

TOWN COUNCIL REPORTS—JANUARY 2009

FORESTRY & BEAUTIFICATION—Georgette Cole

In December I responded to a request for tree services from Bill Uhlendorf. We communicated several times regarding his concern for three large oak trees. You may remember the situation as it led to the information I sent out concerning the diagnosis of Armillaria root rot in his trees. Update: the fungus we are seeing in the Grove is probably not Armillaria. Maria Montefusco did not see the fungus on Bill's trees but she and I inspected the fungus on George Paine's tree and on an oak near McCathran Hall. These clearly show "conk" growth rather than the "mushrooms" seen in Armillaria infected trees. This is typical of a fungus called Ganoderma. Ganoderma won't usually kill a tree but makes it more fragile and likely to be storm damaged. Maria says: "Ultimately, both of the rots can be forestalled if not prevented by reducing environmental stresses and improving plant hygiene." We will work on this where possible. After inspecting the work done on Bill's trees, I asked the tree service to bid on a job for the town. Their bid was the lower of two I got and the job was done to my (and Jim's) satisfaction. We now have four licensed tree services that provide clean, competent service at prices we can live with.

The Woods Group met this morning to work on upcoming plans. Ann Briggs communicated potential budget constraints. Estimates for full and/or partial work on the Invasives program were established. Trails work can be accomplished with minimal funding and plenty of coordinated volunteer efforts. A volunteer day on March 28 is planned. Kathi Carey-Fletcher will coordinate with the Forestry Committee to plan for "Treats, Trees and Trails" event for Arbor Day on April 25. I will have copies of Ann's full report on the meeting for anyone who wants it on Monday.

The Forestry Committee will be meeting the first week in February.

ROADS AND WALKWAYS—Georgette Cole

The major roads effort over the past month+ has been the protective guard rail adjacent to 411 Grove Avenue. Jim and Charlie put in the major planning and co-ordination effort here. Sarah is very happy with the result. She tells me that she has no trouble traversing Johnson Alley in her van.

We have an estimate of \$1,350 from Highway and Safety, Inc if we wish to increase the clearance in Johnson Alley. The cost is the same for increasing the narrowest point of the road from the current 8' 2" to either 8' 4" (using 6" blocks instead of the current 8" blocks) or to 8' 10" by using no blocks at all. The latter option allows vehicle tires to roll off of the asphalt pavement onto the gravel edge that would be installed. Due to the wear and tear this would create for the already fragile road edge, I do not recommend this option. I recommend that we replace the "no truck" sign at either end of Johnson Alley with a sign reading "Caution: 8 foot clearance" This solution is inexpensive and safe. The fire department has confirmed that 8 foot is the minimum clearance they require for emergency vehicles.

RECREATION COMMITTEE—Marida Hines

The Recreation Committee meetings are every three months now. The next one will be April 15 at 7:30 at McCathran Hall. The dates also are listed in the Bulletin every month. At the last meeting, we talked about the Inauguration Brunch and Ball, the upcoming children's program on

March 29 featuring the mime, Mark Jaster, and Music Weekend June 19-21. The Rock n Roll Relics have been secured for Saturday of music weekend. We are working on the music for Friday evening and Sunday morning. We are hoping that Tami Williams will be doing the Children's Recital again on Saturday morning.

The Halloween Party was a great success, thanks to new volunteer Emily Cavey who stepped in to fill the void after the previous organizer moved away.

Preparations for the Holiday Extravaganza are well underway with another entirely original production being written.

The Mousetrap Concert series is about halfway through its program.

LAKE COMMITTEE—Marida Hines

No news, other than that the lake froze and was skated upon by several brave souls.

PLANNING COMMISSION – Charlie Challstrom

Building Permits – 115 Chestnut Ave (Sanford) The Commission approved amended plans for a new home at 115 Chestnut to reflect the modified footprint as approved by the Board of Zoning Appeals. A revised building permit application was approved to reflect structural changes required by Montgomery County.

Johnson Alley – The Commission adopted Resolution No. 2009-01, Confirming Property Land Area and Requesting Correction to State Assessments and Taxation Records. This action reflects guidance received in February 2006 from Town Attorney Bill Roberts, and an updated plat of survey completed in 2007 by Snider & Associates and provided to the Town by Bruce Rothrock. A copy of the Resolution and a request to correct property tax records for 407 Acorn Lane were sent to John W. Brennan, Supervisor of Assessments.

Block Surveys – Snider & Associates submitted a corrected Plat of Survey for Block 9 reflecting the corrections and additions noted in our earlier review. Two 10-foot offset markers were placed to help locate the corner of First Avenue and The Circle, rather than putting a block corner marker on the porch of the home at 1 Circle (Peter Nagrod). This plat for Block 9 was approved by the Commission and is ready for filing in the Land Records of Montgomery County.

Ordinance No. 2008-07 Modifying Building Coverage Standards – Based on testimony received for the Public Hearing on December 8, 2008, the Commission recommended that the Council:

- Reduce the maximum building coverage allowed in any residential zone from 40% down to 34%.
- Realign building coverage standards based on lot area rather than zone, with 3% increments for the four size categories.
- Leave the record open for Ordinance No. 2008-07 for at least an additional month to permit further review and comment by the Historic Preservation Commission and other Town residents.

The Commission concludes that balancing building coverage based on lot size is a good first step, is easy to understand and implement, and may serve us well in the near term to deal with concerns for mansionization. Other items/concepts should be explored, perhaps via a special committee, and can be considered via another ordinance proposal in the future.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL – Charlie Challstrom

Geocache Trail -- The Maryland Municipal League Geocache Trail was launched January 1st and includes hidden caches in 78 cities and towns around the State. This is a “treasure hunt” based on using hand-held GPS units. There were recent articles in the Washington Post, Gaithersburg Gazette, and Frederick News to announce the start of the Geocache Trail. The Town Council adopted a resolution to authorize the Town’s participation. The Washington Grove hidden cache is at latitude/longitude N 39° 08.473 W 077° 10.453; but folks are given the coordinates for parking near McCathran Hall and told to walk to find the hidden cache. Check out website <http://www.geocaching.com/> Log entries for our cache are fun to read.

MML Montgomery Chapter Update – The Chapter meeting was held on January 15 in Poolesville. The primary focus of the meeting was the “Yes Montgomery Can!” program presentation by former County Councilmember Bruce Adams, which helps to inspire community service and support. We discussed the MML legislative proposal for State-wide authority for speed cameras that was hijacked to propose sending all revenues to the State. We heard that the County/Municipal Revenue Task Force has not completed its work, so the County shared revenue formulas for Fiscal Year 2010 are expected to be held constant; this is very important for our Town budget planning.

Complaints of Violation of County Noise Ordinance – Since December 15th, Heather Hoerle has called Montgomery County Police several times and complained to Roberts Oxygen as a result of loud and annoying noises from the Roberts Oxygen operations beginning as early as 5:00 a.m. Kim Lookingbill, Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection, has also been contacted and responded with advice. Dave Mason, Vice President of Operations, Roberts Oxygen, reports that Roberts Oxygen will be testing “smart” backup alarm units on part of its fleets, hopefully on January 26 or 27. In her latest update, Heather also noted loud noise from metal tanks being dragged across the pavement as early as 5:30 a.m. Heather is keeping us informed on progress with solving this situation.

CONTRACTS—Kathie Evans

Our trash/recycling vendor continues to perform well. As winter is now with us, I am once again in a position to wonder when it is advisable to call in the plows and/or sand spreader. I would like to have a committee to call on in the event of snow to help me with the decision on when to plow or sand. Any suggestions?? I also have wondered if we could do small amounts of sand spreading on our own—using our own resources.

WEB SITE—Kathie Evans

Nothing to report.

MCCATHRAN HALL—Kathie Evans

The McCathran Hall committee met today and I will give a short oral report on what they decided.

PUBLIC SAFETY REPORT—Joe Clark

Nothing to report.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION—Joe Clark

There were no reviews to be made. Most of the Commission's time was spent reviewing the mansionization Ordinance No 2008-07: Modifying building coverage standards. Much of the discussion was trying to understand the implications of the ordinance for individual homeowners. There was some confusion about the back up materials used by the Planning Commission to arrive at the percentage of lot coverage. Some of the members stressed the importance of meeting with individual homeowners, particularly those most affected by the proposed ordinance. It is a complicated ordinance and easy to get confused.

MEMORIALS—Joe Clark

Nothing to report.

MAINTENANCE—John Compton

Jim has reported on Maintenance at the previous meeting.

PARKS AND RECREATION—John Compton

No report