always warranted, especially on the east side of the neighborhood, near 16th Street. Most robbers employ only a threat of violence, not guns. But this one, a year and a half ago, was armed, and especially vicious:

"At 9:15 p.m. on Tuesday, May 10, [2011] my daughter, a friend of hers and I were robbed at gun point by two men at the corner of Newton and Mt. Pleasant. . . . The three of us were walking west [from St Stephen's, at the corner of 16th and Newton] on the south side of Newton. As we approached the crosswalk, I noticed two men walking the same direction as us, one in front and one back to my right. The one behind grabbed me and one in front whirled around and pointed his gun at my head. They told the girls to get into the intersection and keep their eyes down or I'd 'get hurt'. They emptied my pockets (cell phone, handkerchief, car and house keys, and billfold). Then they took my daughter's friend's purse (cell phone inside). They told us to keep our eyes down and start walking away down Newton. After we turned the corner we ran to 18th and Newton. We started shouting and a woman from Newton let us use her cell phone to call 911."

Just three days later, one Kevin Copeland was arrested, in the 3000 block of 14th Street, and charged with a robbery at 1366 Kenyon St. Items on his person belonged to the Mount Pleasant victims, connecting him to that robbery as well.

He's been in jail ever since. On July 27, he pleaded guilty to three armed robbery charges, in a plea bargain that provided for the dropping of 16 additional robbery charges. He'll be sentenced on October 12.

Only one-fifth of robberies in the District are "closed by arrest". The robbery closure rate in DC is better than it was, but remains below the average for cities our size. I've never gotten an explanation from the MPD why this is so.

On September 13, the infamous **Porter Street speed camera** was removed. The MPD claims that this was routine, as they move their speed cameras around, believing that the machine has done its job in teaching us in this area not to speed on that bit of Porter Street.

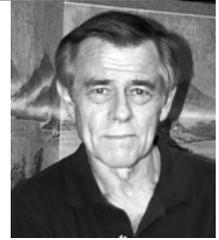
Did my harassment of the MPD about this camera influence their decision to take it away? I don't know, but it might have helped. I think it was obvious that the purpose of this camera was to issue lots of costly speeding tickets, for revenue, not for safety, there being no cross traffic, no crosswalks, and no residences within that camera's range.

The MPD, noting that DC's fatalities declined 69% in 10 years, compared to only 28% nationwide, claims that that difference – a 41% reduction in traffic deaths – is due to their

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"photo enforcement" machines. But obviously you cannot fairly compare the District of Columbia, entirely urbanized and devoid of high-speed roads, to the open countryside and interstate highways.

I've dug up a lot of data, and it's evident that the decrease in traffic deaths here is due mainly to safer cars, not to traffic cameras. Between 2000 and 2009, automobile occupant traffic deaths here declined by 63%, whereas traffic collisions decreased by only 9%. Clearly most of the fatality drop is due to safer cars, not to safer driving. The automobile safety measures brought about by the Federal Government are taking effect, gradually, as older cars are replaced by newer cars with all the safety enhancements.

Furthermore, if MPD photo enforcement were forcing us all to become safer drivers, then the pedestrian fatality count should be decreasing. It's not. In 2001, 11 pedestrian fatalities; in 2010, 13 pedestrian fatalities. The MPD claims that photo enforcement is reducing driving speeds and red-light running, but the pedestrian death count is not going down. This is consistent with the traffic toll being brought down not by tougher MPD enforcement but by safer cars, because air bags and crash-absorbing bodies and protective frames do nothing for pedestrians.

In short, the MPD claim that their speed and red-light cameras are responsible for much of the decline in traffic deaths in DC since 2001 is, in my opinion, bogus. We can thank the Federal Highway Traffic Safety Administration for the reduced traffic fatality count, not the MPD and its speed cameras.

The ANC has resolutely supported efforts to build a new affordable-housing apartment house on the site of the **fire-destroyed Deauville**. On September 10, the application by the National Housing Trust for a Low-Income Housing Tax Credit was one of 12 applications selected. Someday there will be a new building, the Monsignor Romero Apartments, on that site.

Radius Pizza is supposed to reopen, under new ownership, sometime this month. The Beau Thai Restaurant is hoping for a December or January opening. The Beau Thai owners asked us for support for their liquor license application, which of course they got, in a record time for the ANC passing of a resolution, 70 seconds. The only question seemed to be which commissioner was going to be named the sponsor of the resolution. Everybody wanted credit for this.

In September, with the remnants of Hurricane Isaac passing through, DC got 4.3 inches of rain, 0.7 inch more than the average for the month. That's the first month of 2012 for which the rainfall was not less than normal. The area remains in **moderate drought** conditions, and a number of our street trees are showing the stress, some dying. The city doesn't have the resources to care for street trees during summer droughts; it's up to us, the adjacent residents.

Casey Trees has this advice: "Remove slow-release watering bags in October. Tree trunks and the tree flare need to be exposed to air, so once October arrives, remove any watering devices and store them until next spring."

A resident was socked with a \$75 citation here for **"failure to maintain abutting public space"**. She had put some items out near the 19th Street curb, for scavengers to take, or for trash collection.

She has, unfortunately, no defense: we residents are held responsible for everything out in front of our houses, all the way to the curb (DCMR 21, 702). It's not uncommon to see things put out front in hopes that someone will come along and "recycle" them. But it seems that the District is cracking down on this harmless practice. You would think that they would have better things to worry about. Sometimes the District Government seems to be more interested in *policing* the public than in *servicing* the public.

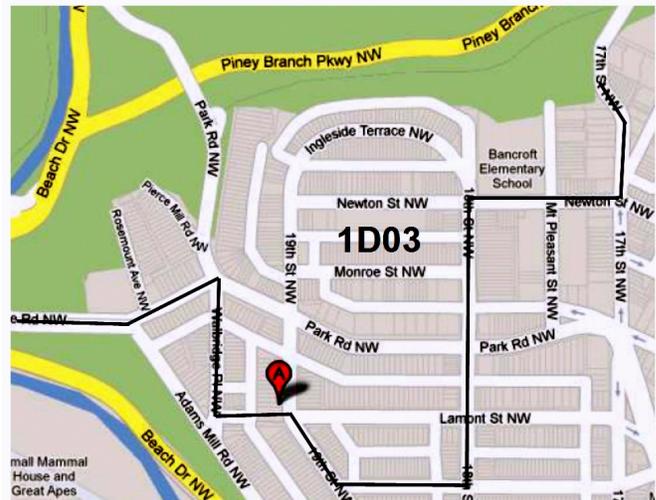
In my April newsletter, I worried about the new plan for **handicapped parking**, namely setting aside 1500 metered spots for handicapped only. While no one disputes the need for such reserved parking, the plan to take 10% of the metered spots in the city and make them handicapped-only seemed excessive. Compare the legal requirement for parking lots, 2% to 4% of parking. And compare the number of handicapped-driver permits in DC, 4% of the total. Why 10% of all curbside metered parking?

I have a certain self-interest in this, given that my wife currently has a (temporary) handicapped parking placard. Nonetheless, I have to ask: how many metered spots should be set aside for drivers with handicapped permits? The DC Government seems to have worked this backwards, deciding that every block should have at least one such spot, and that results in more than twice the proportion of handicapped drivers in the city, and triple the proportion required of commercial lots. Is that really necessary? What do you, my constituents, think? This matters, because the District Council has suddenly revived this red-top-meter plan.

The **West Nile Virus**, as I noted last month, is right here in Mount Pleasant, and it's no joke. A neighbor reports these symptoms: "First day is high fever and horrid headaches. 102 or so. Then three weeks of unusual frequent clammy sweating; off and on headaches; weird eye symptoms; very sore throat; sometimes rashes; and sometimes nausea and inability to eat."

The arrival of cooler weather has greatly reduced mosquito activity, and the Department of Health has taken away its mosquito-monitoring traps. But next spring the mosquitos, and the diseases they carry, will be back. All we can do is be

This will be my single-member district, as of January 2.



conscientious about eliminating all mosquito-breeding sites around our homes.

Daylight saving time ends on November 4. Then sunset will come at 5 pm, putting the evening rush hour into darkness. This will be especially troublesome for our bicycle commuters. I used to be one, and it's no fun, wondering if those automobile drivers are seeing your little lights, or not.

Work is about to begin on the **Kenyon/Irving/Adams Mill** and Harvard/Adams Mill/Beach Drive ramp intersections. Adams Mill Road, between the Kenyon intersection and the Zoo entrance, will be substantially rebuilt. During this work that section of Adams Mill Road will be reduced to a single lane, and that lane will be for northbound traffic only. So the Beach Drive ramp will still permit ready access to Mount Pleasant, but residents who use the Zoo route to reach Beach Drive will have to take another route (e.g., Klingle/Porter). This single-lane operation of Adams Mill Road will likely begin in December.

Election Day is, of course, November 6. If you want me to continue doing this ANC job as I am doing it – including, of course, the monthly newsletters – then please vote for me. I know, there's no opponent, and it seems like a sure thing that I'll be your ANC commissioner for another two years. Nonetheless, vote totals do count. I'd like to do better than my 2008 total of 792 votes, just for assurance that I'm doing an okay job.

It's amazing how far society has come in accepting **gays and lesbians** since the days of my youth. Who would have thought, just a couple of decades back, that we would today have gay marriage? This is a much better world than that into which I was born.

One day early in my ANC career, as I was delivering my monthly newsletter to the residence of a gay constituent on 18th Street, I was confronted with a glare of suspicion from a stranger on his doorstep. "It's okay," my constituent assured him, "*he's one of us*". That pleased me very, very much. Sad to say, though, that we've lost that fine resident to AIDS.

The next meeting of the ANC will be on **Tuesday, October 16, 2012, 7:00 pm.**