

Town Council Reports - March 2022 Meeting

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Border Committee

Patty Klein

The Border Committee met on February 10, 2022 to discuss the following topics.

Welcome Signage: SignCity is making progress on the ‘Welcome’ signs. Several photos of construction stages were shared with the Committee.

A wooden street sign was designed by a local graphic artist for the crossing between Washington Grove and Shady Grove Crossing to recognize our two neighboring communities. This sign is similar in style town street signs created by Susan Van Nostrand’s team. The graphic artist was paid a nominal fee for the design work. This street sign will be constructed by town volunteers.

Identity Fencing: The lack of a Town maintenance person follow Steve Werts’ retirement continues to hinder progress on fence placement – most notably at the RR/Grove Ave bus stop.

Road Signs and Speeding Vehicles: Damaged signs on WGL have been replaced but some turn signs are facing in the wrong direction. The County DOT was contacted again to request lowering the speed limit to 25 mph. They will consider this request. The Committee discussed delays in cutting back overgrown vegetation encroaching along WGL and blocking some road signs at pedestrian crossings. The County has not responded to our requests; subsequently one DOT person said it could take 45 days to get it done. Joli McCathran may help make contact with County staff.

The Emergency Preparedness and Safety Committee also has concerns for speeding vehicles on WGL and RR Street. They drafted a letter sent by the Mayor to the County Executive and police. The Mayor received a response stating the County will consider installing speed cameras.

Multi-Committee Planning Session: The Committee discussed the upcoming “WGL-RR St. Visioning Session” on March 10th with multiple town committees interested to participate. This first meeting will be organizational to identify priorities and solicit further input from committees.

The next Border Committee meeting is on March 10, 2022.

Contracts

Dave Cosson

Potomac Disposal has notified us that the steep rise in fuel, labor and other costs means it cannot continue operating at the current rates and seeks a substantial increase.

The status of the RFPs for landscaping and maintenance is covered in Darrell Anderson's report.

Dog Park Committee

Christine Dibble

- Grove dogs and their owners continue to meet most weekends on Saturday or Sunday mornings for playdates.
- The Dog Park Committee will hold a meeting this month.

Emergency Preparedness and Safety Committee (EPSC)

Patty Klein

The EPSC met on February 24, 2022 to discuss the following topics.

NOAA Sea Level Rise Map and Other Climate Change Information: EPSC members noted that NOAA recently published an online mapping tool to help people visualize the impacts of rising sea levels and community flooding. Committee members agreed that climate change impacts, such as rising sea levels, relate to emergency preparedness and planning along with hazard mitigation and resilience efforts. The EPSC will explore methods to share this kind of information either in a bulletin notice or on an EPSC webpage (as committee webpages on the town website are developed).

Multi-Committee Planning Session Re: WGL and RR Street: On March 10, the Border Committee is hosting a planning session with other Town committees to work on a common vision for Washington Grove Lane and Railroad Street. EPSC members plan to weigh-in on relevant safety issues such as speeding, road signage, pedestrian crossings, and line of sight concerns.

FY2023 EPSC Proposed Budget: Committee members agreed to request \$1,500 for next fiscal year's EPSC budget. Funds could be used for events, educational materials, and supplies.

Future EPSC Event with Fire Department: EPSC members contacted the Gaithersburg/WG Fire Department to inquire about a presentation for Town residents on fire safety and emergency preparedness topics. Officials were receptive to providing a presentation in Spring 2022. Officials can also provide fire extinguisher training, and children's education on a variety of home safety hazards. EPSC will coordinate with the Women's Club and other committees to host the fire department at a jointly sponsored event. For example, the Women's Club is planning a "ring of fire" event where residents will bring their fire pits to a gathering.

The next meeting will be March 24th, 2022.

Forestry & Beautification Committee

Barbara Raimondo

Reviewed Fall tree planting. Discussed spring planting plans:

- Hickory trees coming from Go Native Trees in latter part of April
- Stadler purchases for Grove Avenue and elsewhere.

Reviewed other Spring plans. Will go for a walk this weekend to look at sites.

Historic Preservation Commission

Darrell Anderson

The HPC held a virtual meeting on February 15, 2022; the next meeting will be held on March 15, 2022, at 7:30 pm by virtual means.

The HPC did not have any permits to review.

They discussed the need for a replacement alternate. The chair will contact a few suggested residents.

The HPC spent time reviewing the draft architectural survey. The survey will result in a map of Town sites (fireplace, parks, etc.) of significance. They will solicit comments for revisions to the draft through the bulletin.

Lake Committee

Gray Yachup

Rules and Regulations: There will be slight changes to the lifeguard rules and regulations to better reflect best practices in racial awareness and sensitivity.

Lifeguards: The search for certified lifeguards and instructors has commenced, and pay rates are currently listed at \$16/hour.

Miscellaneous: Final Lake cleanup date pending, but for now is planned for April 16th.

Lighting Committee

Dave Cosson

The Lighting Committee met remotely on February 23rd. and discussed the following:

Draft County and Municipal Street Light Investment Act. On February 11 Mayor Compton filed a letter with the Maryland Senate Finance Committee and the House Economic Matters Committee supporting the proposed legislation as recommended by the Committee. A large number of other municipalities also filed in support. Pepco and the other state electric utilities filed in opposition. Pepco claimed, *inter alia*, that because the compensation to be paid for streetlights does not include lost revenues, forced sale would be an “unconstitutional taking.” However, because the fixtures should be fully depreciated and its operating cost goes away upon sale, Pepco’s revenue loss claim should be rejected. The Senate Committee held a hearing on February 15th, the House hearing is scheduled for be March 10th.

Committee Budget - The Committee adopted a proposed budget that includes funding for street light repair, lighting design consulting and walkway lights.

Website - The Committee discussed and approved draft wording for its appearance on the Town website. (Subsequently, the text was reduced to comply with website design requirements.)

Bollard Lights at Town Hall - A preliminary contact with the staff of the Maryland Historic Trust for approval of the bollard lighting along the pathway has been made and its response is pending. The Town should wait for approval before purchasing additional bollard lights.

Walkway Lighting - The Town Hall bollard lighting, or some variation, may provide a model for revising lighting along Town walkways, depending on residents' reaction and MHT agreement.

Maintenance

Darrell Anderson

There have been a few maintenance issues this month that have been handled by volunteers coordinated by the Town clerk.

The landscaping RFP was distributed to 8 landscaping companies. The Town clerk has contacted them, and it appears that 3 will not respond. In addition, Steve has met with a few of them to review the scope of the RF. It is anticipated that we will get 4 or 5 submissions by March 14.

The Facilities Maintenance RFP has not been distributed because of ongoing discussions.

Maryland Municipal League

Darrell Anderson

The MML held a virtual meeting on February 17, 2022, at 6:30 pm. The next meeting will be March 17, 2022 at 6:30 pm.

County Executive, Mark Elrich, gave an update on the draft FY23 budget and a general COVID-19 update. The draft budget will soon be available on the County website. The following items are of particular interest to the Town.

- This year's budget includes an approximate 60% increase in the Town's Tax Duplication funding to \$84,368 as pursuant to the MML's bill submitted to

the County Executive and County Council. This is good news for the Town if it holds through the Council hearings. The County weathered the COVID decrease in economic activity with help from federal funding and retained its AAA bond rating. We now have an 11% reserve, and it is anticipated that we will be funding some new programs that have been put off for the last two years.

- Montgomery County has the highest percentage of vaccinated people in the nation for a county our size. Mark expressed gratitude to the residents who supported the county efforts even when the county did not agree with the state. Mark believes that lifting the mask mandate now when the rate of transmission is listed as “substantial” rather than “high” is premature because previously the mandates were enacted when the rate reached “substantial”.

McCathran Hall

Barbara Raimondo

Nothing to report.

Montgomery Municipal Cable

Gray Yachup

MMC has worked out a 50/50 revenue split with local cable networks. That is not a huge improvement but is significant enough to help shore up the budget shortfall. Final approval of the split is pending.

Planning Commission

Christine Dibble

- Approved application for permit to enclose front porch at 208 WG Lane (Sisson)
- Approved application for permit for an addition to 342 Ridge Road (Bielen), contingent on HPC review.
- JJB Contractor Comcast Cable Project is complete! Last two steps were trimming by the tree service, and the cable company removing unused cable.

- The PC discussed written and oral comments on the Comprehensive Plan. Discussion will continue at the meeting on March 16th. The PC received written comments from only a handful of residents and intends to provide the authors of those comments with written responses.
- The PC reiterated its recommendation that the Comprehensive Plan reflect that as vehicular use of Cherry Avenue ceases, the portion of Cherry Avenue that is currently open to vehicular uses should conform with other walkways in Town.

Playground and Tennis Courts

Christine Dibble

Nothing to report.

Racial and Social Equity Committee (RASEC)

Barbara Raimondo

Approved inclusivity survey (attached) to be distributed to Town residents.

Committee information now located on Town web site, including links to folders where agendas and minutes can be accessed. Also included are RASEC contact information and list of RASEC subcommittees.

Working on process to eliminate restrictive covenants from deeds.

Reverend Tim Warner of Emory Grove will present a history of Emory Grove virtually on April 28.

Conflict Resolution Center, RASEC, and the Lake Committee will meet March 29 to tailor de-escalation training to WG needs and policies.

Is seeking a volunteer to work on a Town anti-racism statement.

Is looking forward to a response from Mayor and Town Council regarding Martin Luther King Day and granting recognition of it in Town.

Recreation Committee

Gray Yachup

No currently pending Rec Committee projects.

Roads and Walkways

Gray Yachup

Currently working to brainstorm best practices for eliminating the problem with large vehicles in Johnson Alley, will report back when details are finalized.

The Circle and Oak Street near Maple experienced flooding in the last storm and have been added to the list of places to address with the new maintenance team as well.

It has been requested that Miller Drive be off-limits to visitor parking, so that the Woman's Club has space they can use for their events. Details are being discussed still.

The initial draft of the road condition report has been created and is pending approval after winter damage has occurred.

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

Shady Grove Crossing

Barbara Raimondo

Nothing to report.

Stormwater Management

Gray Yachup

Currently working to create a Scope of Work for our residential stormwater system, so that we can begin to seek funding for a full-scale neighborhood study.

Sustainability Committee

Dave Cosson

On March 1, the Sustainability Committee held its first meeting following creation by the Council on February 14. In accordance with the Council resolution the initial membership of the Committee consisted of members the predecessor Sustainability Group. The Committee discussed the following:

Survey of Residents' Energy Use - To date 115 residents have responded to the survey, many of them expressing interest in the Committee's activities. Some respondents explained the obstacles they face in converting from fossil fuels to renewable energy. The survey results generally track the prior effort to identify home energy sources in the Town.

Sustainable Maryland - A virtual training session has been scheduled for Committee Members by Sustainable Maryland for 7 p.m. March 21.

The draft Action Plan to be submitted to Sustainable Maryland is under review and will be submitted to the Council before transmitting.

Committee Status - The necessary actions following the Town Council decision of February 14th were reviewed. These include determining the membership roster, selection of a Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary; adoption of Policies and Procedures and a budget proposal for FY 2023. Prior participants in the Sustainability Group will be contacted to determine their interest in membership in the Committee. A draft of Committee Policies and Procedures was circulated for adoption at the next meeting, along with selection of officers.

FY 2023 Budget - Potential funding requirement categories and amounts were identified to include: energy audits for Town owned buildings; incentives for residents to have energy audits; membership in related organizations; participation in sustainability events; speaker honoraria and fees for grant writing consultants. (A proposed budget was submitted to the Treasurer on March 7th.)

Electric Vehicle Charging Stations - Reviewed the Town Council decision to select the Center Street location and to have the Mayor submit a negotiated license agreement, simultaneously or separately, with Exhibit A to that agreement. The exhibit will illustrate the design and location of the charging stations.

Renewable Electricity Options - Committee members reported on their actions signing up to participate in a Solar Farm and in various Consumer Choice options that supply renewable electricity. Issues with the later were identified to include: few suppliers prices are below Pepco; and actual prices offered by alternative suppliers are different from those shown on either the PSC website, or their own websites. The potential benefits of using a broker to negotiate for a group of residents which might also include the Town were discussed.

Communications - The Committee plans to organize an Earth Day community educational event for April 23rd in Wadsworth Park. Included demonstrations/discussions would be electric vehicles of Town residents, a presentation on community and individual gardening, and representatives of alternative electric suppliers.

Next Meeting April 1, 7:30 p.m.

Website and Communications

Christine Dibble

- New content:
 - Pages:
 - Sustainability Committee
 - Washington Grove Cares
 - Posts:
 - News/business/announcements:
 - March Bulletin
 - Various minutes and agendas
 - Notice of Public Hearing for the 2022 Comprehensive Plan
 - The Historic Context of Minimal Traditional-Style Houses in the Washington Grove Historic District (News Dispatches from Other Centuries post)
 - Features:
 - Get Cash to Recycle Your Appliance with Pepco in March
 - Using Zoom for Grove Meetings
 - Home page feature boxes:
 - Updates to News You Can Use

Woods Committee

Dave Cosson

The Woods Committee met on March 7th by Zoom and discussed the following:

Coordination with Sustainability Committee. Representatives of the Sustainability Committee discussed the goal of net zero carbon emissions in relation to the vital role the Town woods play in the sequestration of carbon. The Committees have a common purpose to protect the woods and maximize their continued effect on carbon emission. Coordination of efforts for Earth Day/Arbor Day functions planned by the respective committees may also include efforts by the Lake Committee and Forestry and Beautification.

Review of Draft Comprehensive Plan. With comments on the draft Comprehensive Plan due to the Planning Commission March 16th, a draft Woods Committee statement was reviewed and discussed briefly. Committee members will further review the statement and decide whether to adopt it a special work session March 13th at 3 PM.

Woods Trail Maintenance Concerns. The Committee reviewed a power point presentation documenting areas of the East Woods where off trail walking is harming vegetation. This led to a discussion of alternatives that would encourage users to stay on trails such as planting understory trees and bushes as well as large trees, dead wood barricades, signage to include "Reforestation Area," and further blazing.

Also presented was a map of the East Woods trails overlaid with boundaries of the wetlands identified on Fish and Wildlife service maps. Discussion followed regarding alternatives for sections of trail that are frequently wet and muddy, including rerouting some to higher ground and additional "timber turnpikes" with drainage pipes.

Stormwater Management. Potential stormwater management projects for the West Woods will be identified once more information on potential funding sources such as the Bond Issue and ARP. In the meantime, the Committee hopes to have on site discussions with appropriate County officials to focus on clarifying the County's responsibilities for stormwater runoff into the West Woods.

Arbor Day Work Event. Following the discussion with the Sustainability Committee it became apparent that multiple events on the same day with all related committees would not be practical. The Arbor Day work session will be Saturday, April 30th, and will focus on trash clean up and removing trail side greenbrier and garlic mustard.

Next Meeting: Monday, April 4th, 7:30 pm