

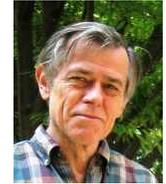
September report to constituents

Here is news of the **September 5 ANC meeting**, and other happenings in Mount Pleasant. At this meeting, the ANC:

- Passed two resolutions intended to keep the alley alongside Heller's, and the courtyard behind, clear, hoping to develop this area into a pedestrian shopping area, or something such; and
- Advised the Alcoholic Beverage Control Board to require groups imposing "voluntary agreements" on business establishments to provide "substantial, written justification" for provisions included in these contracts (my resolution).

ANC 1D03 NEWSLETTER #49

Jack McKay, September 25, 2006



Nineteenth Street is getting new sidewalks and curbing, all the way from Kenyon Street to Ingleside Terrace. The new granite curbs are much higher than the old concrete curbs, high enough to make crossing difficult for wheelchairs, baby strollers, and the handicapped.

There's never been a **wheelchair ramp in the curb** on the west side of the Lamont/19th intersection, and a neighbor asked if we couldn't get one, given the height of the new curb. DDOT agreed, and in short order they cut the curbs on both sides of 19th and laid in ramps to allow a continuous obstacle-free path from the Lamont Street sidewalk to the sidewalk passing in front of the 1900 Lamont apartment house. This is a significant step forward for accessibility by the disabled, as well as making things a bit easier for folks with strollers.

The **primary election on September 12** is tantamount to the final election, given the enormous numerical advantage of DC voters registered Democrat (89%). How did Mount Pleasant's vote compare with the city-wide vote?

Fenty won by a larger margin here, 64% of voters at the polls, vs. 57% DC-wide. Mendelson won in Mount Pleasant by an even larger margin, 72% vs. 59% DC-wide. The greatest disparity between Mount Pleasant's vote, and the city-wide vote, was for Council Chair, where Gray came in second to Patterson in Mount Pleasant, 40% to 55%, but won city-wide, 55% to 41%.

Jim Graham won by a huge margin: 85% of the vote here, 82% in Ward One.

Here are the **ANC candidates** who have qualified to be on the November ballot: 1D01, Jane Zara; 1D02, Joe Anthony Esparza, and Reed Wiedower; 1D03, Jack McKay; 1D04, Gregg Edwards; 1D05, David Bosserman; 1D06, Angelia D. Scott. Three of Mount Pleasant's six ANC commissioners will be new next year.

Much to my surprise, and disappointment, I have no opposition. Shoot, I was looking forward to a stimulating contest, one that would bring out the issues of the neighborhood. Voters ought to have a choice.

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The next ANC meeting is on Tuesday, October 3, 7:00 pm, La Casa Community Center, 3166 Mt Pleasant Street. For an agenda, go to <http://anc1d.org/>.

At the September meeting, we discussed again the problem of so-called "**voluntary agreements**" imposing **severe restrictions on Mount Pleasant restaurants (no live music, no live entertainment, no dancing)**. Recently the Washington Post printed a report on the popularity among immigrants of karaoke ("Karaoke, the universal language; Area Immigrants Find Support and a Taste of Home Through Song", August 31). Salvadoreans have enjoyed karaoke at Don Juan's Restaurant, or did until the MPNA complained that this was a violation of their "voluntary agreement", and shut the karaoke down. The restaurant has been instructed to get an entertainment endorsement to their liquor license to be allowed to offer karaoke (which is classified as "live entertainment", not "live music"). This was supposed to have been routine, but someone behind the scenes has been pressuring the ABC Board to deny the restaurant permission to offer karaoke.

Why is karaoke a problem for anyone outside the restaurant? It's no louder than recorded music, and noise regulations prohibit music from the business from disturbing the neighbors, whether live or recorded. What is it about karaoke that is troublesome? The latest "voluntary agreements" from the MPNA now prohibit "live entertainment", as well as "live music", presumably to head off any further attempts at karaoke in Mount Pleasant. Why? We would like to know the reason, and so to encourage an open discussion of whether this prohibition is appropriate, or not. There cannot be a fair discussion of the issue if the MPNA will not reveal its reasons for banning karaoke, and live music, in Mount Pleasant.

I composed a resolution on the spot calling on the ABC Board to require that organizations imposing "voluntary agreements" be required to state the justifications for any provisions. The resolution was passed by a four to zero vote (Wayne, Gregg, Mitchell, and me voting "yes", Rich and Angelia absent).

On September 15 we met with the ABC Board, and it was clear that they will not take our advice. As far as they're concerned, if the business owner signs the "voluntary" agreement, then that's that. They did suggest that, with the help of restaurant owners, we challenge these bans upon renewal of the liquor licenses, which will occur next March. We'll do it.

Speeding traffic is a problem everywhere in Mount Pleasant, but especially on our “minor arterial” streets, used by drivers simply rushing through Mount Pleasant. Irving Street, Adams Mill Road, Walbridge Place, and Park Road are all afflicted with heavy, too-fast traffic.

Slowing traffic on these roads is hard, because their traffic loads, and frequent use by emergency vehicles, rule out most traffic-calming methods, including speed humps. One effective method that can be used is road narrowing. For example, when the rush-hour parking prohibitions on Park Road were eliminated, filling up the right lane with parked cars, residents noted an immediate slowing of traffic, as drivers reacted to the narrower street.

The 2000 block of Park Road (the last block before entering Rock Creek Park) has a serious speeding problem, drivers commonly exceeding 40 mph, well above speeds observed elsewhere on Park Road. **This block has 29 feet of clear space between parked cars, compared to 22 feet on Park Road east of 19th Street.** Drivers emerging from the narrower parts of Park Road into this wide road evidently feel that they have left Mount Pleasant behind, and are free to speed up.

There is, oddly, no sidewalk on the west side of this block. Residents parking on the west side of this block may not be able to open car doors on the passenger side, because of the guard rail. If they can get the door open, they must step out into weeds and mud. Once they’re out of the car, if they’re heading for Pierce Mill Road, or Klingle, they have to tightrope up the curb, or walk in the busy street. Crossing the street (as most do, because it’s a long hike to the crosswalk at Klingle and back) is a dash across that 29 feet of open roadway.

I have proposed that **a sidewalk be built along this block.** DDOT has confirmed that there’s room for a sidewalk, which would reduce the clear width of Park Road to 22-23 feet, the same as the rest of Park Road. (Our side streets have clear widths of just 15 to 17 feet, which really slows traffic.) Drivers would no longer have that sense of release when they enter this block from the east, and drivers coming from Rock Creek Park would see a narrow, residential street ahead, instead of what appears to be a wide, high-speed road. The sidewalk would also allow easy and safe exit from cars on the passenger side, would provide a safe pedestrian path to the Klingle intersection, and would shorten the distance across the traffic lanes.

In addition, a sidewalk would make possible a pedestrian crossing down at the bridge end of the block. Years ago, Jacques Rondeau requested such a crosswalk, but was denied, because no crosswalk is allowed where there is no sidewalk. With the sidewalk in place, we may be able to get a crosswalk at the bridge, with a flashing-yellow warning light, if not a pedestrian-operated traffic light. The warning light would caution drivers coming from Rock Creek Park that they are entering a residential neighborhood, and must slow down.

An alternative, proposed by opponents of the sidewalk, is bicycle lanes painted on the roadway. I’m skeptical of the effectiveness of this technique (see Irving Street, where the traffic speed problem continues, despite the narrowing by bike lane), and this would not deal with any of the other problems caused by the absence of a sidewalk. Perhaps most importantly, there could be no crosswalk, and no pedestrian crossing or warning light, down at the bridge end of the block.

Speed humps are out of the question. From DC Traffic Calming Policies and Guidelines: “Physical traffic calming measures (such as speed bumps/humps) should generally not be considered on (i) Emergency and evacuation routes (ii) Roadways with grades of 7% or more (iii) Arterials or collector streets (iv) Through truck routes.” Park Road is classified as a “minor arterial”. Furthermore, “Traffic calming measures shall have no significant adverse impact on fire, police and ambulance services.” Park Road carries a great deal of fire engine and ambulance traffic.

Another possibility is a radar-operated speed camera, but data show that these reduce the number of speeders by only about one-third, whereas physical traffic calming measures, such as road narrowing, affect all motorists.

Burglaries continue in Mount Pleasant at an awful rate. In the past, we’ve averaged three to four burglaries a month. In June the number leaped to 11, and in July, another 11. **In August the number jumped again, to an appalling 20 burglaries in the month.** The count so far in September is equally distressing. Someone is “working” our neighborhood, finding open windows, unlocked back doors, and other such vulnerabilities for entry. The police know about it, and are on the lookout for the perpetrator or perpetrators, but from the street, they can’t see the point of entry, commonly in the rear, and they can’t stop people who just look like they might be the burglar. Once the burglar has come and gone, there’s little to go by in tracing whoever did it.

Here’s one description of the guy who could be the culprit (he also cons residents with bogus tales of needing money while he’s working on a neighbor’s house): “Blond, shortish hair, medium build, about 5’10” or so. Needed a shave, wearing clothes that easily could have been a workman’s clothes.” Others have said that he has dark hair.



Car parked up tight against the guard rail on Park Road. Passengers must get out on the street side and walk in, or across, the busy street. A sidewalk would fix that, would reduce the width of the open road by several feet, and would permit a crosswalk and light at the bridge end of the block.