

Jack's September report

At the July 15 meeting, the ANC:

- Approved the Q3FY2014 financial report to the auditor;
- Supported an application by a Kilbourne Place resident for Historic Preservation Office (HPO) approval of a rear addition;
- Supported an application by a Lamont Street resident for HPO approval of a rear addition.

So, what happened to the **August newsletter**? Like a great many others, including much of the DC Government, I took August off, and there was no ANC meeting, so there wasn't an August newsletter! Well, now it's September, summer's over, school has started, and it's time to get back to work.

The November 4 election is now just eight weeks away. Does anybody even remember that absurdly early April 1 primary? We should be having that primary now, not in the early spring. But Federal legislation requiring time for absentee ballots from military personnel serving overseas to return and be counted forced the regular September primary into August. The District Council, for reasons of their own, then shoved it all the way back into late March. They've realized that that was a really bad idea, and future primaries will be in June, as late as possible without intruding on summertime vacation plans. But right now we've got to deal with the results of that April Fool's Day primary. On November 4, voters will choose a new mayor, a new Ward One Councilmember, a new Ward One Board of Education member, and a whole lot of new ANC commissioners.

In the July newsletter, I worried that we might have no candidates to yield a full commission for 2015, two of our five commissioners, China and Phil, declining to run for re-election. But candidates have appeared, and filed petitions with the required 25 signatures, and so will be on the ballot. The **ANC candidates**, for Mount Pleasant's five single-member districts:

- 1D01: Frank Agbro
- 1D02: Adam Hoey
- 1D03: Jack McKay
- 1D04: Rosa Rivas
- 1D05: Arturo Griffiths, and Ilana Harrus

Yasmin Romero-Latin may run as a write-in for 1D04. She cannot run in her current SMD, 1D01, as she plans to move into the rebuilt Deauville/Monsignor Oscar Romero Apartments upon their completion in October. Nor can she qualify for ballot listing for that SMD, not having moved there yet.

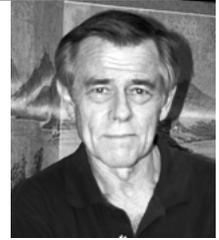
I'm pleased to see that this list of ANC candidates reflects the diversity that we're so proud of in Mount Pleasant.

Our **Visitor Parking Passes** are marked as expiring in September. Not to worry, they'll remain valid through December. DDOT is implementing a new-improved VPP system, to begin in January, covering the whole city, with the exception of most of Ward 2 (downtown and Georgetown). The main difference is that residents will have to apply for Visitor Parking Passes, rather than receiving them automatically. I'll put the application instructions in a newsletter, as soon as they appear.

ANC 1D03 NEWSLETTER #142

Jack McKay, September 7, 2014

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As everyone expected, Mayor Gray accepted the **revised school boundaries plan**, as released in July. The District Council has no say in the matter. But I'm certain that the next Mayor, whether Bowser or Catania, will have those recommendations reconsidered, and who knows what will actually come to pass, in the fall of 2015. Both Bowser and Catania have voiced objections to the new plan.

Catania, in the Post, best summarized the essential problem: Gray's "*recommendations are silent as to how we intend to improve those lower-performing schools*," Catania said. "*Asking parents and guardians to take this leap of faith without more is asking too much.*"

That's the problem, especially for middle schools: who's going to gamble with their children's futures by sending them to a middle school of uncertain quality, when the Deal alternative is available? Everyone agrees that good middle schools are needed across the District, but how do we create what Bowser calls "an Alice Deal in every neighborhood"? The only mayoral candidate who has offered anything that resembles a plan is Carol Schwarz.

The one good item in the current plan is the development of a new, dual-language middle school at MacFarland, in Petworth, not far away. Bancroft would be a feeder school to this new MacFarland middle school, a walkable and bikeable mile and a half from Mount Pleasant. Compare Deal, three miles away, with no safe pedestrian or bicyclist access.

At this time it's impossible to say how much of Mayor Gray's school boundaries plan will actually be implemented. Mount Pleasant's access to Deal and Wilson will, of course, continue, whatever the incoming mayor chooses to do about Gray's plan.

Data from the Urban Institute's Neighborhood Info DC:

The country is aging, but DC is getting younger. From 2000 to 2010, the city's 18- to 34-year old population grew by roughly 37,000, and now makes up 35 percent of the population. (Millennials make up only 23 percent of the US population as a whole.) These young adults are driving DC's population growth, and their numbers are rising in nearly every part of the city.

... The areas that grew the most also lost the most children, including Columbia Heights–Mt. Pleasant, which had 3,200 fewer kids by 2010, and Shaw–Logan Circle, with 1,000 fewer kids despite an overall increase of 3,000 people. Families with children likely moved out to the suburbs while younger, childless newcomers moved in.

A 19th Street neighbor called in July, dismayed because the street tree in front of his house had, without warning, been razed. Further investigation revealed that it was removed because it was a Norway maple, in poor condition.

What's this about **Norway maples**? Maple trees all look alike to me. But it turns out that Norway maples are an undesirable species. Says Wikipedia: *"Especially when used on streets, it can have insufficient space for its root network and is prone to the roots wrapping around themselves, girdling and killing the tree. Norway Maples often cause significant damage and cleanup costs for municipalities and homeowners when branches break off in storms as it is fast-growing and does not have strong wood. . . . The roots of Norway maples grow very close to the ground surface, starving other plants of moisture."* The Norway maple is now considered so undesirable a tree that it, along with the mulberry and the ailanthus, is exempt from the "special tree" provisions that severely restrict the removal of large trees.

Unfortunately, it seems that Norway maples were very popular as replacements for elms, when elms were succumbing to Dutch elm disease. I examined the street tree in front of my own house, and yes, it's a Norway maple. No doubt we have lots of them here, planted by the DC Government years ago, in what seemed to be a good idea at the time.

I'm not giving up on retrieving at least some of the four curbside parking spots lost on 18th Street when DDOT, responding to a call from a single ANC1D commissioner, increased the no-parking distance adjacent to an alley from the legislated 5 feet to 20-25 feet.

This is the alley between Monroe Street and Park Road. The problem is that 18th Street tends to be a commuter cut-through in the morning, and drivers come down 18th Street to Park Road at excessive speed. (A speed hump on 18th would have been a much better solution, forcing drivers to slow at that alley exit, and costing residents no parking spaces.)

So my February ANC resolution called for leaving ample spacing for that one critical direction, exiting the alley on the west side of 18th, facing north, towards oncoming 18th Street traffic. But DDOT is unyielding, offering general arguments about Sight Distances, while ignoring my argument that only one of the four sight directions, namely that to the left upon exiting the alley on the west side of 18th, warranted special concern. They don't even try to explain why what's appropriate for that one direction is needed also for the alley on the east side of 18th, and for the right-hand direction from the alley on the west side, thus costing us four parking spots, rather than just one.

China Terrell finally admitted that she was responsible for this elimination of curbside parking, and has undercut my efforts to retrieve just some of the lost parking, telling DDOT that she believes DDOT "did the right thing" for "protecting human life and safety". China doesn't own a car, and expresses no concern for residents who depend on their cars, and have difficulty finding legal curbside spots when coming home in the evening. Having to walk the dark streets from a parking spot blocks away from one's home is a personal safety matter, too.

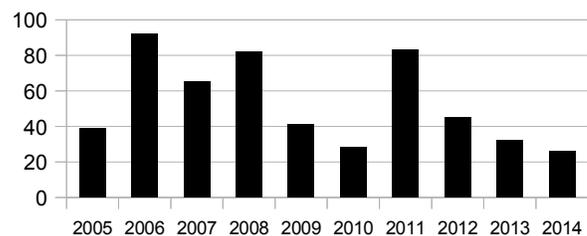
Thefts from auto have always been a headache here. It's an easy crime to commit, and the MPD puts little effort into solving such crimes, figuring that the cost of a serious investigation is high, and the likelihood of identifying a perpetrator low.

Ordinarily Mount Pleasant suffers about 12 such thefts each month. But in July, the count was 27, far above that "normal" number. That's not unprecedented – in November, 2011, there were 35 thefts from auto – but it's high. In August, the count dropped to 14, close to normal. Such large month-to-month variations are typical of these statistics.

How to prevent such thefts? Police patrols will do little, because the guys who do these crimes look like ordinary residents, and it takes only a moment for one to execute a smash-and-grab, once that MPD car is out of sight. It's up to us: leave nothing of street value visible in your car. Lock up things like GPS navigators out of sight.

I've heard some concern expressed about recent **burglaries**. Those are actually quite infrequent, lately: one in July, four in August, continuing the average of three or four per month we've been experiencing for the past few years. Not so long ago we were averaging six or seven burglaries per month.

burglaries in Mt Pleasant, annual



Years ago, dog owners never thought to pick up their **dog's poop**, and walking our streets was an unpleasant experience. Many times I had to take a garden hose to my shoes to get some dog's mess off. But in recent years, almost all dog owners and dog walkers have accepted responsibility for their dog's excrement, picking it up with plastic bags and putting it in trash bins. Now stepping into dog poop is, happily, a rare occurrence. But not everyone, I am told, has gotten the message, and I've been asked to remind people that this is every dog owner's duty to the neighbors: pick up that poop!

The Federal "**Secure Communities**" program requires local police forces to collaborate with Federal immigration authorities. Our ANC was one of the first in DC to object to this program, in March, 2010, asserting that this would seriously harm relations between the police and our immigrant communities. Here's a headline from the September 4 New York Times: *"Deportations have 'no observable effect' on crime rate, study concludes."* From this study: the program "was promoted as a tool for reducing crime – especially violent crime – and making communities safer. Our paper shows that there is no support for that."

The next meeting of the ANC will be on **Tuesday, September 16, 7:00 pm, at the Mount Pleasant Library.**