

**2014 WASHINGTON GROVE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING  
TOWN COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORTS  
May 10, 2013**

**FORESTRY & BEAUTIFICATION – Audrey Maskery**

Nineteen trees were planted in 2013/14 as part of a continuing program of removing ageing trees and replacing the tree canopy. Stump grinding (also part of this program), provides a place for future trees to be planted. The trees planted fall 2013 were provided additional protection from deer destruction. The new trunk covers were very successful and other trees deemed to be vulnerable were also provided with new protection.

Maintenance cleared scrub and invasive plants on Political Hill, (a historic site in Wade Park). The area was then graded, grass turf laid, and the rocks rearranged. A Maple was planted early April and additional trees will be planted in early May; two Serviceberry shrubs, one American holly, and one Eastern Redbud.

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

Arbor Day: Volunteers planted perennials in the bed in front of the Hall entrance.

**MEMORIALS – Audrey Maskery**

No memorials for 2013-14.

**WOODS GROUP:**

Ann Briggs – Chair

Volunteers planted free trees available to municipalities by the State of Maryland under the ‘Tree-Mendous’ program. Some of the trees were planted in East woods exclosures, other trees were planted in areas that had lost tree cover.

Very informative Town forums covering deer management, forest ecology and the future management of both East and West woods were held January through March. A Town Forest Management plan is currently being formulated with the aim of employing a professional with knowledge of forest management.

Arbor Day: A large number of volunteers carried and raked piles of wood chips on the trails through East woods. The new wood chip dressing will hopefully provide a drier path for those who enjoy walking through the woods.

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

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 shall serve as the official archival body of the Town, shall collect, identify, catalogue and preserve documents and information regarding the history of the Town. Over the past year, the HPC carried out these

duties as outlined. Besides permits from homeowners, WSSC and CSX submitted plans for review.

The HPC and the Planning Commission held a joint meeting in January 2014. Several topics discussed included 1) Archives/Record Management 2) Early Review of Permits by the HPC 3) Railroad Street Corridor Improvement Plan 4) Historic District Boundaries.

Archives: The Town Archivist, Pat Patula continues to track the humidity and temperature levels in the archives room via a hygro-thermometer. Both numbers; humidity and temperature, are too high as recommended by the State Archives. Once data is collected she will provide recommendations for solving this problem.

Oral Histories: Ken McCathran and Judy Mroczka continue to collect oral histories. It is the hope to make available on the Town's website. Permissions are needed from the old oral histories to put them on the web site. Pat recommends hiring a typist to transcribe the hand-written, carbon copy and other illegible minutes in the Archives.

Records management: Archivist Pat Patula prepared a set of recommendations on bringing the Washington Grove archives and town records into compliance with the Hall of Records standards.

Political Hill: Political Hill is located in Wade Park. This is where politicians were allowed to hold speeches during Camp Meetings. The ring of white rocks where the politicians were allowed to stand to make speeches is now exposed. Thanks to our Maintenance Staff for their dedicated work in restoring this area.

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

On Oct. 15 several members of the Town Council met with Brenda Sandberg, Maryland National Park and Planning Commission, and staff to preview the Operations & Use plan for the park for presentation. On Oct. 22 several Town Council members attended the formal presentation to the Director of Parks, Mary Bradford and staff. The Town will continue to work with Montgomery Parks Manager Mike Jones on implementation of the plans.

Thanks to the Weed Warriors volunteers who help in reducing non-native species growth in the park. Kudos to the Town residents who, along with the help of M-NCPPC, planted milk weed in the park.

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

An Ad hoc Clay Tennis Court Committee met several times last fall. It was decided unanimously by this group to have this season be a test year for the courts to consider real costs and maintenance work necessary. Steve Werts and Staff did work to improve the drainage. This project is necessary regardless of the surface of the courts. A heavy roller was donated to the Town and Steve will use this equipment to maintain the courts for this season.

### **PUBLIC SAFETY REPORT – Carolyn Rapkiewicz**

In an effort to improve communications between the Town and the Montgomery County Police Department, Mayor Georgette Cole, Town Clerk Kathy Lehman, Carolyn Rapkiewicz, Charlie Challstrom (Chair of the Town Planning Commission) and Keith Gillis (Neighborhood Watch Coordinator) met with Officer Scott Zimmerman, 6th District Community Service Officer. It

was agreed that Officer Zimmerman's points of contact for routine and emergency communications would be the Town Clerk and the Mayor. Officer Zimmerman gave the group the names of the appropriate lieutenants to contact if he is not available.

There was a rise in thefts of private property, vandalism in the Town, and incidents at the lake. Keith Gillis provided residents with safety tips and procedures for reporting incidents. He is working to rejuvenate the Neighborhood Watch program.

The Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service made an informative presentation to the Town about the emergency response to the fire at 203 2nd Avenue. Chief Steve Lohr and other personnel also made presentations to Town residents about fire safety.

Watchful neighbors reported suspected poaching in the Meadow Park and Steve Werts installed "No Hunting" signage at the end of Brown Street extension to deter poachers. The Town is working with Montgomery County Parks to eliminate illegal (and dangerous) hunting in this area.

The Outdoor Lighting Advisory Committee chaired by Tom Land is continuing to explore and research new lighting approaches, discussing street lighting options, and investigating possible paths forward.

#### **WEBSITE – Carolyn Rapkivian**

We began the collaborative process of evaluating the Town's website in order to upgrade the site in the coming year. In April, residents responded to an on-line survey to collect feedback about use of the site. This feedback will inform our choices as we organize town information on the future site. Our goal is to make the site easy to use and to increase use of the site by residents.

Bill Saar, the Town's webmaster, continued to post updated information on the site throughout the year and Town Clerk Kathy Lehman was able to take on the responsibility of posting events to the new calendar. Merida Hines and Christine Dibble assisted as advisors to the planned upgrading of the site.

#### **LAKE COMMITTEE – Carolyn Rapkivian**

Under the sage leadership of John Hutchinson and a dedicated hardworking committee, the Lake provided year-round, treasured recreation for residents and guests.

Swim lessons were arranged by Tom Land and Emily Brown. Life Guards were trained and supervised by John Hutchinson and David Harmon. Caitlin Kelly and other guards are to be commended for appropriately calling the police to respond to incidents at the lake. Bruce Rothrock and John Hutchinson planted aquatic plants and residents worked hard at the April Lake-Clean-Up day. The goose-be-gone light was put on the island in November.

The Committee discussed regulations regarding dogs at the lake and after much deliberation, decided not to pursue any changes to the Maple Lake regulations. The Committee also explored water quality testing and video surveillance safety cameras.

Due to stretches of cold weather, there was excellent skating at the lake this year. The 2014 Maple Lake Plunge was the biggest jump yet: 14 people jumped into Maple Lake, which was nearly covered with a thick blanket of soft, slushy ice.

## **MAINTENANCE – Bill Robertson**

McCathran Hall: The roof of the Town Hall was repaired after the shifting that bowed the exterior walls. New shingles were applied and the exterior windows are currently being repaired and painted.

Town equipment: The Town has purchased and restored several pieces of equipment. A new pickup truck (snow plow included) was also purchased and placed in service. This year, all snow removal was performed by Town personnel and equipment.

Drainage: Drainage ditches in Morgan Park, Woodward Park and the East Woods continue to be improved.

Maple Lake: Multiple sections of the lake fence were repaired or replaced. 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.

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

Lower Ridge Road will be repaved in mid-May this year.

## **CONTRACTS – Greg Silber**

Heavy and prolonged snowfalls this year challenged some our contracted activities. By nearly all accounts, however, the Town was well-served by these hard-working people.

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 very good job for us. Heavy snows hampered some pick-up days, but the contractor and residents alike seemed to adjust admirably given the conditions -- the company has been very responsive to our requests to schedule missed collections. They also handle a bulk trash pick-up twice each year and make the weekly pickup of yard waste (April to December).

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. A particularly wet fall and the onset of an early winter foiled the company's best efforts to make timely collections and some leaf piles lingered much longer than normal.

Snow Removal: We made a decision to rely much more heavily on our Town's Maintenance Supervisor, Steve Werts, and his crew for this year's snow removal. We entered into a contract with RJ Landscape Contractors, Inc. on an "as needed" basis. Equipped with a new (new to us) truck, a plow adapted for the truck by Steve, and other acquired equipment – and through much hard and dedicated work – Town Maintenance did an outstanding job handling the frequent and heavy snow fall. The "as needed" contractor was not called, saving the Town this expense.

With their foresight in advance of approaching storms, dedication, and considerable efforts, they kept our roads plowed and safe. They have earned a well-deserved and hearty ‘thank you!’

### **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, Holiday Show, and a petting zoo in the park. Many thanks to this group and its volunteers for helping to make the Town the fun place that it is.

### **INTERGOVERNMENTAL – Greg Silber**

We continue to participate in the Maryland Municipal League and work with the City of Gaithersburg and the Greater Shady Grove Civic Alliance. Town Council members, members of its various Committees, and residents have been active in attending meetings sponsored by these groups. In addition, we are engaged with Montgomery County officials and staff on a number of issues that affect our community.

### **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):

201 Washington Grove Lane, for enclosure of a porch on existing shed

202 Grove Avenue, for an addition

207 Maple Avenue, for a fence

122 Chestnut Avenue, for an addition

121 Washington Grove Lane, for a fence

201 Grove Avenue and 10 Maple Avenue, for fences

404 Grove Avenue, with revisions to the application, for an addition

CSX/Clark Construction, for East Deer Park Bridge (part of structure within Town limits)

#### Other Permit Issues:

In June 2013, the Commission approved the language for Ordinance No. 2013-02: Building Permit Regulations for presentation to the Council for a July 8 public hearing. Under this ordinance, residents are now required to obtain a building permit when constructing a deck of any size and height.

The Commission reviewed and approved the proposed revisions to “Information for Applicants for a Building Permit.” The most important change is the placement of the HPC review at the beginning of the process: the HPC review must be completed prior to submitting a building permit application.

The Commission began using Public Ways and Property Permits for public utilities and contractors. Permits were approved for WSSC access and sewer line work along Maple Avenue, along Grove Avenue for connection to 203 Second Avenue, and across Meadow Conservation Park for off-site sewer line rehabilitation.

The Commission along with Bob Booher from the HPC discussed the request from Clark Construction (CSX contractor) about whether the Town needed anything else from them in order

to get approval for their 70% plan for the Deer Park Bridge area. It was agreed to get assurances from CSX that: 1) the Town would be included in the consultation process; 2) the Deer Park Bridge could remain on the County Historic Atlas after the work is completed; and 3) County Historic Preservation Planners would be consulted for approval. Subsequently, a Town Public Ways and Property Permit for the East Deer Park Bridge reconstruction was approved. The Commission approved a demolition permit for 203 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue (after the fire) with certain Town conditions included.

#### Other Issues:

The Commission approved revision of some language by the Town attorney of the Zoning Text Amendment Ordinance 2013-05; this went to the Council for reenactment in August 2013. This Ordinance reduced the sum-of-two-side minimum from 25 feet to 20 feet in the RR-1 and RR-2 Zones. The Ordinance retains the side-set-back protection for neighboring properties while increasing flexibility for placement and expansion of homes.

The Commission drafted a document called a Compliance Checklist, which is to be used for informational purposes only in an effort to help residents and potential buyers understand what they can and cannot do to their homes.

The Commission voted to authorize Snider and Associates to go ahead with Block 6 for the next block boundary survey and to ask them to consult with the Town on the completion of corners in Blocks 13 and 15. Snider and Associates also agreed to privately contract with property owners for boundary surveys for 403 McCauley St. and 333 McCauley St. at a reduced rate, if done in conjunction with the Town Block 6 survey.

The Commission discussed a draft ordinance to authorize easement for reconstruction as a method for granting use of Town property under certain circumstances. The Commission's comments were passed to the Town attorney to update the document, which will be reviewed further.

The Mayor and Town Council forwarded the Bridge Advisory Group's recommendations for a Railroad Street Improvements Plan to the Commission for review and recommendations. The Commission will craft a plan of action to engage others for comments and revisions, with an intent this would also serve as an update to our 2009 Master Plan.

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

Ann Briggs – Chair

In October 2013, Oak Grove Restoration completed its work to repair and re-roof the octagonal part of the Hall.

In February 2014, the Town Council approved a bid from Jupiter Systems for \$7,895 to paint the Hall windows. Jupiter is on track to complete this project by May 26 at the latest.

In February and March 2014, the Committee met to review FY15 budget needs for the Hall, which included proposed funds for deep cleaning and to stain the ceiling in the lower Hall.