

December report to constituents

Here is news of the **December 6 ANC meeting**, and notes of other events in the neighborhood.

This was the last, “lame duck” meeting of the ANC before the new commissioners take office. Curiously, of the five commissioners who took office two years ago, I will be the only one continuing into the 2005-2006 session. Will Grant, Peter Muller, and Barbara Bitondo all declined to run for re-election, and Dominic Sale announced at this meeting that, though re-elected in November, he would not be taking his seat. He is now vice president of Mount Pleasant Main Street, and he believes that he cannot handle the burden of being ANC Commissioner as well (“the granddaddy of all time consumers,” he called it). Consequently 1D06 will be vacant as of January 2.

I have been very unhappy with the state of **ANC grants**. This seems like such a good idea, to hand out small grants of money to local nonprofit organizations that do good for the neighborhood. But record keeping can be weak for small neighborhood organizations, and our grants are so small that recipients cannot spend much time on grant paperwork. We are required by DC law to obtain from each grant recipient “a statement as to the use of the funds consistent with the grant application, complete with receipts which support the expenditures”. I have seen no such reports, and we are in the very uncomfortable position of lacking the evidence that the grant funds have been used as specified by the awards. I made, and the commission unanimously approved, this motion: *“Resolved, that ANC 1D will accept no new grant applications, and will award no grants, until an internal review of grant procedures and record-keeping is complete, and improved grant procedures and record-keeping implemented.”*

Since the monthly meeting, I have been contacting past grant recipients to obtain the missing reports, with good results. I believe that the incoming ANC will halt all grant-giving. The effort is too great, the grants too small, and the fiduciary responsibility too heavy. Our modest funds might be better spent on, say, a good community Web site.

We considered a request by the short-term car rental companies, Zipcar and Flexcar, for **reserved parking spots on or adjacent to Mount Pleasant Street**. This is an awkward problem: we want these operations to do well to minimize the number of cars in the neighborhood, and to serve residents who do not own cars. The whole neighborhood benefits if, by virtue of the availability of these short-term rental vehicles, more residents of Mount Pleasant are able to get along without cars. (Some 37% of DC households own no car,

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Jack McKay, December 29, 2004

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

The **streetlight conversion project** is near completion (finally!). We were dismayed to see that portions of two recently repaved streets, 18th and 19th, were posted yet again for “No Parking”, and the brand-new pavement then dug up. The reason for this is that the contractor’s paving job did not pass DDOT inspection, and he had to redo the work.

The **widening of the 3400 block of Mount Pleasant Street** was to be done along with the streetlight repaving work, but the lawsuit by one resident to stop the work has delayed the job. Her request for a temporary restraining order to prohibit moving the trees was denied, and the trees are to be moved onto Bancroft property on December 29. There was another last-minute glitch when my Parks & Rec contact, who was leading the task of moving the trees, abruptly backed out of the deal. But Jim Graham, and Ainsley Caldwell, the director of the Urban Forestry Administration, came to the rescue, and the trees will, at length, be moved.

Work on new curbs and gutters may then begin, but repaving of the street may have to wait until spring.

Remember the endless and very acrimonious dispute over reopening **Klinge Road** across Rock Creek Park? That’s been quiet lately, as people awaited the completion of the Environmental Impact Study needed for the project. Originally due in December 2004, completion of the *draft* EIS is now set for the “winter of 2005”. (The average time required to complete an EIS for a transportation project is 3.6 years. The Federal Highway Administration estimates that the Klinge Road EIS will take two years, which would make it complete in the spring of 2006.)

In my opinion, the National Park Service will use the results of the EIS to veto the construction of the road. I queried Adrienne Coleman, the superintendent of Rock Creek Park, on this topic, and she was noncommittal and poker-faced in reply, but she did note that their first priority is the park. Not traffic, but “the park”. I do believe that that says it all.

I contend that the road could be reopened only if it were combined with substantial recreational benefits, for use of the park as a park, not as an automobile throughfare. This would be possible if the road were designed as a single lane, one-way road, with a good wide bike/hike path alongside. But the road advocates were uninterested in any such compromise, demanding all of the road, all of the time, for cars. The result of that unyielding attitude will, I believe, be none of the road, none of the time.

But it will be another year, at least, until we find out.

A Park Road neighbor stopped by one day to report that there was a **water pipe gushing full blast** under a porch on 19th Street. The residents, newcomers, hadn't thought to turn off their outside water, so the pipe had frozen up and burst. Now that the serious cold weather is upon us, it's time that our outside pipes are turned off and drained. A burst water pipe makes a terrible mess.

a proportion that is surely higher here.) But parking in Mount Pleasant is extremely tight, as anyone arriving home late at night knows all too well. Can we really afford to give away as many as seven parking spots to these services? That might be acceptable for daytime-only use, but these spaces would be reserved 24/7, depriving residents of much-needed overnight parking space. For that reason, I'm opposed to the request by the car companies for such reserved parking spots; let them find private parking spaces to rent.

This is a difficult problem, and the ANC agreed to ask the Zipcar/Flexcar representatives to come to a future ANC meeting to discuss their request.

We began a discussion of an **open source Web site**. Instead of each neighborhood organization building independent Web sites, this would be a network of interconnected sites, creating a "community" system of sites. This seems like a good idea, especially for neighborhood organizations which haven't the resources to do much site maintenance. This is Gregg Edwards' proposal, and incoming commissioner Rich Wysocki has the technical sophistication to understand what this is about. It's cutting-edge technology, and the ANC could take the lead at establishing this capability here.

The new set of Commissioners will be sworn in on January 2, as the current terms expire. Ordinarily our first January meeting would be on January 3, but one of us can't make that date, so we agreed to have the January meeting on the 10th. Because we'll be selecting ANC officers for 2005, it's important to have all the incoming Commissioners present.

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The January 2005 ANC meeting will be on January 10, 7:30 pm, La Casa Community Center, 3166 Mount Pleasant Street. The ANC will select officers for 2005 and set the calendar of public meetings for the year. Other agenda items: transfer of WASA to the Public Service Commission; Reserved parking for Zipcar/Flexcar; ANC's disposition of residents' complaints and recommendations; District Comprehensive Plan; Agency Coordination Initiative; noncitizen voting for ANC.

The 3200 block of 19th is now zoned for **Residential Permit Parking**, so now we have scads of parking space during the day. Where did all those non-permit cars go? Why, to the remaining non-RPP blocks in the neighborhood, of course. In self defense, the 3100 block is about to submit petitions to go RPP. I've arranged for the residents of the apartment house at 1900 Lamont to get RPP stickers. After all, where are they going to park, once every street in the area is zoned RPP?

This is a "zero sum game": the non-permit cars don't disappear from the neighborhood, but merely seek out the remaining places in the neighborhood where they can park. Nearly all of these non-permit cars belong to residents, not to outsiders. I've watched people park their non-DC-tagged cars on my block, then hike to their homes on zoned blocks. RPP may persuade these folks to get their DC tags, which is a good thing, but which does nothing to alleviate the shortage of nighttime parking space.

I've asked about the status of RPP reform legislation, which will put an end to this block-by-block zoning mess. The recommendations of the Mayor's Task Force on Parking were turned in last spring, so that reform is surely coming. District Council continues to wait passively for the Mayor to propose legislation. That is promised to come "shortly".

On November 30 there was a violent collision between a car on Park Place, speeding through a red light at an estimated 80 mph, and a car eastbound on Irving. The speeding driver was running from the police. The driver of the second car, Mr. John Johnson Jr. of Walbridge Place, was innocently on his way to fetch his sister home from work. Mr. Johnson died at the Washington Hospital Center.

There can be no grief more terrible than losing a close family member so suddenly, so brutally, so wantonly. Our hearts go out to Mr Johnson's mother, Patricia Johnson, and his sister, Deidre. I don't know what to say or do in such a heart-breaking situation, but to wish that they find the strength to go on.

Mr Johnson was buried on December 7.

I've been purchasing components for a **public address and audio recording system** for the ANC. This has several purposes: it will assure audibility of ANC commissioners even at the back of the room; it will assure audibility of members of the public to the commissioners (the system includes a wireless microphone to be used by the audience); it will assure that questions posed to the commissioners by people near the front of the room will be audible at the back of the room. The use of microphones by all will permit high grade audio recordings, so that all details of our meetings will be available in the future (should anyone care). The audio recorder is digital, and the recordings can be made Internet-accessible, so that masochists can go back to previous meetings to hear the complete discussions.

What I didn't anticipate was interference from a nearby FM radio station, which injected talk and music into the PA system. I'm working now on eliminating that annoying background.