

## **TOWN COUNCIL REPORTS—January 2011**

### **FORESTRY & BEAUTIFICATION—Georgette Cole**

The Forestry and Beautification Committee will be meeting on Monday Feb 7. Plans will be advanced for Arbor Day which will be celebrated on April 9 in collaboration with the Woods Group. The Woods Group meets Saturday Feb 5 to plan their projects for this year. F&B will sponsor work on plantings around McCathran Hall.

Significant tree damage occurred during the recent wet snow storm. Once residents have a chance to clean up and get material into piles we will be able to get contractor estimates for a chipper cleanup to compare to the cost of Steve (if help is available) doing pick up and transfer station loads.

A related issue that has come up is what to do when residents report tree limbs they feel may be a danger to public safety or to power lines. In the past Jim and I inspected the tree/limb in question and then decided 1) if it was a town tree and 2) what to do with Jim teaching me how to assess and who to call. Steve and I have started doing this together and now Steve is learning what I know. I wasn't thinking through all of this on Monday (1/31) when Bud O'Connor's email about a branch overhanging a Pepco line came in. In this case, since the branch was not in immediate danger of falling, we should have notified Kathy Kershaw (or the family who rents 100 McCauley) that concern had been expressed and that one or both might want to call Pepco about it. For a town tree I think I should be the one to call Dan Landry until Steve learns more of the process and eventually establishes a relationship with Dan.

It would be useful to have an expert come in the spring to go around town with both me and Steve to assess our tree pruning needs. I would like this to be Dan who is familiar with the town and has impressive forestry expertise. I will contact him and see if he is willing to do it.

I am in the process of setting up a meeting with Jeff Driscoll about the reforestation along lower Ridge Road. Looks like it will happen in early March.

### **PLANNING COMMISSION—Georgette Cole**

The Planning Commission met on January 5.

The Planning Commission elected Eric Gleason to be their new Chairman. Respect and appreciation was expressed for outgoing Chairman, Bob Evans, whose leadership has been such an inspiration to all of us.

A shed permit for 201 Maple Road was approved.

There was a lengthy discussion of the boundary survey requirement. The PC is trying to determine the best way to ensure that the setback requirements are properly met while providing for reasonable exceptions. We agree that a house location survey will be accepted for sheds less than 100sf in area that are not on a permanent foundation and for home modifications that don't change the footprint of the structure. We will also accept a house location survey for fences that sit inside the property lines will if the resident can locate and flag all four surveyor pipes on the property corners. We continue to work on this issue.

Eric asked each of the Commissioners to come up with their top three suggestions for process items or ordinances that need further attention by the Commission. He suggested that the Commission could agree on the two or three most pressing issues to serve as a "to do" list for the

calendar year. He expressed hope that this would encourage the Commission to be more proactive and forward-looking.

**PC/HPC:** A new FAR based method of establishing maximum size of a residence based on lot size was reviewed by the FAR/Max subgroup on January 20. The result was sufficiently encouraging that Charlie assembled a draft ordinance embodying it. The PC/HPC joint meeting took place on January 23 to discuss the new draft ordinance “to amend Article VII, sections 3 and 4”. Although this ordinance does not accomplish everything the PC and HPC have discussed to reduce the threat of “mansionsization” in Washington Grove, it is a step in that direction.

The Planning Commission is sending DRAFT ORDINANCE TO AMEND ARTICLE VII, SECTIONS 3 AND 4 to the Town Council for our consideration. The PC and HPC are working on a letter to accompany the draft ordinance regarding the need for further action which will be presented at the public hearing if the Council decides to proceed with the ordinance.

**Action item:** I have asked Eric Gleason, the new Chairman of the PC, to come our February 14 meeting and explain the draft ordinance, the FAR tool and how it would work in Washington Grove. Before the Council meeting I will send a copy of the draft ordinance and a short document giving an example of how the tool is used. You will also get the list/graph of how properties are affected. I will ask Kathy Lehman to make hard copies of these so everyone will have them at our meeting for Eric’s talk.

#### **MAINTENANCE—Joe Clark**

This past month has been quite busy for the middle of the winter. There were 9 trips to the transfer station with Town residential pick up of Christmas trees and storm related damage on Town properties.

Several projects have been completed or almost so.

- (1) The Town nursery has been cleaned up and unwanted brush removed.
- (2) The Town acquired a free Trac Vac unit which was completely refurbished and which will make leaf collection much more efficient for spring and fall cleanup. This is an excellent compliment to the unit the Town already owns. The repair/refurbishing work was completely done “in house” by Supervisor Steve Werts.
- (3) With the snow storms, Steve was able to use the Town tractor to plow some of the bad areas on Town streets. He also cleared the sidewalks around the Town Hall and McCathran Hall.
- (4) Steve Werts and volunteers were able to spread sand and salt on the most difficult roads – Brown St. extended, Ridge, Hickory, Center and Acorn - making them safer for both vehicles and walkers. The tractor was repaired and a part of the plow had to be welded. Though the roads were plowed by the contractor for the heaviest part of the snow, when the opportunity arose, the remainder of the worst of the snow buildup was plowed by Steve Werts, including clearing parking spaces at Town Hall. New lights also had to be installed on the tractor.
- (5) The bamboo was cut down and removed from around the Town Garage making it possible to get in and out of the garage.
- (6) The Christmas decorations were taken down and stored for next year.
- (7) In the Park, snow had to be removed so Pepco could get in to do the necessary work to restore power due to the storm.

### **McCATHRAN HALL—Joe Clark**

Under the floor of the main area, Steve Werts along with three other volunteers, put down a vapor barrier, put foam board on the outside walls, put up insulation under the floor, and chicken wire to protect it from falling down and from animals nesting in it. The furnace room was cleaned up and preparations made for additional work on the storm door and sump pump.

### **HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION—Joli McCathran**

**Amend Historic District:** The members discussed amending the historic district to include the meadow. The HPC decided the County needed to be contacted to determine the process. Members agreed David Stopak to serve on the “Meadow Committee” so that he could be involved in the effort to make the meadow part of the Town of Washington Grove Historic District. David Neumann suggested that when the Meadow Committee begins its work that they contact Clare L. Kelly and Scott Whipple at the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission for some initial advice and help.

**Budget:** Bob Booher presented a draft budget he had received from Joli McCathran. Members decided it was important to keep the Town Archivist as we are still at the beginning of getting the Archives organized with a searchable data base. Options for this position were discussed. Members decided to drop the cost of a secretary from the budget, but to leave a placeholder of \$50 for that item. The total budget for FY 2012 would then be \$7,667.

**Seminars:** The HPC is sponsoring half-day workshop on window repair and maintenance in McCathran Hall. The date was decided to be in March or April. Some or all of the cost of approximately \$750 could be covered by the Town. There would still be a \$35 fee to Town residents. There was also discussion of contacting the HPC in Gaithersburg and Rockville to see if they would like to co-sponsor the program, i.e. allow their residents to attend.

**HPC Rules of Procedure:** David Neumann had sent out to members copies of Draft 22 of the HPC Rules of Procedure. Some changes were suggested. David Neumann will make the changes and re-circulate it as “HPC - Rules of Procedure Draft 23” before the next meeting.

**PC/HPC work sessions on Mansionization:** Members reviewed the current status of the PC/HPC efforts to draft an ordinance that would offer some protection from mansionization. Members discussed their understanding of the PC/HPC proposals. David Neumann presented some graphs of the current proposals, especially the smooth graduated FAR concept. It was discussed at length.

### **RECREATION COMMITTEE—Joli McCathran**

Joli sent Missy the FY 2011 budget requesting input for the 2012 FY budget. Missy will present at the next meeting of the Recreation Committee for their input and review for the upcoming budget work sessions.

### **PARKS AND PLAYGROUNDS—Joli McCathran**

Joe and Joli began discussing work which needs to be accomplished in the playground area. The hard court tennis fence was of particulate concern. The Maintenance Staff and volunteers have completed some work on painting and maintenance of playground equipment.

**ROADS AND WALKWAYS— Bill Robertson**

Nothing to report this month.

**CONTRACTS—Bill Robertson**

**Snow Removal Contract :** The snow removal contractor has been utilized once this season. They made multiple passes through town during the 8 inch snow fall last week and a final clean up pass the day after. There were a couple of special request phone messages left on my answering machine but by the time I could retrieve my messages they were four days old and the problems were no longer an issue. All other snow events have been dealt with by Town Maintenance and volunteers.

**Trash and Recycling Contract:** The trash and recycling contractor missed several recycling receptacles on February 3<sup>rd</sup>. A call to them resulted in a second pass through town on Friday the 4<sup>th</sup>.

**Leaf Collection:** The final collection was completed January 3, 2011. Steve Wertz, Kathy Lehman and I met with Kevin McLaren, the owner of U.S. Lawns, to discuss their proposal to charge additional for the increased volume. Mr. McLaren was to get back to me after doing a cost analysis. I still have not heard from him. I feel that the onus is on him to follow through on the commitment and since he has not submitted the latest invoice I assume he will eventually contact me.

**WEBSITE—Ted “Kelly” Ventresca**

I am working on adjusting a town calendar on web to Google, as had been discussed in the December Council meeting.

**INTERGOVERNMENTAL—Ted “Kelly” Ventresca**

Nothing to report this month.

**MEMORIALS—Ted “Kelly” Ventresca**

Nothing to report this month.

**PUBLIC SAFETY REPORT—Sylvie Favret**

A resident is concerned about the " no right turn" sign on McCauley/124, and suggested new sign stating "no right turn" in words, as well as a new "Stop Sign"

**LAKE COMMITTEE—Sylvie Favret**

**Maple Lake**

- The compressor for the "bubblers" has been turned off to help the ice-forming for skating.
- The skating was "pretty good" over the holidays according to some skaters starting in mid-December.
- We plan to hold the Lake Clean-up day on April 16 so that it will not conflict with Arbor Day on the 9th.