

October report to constituents

Here is news of the **October 4 ANC meeting**, and notes of other events in the neighborhood.

Well, there was no October 4 ANC meeting. Laurie Collins, now president of the Mount Pleasant Neighbors' Alliance (MPNA), complained that we had not provided the legally required notifications of the monthly meeting. We are required to post four announcements in each single-member-district, or 24 in total. I pointed out that there were several in her vicinity, at 18th and Kilbourne, at Heller's Bakery, at the Mount Pleasant Library, and numerous others, as well as the four in my SMD. The other Commissioners could not, however, confirm that the requisite 24 notices had been posted. (Evidently I'm the only Commissioner who posts his own.) Consequently, on that technicality, Commission Chair Will Grant decided that we could not have a legally valid meeting, and cancelled it.

I argued that we had an obligation to the public to have a meeting, even if we could pass no legally valid resolutions. We could hear community concerns, if nothing else. Hence I rejected the Chair's cancellation, took down the "meeting cancelled" poster, and opened up La Casa myself for an "irregular" meeting. Commissioners Muller and Edwards later arrived, and the three of us held an informal meeting.

We made this a true community meeting, in contrast to an ANC meeting, which (and this is commonly misunderstood) is a meeting of the ANC that is *open to the public*, not a meeting *with the public*. A spirited and frank discussion of some important neighborhood matters followed. People brought up some very sensitive

The **Bancroft Gardens** have been repaired, after a good deal of damage done by the use of the area as a staging ground for the street work over the summer. With outstanding support from the U.S. Botanical Gardens, the area has been tilled, replanted, and mulched. The planting includes hundreds of bulbs and perennials, so next spring ought to be quite spectacular.

A resident told me, after the Candidates' Forum on October 12, that she thought the **Bancroft PlayStart playground** was for the use of Bancroft schoolchildren only, at least during school hours. This isn't so: the playground is **open to all residents, at all hours**. The principal of Bancroft, Fay Thompson, is happy to have the playground be a place where neighborhood children and Bancroft children can come together.

I checked with the Bancroft school security guard, Officer Parrish, to confirm school policy. The rule is that children using the playground must be accompanied by an adult. For children with their parents, using the playground during the school day: "**no problem**".

ANC 1D03 NEWSLETTER #26

Jack McKay, October 27, 2004

Opinions expressed here are those of Dr. McKay alone, speaking for himself, not for the Mount Pleasant ANC.

In the August meeting, we agreed to "protest" the liquor license renewals for five Mount Pleasant restaurants – again, not because we oppose those licenses, but because we want to establish standing in the process to work for less restrictive "voluntary agreements", allowing, in particular, limited live music. We were shocked to be told that *all five protests were rejected, due to late filing*. Evidently there was a six-week delay between the August meeting and the mailing of the official protest letters to ABRA.

This, and the poster fiasco of the October 4 meeting, show that our ANC has problems with its secretarial work. At the October 19 make-up meeting, it was agreed that I will take over a number of the tasks of the Commission Secretary, including the posting of meetings, and official correspondence. There will be no more such fiascos.

Crime is a serious problem, to be sure. When I point out that crime here is not bad, compared to other parts of DC, it's not to minimize the problem, but to put it in perspective. There's a tendency for people to become overly frightened by anecdotes, and think that the crime problem here is more serious than it truly is. Lately Mount Pleasant has been getting a black eye city-wide, with all too much negative publicity about crime. People ask, in all seriousness, if Mount Pleasant is a "high crime" area.

Here are some figures: the number of violent crimes (homicides, assaults, robberies) reported in 2003, per thousand population, for a number of inner-city neighborhoods:

Columbia Hts	26.3
Cardozo/Shaw	24.2
Capitol Hill	22.7
DC, city-wide	15.3
Dupont Circle	15.2
Logan Circle	14.1
Adams Morgan	12.9
Mt Pleasant	11.2
Georgetown	6.8

It may be surprising that the Dupont Circle PSA (which includes ritzy Kalorama Heights, and Connecticut Avenue from Florida to downtown) has a violent crime rate *one-third higher than our own*. The Dupont Circle PSA also has a property crime rate *two and a half times ours*. But I don't think people fear Dupont Circle, Kalorama Heights, and the Connecticut Avenue area, the way that some have come, unfortunately, to fear Mount Pleasant.

issues: gentrification, class conflict, racial differences. I thought the discussion was remarkably open and thoughtful. We agreed that the differences that divide us in Mount Pleasant are almost entirely of class, not of race. The gap between the wealthy, in half-million-dollar houses, and the not-wealthy, in dingy rented apartments, is enormous. We all agree that we have to work to reach out and communicate across that gap.

This was a good meeting, we plan to have more like it.

A make-up meeting of the ANC was held on October 19. The matter that could not wait until November was a “stipulated license” for the **Red Bean Restaurant**. This will allow them to serve alcoholic beverages while they go through the time-consuming procedure of getting a regular liquor license. We voted *unanimously* to approve the stipulated license.

The Red Bean proprietors, Frank Connell and Mike Clements, who attended our meeting, said that they needed the approval letter immediately, so that they could have their license by Friday. Employing my newly assigned secretarial functions, I composed the letter, signed it in my role as Vice Chair, and hand-delivered it to the Red Bean that same evening. Frank and Mike were very pleased at the efforts of this ANC to support their business venture.

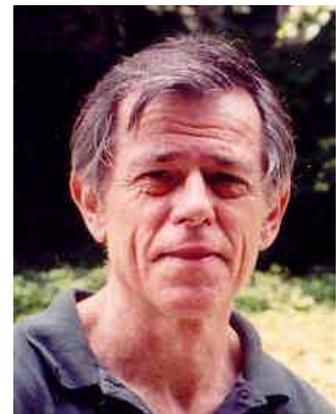
An 18th Street resident wanted to extend his tiny back porch by a couple of feet, and screen it in to keep the mosquitos out. Simple enough, but no house modifications in Mount Pleasant are simple. He needed not only the usual DCRA permits, but approval by the Board of Zoning Adjustment (BZA) for a zoning variance. The BZA’s inspector recommended *denial* of the variance.

I investigated this situation carefully, and determined that this modest modification to a back porch could not be a bother to anybody. I brought a couple of Historic Mount Pleasant board members by to confirm that HMP had no objection, and I persuaded the ANC to pass a resolution affirming “no objection” to the variance. On October 12 I attended the BZA hearing with the resident to argue in support of his application, and I was very pleased to see the Board vote 4 to 1 to **overrule the inspector and allow the variance**.

This resident will now be able to extend his small back porch, making it deep enough to support a couple of chairs, and insect-proof to permit his beautiful 18-month-old daughter to play there. I’m very pleased to have been able to help him out.

“I do not always agree with Jack on the issues. But I always know that Jack will consider each matter thoughtfully and with an open mind. Mount Pleasant is a better community because of the work Jack has done over the last two years. I encourage the residents of ANC 1D-03 to vote for Jack McKay on November 2.” --Peter Muller, Commissioner, ANC 1D-05

Vote for Jack on November 2! You have a clear choice for ANC Commissioner, because an Ingleside Terrace resident is running against me, complaining about my positions on Mount Pleasant issues, and about my newsletter. This vote will be essentially a referendum on me and my work for the past two years. It’s your call: do you want me to continue the work I’ve been doing, as your ANC Commissioner? Or no?



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Repaving of our streets was about to begin – but won’t. The several projects north of Park Road – street lights, gas lines, water lines – have left many streets in awful shape. Now that the work is done, the streets from Oak to 19th, and Monroe to Ingleside, are to be stripped and repaved.

The work was supposed to begin on Monday, October 25 (i.e., right now!) – but it will not. At the very last minute, even as DDOT was preparing for this final step in its work, Washington Gas suddenly announced that it was going to do gas line excavations on Brown Street, and would have that street dug up for a full month. This was exactly where the DDOT repaving was to start.

DDOT is upset and embarrassed by this very unfortunate development. One worrisome possibility is that, by the time Washington Gas finishes its work, it’ll be too cold for road paving, and we’ll be stuck with dreadful streets until spring.

Last year I sponsored a resolution calling on the MPD to improve its very unsatisfactory rate of closing robberies by arrest, a dismal 10%, less than half the norm for Northeastern cities. This caught the attention of District Council, and perhaps the MPD is getting the message. According to the latest statistics (2003), the robbery closure rate is up to 15%. **The best deterrent to crime is a high probability of being caught**, and I will continue to press for improving our closure rate. *We need more crime investigators, not more patrol officers.*

The November ANC meeting will be on November 1, 7:30 pm, La Casa Community Center, 3166 Mount Pleasant Street. On the agenda will be a BZA variance application for 1774 Hobart Street, an update on Residential Permit Parking in Mount Pleasant, and music sound levels in Lamont Plaza.