

Town Council Reports October 2021 Meeting

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION – Darrell Anderson

The HPC held a virtual meeting on September 11, 2021; the next meeting will be held on October 19, 2021, at 7:30 pm by virtual means.

The HPC did not have any permits to review.

The Woods Committee presented proposed trail signs for the woods. The HPC said they were in keeping with the type of signs they would encourage.

The HPC held a discussion on their submission to the Multiuse Pathway Task Force. After edits, the statement was approved and will be submitted.

The HPC reviewed and discussed materials for the upcoming joint session of the town Council/HPC/Planning Commission on demolition, including the agenda. It was decided that there are many issues that could be discussed, but they would like the focus to remain on demolition.

Because of problems with the Town website for viewing the entire Historic review application, the HPC recommends that a link be provided on the Town website that links to the Medusa program.

The HPC will be reviewing and responding to comments from the MHT on the Town's Comprehensive Plan.

MAINTENANCE – Darrell Anderson

The season for steady grass-cutting is winding down, but the continual rains are still making the grass and brush grow. Much of maintenance time required grass-cutting, brush removal, and trips to the dump. Purchased gas when needed. Completed paperwork as required. Worked in the maintenance shop if needed or weather dictated.

Took down flags along Grove Road.

Took down the diving board at the lake.

Met with Bruce Rothrock about hauling dirt to the lake for repair of the outflow drain.

Met with Audrey to discuss F&B fall tree planting.

Cleaned the weeds out of the flower bed at the front entrance.

Worked in the Circle removing invasive plants in area between 4th & 5th Ave.

Met with Myers & Laws to go over tree work. Went over stumps to be ground with Myers & Laws.

Went to Grainger to pick up parts for streetlight - repaired light on Daylily Lane.

Cut up fallen limb on Cherry Ave and one on Dorsey blocking the path in the woods.

Cut up a fallen limb that fell across Acorn Lane (by 418 5th Ave)

Met with Georgette & Jay (F&B) about tree planting at Brown & Grove Ave.

Started hauling dirt & wood chips on 4th Ave between McCauley & Washington Grove Lane (refurbishing the walkway).

Removed a dead yew in the gazebo area to clear for planting of new trees (F&B).

Put items used for Labor Day back on the warehouse shelves. Cleaned the warehouse

Cut up a down tree on Maple Ave a & loaded it on the truck.

Started working on the border fence at Brown Street & Hickory Road. Installed new walkway sign at Brown & Hickory and finished the border fence at Brown & Hickory.

Drilled holes in the asphalt for a new walkway sign. Painted signpost.

Checked Chestnut Ave walkway for flooding and Cherry Ave for drainage.

Met with Patty Kline & Dave Cosson to go over new border fence at Brown & Hickory.

Worked on spreading wood chips under the jungle gym.

Cleaned the bathrooms for the BluestoberFest at the gazebo.

Met with Patty, Joan & representative from Montgomery County parks in the East Woods. Worked on cleaning the ditch entering the East Woods.

Changed the post from 1 to 2 posts at Brown & Hickory border fence.

Checked the electric at the gazebo for the BluestoberFest.

Removed stump grindings where tree was removed in the park & filled area with topsoil.

MARYLAND MUNICIPAL LEAGUE – Darrell Anderson

The MML held a virtual meeting on September 23rd, the first meeting after the summer lull began in June. The MML will hold an in-person Fall Conference on October 13-14. Details to be distributed later. The next Montgomery County MML meeting will be held October 21; it has not been determined whether this will be virtual or in person.

Montgomery County health officials presented current information and data from the Pulse data set on COVID-19 status of the County. The County is #1 in vaccination rates for U.S. counties with more than 300,000 population; Maryland is #1 for states. Among all eligible county residents, more than 90% have had at least one dose. Case rates and hospitalizations continue to decrease. Most encouragingly, the age group 12-17 years of age is vaccinated (1 dose) at 90%; this is allowing schools to stay safely open. The current community spread rate is 2.8%, the lowest in Maryland. The Pulse database is updated every Wednesday and can be found on the Montgomery County website. There was concern from Mayors that the County is not pushing mandates as hard as possible. The County says they are studying the impact on County workers if a mandate is exercised.

MML is still working on the tax duplication issue with the County and should get answers soon.

CONTRACTS – Dave Cosson

The contract for new entrance signs with SignCity is ready for signature by Mayor or Mayor Pro Tempore.

WOODS COMMITTEE – Dave Cosson

The Woods Committee (WC) met on October 4th by Zoom and discussed the following:

Deer Management: The season opened September 10th. Since then one doe has been taken.

Trail Maintenance Projects:

Woods Use Rules: Following discussion at the September Town Council Meeting, the Committee determined to reexamine its proposed rules. Included in this reexamination will be consideration of whether different approaches to construction and routing of trails would permit greater flexibility in regulations. In conjunction with this reexamination, a request for residents' comments was posted in the October

Town Bulletin. Information and questions discussed by Committee members included reports of bicycle riders going off trail; failure of walkers to remove their dogs' waste; how/to whom to report problems; what right of way priorities should be established on trails used by both bicyclists and walkers; communications with neighboring communities; the need for more accurate mapping including location of wetlands.

Consultation with HPC on Sign Design: The Committee has reviewed the proposed use of signposts similar to the one on the Shady Grove Crossing entrance to the Conservation Meadow. The HPC indicated agreement with the approach.

Trail into West Woods from Daylily Drive: In response to a request from two residents, the Committee will examine the best location for a trail to allow Daylily Drive residents to access the West Woods and Maple Lake without having to cross and re-cross Washington Grove Lane.

Fall Workday: November 11 was selected as the day for volunteers to help with the rerouting of the Bradford Crossing. Town Maintenance will be asked to move soil for covering the recently placed culvert as close as possible. Other tasks will include clearing Greenbrier, establishing the new trail and closing the existing one.

Future Timber Turnpikes: Committee co-chairs and Town Maintenance conducted a walkthrough of a portion of the East Woods with a Montgomery County trails official to gain information on criteria used by the County in constructing and regulating use of trails. Suggestions provided included routing some trails away from chronically wet areas; allowing mixed bicycle use on appropriate trails, but not on others; constructing trails using the "fill and tilt" approach to promote natural drainage. The Committee plans to examine these and other ideas and report back to the Council this winter.

American Rescue Plan Funding of Storm water Projects: In the light of Mayor Compton's notice that funds were available for certain uses if completed by 2024, the Committee determined to review prior efforts to control erosion in the West Woods and investigate application of the federal Clean Water Act and possible cooperation with Gaithersburg and the County.

Comment to Shared Use Path Task Force: The Committee again discussed relevant input to provide to the Task Force and reaffirmed its prior conclusions that the Task Force should consider: some areas being considered previously designated for afforestation or are designated wetland and the importance of maintaining an intact "green buffer."

Next Meeting: Monday, November 1st, 7:30 pm

LIGHTING COMMITTEE – Dave Cosson

The Lighting Committee met on September 29 and discussed the following:

Bollard Lights at McCathran Hall: Comments on the three lights installed has been positive to date. A fourth light to cover a dark area is needed, and the electrical connection is available. The Council is requested to approve the fourth light. The question of receiving approval from the Maryland Historic Trust was raised and an application for approval is being drafted.

Streetlights: Although the Public Service Commission threw out Pepco’s street light proposal earlier this year, it did so subject to refilling. The Committee believes the Town should reach out to other municipalities to explore having a coordinated response and recommends that contact be made through the Maryland Municipal League as soon as possible. Contact will be reestablished with people who assisted during the rate case.

The question of an alternative power supplier for the streetlights was discussed. Pepco’s current tariffs do not provide for a choice of supplier, but this issue could be brought before the PSC.

The town now owns most of the bulbs in town streetlights, but should seek to own the fixtures so that Pepco cannot replace the existing fixtures with newer ones that are incompatible with our bulbs and our historic aesthetics.

Comprehensive Plan: A draft recommendation regarding lighting is being written

House Lighting: A discussion of the need for an Ordinance regulating exterior lighting on residences began with description of very bright security lights that shine off of the owner’s property. Detailed rules from out-of-state jurisdictions were explained.

Shared Use Path: The question of whether increased evening/night bicycle traffic would lead to requests to increase the level of lighting in town was discussed. The Committee was not in favor of increased lighting levels. It was noted that the County representative on the Path had indicated that any lights on the county path would be turned off at 8 p.m.

CONSERVATION MEADOW – Dave Cosson

Nothing to report.

PLANNING COMMISSION – Christine Dibble

Applications for Building Permits and Public Ways and Property Permits

- The PC will defer the proposed relocation of the shed at 412 4th Avenue (Foreman) until the homeowner resolves the survey dispute re: the boundary between 412 4th and 414 4th.
- An emergency permit will be granted for 206 Chestnut Avenue (Moyer) -- resolution of water leak.

Other Matters

- **Comprehensive Plan:** The PC is holding a work session (open to the public) on October 20 to address comments on the draft plan received from the Maryland Department of Planning.

WEBSITE AND COMMUNICATIONS – Christine Dibble

I have completed my review and reformatting of the website's 100+ pages. I am currently:

- Identifying content owners for all pages and asking them to review page content and send me updates;
- Populating the sortable tables of all Town ordinances and all Town resolutions, and identifying gaps in these tables.

DOG PARK – Christine Dibble

Grove dogs and their owners continue to meet most weekends on Saturday or Sunday mornings for playdates.

PLAYGROUNDS AND TENNIS COURTS – Christine Dibble

Nothing to report this month.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND SAFETY COMMITTEE (EPSC) – Patty Klein

The Committee met on September 30, 2021 to discuss the following issues:

Shared Use Path Task Force -Summary of Safety Issues: EPSC prepared a list of general safety issues that the committee has identified over the last several years relevant to any shared use path connection to the Town. Specific safety concerns include:

- Risk to pedestrians, baby strollers, and bicyclists posed by speeding motor vehicles

- Line of sight considerations at town road intersections and driveways for increased volume of pedestrians, bicyclists, other shared path users
- Consideration of any enhanced or modified road/path maintenance requirements and associated town costs and liability to promote pedestrian and bicyclist safety
- Consideration of any enhanced or modified snow/ice removal requirements to promote pedestrian and bicyclist safety
- Consideration of any enhanced or modified road/path signage to promote pedestrian and bicyclist safety
- Road/path lighting requirements and costs to the Town to increase visibility for increased volume of pedestrians and bicyclists along Town roads and walkways.

The EPSC will submit this list of safety issues to the Shared Use Pathway Task Force for consideration.

Draft letter from Mayor to County re: speeding vehicles on Washington Grove Lane and Railroad Street: The EPSC will draft a letter for the Mayor to send to county officials requesting action on the following issues: an evaluation for speed cameras on WGL and Railroad Street; new or enhanced speed bumps on both streets; and a reduced speed limit on WGL. This letter will follow-on to similar correspondence submitted to the County by concerned Town residents.

The next meeting is scheduled on October 28th, 2021.

BORDER COMMITTEE – Patty Klein

The Border Committee met on September 9, 2021 to discuss the following issues:

WG Town Welcome signs. The RFP was reissued last month for bids on producing 3 Welcome signs. All bids received will be opened at the September 13th Town Council meeting with expectation that one bid will be accepted.

Identity Fencing. Town maintenance has completed installation of identify fencing at designated Avenue intersections along WGL and RR streets. The West Woods corner of WGL and Day Lilly Lane was cleared of downed tree limbs and non-native vegetation to prepare for installation of a Welcome sign and identity fencing. The Woods Committee will plant 2 native understory trees behind the Welcome sign. Soil and wood chips will be placed along 4th Avenue to improve walkway safety, prevent further erosion, and protect exposed tree roots.

Commercial corner: The dumpster will be moved by end of the year. Plans are being made to trim or remove several bushes along WGL near the commercial corner driveway to provide a safe sidewalk path.

Border Committee input to the Shared Use Path Task Force: In alignment with the Committee's mission statement to "*make residents living along the border areas of WGL and RR street feel a greater sense of inclusion within the town*", Committee members made some efforts to enhance the pedestrian path between TWG and Shady Grove Crossing. This path also has been budgeted by MC-DOT as a shared use path connection. The Committee reached consensus to submit this information to the Task Force as impartial documentation for consideration.

The next Border Committee meeting will be on October 14, 2021.

FORESTRY AND BEAUTIFICATION – Barbara Raimondo

The Committee met 8 September and agreed to divide the proposed planting sites for this fall into two groups. One group will focus on the Grove Avenue replacements, the other on Woodward Park. Audrey will lead one team (WWP) to select planting sites, Jay the other (Grove Ave). Members will join one or both to mark tree locations. Audrey and Jay will each head a group of two to buy the trees at Stadler. Approximately 16-18 trees will be installed in October and November.

RACIAL AND SOCIAL EQUITY COMMITTEE (RASEC) – Barbara Raimondo

RASEC and the Lake Committee held a meeting to discuss several incidents that appear to have a racial component:

- One where a Black man came through the open gate and residents felt threatened.
- One where a resident and her Black guest were approached by neighbors and felt racially profiled. This occurred on at least two occasions, yet when this same resident brought White guests no one questioned them.

After a cordial and productive discussion they determined next steps:

- Research de-escalation training for lifeguards and other residents, if desired.
- Create a message for residents for the website & bulletin clarifying roles of lifeguards and residents.
- Update the official enforcement protocol for lifeguards
- Look into appropriate sign translation.
- If action is taken regarding de-escalation and translation, follow up on requesting funding.

The groups will reconvene sometime around Thanksgiving.

MCCATHRAN HALL – Barbara Raimondo

Nothing to report.

SHADY GROVE CROSSING – Barbara Raimondo

Nothing to report.

ROADS AND WALKWAYS – Gray Yachup

The replacement barrier at Brown Street has been successfully installed. Work is pending on Daylily Lane's areas of issue, as well as the normal scheduling of road maintenance. This will most likely wait until a successor is chosen for Steve.

MAPLE LAKE – Gray Yachup

Measurements and reports: The last two measurements of E. Coli have been within acceptable parameters.

Flora and fauna: No major changes to flora or fauna.

Miscellaneous: The Lake Committee had a great meeting with RASEC regarding inclusivity and methods of de-escalation at the Lake. I look forward to the continuing dialogue between the two committees.

RECREATION – Gray Yachup

Halloween will be from 6-9 pm this year, and additional details regarding COVID regulations will be released in the Town Bulletin.