

Council Reports

July 27, 2009

Georgette Cole

Forestry & Beautification

The new watering plan is working out well. Due to safety concerns about the use of the water wagon, Audrey and Maria are each mowing for 5 hours to free up Jim to do the watering twice a week. The number of trees initially involved was too many to water in the designated time, but that number has been reduced to more manageable proportions by taking up several residents on their offer to water the trees near them. These trees were resident-requested and the watering commitment is also working out well.

Tree removal: The tree work awarded to Walt's tree service has been completed and that by Myers and Laws Tree Service will be done on July 30.

Planning Commission

The Planning Commission met on July 1.

John McClelland was re-elected Chairman of the Planning Commission for the next year.

A fence permit for 407 Fifth Avenue was denied due to lack of submitted information. A fence permit for 215 Ridge Road (back yard) was approved.

The owner of 115 Chestnut Avenue sought guidance from the PC on how the ordinances affect the completion of her current house construction.

The owner of 402 Fourth Avenue raised the issue of how to deal with the house he believes is being used as a non-residential storage facility at 402 Fifth Avenue.

The PC discussed use of town land for parking by several households on Washington Grove Lane. The discussion continued with resident installation of impermeable surfaces (asphalt) for parking on town land. Would it be desirable to consider ordinances that address activities/structures that require a permit when done on town land that abuts residential property? Does the Town Council want this done?

PC/HPC Work Sessions: The fourth work session was held on June 24 and a fourth is planned for July 29.

Charlie Challstrom

Contracts, Roads, Walkways

Trash/Recycling – Only one missed pickup to report during the month – one bag of yard waste that was reported to the contractor and removed the next day.

Insurance Contractor Recommends Policies – The Local Government Insurance Trust (LGIT) has recommended a collection of policies to help manage risk and protect all trust members. We received a LGIT letter in May 2009, noting we do not have in place a policy against sexual or other unlawful harassment in the workplace. The LGIT letter says Federal and State anti-discrimination laws generally make it necessary for employers, including local governments, to establish and enforce anti-harassment

policies. In reaction to a Supreme Court ruling, LGIT says failure to create a policy will make it difficult to prove we exercised reasonable care to prevent and correct harassment. LGIT provided sample language to use in preparing our "Unlawful Harassment Policy" document. LGIT also recommended a document entitled "Progressive Discipline Policy" to ensure we have an understandable process for employee conduct issues. These two draft policy documents were distributed at the July 13 Town Council meeting to allow for review prior to a vote on adoption.

Street Light Proposal – The Town currently pays Pepco more than \$1,400 each month for operation of 107 street lights, most of them using incandescent lamps. Under the Department of Energy (DOE) Solid State Lighting Technology Demonstration Program, we could propose a demonstration of LED technology for Washington Grove street lights. The objective would be to replace the existing street lights and walkway lighting with a more efficient system that also preserves safety and is in keeping with the historic aspect of the Town while minimizing glare, light trespass, and light pollution. Key issues to be addressed include: 1) Town-owned lights on Pepco-owned poles, 2) Maintenance responsibilities, 3) Spectrum selection for new lights, 4) Distribution of new lights, and 5) Costs of conversion. An "Intent to Participate Form" for the DOE program has been drafted along with a spreadsheet of projected operational cost savings. These have been shared with Mike Lizza, Pepco's "Street Light Czar." I met and reviewed these documents with Jeffrey Price, Utility Analyst, Montgomery County Public Schools, who also provided information on existing LED installations to visit after dark. We are awaiting a response from Pepco to discuss moving ahead with this opportunity.

Joe Clark

Maintenance - Jim submitted it.

Safety - two issues to note. First, the concerns about traffic cutting through the Grove as a result of the Deer Park Bridge closing has not materialized in any apparent difference. However, there is some concern about exiting onto Railroad Ave, particularly during rush hours. Second, there was a complaint about kids on motor bikes racing around town. The issue of speeding and not stopping for stop signs remains a big concern for residents, particularly since many of those who violate the "rules" are Town residents.

Community Outreach - Working with Paula Puglisi as a co-leader of this new effort, we are calling for a meeting of neighboring community representatives for the evening of August 11 at the Town Hall.

Background - the Mayor asked that there be a more concerted effort to work with our neighbors. We (Paula and I) began with a definition of the neighborhood to be Shady Grove/East Deer Park/Girard/Mid-County hwy. That would include the neighbors of Emory Grove, Shady Grove Alliance, East Deer Park, part of Old Town Gaithersburg, Saybrooke and Amity. Washington Grove people should involve at least some of those on the edges of WG. We are starting with finding out who is interested in working together on "big" issues that touch us all - ie. the ICC, safety, WG Elementary School, gang issues, summer recreation for the kids. One of the most important outcomes might be a coalition of people who are affected by the decisions around the development around the Metro station. On a smaller scale, we want to work with immediate neighbors on issues which affect a smaller neighborhood - such as East Deer Park and the Bridge or Amity, East Deer Park, WG about how children on the free and reduced price lunch

program at WG can be helped over the summer when school is closed. Smaller yet are specific issues such as last summer and the incidents at the Lake coming from the apartments along Girard. We will be trying this, knowing full well that it may take a couple of years to get it off the ground. We want to be very certain that we are not leading the effort, trying to tell others what to do, think we are the only place with problems or are excluding anyone who needs to be involved. We are starting this with the idea that sometimes WG is looked at by those who live around us as sometimes isolated and even elitist. We tried to hold the meeting in a location other than the Town Hall but places were either closed or too expensive to rent. Another meeting of the larger group is planned for October.

Marida Hines

Maple Lake

The Lake Committee had a meeting on July 16. Luckily, the Lake has had no major problems this season so it was a short meeting.

Critters: The decision was made to do nothing about a hornets' nest in the oak tree by the picnic tables unless they become a problem. Similarly the snapping turtle that has taken up residence is behaving himself, although parents should warn their children not to go near him. A coyote was seen early one morning; the trash he was scavenging was cleared away and he was not seen again.

Security: The usual problem of non-residents getting the gate combination has been compounded by Town residents giving parties at the lake leaving the gate unlocked with the combination showing, resulting in a really large number of non-residents getting the combination. A decision was made to issue a warning with the party permits to the effect that party hosts are responsible for maintaining control of the gate: letting guests in & out, keeping it closed and locked all other times, and not giving the combination number to outsiders.

Since the "residents only" sign at the lake was destroyed last year, non-Grovers are at the lake gate on a daily basis asking if they can come in. Jim has been asked to paint a new sign.

A reporter from the Gazette called to gather information for an article on swimming at the Lake, but was told that we really do not want this publicized.

Lifeguards: The guards have been reminded of their responsibilities regarding raking the beach, picking up trash, and placing sand toys in the new toy bin. They were also reminded to adhere strictly to the official opening and closing hours, not to listen to music or use their ipods or phones if anyone is at the Lake.

Recreation Committee

No update.

Sylvie Favret - nothing to report

Ted Kelly
Playgrounds

The recommendation of crushed rubber, as is used by state and federal playgrounds i.e. Glen Echo is recommended for test usage as ground cover under one or more pieces of playground equipment. I will be gathering a family focus group for recommendations regarding playground equipment for 2010 budget.

Would like to discuss remedies to park and playground related issues that occurred during July. In particular park being used to change oil and clay courts used as a dog run. I visually checked the clay courts after the incident, but was not able to determine the extent of damage. Recommended remedies would include the creation of signage in multiple languages detailing what is strictly prohibited under penalty of tickets and fines.

Website

The new calendar tab that shows all town activities in multiple views i.e. week, month year, was shared with the yahoo group site. Kudos to webmaster Bill Saar for extremely timely review and remedy of Trojan virus that infected a file in the hpc section of our town website. This was brought to our attention by neighbor Richard Cavicchi who notified me via email. I immediately used the yahoo group site to notify the members to inform their neighbors who may have computers but are not on yahoo listserv to temporarily refrain from visiting the site until Bill and site host were able to identify if there was an issue and what remedy could be recommended. Entire issue was rectified within six hours.

Will touch base with HPC and PC to establish a set timeline to receive and post their minutes. This will coordinate with the established posting schedule for TC meetings that is based upon the Mayor/TC review and approval process already in place.

Intergovernmental

Will discuss with councilman Challstrom and Mayor recommendations to obtain MML best practices and advice with regard to resident requests to ask the town to look at the hiring of a lobbyist to address the chemical storage, potential salt run off and destruction of water table and wetlands, buffers, impending foot and bike traffic using town as a cut through to Day Labor site. Also residents have asked that the TC and Mayor ask for emergency meetings with Isiah Leggett, Phil Andrews and each MC Council Person and related government representation that is responsible for road placement and planning with regard to moving the path of Crabbs Branch further from the town.