

**2020 WASHINGTON GROVE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
TOWN COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORTS
May 9, 2020**

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION (HPC) – Darrell Anderson

About the HPC: HPC Members are appointed and confirmed by the Mayor and Town Council. They are Bob Booher, Chair; Wendy Harris, Gail Littlefield, David Stopak, Mimi Styles, and Kirk Greenway, Alternate. Robyn Renas was the Alternate member until July 2019, but moved out of Town, and was replaced by Kirk Greenway in August 2019.

The Historic Preservation Commission has responsibility for enhancing and preserving the historic heritage of the Town. The HPC serves as an advisory body to the Planning Commission, Town Council, Mayor, and residents on matters of “historical accuracy, integrity, and compatibility with the neighborhood and improvements” on private or public property within or outside the Town. The Commission reviews applications for Town building permits involving a change to a structure or site visible from any public way. It’s most valuable service in working with building permit applicants to advise them on possible changes to plans that enhance the plans with historically significant visual and practical alterations. The HPC also serves as the official archival body of the Town to collect, identify, catalogue and preserve documents and information regarding the history of the Town.

Annual Budget: The HPC has recommended a budget for FY 2021 of ~\$26,600. The FY 2021 request includes continuation of archival work by the Town Archivist (~\$15,000) and modest amounts to continue the ongoing participation of the HPC in reviewing building applications and consultations on Town activities, such as the current Streetlight initiative. In addition, funds have been included to allow participation in conferences and preservation workshops, and for providing awards for historic renovations and other special projects.

National Register Historic District's nomination: The contract with Robinson and Associates to develop and submit the Town’s submission to the Maryland Historic Trust and ultimately the National Historic Register program was completed in FY2020. The town is waiting for the Maryland Historic trust to review the application and submit it to the National Park Service. It is anticipated that the Town will receive approval during FY2021.

Archives/Record Management: Pat Patula, Town Archivist, will continue to work with the HPC to create “a resource and clearinghouse of information regarding historic preservation for the benefit of the Town.” Ms. Patula has made significant contributions in her many archival and preservation responsibilities. She has coordinated with the Maryland State Archives (MSA) to secure a record of the Town history at the State level; assisted in arranging for the MSA to tour the Town with their interns, and provided information for uploading on the Town website. She also coordinated with Marilynn Frey, the Town’s Records Management Officer, for implementing the Town’s Record Management Plan and prepared material for transfer to the State Archives. Ms. Patula participated in preparation of the National Register Nomination process. A series of articles in the Town Bulletin on Grove history, written by HPC members and Ms. Patula, has added much to the understanding of the Town’s past.

Street Sign Restoration Project: In 2017, the Town held discussions regarding our aged, dilapidated, and beloved wooden street signs. The HPC strongly advocated for retaining their historic wood character and accepted Stewardship of the project, which was completed in FY2020 under the tutelage and organizing of Susan Van Nostrand, innumerable volunteers, as well as Town Maintenance. All of the nearly 200 town street signs have now been restored. The HPC has submitted an award nomination to the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) for the sign project. This award will be announced in August. In addition, Montgomery Cable filmed an episode on the restoration of the street signs that has been aired County-wide. The HPC will continue Stewardship of Town signage to maintain the signs in the future.

Master Plan: The HPC has been working with the Master Plan committee to include revisions and new text in most sections of the ongoing update of the 2009 Town Master Plan. Information from the updated Historic district Nomination has been integrated into appropriate sections. This effort will continue until completion of the Master Plan update.

WASHINGTON GROVE MEADOW CONSERVATION PARK – Darrell Anderson

Annual mowing of the entire meadow took place as planned in February. A number of minor adjustments to routine mowing of the paths were made, which are on a 7-10 day mowing schedule. In the fall, a few spot concentrations of invasive species were treated per Parks Department policy.

ROADS AND WALKWAYS – Darrell Anderson

The FY2021 budget has a placeholder of ~\$37,000 for repaving. Our roads and walkway maintenance budget are almost entirely provided by funds from the Maryland gas tax collected from residents and distributed by formula to municipalities and counties. Because of the severe reduction of gas tax revenues being experienced now, due to the Coronavirus, and anticipated during FY2021, the Town will hold off on repaving until the fiscal picture becomes clearer later in the year. We will continue to address emergencies if they arise.

Repaving has been completed on Ridge Road, from Center Street to 306 Ridge Road and Brown Street to Railroad Street, as well as two emergency areas: sinking pavement at 107 Grove Avenue on Grove road, and a sinkhole at 122 Grove Avenue on Chestnut Road.

In July, after completing FY2019 repaving on Ridge Road between 112 and 204, WSSC informed the Town that they were scheduling a sewer replacement project on Ridge Road in the entire area just repaved. Town officials met with WSSC multiple times to insist that any work on our newly repaved sections would be completely repaved, shoulder-to-shoulder, rather than having the customary cuts and patching for previous WSSC sewer replacement. After negotiations, WSSC agreed to completely repave the newly repaved sections shoulder-to-shoulder. In addition, because they were to replace sewers from Brown Street to 112 Ridge Road, they completed a contract with the Town to repave the intersection at Brown Street and Ridge Road at no cost, and to repave shoulder-to-shoulder from Brown Street to 112 Ridge Road at the cost to the Town of \$1,900, far below what it would cost the Town under normal circumstances.

The Town also has met with WSSC regarding sewer replacement on Grove Avenue (walkway). A permit has been completed with WSSC to replace the sewer lines with minimal impact on the walkway and to trees along Grove Avenue, although this will be attentively monitored by Town officials and residents impacted by this work.

Speed Humps and Bumps: In FY2020, the Town continued to assess temporary speed bumps at various locations around Town. After resident input, the speed hump on Grove Avenue was replaced by a “flatter” hump that seems better tolerated by drivers and bicycle riders. That speed hump has been moved to Hickory Road between Oak Street and Railroad Street to slow traffic in that area. Two additional speed humps have been placed on Chestnut Road; one between Center Street and Oak Street, and one between Oak Street and Brown Street. In addition, the speed bumps at the intersection of Chestnut Road and Oak Street were removed. The Town Council has been monitoring their effectiveness (and resident comments) throughout the year. The Town Council remains open to comments and feedback on the current speed humps and bumps.

Washington Grove Ad-hoc Lighting Committee: FY2020 was the second year of this *ad-hoc* committee. Members include: Virginia Quesada (Chair), Robert Johnson (Secretary), Darrell Anderson (Council Liaison), Bob Booher, Charlie Challstrom, Bruce Crise, Betsy Klinger, Gail Littlefield, Joan Mahaffey, Barbara Raimondo, and Renee Chandler.

The budget for the Committee for FY2021 is \$10,000 to complete the study of lighting options and possible conversion of our existing lighting to LED. Other tasks that have been completed or are in process are an inventory of current lighting and lighting fixtures for our ~120 light poles and investigations of appropriate lighting for our walkways.

Recently, the Committee has been in discussions with PEPCO over the future of road and walkway lighting. PEPCO owns most light poles and fixtures in Town and provides maintenance under contract to the Town. PEPCO will soon submit a tariff plan to the Maryland Public Service Commission (PSC) to have a total conversion of street lighting to LED lights in their service areas. This will include an initiative to upgrade all streetlights that they own in their service area LED bulbs. Depending on their decision, there may be an impact on the fixtures currently on our light poles, which could have a major impact on the Town. As these decisions are made by PEPCO and the PSC, the Town will be meeting with PEPCO to determine how this will be implemented, and to determine the types of LED lighting and possible fixtures the Town will accept during the conversion.

When decisions are made by the Committee, they will be submitted to the Town for review and discussion. It is hoped that, depending how quickly PEPCO can get approval for their new conversion plan, that this Committee can complete its work by the end of FY2021.

PLANNING COMMISSION – Charlie Challstrom

PC Membership: Peter Nagrod (Chair), Georgette Cole, Deb Mehlferber, Jon Cohen, Charlie Challstrom (Council Liaison), and Robert Johnson (Alternate). The Commission meets the first Wednesday of each month, 7:30 p.m.

Building Permit Approvals

- 102 Center Street – garage (on PC Agenda for May 6)
- 326 Ridge Road – home renovation (on PC Agenda for May 6)
- 414 Brown Street – new fence (on PC Agenda for May 6)
- 116 Ridge Road – new fence
- 203 Second Ave and 315 Grove Ave – demolition of shared shed
- 315 Grove Ave – new shed
- 112 Grove Ave – new fence
- 121 Chestnut Ave – home renovation
- 342 Ridge Road – storage shed at rear of property
- 412 Fourth Ave – home renovation
- 500 McCauley Street – new shed (attached to garage)
- 118 Grove Ave – fencing
- 119 Grove Ave – fencing approved, with 7-foot setback from Grove Road, or a 6-foot to 4-foot height transition
- 211 Maple Ave – garage reconstruction
- 203 Washington Grove Lane – fencing
- 205 Washington Grove Lane – fencing
- 213 Washington Grove Lane – repairs of block wall of garage
- 215 Washington Grove Lane – relocated fence
- 201 Brown Street – modified plans for 4-foot high fence

Public Ways and Property (PW&P) Permits: The PC has revised PW&P permit instructions to reflect updates to the Code of Ordinances enacted by the Town Council. The PW&P permit is required for any excavating or other work in public ways or on town property. This now includes new or altered driveway aprons which use town property to connect to the pavement. The PW&P permit is also required for small wireless telecommunications facilities, and a new Article XVIII in the Code of Ordinances was established with the permit process and criteria for these facilities.

PW&P Permits for WSSC Sewer Work: The PC approved a PW&P permit for rehabilitation of WSSC sanitary sewers along Ridge Road and Grove Avenue during 2020. The PC's approval included two conditions: 1) designation of a Town representative who will be available for on-site consultation during the proposed work; and advance notice (at least 48 hours) to the Town including specific work areas with specific time(s) for the proposed work. PW&P permits were also approved for sewer renewal/rehab work for homes at 403 and 405 Fifth Ave.

326 Ridge Road Water and Sewer: In March, the PC approved a PW&P permit application submitted by WSSC to provide water and sewer services for the recently purchased home at 326 Ridge Road. The new water service will connect with 1 ½-inch copper pipe under Ridge Road to a stub provided with the Shady Grove Crossing development. Although subdivision of this property has been discussed, this WSSC permit application is for the one existing home only. Expansion of the water service to a second home or any other property along Ridge Road will require a separate WSSC process and another PW&P permit application.

326 Ridge Road Subdivision Discussions: PC members have been contacted by Mel Golden, a recent purchaser of the home and property at 326 Ridge Road. This property was annexed into the Town as part of Washington Grove Hills and is in the Town's RR-4 Zone. The State's website indicates the property area is 39,639 square feet, and the RR-4 minimum lot size is 18,000 square feet. The property area is less than the requirement for a forest conservation plan. Discussions with Mel Golden reflect expectations that an application for subdivision may be submitted to provide an additional buildable lot with address of 328 Ridge Road.

West Woods Plats and Boundary Marking: The PC initiated an RFP for plat work and boundary marking work for the West Woods and three proposals were received. The Town Council awarded the contract to Snider & Associates for this project. The plat work will produce an updated plat of subdivision to enable approval of the West Woods as one parcel, and an identification plat required for a local zoning map amendment. The boundary marking work will establish property corners for remaining portions of the West Woods boundary not yet marked. A critical element of this project is the computation and marking of the westerly side of the Washington Grove Lane right of way.

RR-3 Zone Modified Lot Size Standards: The RR-3 zone was initially established in 1990 to annex a parcel once owned by the WSSC; that parcel has since been purchased by a developer, subdivided, and re-zoned to the RR-1 Zone. The RR-3 zone was also used for annexing the parcel at 302 Ridge Road in 1995, and that parcel remains as the only property in the RR-3 zone. In February 2020, the Town Council modified the RR-3 minimum lot size standards to support subdivision of this property with retention of the existing home. The minimum RR3 lot size, specified by the Zoning Ordinance, is 13,900 square feet.

Washington Grove Master Plan Update: In addition to the regular first Wednesday meeting, the PC has met on the third Wednesday of most months to review updates proposed by various groups and committees for the 2020 Master Plan. A copy of the latest 2020 Master Plan Working Draft and draft minutes from each session are available on the Town website. Residents are welcome to attend, and everyone's input is valuable!

Homes on Town-Owned Land: Modern surveys have revealed that portions of nine historic homes were initially constructed on land owned by the Town. Article XVII of the Code of Ordinances was created in 2018 to provide a process by which the Council may sell the land under these portions to the owners of these homes. This process includes: Owner submission of a request for purchase, accompanied by four copies of a specified identification plat; Planning Commission and Historic Preservation Commission actions and recommendations; and Town Council authorization of a sale with enforceable covenants to run with the land. In August 2019, the Town Council enacted ordinances to authorize a sale to Jane Seegal (315 Grove Ave) and a sale to Bud and Carolyn O'Connor (then at 409 Fifth Ave).

MCCATHRAN HALL – Charlie Challstrom

Hallway and Restroom Refurbishments: To follow up 2019 renovations of the McCathran Hall kitchenette, Town Maintenance continued with replacements of flooring in the hallway, and the flooring, wallboard, and trim in the restrooms. Steve Werts recently completed his masterful flooring work for the Lower Level in the area at the base of the stairs, between the three doors.

Termite-damaged underlayment and support pieces were repaired, and linoleum tiles were replaced with solid hardwood.

Council Room Floor Restoration and Hall Cleaning: Hawkins Floor Company restored the Council Room flooring last December with two added coats of polyurethane. The Hall cleaning, until the March suspension, was in cooperation with SEEC, a progressive nonprofit agency providing an array of services to help people who have significant disabilities live, work and thrive in their own communities. The cleaning method for all the hardwood flooring has been updated to use Bona spray to protect the new and restored flooring.

McCathran Hall Gas Furnace and Water Heater: The 8-year-old Bryant natural gas furnace for the lower portion of the Hall was repaired by Don Hoffacker's Air Conditioning & Heating, with replacement blower motor, blower wheel, and blower condenser. The 14-year-old natural gas water heater for the Hall was replaced by Jack Mettee Plumbing & Heating. County Code requires water heaters to be located within heated space, so Steve Werts added a space heater to the utility enclosure on the Chestnut Road side of the Hall.

Lift Safety Testing and Inspections: The Town has signed a 3-year agreement with ALLSAFE Elevator Inspections LLC, for annual inspections of the witnessed safety testing performed by Premier Lifts, the maintenance contractor for our vertical platform lift. Such inspections, previously done by the State of Maryland, must now be done by a third-party Qualified Elevator Inspector who is registered with the State. The annual safety testing and inspection for the Hall lift was completed in March.

MONTGOMERY MUNICIPAL CABLE (MMC) – Charlie Challstrom

MMC and the Inside Scoop: The Town is a participating member of MMC, a nonprofit organization established to operate a cable station on behalf of municipalities in Montgomery County, with studios at the Kensington Town Hall. MMC broadcasts on cable channels, and also uses the MMC YouTube channel for live streaming of MMC cable programs, videos, and playlists. MMC is continuing operations as a 3-person team, each working from home. Each week, the "MMC Inside Scoop" is forwarded to town residents via the Yahoo Group. This email newsletter provides the County's website link for COVID-19 updates, along with video links for MMC programs intended to help cope, such as "Cherryblossom Yoga" and "Happy & Health" episodes.

Video Events and Sign Restoration Project: This past year, MMC captured video for the Youth Recital, the Fourth of July, and the Washington Grove street sign restoration/reconstruction project. MMC also completed a 19-minute instructional video documenting the detailed steps and supplies involved with the street sign restoration project. This video is now available on YouTube to assist other communities with restoration of historic wooden street signs.

CENSUS – Charlie Challstrom

Census Announcements and Activities: Beginning in December, Census announcements have been in the Town Bulletins and shared with town residents via the Yahoo Group and NextDoor. I have enjoyed meeting with community groups outside of Town to help encourage Census

responses. Thus far, more than 70% of Washington Grove households have responded to the 2020 Census.

WOODS COMMITTEE – Rob Gilmore

The past year has been an extremely active one for the Woods Committee, pursuing a number of initiatives as part of its overall effort at forest restoration. The objective is to improve the health and species diversity of the woods, and to develop measures to preserve the forest in the future.

The Committee has further progressed the development of a comprehensive forest restoration plan, comprising three main elements: (1) combatting non-native invasive species; (2) deer population control in order to mitigate the harm to the forests caused by deer over-browsing; and (3) replanting of native trees and shrubs. These efforts have included:

- Interfacing with the Town to enact an amendment to the Town Charter to permit the Town Council to authorize strictly controlled managed deer archery hunting sessions in the East and West Woods by volunteer archery teams meeting or exceeding the qualifications of the MD-DNR and MCP Deer Management Program;
- After the Town Council enacted that amendment and authorized a deer archery session, interfacing with Bowhunting Firefighters of Maryland, a qualified bowhunting group, to oversee their deer archery hunting efforts;
- Commence work on a Woods walking trails renewal and signage effort;
- Overseeing targeted herbicide treatments of non-native invasive (NNI) plant species administered by Invasive Plant Control, Inc. (“IPC”), the specialist contractor hired by the Town for NNI plant species remediation efforts;
- Conducting outreach and communication with the Town, including a comprehensive informational meeting with the Town and a survey of Town views on the different proposed elements of the forest restoration plan;
- Organizing volunteers to remove NNI plants manually, and to perform woods clean-up and restoration activities; and
- Replanting trees with tree protectors in several areas to test their ability to deter deer over-browsing

Over the next year, the Committee intends to continue pursuing the three-pronged forest restoration plan approach, to include targeted tree replanting; continued supervised archery hunting sessions (subject to the Town Council’s approval and oversight); and continued assessment of NNI plant control with possible enclosure alternatives.

CONTRACTS – Stormwater Management – Rob Gilmore

The Stormwater Committee was formed in May of 2019 with the initial task of a Request for Proposals (RFP) to deal with the significant erosion in the West Woods near the Lake caused by runoff coming under Washington Grove Lane. That RFP, which had initially been written by a consultant, had to be withdrawn due to excessive cost. The Committee is in the process of tailoring that RFP for affordability but has also become involved in identifying and prioritizing

stormwater issues in the Town itself in addition to the Woods. The Committee is working with Montgomery County and the City of Gaithersburg stormwater experts. Stormwater and related drainage issues have always been part of the history of the Town but are becoming more important as the number and severity of storms is increasing. The Committee will be advising the Council on stormwater management policy and priorities in the Town as well as in the woods.

DOG PARK – Rob Gilmore

Nothing to report.

SHADY GROVE CROSSING – Rob Gilmore

Nothing to report.

RECREATION COMMITTEE – Marida Hines

The Recreation Committee continues to create the activities and events that bring our community together and make our Town a special place. A special thanks goes out to these extraordinarily dedicated volunteers, especially Missy Yachup, Emily Cavey, Rob Gilmore, Same Beres, and Sung Chang.

In December, Missy stepped down as co-Chair of the Recreation Committee. The Town owes her a heartfelt thanks for her years of service.

In May of 2020, when this report is being written, we are entering the second month of lockdown due to the coronavirus pandemic. The Rec Committee begun planning for a year of activities in January. Sadly, it is certain that some if not all of these events will be cancelled or significantly changed due to the need for social distancing.

Now more than ever, we should celebrate the contribution of this vital committee that brings Grovers of all ages, backgrounds, and political affiliations together throughout the year to immerse ourselves in our unique traditions and our shared community. Looking back over the past year, the Recreation Committee's events stand out as milestones in our community:

The 2019-2020 year started with Music Weekend on June 14-16, a great success with performances including a "Piano Bar with Jerry Calderone" singalong of old favorites on Friday, a Youth Recital and Reception on Saturday morning, The Rock & Roll Relics inciting attendees to get up and dance on the grass on a splendid Saturday evening, and a Jazz Brunch with the 'Round Maryland Quartet' during the Sunday morning potluck brunch. Montgomery Municipal Cable filmed the Youth Recital and put a "highlights" short video up on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lgoYww-MV1g>). A full edited version was later produced (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ki_N3Ouv6BU).

Residents turned out in strength for the July 4 festivities despite intense heat and impending thunderstorms. In addition to the traditional musical salute to the flag, led by the Muskrat Band, musketer demonstration, and (now traditional) Sabrage Team performance, a sign honoring Craig English's contribution to the Town was dedicated prior to installation. Darrell Anderson, Mayor Pro Tem, spoke on the importance of both understanding our history and focusing on our future.

As fall approached, the Recreation Committee was pleased to report that Summer in the Parks had gone well.

On Labor Day weekend, the Recreation Committee staged the traditional softball game and also held a Weenie Roast at Maple Lake that was a great success despite light rain, with the hottest item being Washington Grove baseball caps available for purchase. The rest of the 2019 games, including field events, races, croquet match, etc., were held the weekend of September 7/8 due to concerns that changes in the Montgomery County school year calendar may have suppressed turnout in recent years. On Saturday September 7, six contests for children and adults were scheduled as well as three bike races followed by two running races. The fun continued on Sunday with a morning Doubles Tennis match, a mid-day Croquet Tournament and the first Annual Badminton Tournament, a field game and a potluck dinner featuring awards for the winners.

The Bluestoberfest on Saturday, October 5 was very well attended and the music by Puryear, Summerour, and Selby was very well received.

Halloween Trick-or-Treating in the Grove saw a great turnout, despite being moved from October 31 to the following day due to a tornado threat.

The 2019 Holiday Show was held Saturday, December 14, and was a huge hit thanks to appearances by the inimitable Mo and Jo and a cast of many, many Grovers. A huge thanks is due to the show's writer, director, and producer Judy Mroczka and the massive contribution of Marilynn Frey in making the show happen.

In February, the Recreation Committee started planning as normal for Summer in the Parks, Music Weekend, and the rest of the year's full schedule of events. Music weekend, planned for the weekend of June 20, was reconfigured with several updates and innovations to draw greater attendance and participation by residents of all ages and interests. These included reducing activities to two evening events as three days and potentially staging the Saturday evening event from 5 to 10pm, with the first half featuring a mellower family friendly band and the second half featuring a dance band.

As we enter May, the status of these great activities is unknown. By their nature, the Recreation Committee's activities involve in-person events with crowds. We will not know for some time which can be held safely and when. Some Town events, such as the Town Meeting, are being held virtually. But it is hard to see how this model can be applied to Recreation Committee activities. The Recreation Committee is still continuing to collect applications for enrollment and employment for Summer in the Parks, to be prepared should the situation change.

COMMUNICATIONS - Marida Hines

The Washington Grove Communications Working Group (CWG) was formed in 2018 by Town volunteers interested in identifying ways to ensure residents are fully informed on Town affairs and to facilitate engagement through effective dissemination of information.

A comprehensive survey of the residents shortly after the formation of the CWG had revealed considerable dissatisfaction with the website, specifically the ability to find information. The

CWG conducted a usability test in 2019 that included tests with six volunteers, including one non-resident and six residents of different ages, sexes, and facility with electronic communications. The tests were conducted in the residents' homes, on computers they were familiar with, and included seven tasks for them to complete:

- Find a specific ordinance
- Find out who to call about a problem
- Find out the status of an issue before the council
- Find out requirements for a building permit
- Find out when an event is happening and where
- Find out rules for a town service like leaf pick up or recycling
- Find out what the current master plan draft says about an issue of interest

The usability test revealed several areas for improvement in the website, both technological and editorial:

Technically, search continues to top the list. Searches return large numbers of website pages and news items, in apparently random order and with insufficient information to assess which item has the information sought. Bill Saar is aware of this issue.

Other issues are editorial in nature. High-profile Town issues are not highlighted or consolidated anywhere on the website and are often buried in committee reports. To find the latest news on these issues, residents must have an advanced understanding of the structure of the Town's government and committees to know where to look. The test used the bike path as an example topic. The test was conducted prior to the Special Town Meeting on the bike path which brought everyone up to date on this issue. At the time of the test, interest was high but the primary activities underway around the bike path were in the effort to update the Master Plan. None of our subjects considered looking under the Master Plan reports for information on the bike path. This is not an uncommon example. The recommendation here is to implement either a process or a person to consolidate high interest items like the bike path into a "hot issues" page. It is unclear whether the Town has the resources to implement this, but it is worth considering.

Another editorial issue involves the reality that modern websites serve up news items by headline. Generic headlines for information items, such as "Minutes from the Master Plan meeting" do not indicate anything about the topics that were discussed, forcing a resident trying to determine the current state of an issue to click through minutes. The recommendation here is to implement a rule of submitting a list of topics covered along with minutes. These could be included in the "excerpt" functionality in search returns or in news feeds. This would require extra work from the Committees, so it is unclear whether this recommendation can be implemented, but it is worth considering.

Conclusion

Since the formation of the CWG, many changes in the Town's official communications have been effected, either through changes in a more communications-oriented Town government or as a response to Residents input as transmitted by the CWG. These include:

- Posting of draft minutes from the Town Council meetings in "real time" (within a week, rather than waiting for final versions approved at the following meeting.)

- Re-introduction of the Coming Events Calendar section in the Bulletin
- Creation of an alternative to the listserv in a Town-specific Next Door app. This functionality is available but at this time residents continue to prefer the listserv
- Identification of top issues with the website through the survey and a website usability test

While a few communications improvements that received strong support from the residents remain to be implemented, the consensus among members of the CWG after two years of work is that changes that have been made have vastly improved official communications in Town.

Remaining issues, which are largely in the emergency communications area, can be addressed from within the Emergency Management Committee. The Communications Working Group is now examining its next steps.

WEBSITE – Marida Hines

Bill Saar's ongoing dedication to maintaining and improving the Town website continues. In addition to regularly posting updates on meetings, agendas, and minutes, the website is updated on an ongoing basis with new pages and functionality to reflect new activities in Town. An initiative is underway to update all committee pages.

As the Town faces the challenges posed by the coronavirus pandemic, which affected the Town's ability to communicate in person, the website's role as primary repository of news and information for Town citizens is necessarily expanding. Working with the Mayor and the Town Council liaison, Bill has improved the visibility of critical information items such as Town Alerts and special procedures for the Town Meeting and Town elections by creating a high-visibility alert section at the top of the home page, incorporating additional categories in the home page news feed areas, and consolidating information in government-related pages.

WashingtonGroveMD.org continues to be a professional site that is head and shoulders above most municipal websites.

MAPLE LAKE COMMITTEE – Pat Klein

Overall, the 2019 lake season was successful with great swim instructions, lifeguard coverage, and no security problems. A number of tasks are now underway to prepare the Lake to open for the 2020 season. The Mayor and Lake Committee chairs recently met with MCPD to conduct random patrols several times a week beginning in early May through early June to prevent trespassing and vandalism at the Lake.

There was one incident last June 2019 during a private party of a 9-year old child pulled from the lake edge near the dock by our lifeguard avoiding a potential drowning accident.

Last June, a Water Quality Testing result reported slightly elevated levels of Enterococcus and E.coli. This was associated with recent heavy rains and run-off. The committee keeps a chart of monthly water quality test results and notifies the Mayor of elevated levels.

Last summer, a town resident raised concerns about the potential for ‘harmful algal blooms’ in Maple Lake given reports at other regional lakes and waterways. The committee gathered information from the EPA, Maryland DNR, and other expert resources. NatureWorksCWA, the company that provides algal treatments for Maple Lake, was contacted for testing advice. They stated that their routine lake treatment using a blue dye filters out sunlight and retards the growth of algae in the water column. The beneficial bacteria they add reduces nutrients in the water column that the algae need, further retarding growth. The algicide applications performed reduce cell counts before a bloom can occur so the lake is being managed to prevent algae (and cyanobacteria) to reproduce and bloom. The EPA web link has information about blue-green algae: <https://www.epa.gov/cyanohabs>.

The Lake Committee has been engaged in discussions with the Stormwater Management Committee and Woods Committee on stormwater runoff into the West Woods and management solutions to prevent ongoing soil erosion, tree damage, and to preserve the integrity of Maple Lake.

The Lake Committee continues to use the HSUS protocol to humanely prevent hatching of eggs laid each year by a nesting pair of Canada geese along the island.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND SAFETY COMMITTEE (EPSC) – Pat Klein

The EPSC was focused this year on identifying longstanding internal and external infrastructure issues impacting town safety; and recommending improvements to the Mayor and Town Council. The following is a list of key accomplishments.

Improving emergency communications: (a) The Grove Alert can now be distributed electronically from locations other than the Town Office by authorized senders. (b) The Town website added a homepage banner enabling one-click access to COVID-19 webpage containing vital information links. The EPSC will work with the Communications Committee on upgrading town communication systems so residents can receive emergency alerts, notifications, and updates via email and/or text messages.

Stormwater Management issues being discussed with other Town committees and Mayor/Town Council to address stormwater runoff structural impacts throughout town, traffic safety issues along Railroad Street, and soil erosion and tree damage in the West Woods.

Prepared letter from the Mayor to the County Executive regarding public road safety issues to include safe access at Ride-On bus stops, hold back lines and sensors approaching the Deer Park humpback bridge, and roadway erosion along Railroad Street near the bridge.

Prepared letter from Mayor to the commercial corner owner to notify need to repair the walkway steps handrail and request County inspection of the damaged handrail to protect public safety.

Emergency Preparedness Seminar recommended exploring use of fire key boxes for McCathran Hall to provide access to first responders and incorporating an emergency lock at Maple Lake.

“Town of Washington Grove Risk Management and Safety Procedures” submitted to the Mayor and Town Council for approval. This document describes the Mayor and Town Council oversight responsibilities for risk management and accident investigation and required safety training for Town employees.

Advocated for Montgomery County Police Town liaison to Town of Washington Grove to be restored.

FORESTRY AND BEAUTIFICATION - Audrey Maskery

It has not been an easy year for our venerable oaks, some have failed requiring removal, and many are in their declining years. Due to the effects of Climate change, Forestry and Beautification decided to plant new varieties of oaks, plus a mixture of trees in areas that have proved to be challenging for the older oaks (mostly White Oak and Red Oak). We also felt that planting some larger caliper trees as well as the smaller caliper trees that we have been planting for many years would add greater age variety to our canopy increasing its coverage for many generations to come.

The Grove itself poses limitations on where we can plant trees. Water and sewer lines often run down either side of the Avenues. Along our roads we need to be careful of the powerlines along the sides, as these trees will otherwise be unattractively cut back by Asplundh on behalf of PEPCO.

The Forestry and Beautification Committee - has worked hard to obtain the best quality trees and shrubs, but one of our contractors, Ace Tree Service, went out of business this year. We have found another source for obtaining good quality large caliper trees which we expect to be available for our Fall 2020 planting.

Forestry and Beautification member, Jay Everhart, has been contributing informative articles, the "Trees in the Grove" series, for the Town bulletin. We hope the information will add to resident appreciation of our amazing Washington Grove canopy.

20 new trees were planted throughout Town Fall 2019/Spring 2020:

- 1 Black Gum – *Nyssa sylvatica*
- 1 Buckeye – *Aesculus californica*
- 1 River Birch – *Betula nigra*
- 1 Bur Oak – *Quercus macrocarpa*
- 1 Willow Oak – *Quercus phellos*
- 1 White Oak – *Quercus alba*
- 3 Over-cup Oak - *Quercus lyrata*
- 3 Maple - *Acer rubrum*
- 1 Maple – *Acer platanoides*
- 2 Dogwood – *Cornus florida*
- 2 Dogwood – *Cornus X Rutgans*
- 1 Dogwood – *Cornus kousa*
- 1 Weeping Cherry – *Prunus subhirtalla* (pink)
- 1 Chokeberry – *Aronia arbutifolia*

MAINTENANCE – Audrey Maskery

The Town Hall bathrooms have been completely renovated. The old toilets in both men's and ladies have been replaced with new low flush water conservation toilets. The floors replaced with new tiling to match the outside passage that connects the Old Council room with the New Council room.

The walls behind the men's urinal lined with washable paneling, and the walls in both bathrooms refinished and painted.

Woodward Park public bathrooms have also been renovated receiving the new toilet fittings, and the walls and floors repainted.

The Archive room was fitted with the air-conditioner necessary to maintain a constant temperature and humidity required for preservation of the material stored there.

The old Council table has been refurbished and placed back ready for use.

New speed humps/bumps have been installed on Grove Road and Chestnut Road; additional speed control humps will be placed in suitable locations in Town.

A ditch dug from private property to the culvert under Maple Road to direct ground water from flooding the Acorn Library. The ditch was then lined with grass sod to slow the volume of water.

Rotten wood removed from the Children's 'Play Fort' and replaced with new pressure treated wood. The Fort is almost completely finished ready for children to use as soon as the current conditions ease.

The Town tennis courts have been kept in playable condition all season. Leaves and weeds removed, grass cut making the area a pleasing place to play tennis.

MEMORIALS – Audrey Maskery

A revision of the Memorial Policy was accepted by the Mayor and Town Council, at the March 2020 Council meeting.

We have received requests from families of deceased Town Residents wishing to dedicate benches, unfortunately these are now on hold due to the current situation.