

## December report to constituents

Here is news of the December Advisory Neighborhood Commission meeting, and the preliminary agenda for the January meeting.

## ANC 1D03 NEWSLETTER

Jack McKay, December 29, 2003

### Highlights of the December ANC meeting

The hotly controversial "**zero tolerance**" resolution, tabled at the November meeting, was brought up again in December. Right or wrong, this resolution was perceived by many in the Latino community as a threat to them, and the Latino Committee of the ANC asked that the measure not be taken up in December. Furthermore, in an attempt to replace this hotly divisive resolution with something less controversial, Commissioner Bitondo and I devised a resolution aimed specifically at stopping the drug dealing around Park Road. This appears to me to be the key problem, because that dealing brings vile and violent people into our neighborhood, and has been responsible for shootings in the neighborhood. We hoped that this compromise resolution would address our most serious crime problems while not polarizing the community.

Unfortunately the sponsor of the "zero tolerance" resolution ignored our compromise, and brought up his resolution for a vote. Had all six commissioners been present, that resolution would have failed, the ANC being split three to three. Very unfortunately, Commissioner Muller was absent, on travel, depriving us of a critical "no" vote. If our by-laws provided for an absentee vote, the "zero tolerance" resolution would have failed, and we could have substituted our resolution for it. But there is no provision for absentee voting, and so the resolution passed, by a three to two vote. (I will initiate an absentee-voting provision in our by-laws, so that this won't happen again.) Commissioners Sale and Grant voted for the zero tolerance resolution; Commissioner Babcock and I voted "no". Commissioner Bitondo, under intense pressure from her Park Road constituents, voted "yes", providing the

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

Commissioner Bitondo and I offered this resolution as a much more effective means of attacking the drug dealing problem on Park Road than the misguided "zero tolerance" approach. Much to our dismay, the Park Road neighbors ignored this alternative, walking out of the ANC meeting even as we were taking this resolution up for discussion. They insist on "zero tolerance", and showed no interest in a resolution designed to deal directly and specifically with their most serious problem.

**Whereas** a notorious open-air drug market operates in Mount Pleasant, threatening the safety and welfare of nearby residents, and drawing armed and violent people into our neighborhood; and

**Whereas** efforts by neighbors and the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD), over many months, have failed to put a stop to this drug market; and

**Whereas** this drug dealing takes place within 1000 feet of several neighborhood schools, including Bancroft Elementary, Sacred Heart Academy, and the Elsie Stokes Charter School; and

**Whereas** other incidents of violence, including shootings on Mount Pleasant Street and on Park Road, are causing Mount Pleasant residents to live in fear; therefore,

the Mount Pleasant ANC1D **Resolves** that the MPD is requested to focus all necessary resources on suppression of the drug dealing in Mount Pleasant, until that dealing is successfully and finally eliminated from the neighborhood; and

the Mount Pleasant ANC1D **Resolves** that the ANC will continue to support the residents in complementing the MPD work with community actions to interfere with and discourage drug dealing; and

the Mount Pleasant ANC1D **Resolves** that the ANC will investigate other methods of interfering with the drug trade, e.g., by working with the District Department of Transportation to change traffic patterns in the area.

This resolution passed unanimously, 5 to 0.

The most powerful deterrent to crime is a substantial chance of being caught and punished. This is where the District falls far short. **The proportion of reported robberies closed by arrest** is as follows:

Nationwide average: 25.7%  
Large-city average: 21.4%  
District average: 10.6%

That is, anyone committing a robbery here has a 9 in 10 chance of getting away scot-free. **The correct answer to the crime problem here, and throughout the District, is to increase the effectiveness of detective work after the crime, through better criminal intelligence and forensics.** Simply putting more police on the street, or punishing vagrants for being unpleasant, will do no good.

This "zero tolerance" dispute is not over, despite the resolution having been approved by the ANC. Commissioners Babcock, Muller, and I are preparing **an open letter declaring our opposition** to this resolution, to be sent to the Mayor, City Council, and the MPD.

The sponsor of the zero tolerance resolution has called our action "highly unprofessional". He asserts that we should pretend to agree with the resolution, in a phony show of unanimity. We will, however, continue to speak out for what we believe is right and best for our community, as is our duty as Commissioners. You voters will decide, next fall, whether we're right or not.

crucial third vote for passage.

"Zero tolerance" will do us no good. Any arrest, even for a minor offense such as littering or possession of an open container of alcohol, takes an officer away for a minimum of two hours. As Commander Burton of the Fourth District said, at the November 18 PSA meeting, "zero tolerance" will significantly interfere with their policing for more serious crimes, such as the drug dealing. It is implausible, to say the least, that more intensive policing of trivial offenses, and consequently less policing of serious crimes, will lead to fewer serious crimes.

All my past newsletters can now be found at my Web site: <http://jackmckay.smcwebhosting.com>

**Mount Pleasant area schools.** For years people have said that Mount Pleasant residents had to move to other neighborhoods in order to find good schools for their children. I think our schools have quietly gotten very much better, especially Bancroft. Now we also have several excellent charter schools in the vicinity. The ANC has agreed to make the January meeting a schools-focussed meeting, where we can all learn about our neighborhood schools, and perhaps end this notion that one has to leave Mount Pleasant to find good schools.

**Preliminary, partial agenda (highlights) for the Jan. 5 ANC meeting; times approximate**

7:30 Call to order  
7:40 Election of 2004 ANC officers  
8:00 Community Forum  
8:20 Julie Mikuta, DC School Board  
8:40 Bobby Caballero, Elsie Stokes Charter School  
8:50 Jennie Niles, E. L. Haynes Charter School  
9:00 TBD, Capital City Charter School  
9:10 TBD, Sacred Heart Academy  
9:20 TBD, Bancroft Elementary  
9:30 Committee Reports  
10:30 Adjourn

**Columbia Heights ANC:** I have long been working at building relationships with our neighbors on the other side of 16th Street. As Columbia Heights develops and becomes more prosperous, our sister neighborhood will become increasingly important to us.

We in Mount Pleasant have long been perceived by Columbia Heights residents as rich folks in expensive houses, turning our noses up at those people in shabby Columbia Heights. This perception has made it hard to arrange any cooperation in common problems, such as crime, and schools.

For over a year I've been attending Columbia Heights ANC and PSA meetings, thereby earning some credibility as a person who wants to see both neighborhoods prosper. I was very pleased to see the Vice Chair of the Columbia Heights ANC, Jacqueline Arguelles, attend our December ANC meeting. I think this is a good step forward in building a new spirit of cooperation between our two neighborhoods.

According to the Washington Post survey of area schools, **Bancroft Elementary is "Top Ranked" in Overall Test Scores, and in Student-Teacher Ratio.** We should be proud of our neighborhood public school.

**Live music in Mount Pleasant:** At the August meeting, we passed a resolution calling for changes in the "voluntary agreements" that are imposed on every restaurant in Mount Pleasant. The principal goal was to lift the prohibition on live music in our restaurants, which we think is an unreasonable imposition on our restaurants, and which denies the desires of many Mount Pleasant residents.

I noted after that meeting that we had gone about seeking this change badly. Rather than calling for City Council action, or a change in ABC Board procedures, to permit live music, we should first have undertaken negotiations with the Mount Pleasant Neighborhood Alliance (MPNA), to see if a compromise could be reached. I'm certain that we could have some live music in Mount Pleasant while respecting the concerns of the nearby residents.

Our attempt to force this change from the top down appears to have failed. After two long days of hearings, including testimony from our ANC, Councilmember Ambrose endorsed the role of citizens' groups, such as the MPNA, in forcing voluntary agreements, and there seems to be little hope for any substantial change to the existing system.

Once again, I say that we should seek a compromise with the MPNA. Let us have live music, but allowed perhaps only until midnight, and perhaps only a couple of nights a week. We can put in a provision that, if there are problems in the neighborhood due to an excessive number of late-night customers, that the limitations on live music will be further tightened, until a mutually acceptable compromise is found.

This is the only way I see that we will ever have live entertainment in Mount Pleasant restaurants. I'm not giving up on this.