

Jack's August/September report

At the July meeting, the ANC:

- Approved an increase of the Mount Pleasant Street gum-busting project from \$3500 to \$6000;
- Endorsed the application by the Paisley Fig Restaurant and Bakery for a tavern liquor license;
- Advised the ABC Board to dismiss the complaint filed against the Brown Street Market for a “go-cup” sale;
- Encouraged DDOT to continue the development of bike lanes on Klingle Road, for Rock Creek Park access;
- Advised the HPRB to approve plans for 3109 18th Street;
- Advised the ABC Board to approve the application by the Brown Street Market for a Class A retailer's license.

I **skipped the August newsletter**, because much of the District Government shuts down for the month, many residents are away on summer vacations, and it's miserably hot and humid for my newsletter delivery. Hence, this August/September issue.

My suggestion to DDOT of a **bicyclist/pedestrian lane down Klingle Road into Rock Creek Park**, for safe access to the Rock Creek Park bike path, will soon be implemented. Many residents have expressed support for a safe route into the Park, the existing roads – Park Road, Klingle Road – being quite unsafe, especially for families with children on bicycles. The months-long closure of half of Klingle Road for utility repair work proved that there's no need for four traffic lanes on Klingle.

DDOT substantially expanded on my proposal. There will be:

- a “protected” (with plastic stanchion barriers) lane on westbound Klingle, descending to the Beach Drive turnoff, providing safe access to the Park for bicyclists and pedestrians;
- a protected bike lane on eastbound Klingle, from the Beach Drive crossover up the hill to the Adams Mill Road intersection, taking bicyclists off the too-narrow sidewalk on the south side of Klingle; and
- pavement-marked (no stanchions) bike lanes on the block of Klingle between Adams Mill Road and the Walbridge/-Park Road intersection.

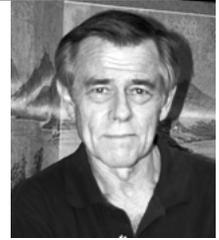
There are certain safety and traffic concerns, of course, and those are noted in our resolution of support. Westbound morning traffic tends to back up on Klingle, and the elimination of one traffic lane for the bike lane decreases the space available for cars waiting at the Adams Mill light. The timing of the traffic lights at Adams Mill, and Walbridge/-Park Road, must be controlled to minimize the traffic buildup on Klingle. And drivers turning right from westbound Klingle onto Rosemount Avenue must be cautioned to watch for bicyclists in the bike lane. Also, the Klingle Road bike lane continues across the turnoff to Beach Drive, for bicyclists heading up Porter Street, and left-turning drivers will have to be cautioned to watch for them.

The **Brown Street Market** has recently changed ownership. I spoke to the new proprietor, Mr. Michael Fasanmi, about his request for a Class A retailer's liquor license, which would

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permit him to offer “spirits”, that is, liquor, in addition to beer and wine. He assured me that he wants the license only to be able to offer whatever liquors his nearby resident customers want. He's not planning to become a liquor store. Given that assurance, I sponsored the resolution of support.

In fact, I doubt that his license conversion to Class A will come to pass. The District has a limit of 250 such licenses in the city, and it is up against that limit. Only recently has one become available, due to the closing of an existing retailer. Clearly such a license is valuable, and one was sold recently for some \$74,000. There will surely be competition for this newly appeared Class A, and I doubt that the little Brown Street Market, planning to offer only a handful of beverages, will get it. A big-time retailer, offering the District substantial liquor-sales revenues, will surely be preferred. So this was a gesture of support for Mr. Fasanmi, as was the resolution advising that the “go-cup” violation be dismissed, that offense having taken place under the previous ownership.

The **Paisley Fig Restaurant and Bakery** will be moving into the Heller's Bakery site, once they get their permits. The ANC endorsed their application for a tavern license (differing from a restaurant license in having no minimum food-sales requirement). Right now the obstacle seems to be objections by our local historic preservationists to the changes the owner wants to make to the storefront to facilitate the new operation.

Speaking of **historic preservation**, I attempted to help the owner of 3109 18th Street get HPRB approval of his plans to expand the rear of his house, as he needs to make room for a disabled daughter to move into his home.

The District's historic preservation law is clear: “alterations” are not prohibited, but must be “compatible with the character of the historic district”. Fair enough! And because the homeowner wants to add volume to his home by extending the existing architecture, surely that “alteration” is “compatible”, and therefore legal.

Well, the HPRB does not agree. “The Board acknowledged the Advisory Neighborhood Commission resolution in favor of the application, but disagreed with its contention that adversely altering the character of a single property is irrelevant to the question and standard of compatibility with the character of the historic district, and therefore to the purposes of the preservation law.”

In short, no visible alteration, however in keeping with the styles of the neighborhood, is “compatible”, and therefore no

visible alterations are allowed. *You may not change anything about your current property, even if the changes you want to make are identical in style to the standard styles of the neighborhood.* Our homes are museum pieces, not homes, and if you have a serious family need that can be met only by making changes to the external appearance of your home, well, too bad for you, there's no provision in historic preservation law for your human needs, and you have no choice but to move out. I don't think this is what people had in mind in 1985, when historic district designation was imposed on Mount Pleasant.

There are now two "Photo Enforced" signs on the south end of the block of Park Road that now features a **speed camera**. Do drivers even notice these signs, amidst the clutter of signage on our streets? Are they slowing down, intimidated by the threat of speeding tickets? I hope so – certainly this works on other speed-camera streets. As of mid-August, the camera was responsible for 409 speeding citations, which should slow those four hundred drivers down.

Beach Drive south of Park Road will be closed to traffic, beginning on or about September 19, for a few months. Will this cause traffic problems here in Mount Pleasant? Yes, I expect some of the Beach Drive traffic stopped at the Park Road intersection to try to pass through Mount Pleasant to reach 16th, increasing traffic on Park Road, Walbridge Place, and Irving Street. This won't be fun.

We ANC folks are up for election every two years. Of the five current ANC1D commissioners, only two – Frank Agbro, and yours truly – have filed for re-election. **The 2016 candidates for this ANC are:**

1D01 (incumbent: Frank Agbro): Frank Agbro, Jon Stewart
1D02 (Adam Hoey): Alex Hastie, Paul Karrer, Capree Bell
1D03 (Jack McKay): Jack McKay, Benjamin Mann
1D04 (Rosa Rivas): Yasmin Romero-Latin
1D05 (Arturo Griffiths): Stuart Karaffa

Yasmin was on this commission from 2010 through 2015, so she's not new to ANC work. She being the only candidate, it appears that 1D04 will remain a "Latina" seat. As for Mr. Benjamin Mann, I'm happy to see my constituents offered a choice this year.

Speaking of the upcoming election – our usual voting location, Bancroft Elementary, is closed for its extensive rebuilding work, so for this election, residents who in the past have voted at Bancroft must instead **go the Mount Pleasant Library to vote**. Residents south of Lamont will vote at the Columbia Heights Education Campus, across 16th Street.

There was an exceptionally vicious **assault and robbery on Newton Street**, west of 18th, on the evening of July 14. A band of teenagers assaulted a resident on the street, as he made his way home from work.

What's remarkable about this incident, aside from the age of the perpetrators ("ranging in age from 10 to 17"), is that they were from Southeast DC, in this area on an organized "field trip". I guess some of these young people decided that they could commit a robbery with impunity here, far from their homes, where no one would recognize them.

What they found out is that, in this neighborhood, people watch out for each other. The police were promptly called by observant neighbors, and "officers quickly responded and located four juveniles running in the south alley of 1800 Newton Street . . . The juveniles had the victim's credit cards and cell phone."

This was an exceptional situation, a "field trip" from a distant neighborhood gone awry, and neighbors need not fear that this is a sign of a local band of violent teenagers roaming our streets, committing robberies and assaults.

Concerning robberies, how worried should we residents of Mount Pleasant be? In July and August, together, there were eight robberies in Mount Pleasant, one with a gun, on Hobart. (Most robberies in DC are perpetrated without a weapon, just a threat of physical violence.) The total robbery count this year promises to be about the same as last year, 31. That's *less than half the count* that prevailed here ten years ago.

As for robberies per resident, Mount Pleasant's rate is about half that for the District as a whole, and half the rate that prevails in Columbia Heights, just on the other side of 16th Street.

Also significant is the fact that robberies in Mount Pleasant are largely confined to the eastern edge of the neighborhood, between 16th Street and 17th Street. Of the eight robberies committed here in July and August, only one – that assault and robbery in the 1800 block of Newton – was west of 17th Street. The per-capita robbery rate west of 17th is about the same as prevails west of Rock Creek Park. Robberies happen here, but relatively seldom, compared to almost anywhere else in DC.

Of course, this is the inner city, and residents have to be suitably cautious. I see too many young residents walking with their full attention focused on their smartphones. Aside from possibly blundering into other pedestrians, or into traffic, that behavior is an invitation for a cellphone snatch.

Residents of Monroe Street will be interested, and perhaps dismayed, by plans to develop **the vacant lot adjacent to 1840 Monroe**. The plan is to put two row houses on the lot, essentially extending the existing row.

That existing empty lot isn't being used for anything, and isn't particularly esthetically appealing, but it is a bit of open space and light in what is a wholly built-up area. I guess if I lived near it I'd be dismayed by having it developed into row houses. But I know of no grounds for objecting to the development of the vacant lot. The current permit issue is about historic preservation, not zoning, and historic preservation deals only with the architectural esthetics of a design, not the filling in of a vacant lot. The applicants are not requesting a zoning variance or "special exception". ~~We'll hear more about this project (and the Paisley Fig storefront matter) at the September 20 meeting of the ANC.~~

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| The next meeting of the ANC will be on <u>Tuesday, September 20</u> , 7:00 pm, at the Mount Pleasant Library. |
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