

TOWN COUNCIL REPORTS APRIL 2021 MEETING

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION – Darrell Anderson

The HPC held a virtual meeting on March 16, 2021; the next meeting will be held on April 20, 2021, at 7:30 pm by virtual means.

The HPC reviewed their first permit application under the new Public Ways permit. The residents of 410 4th Avenue (Greenway/Uh) applied for a permit to add access to a driveway off Johnson Alley to accommodate an electric vehicle so they would have access to electricity for charging the vehicle. The driveway would be 7 x 15 feet and connect approximately 1.5 feet as an apron to Johnson Alley. The apron would be small stone, which was supported by the HPC. The HPC will write a review and send to the Planning Commission.

Pat Patula, Town Archivist, presented the Annual Report and spoke highly of the work of the HPC in collecting archival data and placing it on the Town website. She has completed most of the archived material from the Camp Meeting until 1937, when the Town was established. She also praised the HPC for the recent material included in the National Register nomination and said that its accessibility on the Town website was excellent.

David Stopak presented his opinions on why the Town Council made the wrong decision on passing a Resolution supporting the Bikeway through Brown Street Extended. He offered an alternative that would ultimately cross the Conservation Meadow to Oak Street and through the Town. There was much discussion about the Town Council's decision and that the HPC should weigh in with a letter to the Council. A draft letter will be developed and reviewed by HPC members; the final will be sent to the Town Council before the April 12 meeting.

The HPC continues to work on a map regarding Town historic resources based on the historic review information for our National Register nomination.

The HPC received updates on the Racial Equity Ad Hoc Committee, the Border Committee, and the Lighting Committee.

Lighting Committee

The Lighting Committee (LC) held a virtual meeting on March 24, 2021; the next meeting will be held on April 28, 2021.

The LC spent a majority of the meeting discussing interactions with PEPCO regarding questions about the proposed tariff document submitted to the Maryland Public Service Commission. Members of the LC recently testified at a virtual meeting for interested parties. Discussions afterwards with PEPCOs Alberto del Gado have been ongoing regarding questions the LC members had for specifics of the tariff recommendations. Mr. del Gado said that PEPCO has listened to the Town's testimony and will consider it at the highest level of PEPCO management. The LC submitted a list of questions to Mr. del Gado but has yet to garner a response.

After a lengthy discussion during the LC meeting, it was decided that one way forward is to wait for the response from PEPCO, create another list of questions, and possibly present them to the

Town Council at the April meeting to help define what the Town still needs to know before responding to PEPCO's response.

It was noted that the Town already has converted all our streetlights to LED (except for a few with fixture issues) and that the Town should be able to be immune from much of the LED conversion requirements in the tariff. It was noted that none of our fixtures have dimmable capabilities, but the Town should stress that we want to keep what we have.

The LC would like to place bollard lights at McCathran Hall as a test for their applicability and to get input from residents. One issue remains the access to electricity for running the low-voltage bollard lights before testing them on Town walkways; we will not be able to tap into PEPCO lighting for the electricity.

MAINTENANCE – Darrell Anderson

Made trips to the County dump when necessary. Purchased gas when needed. Completed paperwork as required. Worked in the maintenance shop if needed or weather dictated.

Worked with the Town Treasurer to develop the FY2022 Maintenance Budget.

Worked on Grove Avenue to smooth the walkway. Spread topsoil along the edge of the walkway. Spread gravel on the walkway to complete the WSSC work. Replaced two small bushes in front of 102 Grove Avenue. Spread a small amount of gravel at 116 Ridge Road (replaces original asphalt on Town property).

Went to Home Depot to pick up wood for bench repair. Repaired damaged bench in the park. Replaced broken post on the Dead-End sign on Ridge Road. Painted two 4 x 4 wooden posts for street signs. Also picked up new trim boards for the shop. Painted trim boards for the shop, took down rotted trim boards and replaced with new boards.

Went to Advance Auto for a new key switch for the Town truck. Installed the key switch. Picked up new side steps for the Town truck; removed rotted steps and installed the new ones.

Installed landscaping ties in Wade Park (project approved by John Compton for defining parking area) Loaded the truck with fill dirt and spread in low spots in Wade Park. Went to Seasons Nursery to pick up a yard of topsoil for Wade Park. Raked Wade Park (4th Ave side) and leveled topsoil to get ready for seeding.

Worked on the elevator lift at Town Hall to prepare for State inspection. Met with the State inspector and Premier Lift at Town Hall to perform inspection on elevator lift.

Met with Georgette about removing Bush Honeysuckle along Center Street

Performed annual check on the playground equipment.

Met with WSSC contractor about the failed lateral at 207 Grove Ave. WSSC will return on April 13 to complete repairs. Met with WSSC in the East Woods to check fire hydrant (now fixed).

Checked gravel for parking on 4th Ave (purchased by owner).

Finished cleaning out flower beds around Town Hall and the Woman's Club. Picked up piles of leaves on Grove Ave and moved to Brown Street for pickup. Picked up sticks and leaves around the Gazebo. Picked up sticks and leaves between the bamboo area and Grove Road. Did brush work on Oak Street and Cherry Ave.

Met with IPC on spraying the clay tennis courts and new foam that could help reduce moss.

Looked at proposed road work around Town for 2022 RFP.

Delivered recycle bins to new residents at 513 Washington Grove Lane, 8900 Boundary Lane, and 326 Ridge Road.

Dewinterized the watering tank.

Worked on removing graffiti on Washington Grove Lane sidewalk.

Cleaned bathrooms.

Went to John Deere to pick up a belt for our mower Installed the belt on John Deere 500 mower.

PLANNING COMMISSION – Charlie Challstrom

Building Permit Activity –

- 412 Fourth Ave – shed approved for new compliant location on northern side of property; shed to be re-located from its present location adjacent to Johnson Alley.

Public Ways & Property (PW&P) Permit Activity

- 410 Fourth Ave – gravel driveway apron approved for use of public land between the property line and the Johnson Alley pavement.

Annual PC Report to State of Maryland – All planning commissions are required to submit an annual report for the previous Calendar Year to the Maryland Department of Planning. Our report for Calendar Year 2020 includes: (1) Ordinance 2019-18 modifying lot size standards for the RR-3 Zone; (2) Ordinance 2020-11 modifying the front minimum setback requirements for accessory buildings; (3) subdivision of 326 Ridge Road property to create an additional buildable lot; (4) updated Public Ways and Property Permits process to include HPC reviews, refined permit approval criteria, and reduced permit fees for proposed driveway aprons on public property adjoining the property of the applicant; and (5) development of Ordinance 2021-01 to terminate restrictive covenants and authorize legal instruments suitable for filing in the Land Records for Montgomery County. This report has been prepared in a prescribed format, and the report must be filed with the Town Council before submission to the State.

2021 Comprehensive Plan – During the PC Work Session on March 17, the PC reviewed the latest version of Exhibit A (Current Zoning and Growth Areas) from Kirk Eby, GIS Planner, City of Gaithersburg, and identified a few changes needed. Most significantly, PC members expressed strong interest in annexing the CSX Railroad adjoining the Town, and selected portions of Oakmont on the other side of the railroad tracks stretching from Aitchison Crossing to the Gaithersburg City Limits. A draft of this “Grown Area 5” has been prepared and circulated for review and comment, and further feedback to Kirk Eby is awaiting PC

endorsement of Growth Area 5 as drafted. Refinements were accepted for the descriptions of “infill development” and “redevelopment” to add clarity. There was also support for exploring improvements for the Washington Grove Lane intersections with Center Street and Oak Street to make these better walkways and manage stormwater flows. The access for emergency vehicles must be continued according to the 1979 ordinance which authorized closing the Center Street and Oak Street intersections to other vehicular traffic. Comprehensive Plan recommendations for the Center Street and Center Street intersections, safety improvements for the Brown Street closure, and safety trimming along the Washington Grove Lane sidewalk have been drafted for review during the next PC Work Session scheduled for April 21.

MCCATHRAN HALL – Charlie Challstrom

McCathran Hall Alarm Monitoring – The Town contracts with Guardian Fire Protection Services for alarm monitoring, with routine ping checks using two Verizon telephone lines (one Fios line and one older “POTS” copper line). There is an automatic notification via telephone to a designated Town contact when an interrupt is detected in the connection to Guardian. During wet and cold weather, false notifications have increased, apparently due to problems with using the remaining copper line. Later this month, a Verizon work order will be submitted to convert the older line to Fios, and this work will be coordinated with Steve’s availability.

MONTGOMERY MUNICIPAL CABLE (MMC) – Charlie Challstrom

Behind the Quilts – MMC produces and broadcasts programs on Cable Channel 16, with streaming from [MMCTV online](#), and the [MMC YouTube Channel](#). Past reports have recognized MMC efforts to capture Washington Grove events in videos that remain available for streaming. This report highlights a recent program now available on YouTube – [Behind the Quilts](#) with Washington Grove resident Lauren Kingsland. Lauren, a quilter, leads us through the stories of 40 quilts that were on recent display at the Sandy Spring Museum. This virtual event features music from Grammy-winning duo Cathy Fink and Marcy Marxer.

CENSUS – Charlie Challstrom

America Counts – The Census website offers a collection of “[Stories Behind the Numbers](#)” featuring various topics such as families, housing, employment, business, education, the economy, emergency management, and population. Under the Housing category, there is more explanation of the American Community Survey (ACS) which helps local officials, community leaders, and businesses understand the changes taking place in their communities. It is the premier source for detailed population and housing information about our nation. ACS data for Washington Grove was used in drafting the Housing section of the new Washington Grove Comprehensive Plan which is planned for completion in the next several months.

CONTRACTS – Dave Cosson

An acceptance letter to Potomac Disposal for the Refuse and Recycling contracts has been signed and mailed.

WOODS – Dave Cosson

Ordinance 2020-13. The Committee reviewed a draft Ordinance establishing the fees applicable for permits required Ordinance 2020-13 for archeological or fossil exploration and

requested that expiration periods be set at six months to begin work and one year to complete. The proposed Ordinance is attached.

Signage - Price quotes for construction and installation of entrance and trail signs were reviewed. There would be substantial savings if installation of the signposts can be done by Town maintenance staff. The Committee will inquire if the maintenance work schedule of the staff could accommodate the installation. Entrance signs would be done first, while identification of the precise location for trail signs is worked out.

Timber Turnpikes - Both the gravel and soil/chip turnpikes appeared to work well during recent heavy rain. Committee members reported substantial water in some places on the outside of the rails, but the drainage systems installed appeared to reduce the water level substantially within 24 hours. Further evaluation of drainage and potential locations for more turnpikes was discussed. Town maintenance will be requested to reserve available soil for future turnpike construction this fall.

West Woods Cleanup and Kelly Park Drainage - The April Town Bulletin included the request that residents 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. The Committee co-chair will provide direction and assistance to resident volunteers. No new information was available with respect to any work by Gaithersburg to improve drainage in Kelly Park that affects the West Woods. It was noted that preliminary work for construction of a school has begun on the opposite side of the park.

Border Committee Identity Fence Proposal - The Border Committee has been advised that the Woods Committee believes the “identity fencing” being considered should be of the split rail design similar to that now in place at the driveway entrance to Maple Lake. It was also noted that some vegetation clearing has been done along Washington Grove Lane.

RACIAL EQUITY COMMITTEE – Dave Cosson

The Committee met by Zoom on March 14 and discussed the following:

Graffiti on Washington Grove Lane Sidewalk - Committee members expressed appreciation for the Town’s response to the graffiti including its removal and inclusion of the incident as an item in the March Bulletin with telephone numbers for reporting. The Committee believes a guideline for response to graffiti should also be located on the Town website.

Bike Path - The Committee discussed at length the status of the proposed bicycle path and the potential impacts on racial and social justice. The concern expressed was that Town actions not be perceived by neighboring communities as exclusionary. A letter to the Mayor and Council expressing this concern will be drafted for consideration at the April meeting.

Education Subcommittee updates - The Education Subcommittee has experimented with various presentations on subjects relevant to the Committee’s educational objective. Additional presentations are being prepared and the Subcommittee will continue to evaluate options for both internal education and for information of all Town residents.

Social Equity Assessment - The Committee's budget request is pending before the Town Council, whose decision will then go to the Town Meeting. The Committee plans to have preliminary discussions with a potential consultant in May. The desirability of having survey information translated to Spanish was discussed. In that respect, the Town's welcome letter, and information about the forthcoming election, should be considered for translation.

Education Subcommittee

The Education Subcommittee met by Zoon on March 28 and discussed the following:

- Collaboration with Other Organizations - The possibility of working with the Montgomery County Lynching Memorial Project was discussed, including preparation of newsletter announcements and opportunities for people to become involved.
- Presentations and Discussions - Consideration was given to making the presentations at the monthly Discussion Day more informal "pitches" to obtain feedback for future expansion. Several tentative speakers are preparing presentations. Consideration was also given to sponsoring discussions of books or movies when there are no specific speakers. Pros and cons of hosting discussions of personal reflections were discussed and resources identified.
- Sharing of Events and Resources - Resource sharing remains an important goal and a master spreadsheet has been constructed with includes presentation sign-ups and general resources.
- Maryland Commission on Civil Rights Training April 25th, 1:00 pm The subcommittee has arranged for a free trial of the Commissions bias training and expects to have a short discussion after its conclusion.

Lighting Committee

- **Maryland PSC Case No. 9655, Pepco Smart Streetlight Initiative** The Maryland Public Service Commission is considering Pepco's October 2020 filing of a multiyear plan, that includes converting all streetlights in its service area to LED and changing the applicable rates. Because the Town has already converted most of its lights to LED, the Committee was concerned that acceptance of the Pepco plan could result in unnecessary cost and reduce the Town's control over its lighting. The Chairs of the Lighting Committee and Historic Preservation Commission, respectively, gave oral testimony to the PSC on March 15 expressing their concerns.
- The last opportunity for public input to the PSC is filing of comments on May 5. I have drafted the attached Comment for the Council's consideration. The Comment is intended to expand upon the two oral testimonies and reflect subsequent discussions with Pepco representatives in a more formal style consistent with regulatory proceeding practice.
- In addition the Comment raises concerns with the privacy and cybersecurity aspects of the Pepco proposal to allow a variety of sensors to be installed on the streetlights and connected to Pepco's communications network. These sensors could provide information about town residents to unknown parties. Further, because at some future time the town could be connected to the network to control on/off and dimming, a hack of the Pepco network could affect the Town.

COMMUNICATIONS WORK GROUP – Marida Hines

Nothing to report.

DOG PARK – Marida Hines

Nothing to report.

RECREATION – Marida Hines

The Recreation Committee will hold a virtual meeting on April 21, 2021, by Zoom. All are invited to attend and details are on the Town website. On the agenda will be discussions on whether Summer in the Parks can be held outdoors in 2021, Music Weekend which is currently planned as a virtual event including one band performance and the Children’s Concert, and the 4th of July activities which are planned to be virtual again this year.

WEBSITE – Marida Hines

The website was updated with more, and more user-friendly information about Washington Grove’s Historic District status.

Currently, two new resources are in process for upload to the website:

- A new page on sustainability including information about the new Sustainability Initiative and resources to facilitate Town residents sustainability efforts.
- Information on the Washington Grove Connector Bike/Pedestrian Path and Crabbs Branch Extension, including many links to Town, County, and other resources about this topic.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS & SAFETY COMMITTEE – Pat Klein

The EPSC met on March 25, 2021 and discussed the following three topics.

Washington Grove Lane Intersection Improvements and Ordinance 1979-02

The EPSC discussed a draft memo to the Mayor and TC highlighting road safety provisions in Ordinance (1979-02) that remain relevant to certain Town’s intersections. The Ordinance includes provisions for blocking vehicular traffic at the intersections of Washington Grove Lane at both Center Street and Oak Street, except for emergency vehicles. The ordinance also calls for restructuring the intersection at Washington Grove Lane and McCauley Street to make prohibited right turns onto WGL more difficult. The purpose of the draft memo is to remind town officials to revisit this Ordinance when making decisions about potential changes at the intersections. The EPSC is seeking input from Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service on the Town’s road closures and researching different, safer options for road barriers including the gate barrier on Brown Street installed after the 1979 Ordinance was enacted. (ADDENDUM: The current gate barrier was installed after a 1989 decision process that included soliciting and obtaining input from County Fire officials at that time.

Commercial Corner

The EPSC is in favor of removal of the dumpster site at the Commercial Corner because it presents a public safety risk by blocking vehicular drivers’ views of pedestrians crossing at the corner. The EPSC continues to offer assistance to the PC and the Border Committee. The PC is planning to contact MoCo and a representative of the property owner for further discussions.

Washington Grove Lane Sidewalk Snow Removal

EPSC raised concerns on who has responsibility for clearing snow/ice from the WGL sidewalk which poses a safety hazard to pedestrians. Based on established agreements between the Town and MoCo regarding the WGL sidewalks, the Town is the defaulted responsible entity. However, there is an opportunity to enact an Ordinance to adopt the MoCo code making homeowners along WGL responsible for clearing snow/ice on the sidewalks in front of their homes. EPSC will revisit options and potential recommendations before next winter.

The next EPSC meeting will be on April 22, 2021.

MAPLE LAKE – Pat Klein

The Lake Committee met on March 18, 2021 to discuss the following topics.

Two Canada geese are seen swimming at Maple Lake. Expectation the pair soon will build a nest and lay eggs which will be oiled according to HSUS protocol. (ADDENDUM: On April 4th, 4 eggs in the nest were oiled. Two additional eggs were found floating in the shallow water and were discarded).

The annual spring Lake Cleanup is scheduled on April 24th and the lake will be drained on April 12 to allow for cleaning organic debris along the banks. Any fence damage will be repaired and soil erosion in the berm behind the dock and far side of the lake will be filled. The Woods Committee had 4 partially uprooted tall trees topped which are located across the drainage ditch opposite the lake shed to prevent likelihood of trees falling on the fence and shed.

The Lake Committee will monitor water quality by monthly *E. coli* testing (3 samples/month) using a commercial Water Testing Lab; and algae/ pond weed control will be monitored by NatureWorksCWA every three weeks – both testing procedures will begin in early May and continue until lake closure.

Lake opening and operational 2021 protocols will be like 2020 COVID-19 precautions but more details to follow. Lifeguard availability (and certification) and swim lessons are being considered. There is interest to offer lessons for the youngest residents to help with Water Safety Training.

The next Lake Committee will be April 15, 2021.

BORDER COMMITTEE – Patty Klein

The Committee met on March 11, 2021 to discuss the following topics.

The BC agreed the AZEK is a superior synthetic material and graffiti resistant for town sign construction. There was agreement to have the signs made professionally at a total price range of \$10-15K as a good long-term investment in the overall image portrayed about the town. An RFP will be prepared to solicit bids.

The BC agreed to propose installation of ‘small’ (6-8 feet) sections of Identity Fencing at the entrance to all perimeter walkways entering the town from Railroad Street and Washington Grove Lane. The fencing style would be split rail fencing similar to fencing at Ridge/Oak and at the Lake driveway entrance.

The Committee discussed the identity fencing style to be used along the West Wood perimeter of WGL. A “snake-rail” style was considered but the traditional split rail was chosen for its

simplicity and cost effectiveness for repair. Placement of identity fencing along RR Street will be further discussed at future meetings.

Improvement of the walkways on 4th St. and Grove Avenue between McCauley and WGL is being considered including a recommendation to transition Brown St. (between Chestnut/Hickory), and Oak St. and Center St. (between Hickory/WGL) to town walkways.

The Committee expressed concerns about the number of vehicle accidents along WGL this year and safety risks to residents and their homes. Several Committee members are working with MoCo police to document speeding vehicles on WGL and RR Street and efforts to “calm” car noise and speeding. Similar efforts were successful in the Derwood community and the BC will request the Mayor/TC to pursue this approach.

The next Border Committee meeting will be April 8, 2021.

FORESTRY & BEAUTIFICATION – Gray Yachup

The Forestry and Beautification Committee is next meeting on the 14th to discuss the spring tree planting proposal, as well as the parameters for vegetation on Town land.

They will also be discussing cicada damage mitigation efforts, and how to best protect vegetation during Brood X this summer.

PLAYGROUNDS – Gray Yachup

Nothing to report.

ROADS & WALKWAYS – Gray Yachup

Drafted our RFP for the work at McCauley, Oak Street and Hickory/Center. Waiting on final approval before sending it out to potential contractors.

Also reviewed our new potential work sites for repaving moving forward and will be presenting them to the Council at our next meeting.

MEMORIALS – Gray Yachup

Nothing to report.

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT – Gray Yachup

Currently in discussions with a Montgomery County contact to see if we can get a SWM appraisal by the County.

WASHINGTON GROVE MEADOW CONSERVATION PARK – Gray Yachup

Chatting with a Parks and Planning liaison to make sure they inform the Council liaison before mowing the field.

SHADY GROVE CROSSING – Gray Yachup

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