

## Jack's September report

At the July meeting, the ANC did the following:

- Asked DDOT to “assess the feasibility and cost of replacing some of the 'cobra' streetlights on Klinge Road NW (2000 block) and Walbridge Place NW (3200 block) with Washington Upright streetlights”.

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There was **no ANCID meeting, and no newsletter, in August**. District Council is away, most District agencies take the month off, and a whole lot of residents go on vacation. We were gone too, for a week at our cabin in northern Ontario, where I found myself building fires in the morning to warm our cabin up to 70 degrees. In August!

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**Streetlight replacement** is well under way on Mount Pleasant Street. That's what impelled a couple of residents to ask if their “cobra” streetlights could be replaced by those elegant “Washington Upright” streetlights. This has already been done, 12 years ago, on most of our streets. Klinge Road and Walbridge Place were excluded from that conversion, perhaps because they're designated “minor arterials”, not local-traffic-only streets.

Aside from the nicer appearance of the Uprights, more “neighborly” and less “industrial-commercial”, these streetlights do a better job of illuminating sidewalks. The cobras are fine for the middle of the street, but leave the sidewalks in full-shadow darkness, when the trees are in leaf.

There's been no response yet from DDOT (not surprising). If this is to be implemented, it's got to be via our Council-member. Brianne Nadeau. DDOT isn't going to do this because a mere ANC asked for it.

Councilmember Nadeau is interested in pushing this possible streetlight conversion. But it will take, at best, a few years for anything to come of it.

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Seven years ago, Lieutenant Micah Pate became our PSA lieutenant, and he's been a good one. But seven years is a long time at one post, the MPD preferring to rotate officers through different neighborhoods, and routine retirements and promotions necessitating occasional personnel shifts. In my 14 years on the ANC, I've seen at least six lieutenants at our PSA, so Lieutenant Pate's seven-year tenure is exceptionally long.

This month we're told that Lt. Pate is being transferred, and **our PSA lieutenant will now be one Jonathan Munk**. Lt. Munk was, some years ago, posted to nearby Columbia Heights, so he's not entirely new to the neighborhood.

Our next PSA meeting will be on October 25, 7 pm, La Casa Community Center. Our last PSA meeting, in July, was a bust, due to confusion about the meeting room at La Casa Community Center. Unfortunately I forgot about the PSA meeting, and didn't arrive there in time to resolve the confusion and lay claim to the meeting room, which had been taken over by a group that was convinced that the reservation was theirs. But it was July, and presumably attendance would have been low anyway, so little harm done, I hope.

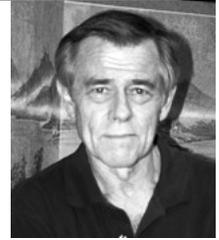
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Years ago, I commuted to work by bus for a while, and I recall how frustrating it was for the bus to go a block and

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Jack McKay, September 17, 2017

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stop, go a block and stop, barely outpacing pedestrians walking down 16th Street. So I understand the current effort to expedite 16th Street bus service by **eliminating the Lamont and Newton stops**, compelling users of those stops to hike to the Park Road or Irving Street stops. But we have to ask if the time savings is significant, weighed against the inconvenience imposed on riders. Many residents have expressed dismay at the additional blocks they'll have to walk to and from their bus stops.

DDOT has provided some bus boarding data, as we want to know if the 16th Street buses are stopping at Newton and Lamont for just one or two boarding passengers, or for many. DDOT reports, for example, that 357 people board south-bound buses at the Newton Street stop, every weekday. The S4 bus stops there roughly every 20 minutes, indicating perhaps 9 buses during the morning rush period. That suggests that 40 people are getting on that bus each time it stops. That's plainly incorrect, and we need to work further on this analysis, but it certainly suggests that there are so many users boarding the bus each time it stops that the time required for passenger boarding is much greater than the time required to come to a stop and start up again.

The ANC will continue to argue that the Lamont and Newton stops should be retained, because the amount of time saved by the elimination of stops is small, compared to the amount of time spent at these stops for boarding.

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In April, this new zoning regulation came from the Office of Zoning: DCMR 11-E.202.5: “A rear wall of an attached or semi-detached building may be constructed to extend farther than ten feet (10 ft.) beyond the farthest rear wall of any principal residential building on an adjoining property [only] if approved as a special exception.

“An applicant for special exception under this section shall demonstrate that the addition or accessory structure shall not have a substantially adverse effect on the use or enjoyment of any abutting or adjacent dwelling or property, in particular:

“(a) The light and air available to neighboring properties shall not be unduly affected;

“(b) The privacy of use and enjoyment of neighboring properties shall not be unduly compromised”.

This new regulation caught two Mount Pleasant projects, both on Harvard Street, in mid-design, both extending about 14 feet from the adjacent rear walls, and so triggering the “special exception” requirement. These will be considered at the September ANC meeting.

The question is, what does “unduly” mean? This is a judgment call; how much reduction of “light and air”, or compromise of “privacy of use and enjoyment” is tolerable, and what is the threshold for “unduly”?

This puts the ANC in an awful position, because some neighbors of these two Harvard Street properties are evidently displeased by the rearward expansion of these houses. How are we to choose, between residents with legitimate desires to expand their homes, and neighbors with legitimate dislike for these expansions adjacent to their back yards?

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I've long fought the problem of **parking tickets** written by MPD officers for cars legally parked, but extending beyond the “no parking” to intersection signposts. If it's an RPP block, and your car has Ward One RPP, then you can extend up to 15 feet beyond those signposts. (But you must leave 25 feet to the intersection, and this does not permit parking up close to a stop sign.)

Parking Enforcement (DPW) understands this regulation, and I've not seen a wrongly ticketed car from them for years. MPD officers, however, have enormous difficulty with the notion that a car can be in apparent violation of a “no parking” sign, and yet be legally parked.

A resident recently got such a ticket, which not only was for his legally parked car, but failed to identify the specific violation, and asserted an incorrect fine for the supposed violation. I used that ticket to advise our incoming Lieutenant Munk about this continuing problem. Lieutenant Pate is well aware of it by now, but Lieutenant Munk may not be. I also sent that e-mail complaining about the very incompetent MPD ticket writing to 4D Commander Manlapaz, as he and I have exchanged pointed e-mails on this topic. My advice to the MPD: leave parking enforcement to DPW Parking Enforcement. The DPW folks are quite good at it, they're better trained in the parking regulations, they post on line a photograph of the violation for confirmation, and they work for lower pay than our MPD officers. Better, I think, that our patrol officers should be protecting our parked cars from thieves, as well as the neighborhood from burglars and robbers.

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By the way, in August there were **zero burglaries, and zero robberies, in Mount Pleasant**. There were eight thefts from auto, our most common crime, yes. But no home burglaries, no street robberies! I believe it's the first time I've ever seen that here. And perhaps that's why our MPD officers are reduced to writing parking tickets.

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On September 9, MPD Captain Sledge advised the neighborhood that the MPD has “requested DPW to **increase their enforcement activity with respect to blocking alleyways** in Mount Pleasant”.

The MPD concern is access through alleys by emergency vehicles. Fair enough, and I certainly hear the complaints from residents of their alleys being blocked by contractors' trucks (especially on the alley above Park Road, west from 19th, which has only one exit, thus trapping cars beyond any alley blockage). The problem is that a vague call for

“increased enforcement” may result in lots of parking tickets to anyone parked in an alley, whether obstructing vehicle passage or not.

There is no DC regulation pertaining specifically to *blocking* alleys. There is only a blanket ban on parking “in any public alley”, whether blocking passage or not. I don't think we can expect Parking Enforcement personnel to distinguish between cars blocking the alley, and cars merely parked along the edge of the alley. So, if DPW initiates enhanced alley parking enforcement, and you're a resident who is sometimes compelled to park in an alley because there's just nothing available on the street, you may be afflicted with \$30 tickets.

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**A pair of two-dwelling-unit row houses** are to be built in the open lot between 1842 and 1850 Monroe Street. The plans were given a conceptual approval by the Historic Preservation Review Board last December, “delegating to staff further review”.

The developer wants to build houses as large as will fit into this pair of 25-foot-wide lots: “The proposed houses are comparable only to the broadest rowhouses within the historic district”, writes HPO staff. People today want larger houses than were the norm when most of our houses were built.

For this reason, the developer does not want to provide a five-foot-wide “side yard” on the west edge of the lots, preferring building right up to the property line. Zoning, however, requires a side yard, the western building of this pair being, in effect, the end of a row.

Or so says the DCRA Zoning Administrator. The developer is asking the BZA to overrule that decision. The developer is also, should the BZA uphold the Zoning Administrator's decision, asking for a variance from the side-yard requirement. This will be on the ANC agenda in October, as it will come up at the BZA in November.

I've taken a close look at this property, to decide for myself how I would feel about an adjacent row house being built right up to the property line. I wouldn't much like it, and I think most residents would agree; it amounts to an oppressive 32-foot-tall vertical wall abutting their side yard. So I'll ask the ANC to support the neighbors who want that five-foot “side yard” to keep that new structure a little distance away.

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The revised **closure of Beach Drive**, now open to the south of Park Road and closed to the north, causes some traffic through Mount Pleasant. Mornings, people come down Park Road (or Newton) to make their way to the Beach Drive on ramp. And in the evening, there are serious backups of cars exiting Beach Drive at the Zoo exit, then mostly coming up Adams Mill Road and turning right onto Irving, presumably on their way to 16th Street.

We're worrying about this problem, but solutions aren't easily found. This situation will continue for about a year.

The next meeting of the ANC will be on <u>Tuesday, September 26</u> , 7:00 pm, at the Mount Pleasant Library.
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