

TOWN COUNCIL REPORTS MARCH 2021 MEETING

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION – Darrell Anderson

Comprehensive (Master) Plan Update:

Lighting Committee

MAINTENANCE – Darrell Anderson

PLANNING COMMISSION – Charlie Challstrom

Building Permit Activity –

- 317 Brown Street – porch screen enclosure approved; confirmed lot coverage is near max.
- 414 Brown Street – fence approved; discussed expected permit application for installation of railings for porch on the side of the home facing Roberts Oxygen.

Public Ways & Property (PW&P) Permit Activity – PW&P forms have been updated to reflect an adjusted timing for application submission to facilitate application review by the Historic Preservation Commission. The PW&P forms include a specific application for a driveway or walkway apron, the portion of a driveway, walkway, or parking area located on a public way or other Town-owned property. This PW&P application reflects updated evaluation criteria regarding a proposed circular driveway or multiple driveway aprons, and the Maryland Roadside Tree Permit requirements. The PC requests Council adoption of Resolution 2021-04 with the updated evaluation criteria for PW&P permit applications.

Terminating Restrictive Covenants – Ordinance 2021-01 is the proposed Zoning Text Amendment to declare a set of three Restrictive Covenants as terminated and authorize optional legal instruments for filing in the Land Records, if requested and prepared by owners of affected properties. Of the 225 homes in Washington Grove, 115 have been identified as being burdened by this set of restrictive covenants. Additional searching in the land records may identify additional affected properties. The public hearing for this Ordinance is March 8, 2021.

2021 Comprehensive Plan – During the PC Work Session on February 22, review and edits continued for new Section 13 (Sustainability) with a focus on opportunities and strategies for carbon sequestration associated with mature oak forests, and other trees and vegetation. There was discussion again about a proposal to allow more public ways and parks to revert to forest, but these were rejected again based on concerns including health and safety, e.g. increased tick exposures. Updates were accepted to improve explanations of “infill development” and “re-development” in Section 2 (Municipal Growth and Boundary Enhancements). Review continued of draft maps for the Comprehensive Plan: Exhibit A (Current Zoning and Growth Areas) and Exhibit B (Town Buildings, Parks, and Community Facilities). Exhibit A is being updated by Kirk Eby, GIS Planner, City of Gaithersburg, and a few final edits were suggested. Exhibit B is being updated by Charlie from the Town Directory map, and edits were suggested for this map as well. Suggested edits were also received for the long-term vision for the Commercial Corner to create a more welcoming connection to the Town and a “sense of place” that is safe, comfortable, and essential to the community. The next PC Work Session is scheduled for March 17.

Lift Repairs and Inspection – The Town has a 3-year agreement with ALLSAFE Elevator Inspections, LLC for annual inspections of the witnessed safety testing performed by Premier

Lifts, our maintenance contractor for the lift in McCathran Hall. These inspections must be done by a third-party Qualified Elevator Inspector who is registered with the State. The lift has not been used for more than a year, and Steve Werts recently discovered a damaged switch when testing the lift operation in anticipation of the annual inspection. With concurrence from our lift maintenance contractor, Steve repaired the switch and re-secured the electrical cables to prevent future problems. The annual safety testing and inspection was completed on March 3rd.

MONTGOMERY MUNICIPAL CABLE (MMC) – Charlie Challstrom

Meeting with County Executive – Members of the Maryland Municipal League (MML) Montgomery Chapter met with County Executive Marc Elrich on February 18. The meeting began with interactive updates from County Health Officer Travis Gayles, and OEMHS Director Earl Stoddard on COVID-19. Marc Elrich focused on the County-managed vaccination strategies, his efforts to coordinate vaccination registration with State-managed programs, and the impacts of disparities on the County’s goal to get 80% of the community vaccinated. This was also the annual “meet and confer” event intended to discuss county/municipal tax issues. Along with the County Executive and other County officials, representatives from cities and towns, including Mayor Compton and me, reviewed revenue projections, commercial property development strategies, upcoming tax duplication payments, and new expectations for funding with the proposed American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. This meeting with the County Executive was recorded and is available for streaming on the [MMC YouTube channel](#).

CENSUS – Charlie Challstrom

Census Update – To make responding as easy and quick as possible, people were allowed to respond to the Census with or without the Census ID mailed to them. If a household responded with its unique Census ID, Census was able to link the response to the home’s physical address right away. According to Michael Thieme, an Assistant Director at Census, they chose to give households the option to respond without their Census ID, meaning that by design, Census is processing an unprecedented number of 2020 Census responses without IDs. This means it takes longer to match responses to the right address and count people in the right place. This is one aspect that contributes to the complexity of processing and the delay in meeting target dates for Census reports. Here in Washington Grove, we appreciate the challenges of having the mail delivery addresses different from the physical addresses used for other services.

CONTRACTS – Dave Cosson

RFPs for the Refuse and Recycling contracts have been issued with a return date of March 5, 2021.

WOODS – Dave Cosson

The Woods Committee met on March 1st by Zoom and discussed the following:

Deer Management. A representative of the BHFFMD called in to discuss this season’s experience and activities in the 2021-22 season. He noted that fewer deer were harvested in the 2019-20 season and that the hunters had seen fewer deer in the East and West Woods. Approximately 250lbs of venison were donated to the food bank. They did observe a substantial increase in residents using the walking trails in the woods especially along Franklin, Cherry, and Maple trails, beginning with early morning which may have affected deer movement. He discussed with the Committee potentially relocating their stands for the next season and will

contact the Montgomery County Parks Deer Management Program manager to inquire if the Town and County could agree to a managed bow hunt in the Conservation Meadow next season.

The Committee approved a draft letter of appreciation for the Mayor to send in recognition of BHHFMD's efforts over the last two seasons.

Ordinance 2020-13. The Committee approved for introduction a draft Ordinance establishing the fees applicable for permits by Ordinance 2020-13 for archeological or fossil exploration. The draft Ordinance also would revise the title of Article I to remove the word "morals."

Signage. Sample East/West Woods trail signs and potential prices from a supplier were discussed. Three symbols would be attached to posts: Dogs on Leash, Stay on Trail, and No Bikes. A more detailed price list is being prepared for final evaluation, including whether to have the posts installed by the supplier or the Town.

Timber Turnpikes. Experimental "Timber Turnpikes" have been installed in the East Woods on Franklin, Cherry, and Challstrom trails using natural tree limbs for side braces with fill dirt and wood chips. Drainage pipe and rocks have been placed under the trails to assist with water run-off. The Committee will evaluate whether the mix of soil and wood chips is adequate or if more soil layers are needed in the future. Brown gravel was placed along the Maple Ave extended trail between Center St and Franklin trail.



West Woods Cleanup. The WC will place a notice in the April Town Bulletin to ask residents to assist with a Spring trash clean-up in the West Woods on an individual basis consistent with pandemic precautions of social distancing and wearing masks. Volunteers will be assigned specific areas, provided with heavy duty trash bags and instructed on precautions for dealing with broken glass.

Border Committee Identity Fence Proposal. The Border Committee is exploring “identify fencing” and Town Signing in several areas, including the West Woods border with Washington Grove Lane. The Committee discussed placing of the “Welcome to Washington Grove” sign near the intersection of WGL and Daylily Lane and alternative styles of identity fencing. It concluded that the sign should be placed so as not to obscure the vision of vehicles turning onto Washington Grove Lane, and that split rail fencing, similar to what is now in place at the entrance to Maple Lake would be appropriate where there is sufficient grade and no large trees would be harmed.

RACIAL EQUITY COMMITTEE – Dave Cosson

The Committee met by Zoom on February 21 and discussed the following:

Graffiti on Washington Grove Lane Sidewalk Committee members expressed great concern with the racist graffiti painted on the sidewalk and that a picture of it had inadvertently appeared on the town listserv without context. The Committee subsequently sent a letter to the Mayor and Council regarding the incident as a potential hate crime.

Social Equity Assessment A revised version of the paper describing the purpose and function of the proposed Social Equity Assessment was discussed and approved. The proposal focuses on the Town’s need to gain insight in this area in order to sustain volunteerism and promote inclusion of all. This concept document will serve as the basis for the Committee’s budget request to the Town Council. The Committee’s budget proposal was provided to the Treasurer on February 28.

Comprehensive Plan The Committee has reached agreement with the Sustainability Group with respect to the Committee’s proposed edits to the Sustainability Section of the Comprehensive Plan.

Education Subcommittee The Education Subcommittee met by Zoom on February 28 and watched two presentations from members. The first was a discussion of the book *My Grandmother’s Hands* Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies by Resmaa Menakem. The book explores the damage to the bodies of the victims of racism and ways to reduce that damage.

The second presenter discussed the book *History of Black Schools in Montgomery County, 1872-1961* by Nina Clark and Lilian Brown. The book describes at length how, despite the Supreme Court’s sanction of “separate but equal” in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, Montgomery County schools were anything but equal: physical facilities were atrocious, learning materials were scarce and hand-me-down and Black teachers were paid at half the rate of White teachers. Black residents nevertheless paid taxes at the same rate as Whites. This pay disparity led to the County being sued by a Black teacher who was represented by Thurgood Marshall in a 1937 case. After settling the case it knew it couldn’t win, the County then fired the teacher. Later, however, his

efforts were recognized by naming an elementary school in Germantown the William B. Gibbs Elementary.

Following the presentations the subcommittee discussed future events, noting that there is a sign-up page for residents who would like to volunteer presentations. The possibility of an in-person educational seminar in the fall if Covid restrictions are removed was discussed.

COMMUNICATIONS WORK GROUP – Marida Hines

DOG PARK – Marida Hines

RECREATION – Marida Hines

WEBSITE – Marida Hines

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS & SAFETY COMMITTEE – Pat Klein

The EPSC virtually met via Zoom on February 25, 2021. Although the Chair was unable to attend and a quorum was lacking, the committee members present discussed the following matters:

- Washington Grove Lane sidewalk. The recent ice storm resulted in the sidewalk being hazardous for pedestrians. While the Town has done a good job removing snow from the sidewalk, icy conditions make removal impractical. The EPSC seeks clarification on whether the County or the Town has responsibility for this sidewalk to ensure public safety, and any role for the adjacent homeowner. The Town should have an all-seasons sidewalk safety policy identifying the responsible party.
- Bike path alternatives – Mayor Compton filed testimony at MC Council meeting to remove “Brown Street” reference from bike path Sector Plan. EPSC recommends the Mayor establish a Bike Path Work Group (Task Force) to consider town residents’ concerns and perspectives; and submit a report with recommendations to the TC.
- Railroad Street/CSX RR-tracks drainage – EPSC was awaiting updates from Mayor Compton on any response from MC DOT to his latest correspondence. Since the meeting, MC-DOT has replied that drainage pipe replacement will be completed by next year.
- Town street and walkway lighting safety – The Town wants to retain our heritage style of lighting with LEDs to maintain our historic character. Public hearings are scheduled in March and April by the Public Service Commission to receive comments. Robert/Virginia may attend on behalf of the Lighting Committee and EPSC. EPSC recommends this topic be discussed at the next TC meeting.

The next EPSC meeting will be on March 25, 2021.

MAPLE LAKE – Pat Klein

The Committee had its initial virtual (Zoom) meeting on February 18, 2021 to begin preparation of the 2021 season. Routine organizational activities to start soon include:

- Checking for arrival of nesting Canada geese in anticipation of egg addling in coming weeks
- Start to drain the lake in early April prior to Lake Cleanup event scheduled on April 24th
- Repair any fence holes and fill low berm areas and ground holes behind dock with soil
- Resume monthly water quality testing and tri-weekly algae management to commence in early May.

- Maintain COVID-19 protocols based on State and County Public Health guidance.
- Recruit lifeguards and swim instructor.
- Submit FY2022 proposed budget (see below)
 - Lifeguard salaries \$17,000
 - Swim Instructor salary \$ 2,000
 - Supplies \$ 3,000
 - Electricity \$ 750
 - Water testing/ treatment \$ 7,000
 - Footbridge / Dock \$ 200
 - Fencing \$ 1,000
 - TOTAL \$30,950

The next Lake Committee meeting will be on March 18, 2021.

FORESTRY & BEAUTIFICATION – Gray Yachup

The Forestry and Beautification Committee has concluded their efforts for Fall planting season and will begin meeting again next week on the 10th.

PLAYGROUNDS – Gray Yachup

Nothing to report

ROADS & WALKWAYS – Gray Yachup

Bruce Rothrock requested a new sign denoting the intersection of Acorn Lane and 4th Avenue. Bruce is working with Steve and Susan to get the sign set up.

I am also monitoring the situation with the Bikeway to ensure that movement is occurring, and that all constituent’s thoughts are heard.

Will also be putting out the RFP for the additional work that was identified (McCauley, Chestnut pipe, squash pipe, etc.) next month.

MEMORIALS – Gray Yachup

Nothing to report

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT – Gray Yachup

Chatted with Krista and Steve about their concerns with regards to water pooling in their yards, discussed possible mitigation efforts. I will be investigating more in the coming weeks.

WASHINGTON GROVE MEADOW CONSERVATION PARK – Gray Yachup

Nothing to report

SHADY GROVE CROSSING – Gray Yachup

Working with Border Committee to beautify the entrance between SGXC and the Grove. Will keep monitoring the efforts.