

TOWN COUNCIL REPORTS—January 2010

CONTRACTS—Charlie Challstrom

Right-Of-Way Block Boundary Surveys— We are nearing completion of block boundary surveys around The Circle. Our contracted surveyor, Joe Snider, is preparing a draft document to adjust the northern end of Block 9 (edge of Peter Nagrod's property) to ensure the prescribed 10-foot right-of-way for the Seventh Ave walkway. Block 9 problems trace back to a re-subdivision of Lots 1-5 done in 1903, and Seventh Ave (between Blocks 9 and 16) has been "squeezed" to only about 4 feet in width. A block adjustment for the end of Block 9 would eliminate First Ave and Circle encroachments by the Nagrod porch and fence in exchange for regaining the full 10-foot width for Seventh Ave. This block adjustment requires concurrence from Peter, and possibly his lender, so I retrieved the applicable Deed of Trust from the County Land Records. I met with Peter to review the concepts, and Peter agrees with the approach as we understand it thus far. A proposed ordinance to authorize this adjustment will be prepared for a public hearing and Council action.

Streetlights Update— Last August a group of Town residents visited a Pepco facility to view examples of streetlight fixtures with light emitting diode (LED) and induction bulbs, and our general reaction was these were too bright for use in Town. A Kim Lighting representative has not yet located a lower intensity example of LEDs for us to view in situ. In October the Council received advice from Konrad Ritter who has worked on the LED streetlight plan for Manila, and Konrad advised that LED fixture electronics are not yet stable enough. Konrad noted LED technology promises to provide significant additional energy savings and flexibility with middle-of-the-night dimming and motion sensors, once the supporting electronics matures and stabilizes. In November, we learned Pepco does not yet have data available on life expectancy for LED's, and offers induction and high pressure sodium fixtures while exploration of LED technology continues. This month Pepco submitted new rates for Street Lighting Service (monthly operating and maintenance charges per fixture) to the Public Service Commission of Maryland. Using our December 2009 monthly streetlight bill (\$1,877.69 for our 107 current streetlights), I calculated the near-term impact of these new rates is a monthly increase of only \$98. Washington Grove has 93 incandescent, 4 mercury vapor, and 10 high pressure sodium fixtures. Pepco has advised that incandescent fixtures must be phased out and converted as parts become unavailable. If all Washington Grove streetlights were converted to high pressure sodium, I calculate we would save about \$6,000 per year. Alternatively, if all Washington Grove streetlights were converted to new induction bulbs, I calculate we would save about \$8,000 per year. However, I learned from Garrett Park's Town Administrator Ted Pratt that Garrett Park has 98 streetlights which cost the Town \$230K to convert to induction bulbs. Additional operating and maintenance savings are possible if streetlight ownership is transferred from Pepco to the Town, but it still takes decades to amortize such conversion costs. I recommend we continue to seek any opportunities to view a lower wattage LED example, and also monitor progress with improving the reliability and reducing maintenance costs for these new streetlight technologies.

Snow/Ice Removal Update—There have been five events this season thus far to call upon our contractor for pre-treating and/or plowing our roads. Prior to each event, there has been a conversation with the contractor's representative to confirm the latest cell number for contact, share updated weather prediction information, and refine the strategy and contingencies. Separate from the Yahoo Group chatter, I have received numerous non-Yahoo Group messages with helpful feedback and appreciation from Town residents.

FORESTRY & BEAUTIFICATION—Georgette Cole

Our biennial review with DNR representative, Tod Ericson, will take place February 2. This is a review of our forest conservation plans as well as the recent changes in the roadside tree law and new spreadsheet for annual reports.

The meeting Tod conducted on the Roadside Tree Law in November 2009 brought up roadside tree procedures the Town has not been following in recent years. I have had several discussions with Tod toward getting us in line with state law. I hoped we would be able to get a blanket permit to do our roadside tree work but that probably will not be possible since DNR requires a licensed tree expert (LTE) be on our staff to get one. I have now talked to staff in Gaithersburg, Garrett Park and Laytonsville. Information from the other small jurisdictions has been the most pertinent. Jim Fletcher and I are working on a plan for the town that can be discussed with Tod Ericson at our review. I think that roadside tree removals will need to be clustered so they can be reviewed by the state forester before the contract is bid and awarded. Most roadside trees in Washington Grove are not on public easements (which is the case in most jurisdictions) but on land owned by the town. However, this does not affect the requirement for a DNR permit to trim, remove, and maintain existing roadside trees or to add new ones. Both Garrett Park and Laytonsville use a licensed tree expert who is willing to do small contracts. We may want to consider this going forward. Dan Landry has done a great job for us for many years but DNR does not recognize the services of a licensed forester because state law was written to require a licensed tree expert.

PLANNING COMMISSION—Georgette Cole

The Planning Commission met on January 6. The Mayor swore in new member Samantha Beres as well as all other members. The Planning Commission elected Bob Evans as their new Chairman.

Bob assigned PC responsibilities based on discussions with the Commission members involved. Steve Werts will act as liaison with the code inspector. Eric Gleason will review the permit applications before the meeting at which they will be considered. Samantha Beres and Missy Yachup will share in checking the placement of proposed fences.

We discussed procedural changes. We agreed that the code inspector would be called in at footing placement and again at close-in. We will try to be efficient about use of his time, but the cost of monitoring a building permit will rise since we pay him \$40/hour. We agreed that the cost for filing a building permit should rise to \$100 to cover the increased to the town of using the code inspector. He will not be called on to inspect fences so the cost of a fence permit will remain at \$10.

Another administrative change will be that permits must be submitted at least 7 days before the PC meeting at which they will be considered. This is essential to give adequate time to review the permit and make sure everything is done according to our ordinances. It will also assist in giving adequate public notice of new permits. In addition, we will be requiring a boundary survey for most permits including most fences. Building permits for small sheds and home modifications that don't change the footprint may use a house location survey. The new language for this is being written by Bob Evans and Georgette Cole. PC expects to finalize this language at their February 3 meeting.

The Planning Commission is working to make the permit process more transparent to the residents of Washington Grove. We would like the current PC agenda to be posted on the town web site until a new agenda replaces it. Bill Saar has been asked to make this change. Eric Gleason is designing a spreadsheet to track building permits as they come in as well as the status of the permits. He will work with Kathy Lehman to integrate with the current process. We would like residents to be able to access a PDF version of this spreadsheet on the town web site possibly in the "Items of Official Community Interest" section.

There were no new permits submitted for this meeting.

Update on 344 Ridge Road—Terry Arnold has produced a screening plan that is approved by his neighbors at 346 Ridge Road. A covenant is being drawn up. Building and cleanup is expected to be finished by July 1, 2010. Bob Evans, PC Chair, is waiting for information from the code inspector and will then update us on the other building permits still underway.

PC/HPC Work Sessions: Met on December 9. Sub-group work still in progress. The next meeting is expected to be the second week in February.

MAINTENANCE—Joe Clark

Jim did not provide a list, but a narrative. Here is what he reported but I put it in bullet format:

- Things have been rather quiet. For the most part through the snow and cold, work is and has been carried out on the town's tractors.
- Assistance was given to the cleanup of the SITP closets.
- Installed several sand buckets around town.
- Numerous trips to the transfer station were accomplished with both brush and Christmas Trees.
- The train station was un-decorated.
- Checked the roads in town for left over leaf piles.
- Purchased an environmentally safe salt product for the walkways around the town hall.
- Assisted with the removal and storage of Christmas items in the hall.
- Repaired the shelving in the SITP closet.
- Met with Charlie Musser to discuss a dead tree that needs to come down. Turns out it is a homeowner tree.

PUBLIC SAFETY REPORT—Joe Clark

No major incidents to report.

COMMUNITY LIAISON COMMITTEE—Joe Clark

The Community Outreach met on January 21 at the Methodist Church with 11 participants. A representative from Neighbor Corp presented information on the program, which is sponsored by Montgomery County and is partially funded through AmeriCorp. After discussions, it became clear that the goals of the program are identical to the goals of our group.

After questions and further discussion, the decision was made to fold the Washington Grove initiative into Neighbor Corp. A more detailed report will be provided in the February bulletin.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL—Ted “Kelly” Ventresca

Nothing to Report.

WEB SITE—Ted “Kelly” Ventresca

Nothing to Report.

PARKS AND PLAYGROUNDS—Ted “Kelly” Ventresca

Nothing to Report.

LAKE COMMITTEE—Marida Hines

The Lake Committee will begin organizing the Summer season on at a kickoff meeting on February 18. Subsequent meetings will be held on the third Thursday of the month through September.

RECREATION COMMITTEE—Marida Hines

The Recreation Committee met on January 20th. Several topics were discussed:

- Nancy Haskett requested that the poetry workshops that are currently meeting Saturday mornings monthly at various people's houses be allowed to meet in Town Hall under the aegis of the Recreation Committee. The Committee agreed.
- The Kids' Program to be held April 25th will host storyteller Bill Lepp.
- There will be a Ceili Dance on Friday, March 12.
- The Recreation Committee will organize refreshments for the Town Meeting on May 8th.
- The Committee is debating options on whom to seek to perform for this year's Music Weekend.
- This year's July 4th of July festivities will include: Parade 1pm, Baseball game 4pm, and Potluck 6pm.

MEMORIALS—Marida Hines

Nothing to Report.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION—Sylvie Favret

No report.

McCATHRAN HALL—Sylvie Favret

No report.