

Town Council Reports November 2021 Meeting

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION – Darrell Anderson

The HPC held a virtual meeting on October 19, 2021; the next meeting will be held on November 16, 2021, at 7:30 pm by virtual means.

The HPC reviewed three potential permits: the Pepco proposal for placement of EV stations; the Comcast proposal for replacing overhead cables; and a screened front porch at 208 Washington Grove Lane (Sisson). Alberto Zagrada presented information from Pepco on the EV stations. After a presentation from Bob Booher, the focus became on a station on Chestnut Road near the Women's Club and the Town Hall. An important point was made that according to the requirements for EV stations is that they are to be placed on municipal land rather than private property. It will be important for the Town to get all information by the December HPC meeting for a comprehensive review. Mr. Zagrada provided a link to EV stations in historic districts in Boston. In summary, Pepco is offering the charging stations free of charge, but this may not be so in the future. Concerns were expressed by HPC members included the size and look of the stations and wanted to know if they may be smaller and more attractive in the future. The HPC did not feel they had enough information at this time to fulfill the request from the Town Council; the report will have to wait until subsequent meetings.

Or Comcast, Town HPC, F&B, and maintenance toured the area to be impacted. Mitigation was discussed and deadlines would be removed. Very little impact to trees would occur. Comcast has not submitted the Public Ways permit, but the HPC will begin to write a preliminary review based on letters and other communication with Comcast.

The Sisson screened front porch was discussed and the HPC viewed the plans favorably, with a few changes recommended. A review will be written and submitted to the Planning Commission.

Wendy met with the outside archeological members and will map specific areas. They will return for the archeological tour in a few days. Everything is flagged so residents can go look at them. Ultimately, they will write a report for the Town.

For the bike path discussion, David made it clear that the alternate path through the field (2b) is not being advocated by the HPC. A discussion ensued that this is not the position of the HPC, but a comment made by David separate from the HPC. The HPC will resubmit three documents to the Multiuse Pathway Task Force.

The HPC discussed the joint session of the town Council/HPC/Planning Commission on demolition. Everyone felt it was a positive meeting and some good ideas. The PC felt that they are interested in moving forward.

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.

Met with Guardian Fire at Town Hall for smoke detector inspections.

Installed new split rail fence on Grove Road (for F&B).

Replaced six damaged stop signs.

Met with Georgette Cole, Bob Booher, Gail Littlefield & Comcast representative (on Brown Street).

Worked on the clay tennis court.

Worked on the sediment pond on lower Brown Street.

Fixed ruts on Ridge Road (in front of 116).

Made a path in the East Woods to Bradford Crossing (to transport the buggy).

Met Georgette & Audrey to go over work being done in The Circle for F&B.

Hauled 7 loads of dirt from the shop into the East Woods (to Bradford Crossing) for the Woods Committee.

Installed another section of border fence at Railroad & Grove Ave.

Met with M.T. Laney to cover paving work being done on Ridge Road.

Picked up topsoil and mulch from Seasons Nursery

Cut grass.

Went to Laytonsville Landscaping twice to pick up sod for The Circle (F&B project). Put down pallet of sod in The Circle. Watered new sod.

Watered five newly planted trees installed by Stadler Nursery and new sod.

Blew leaves off the roof at Town Hall and fixed gutter (clogged under the ground). Disconnected the surveillance cameras at the lake for the Lake Committee (for winter storage).

Met with Georgette, Audrey & IPC contractor about spraying.

Cut up a tree in the Town Garden (blown down during rainstorm).

MARYLAND MUNICIPAL LEAGUE – Darrell Anderson

The MML held a virtual meeting on October 14, 2021, at 6:30 pm. The next meeting will be held on November 18, 2021. It has not been determined whether this will be virtual or in person.

Montgomery County Board of Education President Brenda Wolffe provided an update on what MCPS is doing to provide a safe environment for the 160,000 students who returned in in-person classes this fall. There has been high uptake of vaccines in school children eligible for the vaccine, which has dramatically reduced the need to close schools or impose quarantine to many students. Mask mandates also have been effective. Staffing still is down, but the County is working hard to fill vacancies, with recruitment of retired staff and recruiting out-of-state teachers while temporarily waiving some certification requirements. For those certified in other states. The County has seen some small angry protests regarding COVID-19 restrictions, but not at the level in some states or counties.

Monifa McKnight, MCPS Staffing Department, provided more detailed information on staffing needs and strategies. Some of the highlights include more funds for hiring counselors and social workers to deal with COVID-19 issues, especially for students who have lost family members during the pandemic. In addition, more than \$400M has been added to the MC CIP budget for staffing and school construction.

After the meeting in a follow-up to questions, MML provided an update on the tax duplication issue. The Chapter has requested an early draft of the bill and recommendations. Given the draft nature, MML asked that it not be shared or posted externally. This is for internal discussions with our respective municipalities. Those items that apply to Washington Grove, and are general in nature include (1) codify the calculation of reimbursements to municipalities for eligible costs; (2) alter the requirements for municipalities to participate in the program; (3) provide for a timeline of when certain reimbursement activities must be accomplished; and, (4) provide a three-year phased implementation of full reimbursements. County CEO Rich Madaleno has been asked to attend the November MML meeting to update this issue.

COVID-19 Community Committee (CCC) and 2020 Census

The County-wide CCC and Census group met on November 1, 2021, by virtual means. The next meeting will be scheduled with the Regional committees TBD.

COVID-19 Update

Sean O'Donnell (HHS) reported that the County continues to lead the nation in vaccine uptake for counties of our size. Minority and age 12 to 17 uptake is also highest in Maryland. Complete reports may be found on the MC DHS Pulse Reports at <https://montgomerycountymd.gov/covid19/news/pulse-reports.html>, which are update weekly on Wednesdays.

The County is ready to vaccinate ages 5 to 11 years as soon as the CDC authorizes them. More than 200 pediatrician offices and the regional health centers will have doses this week. In addition, weekend school vaccination sites are being opened as does become available.

2020 Census Update

Corrine Blankford (DHS) provided a plethora of slides showing updated 2020 Census data. The

County had a 78.2% response rate, which was above the national and Maryland rates. Since 1990, the County has become a majority-minority population. Disparities in economics, educational levels, and housing abound, but are improving from the 2000 and 2010 censuses. All data and the slide show are posted on the DHS Census website at: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/census/Partners.html>.

Eviction and Rental Assistance Update

Lorine Driscoll (DHCA) presented an update on the COVID-19 rental assistance program and eviction updates. At this time, it is estimated that 15% of the 15-20,000 county renters are in areas. DHCA has provided rental assistance to approximately 7,000 renters, but more outreach is required to use the existing monies. DHCA provides monetary, legal, and other support for those being evicted.

CONTRACTS – Dave Cosson

The contract for new entrance signs with SignCity was signed and returned. The leaf collection contract for 2021-22 has been signed. Residents have raised questions about whether recycling and lawn waste are being handled properly. Mayor Compton will report on this issue.

WOODS COMMITTEE – Dave Cosson

The Woods Committee (WC) met on November 1st by Zoom and discussed the following:

Deer Management: The deer hunting season opened September 10th. Two does have been harvested to date by BHFFMD, one in the East Woods, the other in the West Woods.

Trail Maintenance Projects:

Improved Trail Mapping: The Committee continued discussion of using GPS-based mobile apps to improve the accuracy of trail maps. Several members will test out these apps and report back on the use of the systems.

Rerouting Trails to Avoid Wetlands: The Committee is reevaluating its earlier intention to extend the “timber turnpikes” through the portion of Maple Avenue Extended that is chronically wet. Based on the recommendations by the MC Parks trails manager, the Committee is considering closing off the wet trail sections and rerouting the trail to higher ground to intersect with the McCauley and Pine trails. Closed portions of the rerouted trails should be blocked with downed tree logs. Other MC Parks recommendations include limiting trail use in sensitive and protected areas to walkers.

West Woods Trail Connection to Daylily Lane: Following discussion at the previous meeting, a West Woods trail has been recreated from Daylily Lane connecting to the Poplar trail to provide safe passage for Daylily Lane residents to Maple Lake and the Washington Grove Lane crosswalk. The trail will be named Ironwood Trail in recognition of the many Ironwood trees in the area.

November 11 Workday: A notice was posted in the November Town Bulletin to recruit town volunteers to help on the East Woods workday. One focus will be completion of the new Bradford Crossing and rerouting the trail, including the nearby spur to the champion Blackjack Oak [*Quercus marilandica*]. Town maintenance has packed soil over the new culvert. The

culvert will be reinforced with rocks. The trail to the former crossing will be blocked. Additional activity will include placing tree protectors on trees with evidence of deer rubbing.

American Rescue Plan Funding of Stormwater Projects: The Committee discussed how best to utilize the extensive work of the Stormwater Management Committee to prepare proposals for ARP-funded projects to mitigate stormwater erosion in the West Woods from multiple sources. The Committee expects its review of that work may lead to an RFP for engineering assistance. Coordination with the County and the City of Gaithersburg will be necessary.

Next Meeting: Monday, December 6th, 7:30 pm

LIGHTING COMMITTEE – Dave Cosson

The Lighting Committee met on October 27th and discussed the following:

Bollard Lights at McCathran Hall: In accordance with direction from the Town Council, a request to the Maryland Historic Trust is being drafted to seek approval for installation of the Bollard lights installed as a test, plus additional lights near the entrance to the Hall and on the walkway leading to the Council Room. Contact with the Trust has been made to advise the request in coming.

Streetlight Options: To date, Pepco has not filed any new streetlight proposals, following rejection by the Public Service Commission of its prior approach. Nevertheless, the Committee intends to seek discussions with other municipalities in an effort to build a consensus and coalition to participate in any future proceeding. The objective remains to ensure the Town has a realistic option to purchase its own lighting facilities.

Comprehensive Plan Submission: The Committee made editorial revisions to the draft of its proposed section of the Town's Comprehensive Plan. The revised version will be submitted upon completion.

Lighting Ordinance: The Committee discussed, but reached no conclusions, on the question of whether to recommend the Town adopt a lighting ordinance to regulate residents' lighting that illuminates their neighbors' or town property. At this time the preferable approach appears to be neighbor to neighbor discussions where there are problems. The Committee does recommend that residents' exterior lighting should be "Dark Sky" compliant.

Next Meeting: December 8th, 7:30 p.m.

PLANNING COMMISSION – Christine Dibble

- The PC had an extensive discussion at its November 2021 meeting about the possibility of installing Pepco electric vehicle charging stations (EVCSs) in the Grove. Bob Booher made a presentation about potential locations, costs etc. It appears unlikely that the members of the PC will be able to arrive at a consensus about whether to recommend installation of the EVCSs in the Grove. The PC will schedule more discussion at its December meeting. Of note, many PC members believe that it would be useful to have the Town's attorney review the Code of Ordinances to determine whether any ordinances

would need to be amended in order to permit the installation of the EVCSs.

- Georgette Cole expressed concern that a snow-plowing contract be put into place as soon as possible for any snow or ice that we may incur this winter.

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 EPSC met on October 28th to discuss the following topics.

Speeding vehicles on WGL and Railroad Street: The EPSC drafted letter for the Mayor to send to the Montgomery County Executive Marc Elrich requesting the following actions: (1) an evaluation for speed cameras on WGL and Railroad Street; (2) new or enhanced speed bumps on both streets; and (3) increased enforcement of traffic violations and vehicle equipment regulations. The EPSC chair will send the final draft letter to the Mayor for consideration.

Lower Ridge Road – EPSC members planned to meet on Sunday, 10/31 to clear vegetation from the guard rail at the end of Lower Ridge Road and apply reflective tape to improve visibility for drivers to recognize the barrier well in advance. Reflective tape would be applied to several street signs along the road to draw attention to the speed limit and dead-end warnings.

Overgrown vegetation obscuring road signs along several WG roads: EPSC identified several road signs in Town obscured by vegetation that pose a traffic safety hazard. EPSC will request Town Maintenance to trim the overgrowth or assist if needed.

The EPSC will not meet in November due to the Thanksgiving holiday. The next EPSC meeting will be Thursday, December 16, 2021.

BORDER COMMITTEE – Patty Klein

The Border Committee met on October 14th to discuss the following topics.

Signage: The Town Council approved the SignCity bid for “Welcome” signs to be produced. The HPC chair recommended the Border Committee have the vendor provide a mock-up of the actual sign colors to original specifications before making the signs.

Identity Fencing: The Committee discussed moving forward with identify fencing at Silver Dollar Court/6th Avenue noting significant trash has been dumped at that corner near the East Woods trail entrance. Identify fencing at that site would discourage such practices.

Discussion was deferred until the November meeting about vehicle noise control and speeding along Washington Grove Lane and Railroad Street but improved observance by drivers of the Maple Lake crosswalk on WGL was noted.

The Committee considered a vision for RR Street and WGL improvements. The HPC chair showed a 2011 proposed graphic rendition of RR St. as a more “welcoming” environment with landscaped enhancements. The Committee agreed that a joint strategy meeting of all relevant Town committees would be the best approach to move forward.

The next Border Committee meeting will be November 11, 2021.

FORESTRY AND BEAUTIFICATION – Barbara Raimondo

An article on spruces has been prepared for the Town Bulletin.

Eighteen trees will be planted by Stadler Nurseries in early November.

Georgette has been in contact with Go Native Tree Farm, located in Lancaster, PA, to purchase several hickories for proposed spring 2022 planting.

The segment in front of #17 The Circle will be graded and sodded this fall.

Once the new WG welcome signs are installed at the various entrances in town, F&B will install plantings to further enhance the areas.

RACIAL AND SOCIAL EQUITY COMMITTEE (RASEC) – Barbara Raimondo

Met in October. Topics discussed were the Town assessment, an event with neighboring communities, website planning, accessory dwelling units, and others. Next meeting is November 11.

MCCATHRAN HALL – Barbara Raimondo

Nothing to report.

SHADY GROVE CROSSING – Barbara Raimondo

Nothing to report.

Accessibility of Zoom Meetings:

Researched Americans with Disabilities Act requirements that apply to TWG; researched differences between live captioning and auto captioning; posted a notice on the listserv inviting individuals to contact me with opinions regarding accessibility and captioning; posted Zoom link for Town committees to use the Zoom auto captioning feature.

ROADS AND WALKWAYS – Gray Yachup

Currently working on a comprehensive status report of all Town roads to present to the next

Maintenance Supervisor, so that we can pick up seamlessly with road repair projects.

Working on creating a standardized process for requesting/approving projects like speedbumps, road repairs, or other similar maintenance projects.

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 continues to have productive meetings with RASEC regarding how we can best incorporate racial equity into our operations.

RECREATION – Gray Yachup

Halloween was a success! No currently pending Rec Committee projects.

MMC is working with Judy Mroczka and the Christmas Show crew to film the virtual show this year. It is going wonderfully.

MMC is also filming an architectural tour of the Grove as we speak, and crews may be seen around Town.