

**2015 WASHINGTON GROVE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
TOWN COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORTS
May 9, 2015**

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION (HPC) – Georgette Cole

Members: Bob Booher, Chair; Wendy Harris, Gail Littlefield, David Stopak, Mimi Styles

The Historic Preservation Committee is charged with reviewing all applications for building permits filed with the Town Planning Commission which would involve any change to a structure or site visible from any public way for historical accuracy, integrity, and compatibility with the neighborhood and improvements therein. The Commission also serves as the official archival body of the Town to collect, identify, catalogue and preserve documents and information regarding the history of the Town.

The HPC and the Planning Commission held a joint meeting in January 2015. Topics included 1) the role of the HPC in the Permanent Easement Procedure laid out in Ordinance 2014-03 and proposed changes for Ordinance 2015-03, 2) Railroad Street Corridor Improvement Plan 3) Dilapidated Housing and Hoarding.

Annual Budget: The HPC has recommended:

1. Allowance for repair or replacement of the defective scanner currently being used in the office for scanning archival documents.
2. Add \$1,500.00 to the budget for three plaques: one to help identify the historic significance of Political Hill; one for the entrance to the Town, and, another one to identify the Town as a National Registered Historical District.
3. Increase the monthly number of hours to 50 for the Archivist (the budget currently allows for 40 hours).
4. Budget \$500.00 in funds to allow HPC members to attend statewide conferences.

Archives/Record Management: Archivist Pat Patula continues to organize our Town records. Her contribution has been immensely helpful and the HPC has requested an increase of her hours in the 2016 Budget. She will work with the HPC and the Town Council to bring the Washington Grove archives and town records into compliance with the Hall of Records standards. Town archives projects that need to be addressed are:

Collection Care (State storage vs. local, IE: our current archives storage area)

Records Management (Website, Town Documents, Oral Histories, Photographs, Equipment)

Public Education (Advancement of the history of the Grove)

The Washington Grove Humpback Bridge: CSX plans for rebuilding the Bridge were reviewed by the HPC who also monitored the construction process. The new Bridge was so satisfactory Gail Littlefield assembled the information needed to submit a nomination to Montgomery Preservation Inc. (MPI) for "Re-creation of a Historic Landmark". On Friday, March, 27th Mimi Styles, for the HPC, and Georgette Cole, as Council Liaison to the HPC, attended the annual awards ceremony to receive the award along with a representative from CSX. MPI recognized the creativity of the curved I-beam solution which allowed the Town to retain its landmark entry

point while giving CSX the clearance to move double stack freight loads and providing Montgomery Department of Transportation with a safer bridge structure.

WASHINGTON GROVE MEADOW CONSERVATION PARK – Georgette Cole

The Operations and Use plan for the Meadow Park is well underway. Park Manager, Mike Jones, has been transferred and the new Park Manager is David Quintanilla. We look forward to getting to know him and continuing our joint commitment to the Meadow. This past fall and winter the Parks Department planted new trees to thicken the forested buffer between the upper (our Meadow) and lower fields. These are large, very healthy specimens brought in by tree spade. Residents asked about the straight-line planting of two rows of trees. Although this is less natural looking than a more random arrangement, we understand from the Parks Department the regular pattern and open space are needed for future mowing to control invasive species endemic to the meadow. The trees themselves are beautiful; there are twenty seven (27) south of the diagonal path across the field and twenty nine (29) north of it.

SHADY GROVE CROSSING LIAISON – Georgette Cole

Toll Brothers has completed the Shady Grove Crossing development. Final work included finishing the last houses and completing work around the very large Black Gum tree Washington Grove fought to preserve. Their care for the Black Gum during and after the construction process has been really excellent and we hope to enjoy this beautiful specimen for many years.

We are in communication with the President of the Shady Grove Crossing HOA and look forward to getting to know our new neighbors.

FORESTRY & BEAUTIFICATION – Audrey Maskery

Several trees were lost during the year most notably a large oak on Oak Street and two (2) large oaks on Center Street. Six trees were planted in 2014/15 in a continuing effort to replace the lost tree canopy. The tree guards used to protect vulnerable small trees have proved to be a success. Due to lack of food during the winter, the clearing of leaves from lower branches of evergreen shrubs by deer is a continuing problem throughout the town.

Gypsy Moth Spraying: MD Department of Agriculture conducted the annual Gypsy Moth egg count last fall. The results indicated no new egg masses. Based on this information no spraying will take place this year.

Arbor Day: Volunteers planted perennials in the two barrels - one outside the council room, and one next to the bench in front of Town Hall.

MEMORIALS – Audrey Maskery

Three (3) Rhododendrons will be planted by Stadler Nurseries in Morgan Park; a bed has been prepared by Town Maintenance. The Rhododendrons are planted in memory of Carol Uhlendorf, (ex-Mayor) and staunch supporter of Forestry & Beautification.

MAINTENANCE – Audrey Maskery

All snow removal this winter was performed by Town Maintenance personnel and equipment, no outside contractor was not needed.

Re-alignment of a brick path on Political Hill completes the rejuvenation of historic site and provides a finishing touch to Wade Park.

Steve Werts is building an addition to the Town Maintenance Shed which will provide additional storage for seasonal equipment.

A new gate was installed on Center Street near the maintenance shed using support timbers provided by CSX at shop entrance, supports for gate provided by CSX. A new small gas cultivator was purchased for tilling soil in flower beds.

The ingenuity of Steve Werts, our Town Maintenance Supervisor, has provided the Town with equipment and services that rival other towns in Maryland with larger budgets. We are proud to announce Steve has been selected to receive the Ronald B. Sweitzer Municipal Employee of the Year Award at the Maryland Municipal League meeting in June 2015. This is a great honor as nominees include every municipality in the state of Maryland. We are delighted with his outstanding work and its tremendous benefit to our town is being recognized.

PLANNING COMMISSION – John McClelland

Commissioners: Charlie Challstrom (Chairman), Brenda Gumula, Dave Hix (Alternate), John McClelland (Council Liaison), Peter Nagrod, and Steve Werts.

Building Permit Activities (last 12 months):

102 Center Street – shed approved
118 Grove Ave – fence replacement approved
201 Maple Road – garage approved as part of main building
203 Second Ave – reconstruction of home approved
207 Grove Ave – shed approved
330 Ridge Road – solar panels in rear yard approved
346 Ridge Road – ramps approved
402 Grove Ave – removal of shed approved
402 Grove Ave – raising roof of existing accessory building approved
402 Grove Ave – pergola approved
409 Fifth Ave – fence approved
501 Brown Street – screened porch approved

Public Ways and Property Permits:

203 Second Ave – access via Second Ave & Grove Ave for reconstruction
417 Fourth Ave – drainage piping under Fourth Ave to private outlot
312 Center St – Town Garage addition
Pepco – underground electrical service for 402 Grove Ave via Chestnut Road
Pepco – replacement of power poles in Town
WSSC – proactive action for 60% root blockage along Center Street

Easements for Main Buildings Initially Constructed in Part on Town Land: For eight identified properties, a process was implemented to grant a permanent easement to accommodate that portion of a main building initially constructed on land owned by the Town, when application is made by the owner for continued use and location of that portion of the main building and/or when replacement or reconstruction is required. The Planning Commission appreciates the advice and assistance of Town Attorney Suellen Ferguson as this new process has allowed

approval of a building permit for reconstruction of the home destroyed by fire at 203 Second Avenue.

East Deer Park Bridge: Reconstruction of the bridge over the railroad tracks on the Town's southwestern border was completed to increase vertical clearance needed for double-stacked rail containers. The Planning Commission approved a building permit and a public ways and property permit for this project involving property within the Town's corporate limits. The earlier threats of negative impacts on the Town were ameliorated by engineering solutions to replace the three-span I-beams with rolled steel beams in an arched shape to provide the additional 20 inches of clearance, while retaining the dimensions, details, approaches, profile, and landscape of the historic bridge.

Zoning Text Amendment Enacted (Ordinance No. 2015-01): Article VII Sections 2, 3, 4,5,6,7, and 8 were updated to increase clarity and consistency, delete outdated provisions and add a vertical component to the definition of degree or non-compliance.

House Files: A property checklist was developed to eventually provide residents and potential buyers with current property information such as lot and structure(s) square footage, distance to property lines, structure(s) height, percentage of rear lot coverage, fence location and height, BZA exceptions, limiting covenants (if applicable) etc. Due to the detail and scope of information required these forms involve a great amount of time to complete. They are intended as an education and assistance resource.

Block Boundary Surveys: The Town has contracted with Snider & Associates for boundary surveys and plats for filing in the Montgomery County Land Records and then available online from the Maryland State Archives. During the past 12 months, the boundary survey for Block 6 was completed, bounded by Grove Avenue, Center Street, Washington Grove Lane, and Chestnut Avenue. Additional block boundary work for the interior of Block 11 has been initiated to resolve location of the remaining shared public alleyway from Grove Avenue to the homes with addresses: 203 Second Avenue, 6 and 8 Circle, and 315 and 319 Grove Avenue. The boundary surveys improve our knowledge of public rights of way for maintenance and safety.

The Planning Commissioner, Planning Board and Board of Appeals Education Course: All Planning Commission and Board of Zoning Appeal members completed this required course.

MCCATHRAN HALL – John McClelland

Hall Maintenance: George Ellis retired after many years of hall janitorial duties. Haley McClelland has assumed those responsibilities. The basement door was repaired/replaced and the windows were painted. The wood floors were waxed/polished.

MAPLE LAKE – Carolyn Rapkivian

John Hutchinson and a devoted committee worked hard to solve algae and pond-weed challenges at the lake this past year. The lake was treated with Cutrine+ and Diquat, to treat the algae and rooted pond-weed however there continued to be issues and the Committee tried to find solutions. Volunteers physically removed algae and pond-weed using 2 x 4s as well as

rakes. Barley bales were also placed in the lake. The water quality was tested by Water Testing Labs and according to the analysis, the water quality was good. Blue dye was administered to the water to discourage pond weed. NatureWorksCWA and the Miescos will be treating the lake for algae and pondweed, will be monitoring the lake twice per month, and deploying treatments as needed. In spite of the challenges noted above, the lake did open as planned and the life guards were: Eric Gausseres, Kelley Schreiber, Caitlin Kelly, Lainey Selby, and Emily Montgomery. Swim lessons were very successful thanks to Frank Barrett and Emily Cavey.

Last spring, a family of geese (two adults and three goslings) who nested outside of the lake (most likely not on Town property), continued to use the lake at night for protection and during the day for feeding in spite of Committee attempts to plug up fence holes. One of the goslings had a very severe deformed 'wrist' joint – the right wing would not extend normally. Resident Patty Klein, a veterinarian at Second Chance Nature Center, transported the gosling to the Center. She advised the Committee that the remaining geese, once fully flighted will eventually leave the lake area. Volunteers picked up goose droppings on the shore with scoopers. During the summer, there were no geese at the lake during swimming hours. Deterrents included Nite-Lite (“AwayWithGeese”) and Green Laser. This spring, eggs were oiled before mature.

With the onset of very cold weather and the possibility of ice skating on the lake, the bubblers were turned off the first week of January. Residents enjoyed a short season of skating on the lake.

The gate lock combination was changed routinely. This year, the lake will be open: week-ends starting with (and including) Memorial Day. David Harmon is coordinating the hiring of life guards. David and Hutch are coordinating training and supervision. Tom Land and Emily Brown are coordinating swim Instructors for lessons which will be offered on the same days as Summer In The Parks.

SAFETY – Carolyn Rapkivian

Kristen Perry chaired a Traffic Safety Advisory Committee to address citizen concerns regarding the speeding of vehicles on Town roads and other safety issues regarding vehicles. The Committee presented the Mayor and Council with recommendations for action including some "easy, in-town fixes" and also some longer-term suggestions for addressing traffic issues on Route 124. The town proceeded the in-town recommendations (re-painting crosswalks and clearing brush from stop-signs and the Mayor is contacting the County to explore the longer-term possibilities for Route 124. In response to accounts of recent car break-ins in Town, residents were reminded to report incidents to the police.

Wendy Harris and Shelley Winkler asked public officials to investigate whether the location of Roberts Oxygen, the current usage of the CSX tracks for oil tanker cars and the adjacent T-intersection, present an unacceptable risk to the community. Continued follow-up is underway.

WEBSITE – Carolyn Rapkivian

Marida Hines has been contracted to organize and migrate our existing content for an updated Town website. Early in the year, Carolyn Rapkivian, Bill Saar, Mark Dubnick, Christine Dibble, as well as Marida worked to analyze the results of the Town survey and advised the choosing of a new website platform as well as organizing and migrating the content. Later in the

year, a "kick-off" meeting was held to determine five "critical paths" (information users must find) on the new website. Other technical requirements were determined as well. After mock-ups are created, "testers" recruited by task-force members, will meet with Marida to review lexicon and to try out aspects of the design. Marida has developed rough layouts and the creative phase is in process

CONTRACTS – Greg Silber

We continue to work closely with our contracted services in an attempt to ensure the Town is well-served. Generally, we have been pleased with their work.

Snow Removal: The decision to rely primarily on our Town's Maintenance Team for snow removal has worked very well -- thanks to Steve Werts and crew. In the last two years we have provided a contract with RJ Landscape Contractors, Inc. on an "as needed" basis (when, for example, snows are unusually heavy), but so far this has not been needed. With their foresight in advance of approaching storms, dedication, and considerable effort, Steve and crew have kept our roads plowed, sanded in certain areas, and safe. They have earned a well-deserved and hearty 'thank you!'

Recycling and Refuse Collection: We continued this year with the same trash collection firm as last: Potomac Disposal Inc. With the exception of a handful of missed pick-ups, Potomac Disposal has done a good job for us. They also handle a bulk trash pick-up twice each year and make the weekly pickup of yard waste (April to December).

Leaf Collection: We have been generally pleased with the leaf removal work of contractor GreenEarth. The company makes curbside leaf collections from October to early January with another pickup in March/April.

PLAYGROUNDS – Greg Silber

A Playground Committee was formed this year to help evaluate the status of the Town's various play areas and to make recommendations for improving their safety and accessibility. Among other things, the Committee is addressing drainage in certain areas, specific safety issues involving some equipment, and ways to improve access for all users. Town Maintenance has already handled some of these issues. The Committee expects to provide further recommendations for improving these areas in the coming year.

RECREATION COMMITTEE – Greg Silber

This Committee has worked hard throughout the year making plans and organizing a number of events. This year, the Committee planned – and pulled off with great success – activities associated with the Town Meeting, Music Weekend, 4th of July, Labor Day, Summer In The Parks, the Film Society, Halloween Party, and Holiday Show. Many thanks to this group and its volunteers for helping to make the Town the fun place that it is.