

**2013 WASHINGTON GROVE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING  
TOWN COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORTS  
May 11, 2013**

**CONTRACTS – Joe Clark**

Recycling and trash pickup: This year, we began the fiscal year in July with a new trash collection firm, Potomac Disposal Inc. The previous firm had served the Town well but was outbid by Potomac and other than a few missed pickups, the work has gone well. On almost every occasion, the new contractor was able to make the pickup the next day. Learning the Grove streets and where people put their trash isn't the easiest of jobs. They also do a bulk trash pickup twice per year and make the weekly pickup of recycling and yard waste (April to December).

Snow Removal: This year, due to an unseasonably warm winter, the contractor, Lion Contractors, did not have to be called for work, saving the Town a considerable expense. Special thanks goes to Steve Werts, Maintenance Supervisor and his main helper, Terry Cox, plus volunteers Bruce Rothrock and Bill Robertson for removal of slush and sanding of ice covered patches. Their work helped the Town make streets far more safe.

Leaf Collection: US Lawns continued the good work of the past years, making curbside collection from October to early January and another final pickup in April.

**WEB SITE – Joe Clark**

The Town's website is maintained by Bill Saar who spends a significant amount of time keeping the Town updated with the calendar, the reports of committees, Town Commission work and the work of the Town Council. Working closely with the Town Clerk, Kathy Lehman, residents can get all current information. The calendar issues of last year have been resolved.

**RECREATION COMMITTEE - Joe Clark**

This committee is chaired by Missy Yachup and is probably the largest and most enthusiastic committee of volunteers in the Town of Washington Grove. They have worked hard all year long making the plans and providing the help for the many, many activities which make the Town what it is. During this past year, they planned the party for the Town Meeting, Music Weekend, 4<sup>th</sup> of July, Labor Day, Summer In The Parks, Zumba dance class and the Film Society, Halloween Party, Holiday Show, Caroling and this year, the petting zoo in the park. They meet 4 times per year and do great work.

**FORESTRY & BEAUTIFICATION – Audrey Maskery**

Tree Removals and Reforestation: The Town lost a number of trees, mainly in the East Woods and West Woods during 2012/13 storms. Many trees sustained heavy damage requiring outside contractors to trim out potentially hazardous branches. This was coordinated with our on-going program to regularly perform safety pruning trees in our parks. Downed and dead trees have been removed in the parks but far more trees were planted than removed. Seven Oak trees were purchased from Waynesboro Nursery and planted by Town Maintenance in fall 2012. An oak and a sweet gum as well as three smaller trees were planted by Stadler. New trees for 2013 will be installed in the fall.

Kelly Landscaping transplanted trees from Town Nursery to thin out trees planted there over many years. These trees are now located in less densely planted areas where they can reach their growth potential and fill in the landscape.

We have continued stump grinding throughout the year; the program is close to completion. A new pathway engineered by the Town Maintenance, now provides an easier and safer passage from Chestnut Street to the Council room.

Gypsy Moth Spraying: A Town survey conducted by MD Department of Agriculture last fall indicated no new egg masses. Based on this information no spraying will take place. The department will conduct their annual survey next fall.

Arbor Day: Maintenance rotor-tilled the ground and mulched the area around the Hall. Volunteers planted four new azaleas to augment those in the garden bed close to Council room. Volunteers also planted one flat of white Snapdragons and one flat of Hypoestes 'white splash' in the bed in front of the Hall entrance. These are expected to fill in nicely for the summer. Many thanks to all who helped make our Town Hall so beautiful!

### **MEMORIALS – Audrey Maskery**

No memorials for 2012-13.

### **HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION (HPC) – Joli A. McCathran**

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

After 6 years of exemplary service the HPC regretfully accepted the resignation of Margot Bohan. The Mayor appointed Wendy Harris to fill her seat. During the year Bob Booher and David Stopak each were reappointed another term on the Commission.

Projects: The HPC reviewed permit applications for 9 building applications in FY2013.

Permit Procedure: The HPC continues to work on the permit procedures: 1) a set of FAQs, 2) a separate HPC application and instructions, and 3) a "cresting the process" document. There was ongoing discussion regarding whether the effort should be focused on a separate process for the HPC or on modifying the current Planning Commission-focused process. This is to consider revisions to the procedures currently on the web site, to make them more user friendly, and to insert HPC review at an earlier stage in the process if possible.

The HPC continues to work closely with the Planning Commission (PC). A member of the HPC attends the monthly PC meeting. This allows for better communication between the two commissions. In particular: the Town Crest development, the CSX bridge project including CSX's "beyond our rails," "trees for tracks," and "quiet zones" programs, and the Oakmont senior day care center.

Town Archivist: Pat Patula along with volunteer Wendy Harris continues to work on the Town Archives collection with great expertise. Pat submits monthly reports to the HPC on the progress and scope of work. One archive report mentions missing Camp Meeting Association minutes from 1884-1902. If you know of their location, please contact the Town office. The Town purchased a scanner so various documents scanned can be "searchable."

The HPC discussed the following actions with regard to managing the Archives and larger historic preservation issues:

- Formulation of a records management plan in compliance with State Archives guidelines;
- Participation in the State Archives initiative to inventory local government archives;
- Maintenance of a record of volunteer hours spent with the Archives or other historic preservation activities;
- The Maryland Historic Trust update of the State Preservation;

- Evaluation of adequacy of current Archives room.

Lighting Committee: The HPC recognizes their role lighting evaluation and recommendations. The group reiterated its interest in providing its commentary from the historic perspective about streetlights to both the Town Council and Town Lighting Committee. The HPC asked if the Archivist could look into the history of lighting in Town.

MARC Train Schedule Changes: The HPC provided information to the Town Council to communicate to MARC regarding the Town's historic preservation to the conversion of flag status of some of the present regular train stops in Washington Grove.

National Register of Historic Places: The HCP continues working to include all Town boundaries for revision to include the entire Town on the National Register of Historic Places.

Preservation Maryland Most Endangered List: The Town submitted an application to be recognized as one of the 10 Most Endangered Places in Maryland for 2013. The Town was selected for this and it is published in the March 2013 edition of Maryland Life Magazine. Thanks to Wendy Harris and Shelley Winkler for their collective work on the nomination.

Oral Histories: The HPC sincerely appreciates the excellent work Judy Mrocicka, Ken McCathran, and Pat Patula are doing to create and preserve oral histories of Town residents and their memories of the Town's past. The Town has oral histories from 1975-2009. The goal is to eventually make these accessible through the Town web site.

Tennis Courts: Maintenance for the clay tennis courts is included in the FY2013 budget, but not in the 2014 budget. The Capital Improvement Budget (CIP) for 2015 includes \$25K for paving of the clay tennis courts. The Archivist is preparing information on the history of tennis since the Town's inception as requested by the HPC.

### **WASHINGTON GROVE MEADOW CONSERVATION PARK – Joli A. McCathran**

In September the Town Committee chaired by Ernie Kawasaki and the Town Council met with Brenda Sandberg, LOS Project Coordinator, Maryland National Capitol Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC). Ms. Sandberg outlined the development of the park in two major steps:

- Initial Clean Up: This included Pepco removing and cutting from plants and trees from power lines along Ridge Road. The MNCPPC eradicated non-native invasives and dead, dying, and/or hazardous trees.
- Concept Phase: Ms. Sandberg outlined the operation and use plan to be developed. She touched on the maintenance schedule, plantings, and the addition of a kiosk with maps and additional information about the trails.

In November, Brenda Sandberg presented the Town Council with the "Operations and Use Plan" for the park. Town Committee Chair Ernie Kawasaki sent it out to the members of the Committee for comments. Plans are still in the development phase.

Additionally, M-NCPPC has maintained the area including mowing, installation of large trees and construction of a park kiosk which includes no hunting signage.

### **PLAYGROUNDS – Joli A. McCathran**

In the beginning of FY2013, Steve Werts and Crew completed the installation of the barriers around playground equipment and for the parking lot barriers in the playground and ball field parking areas. The tennis fence project was completed with the help of dedicated volunteers.

## **MAINTENANCE– Bill Robertson**

**McCathran Hall:** The roof of the Town Hall octagon has shifted. A structural engineer was consulted and a repair plan was developed. As part of the repair plan, a temporary support was installed and will remain in place until repairs can be made. Bids for the repairs were solicited and a contractor has been selected to make the repairs. This work is scheduled to begin in August. The roof of the non-octagon portion of the hall was stripped to the decking and re-shingled in early April.

**Maintenance Garage:** The larger of the two roll down doors was replaced. The door had been damaged in an attempted break in. Rotted siding was replaced and the garage was painted.

**Town equipment:** The mowers, leaf vacuums and tractor were repaired and serviced during the winter months. The clutch of the town truck was replaced in house.

**Drainage:** Drainage ditches in Morgan Park, Woodward Park and the East Woods were improved. A new culvert was installed on Oak Street in Woodward Park.

**Maple Lake:** Multiple sections of the lake fence were repaired or replaced; the diving dock was resurfaced and the bridge to the island was repaired and resurfaced. The water and air pumps were cleaned, repaired and put back in service in preparation for the Memorial Day opening.

**Walkways:** These areas continued to be widened where undergrowth has encroached into the walkways.

**Playground Equipment:** Multiple pieces of playground equipment were repaired and repainted. The barriers containing the cushioning mulch are being replaced as time and funds allow.

**Storm damage:** Considerable time was spent cleaning up storm related damage around Town and in the woods. This was accomplished by Town Maintenance and a cadre of volunteers. Many thanks to all who came out and helped!

## **ROADS AND WALKWAYS – Bill Robertson**

No asphalt was replaced during the past fiscal year.

## **INTERGOVERNMENTAL – Greg Silber**

We continue to participate in the Maryland Municipal League and the Greater Shady Grove Civic Alliance activities and to work closely with the City of Gaithersburg. The Town also worked with work the Montgomery County Department of General Services to develop a plan for improving and maintaining the WG Meadow Conservation Park. That plan is now being implemented. We are also engaged with Montgomery County officials and staff on a number of issues which affect our community.

## **PUBLIC SAFETY REPORT—Greg Silber**

As in previous years, we were fortunate to have had very few incidents this year. The Council once again extends its thanks to Keith Gillis for monitoring safety in our community and to all the Block Captains.

This year, much of the work in this area revolved around addressing various Town lighting matters. Hard work by a number of residents resulted in the new (lower wattage) PEPCO-installed light bulbs throughout the Town. These improvements will provide substantial reductions in utility costs for years to come. Some of the new lights were regarded as being too bright by a number of residents and requests were made to shield the lights. However, the Town has little recourse in addressing this because the lights, poles, and fixtures are owned by PEPCO

which has a policy against adding shielding devices. The Outdoor Lighting Advisory Committee has met regularly throughout the year and is focusing its efforts on long-term lighting plans for the Town, particularly with an eye to the use of evolving technologies to help ensure public safety around the Town while also minimizing over-illumination where possible.

### **LAKE COMMITTEE—Greg Silber**

The Lake Committee has done an outstanding job of staying on top of in-season and out-of-season Maple Lake maintenance, staffing, and other needs. Summer employees, life guards, and swimming instructors have been hired and well-managed. Control of both algae and geese have been ongoing concerns, but have been largely handled. The annual lake clean-up occurred recently and all indications are that Town residents can enjoy another fun, safe, and rewarding year at our little gem in the woods.

### **PLANNING COMMISSION – David Young**

Membership – Charlie Challstrom (Chair), Brenda Gumula, Peter Nagrod, Freda Temple (Alternate), Steve Werts and David Young (Council Liaison).

#### Building Permit Activities (last 12 months):

- 315 Brown Street      Garage approved
- 119 Maple Ave        Dormer modifications approved
- 201 Maple Road       Chimney replacement approved
- 302 Ridge Road        Fence approved
- 302 Ridge Road        Garage approved
- 344 Ridge Road        Home declared complete; taxable assessment being updated
- 346 Ridge Road        Addition approved

Boundary Survey: The Town contracts 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 3 was completed, bounded by Center Street, Washington Grove Lane, and Chestnut Avenue. The boundary surveys improve our knowledge of public rights of way for maintenance and safety. Block 3 was a priority this year with the County's installation of the concrete sidewalk along Washington Grove Lane.

Towne Crest Redevelopment Proposal: Owners of the Towne Crest Apartments, in the County and adjacent to our West Woods and Town residences along Daylily Lane and Washington Grove Lane, have proposed redevelopment of the Towne Crest 8-acre property to more than three times the number of current rental apartments. The Planning Commission compiled recommendations for the Mayor and Town Council, citing problems with setbacks from adjacent properties, community compatibility, tree preservation, pedestrian and traffic safety, green space, and storm water runoff. The rezoning and redevelopment process has involved interactions with County Planning Staff, a hearing before the County Planning Board, a multi-day hearing before the County's Hearing Examiner with testimony by legal and planning experts to assist the Town, and a filing re forest conservation variances in the Montgomery County Circuit Court. We are awaiting recommendations from the Hearing Examiner and then action by the County Council.

Proposal for Driveway on Town Property: The Planning Commission recommended to the Town Council approval of revised plans for a 15-foot wide gravel driveway across public property on the front side of 123 Washington Grove Lane.

Public Ways and Property Permit: Ordinance No. 2012-07 was enacted to require this new permit intended to protect and maintain public ways and property of the Town, and to exercise

more authority over the use of Town land when outside entities need to do work in Town. Town Attorney Suellen Ferguson assisted with legal advice and permit examples from other jurisdictions. We have begun to use our “Application for Public Ways and Property Permit” with the expectation the application will be revised as we gain experience with its use, beginning with utilities, e.g. Verizon, Pepco, and WSSC.

Updates to Article IV re Building Permits: The Commission prepared proposed Ordinance No. 2013-02 to revise Article IV, Section 5, re structures requiring building permits from the Town and/or the County. The most significant change is that a permit is proposed to be required for the construction of a deck of any size. This is intended to make the Town process more consistent with updated safety standards associated with Montgomery County requirements.

Oakmont Grand Hall: The chair of the Planning Commission confirmed that the large event rentals at the Oakmont Grand Hall at 17051 Oakmont Avenue will no longer take place since that type of use is not permitted at this location because of parking restrictions and County zoning regulations. The large signs have also been taken down. Adult day care at the facility is still permitted.

### **McCATHRAN HALL NEEDS COMMITTEE – David Young**

Ann Briggs – Chair

McCathran Hall Repairs: In November 2012, the Town requested a report by engineer David Wallace on the observed vertical separation in the corner to the left of the Hall’s entrance. Based on this report, the Town Council approved funding for Mr. Wallace to install a temporary center support pole for the Hall ceiling and roof and to provide another report on the Hall, to include the scope of services and drawings to address the underlying structural problems. Based on this report, bids were requested and in March 2013, the Town Council:

- 1) accepted a bid of \$54,700 from Oak Grove Restoration for the repairs on McCathran Hall, including a new roof on the octagon and;
- 2) accepted a bid of \$8,550 from Thomas Johnson, Inc. for a new roof on the non-octagon portion of the Hall.

The Thomas Johnson Company completed its work in April and Oak Grove Restoration plans to start its work in early August.

FY14 Budget: For the FY14 budget, \$13,000 is requested for Town Hall maintenance needs (under the CIP), which includes funds for floor maintenance, furnaces inspected, rebuilding the sprinkler backflow preventer (done every five years), deep cleaning, window washing, and a gas furnace.