

Town Council Reports for April 2022 Council Meeting

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Border Committee

Patty Klein

The Border Committee meeting on March 10, 2022, was dedicated to a ‘multi-committee’ session to overview WGL and RR Street issues impacting the Town and recognize the importance of a coordinated effort by Town Committees to develop a strategic plan to address these issues. Representatives from EPSC, Woods Committee, F&B Committee, and HPC attended.

The Border Committee Vision Statement is “To reinforce that you are driving through our “Town Within a Forest” (not around our Town) by creating a welcoming environment that discourages speeding and littering and highlights the bucolic nature of Washington Grove.”

The primary themes discussed were two-fold: The coordination of Town efforts will greatly increase the likelihood of getting positive action from Montgomery County, and speeding is an immediate and common concern. Opportunities for improvements of Morgan Park, welcome signage, traffic cameras, and tree plantings were identified. The attendees agreed to report back to their respective committees and commissions to solicit input. The Border Committee will consolidate ideas to present at the next meeting so the multi-committee group can begin to prioritize topics and create actions plans.

The next Border Committee-hosted meeting will be on April 14th.

Conservation Meadow

Dave Cosson

Possible Unauthorized Tree Trimming. A Town resident reported he has noticed that several trees in both the upper and lower meadow have been trimmed and was concerned that this may have been done by a resident or other unauthorized person. A conversation with responsible authorities at MNCPPC will be scheduled in the near future to discuss the question.

Contracts

Dave Cosson

Potomac Disposal has proposed a specific new rate schedule and plans to introduce the use of trash cans that can be picked up mechanically at some time as they become available.

The contract for landscaping with RJ Landscaping has been signed and the company has begun work.

Dog Park Committee

Christine Dibble

- Grove dogs and their owners continue to meet most weekends on Saturday or Sunday mornings for playdates.
- Mary Warfield was re-elected chair of the Committee at our March meeting. The Committee is developing a small budget request (~\$200).

Emergency Preparedness and Safety Committee (EPSC)

Patty Klein

The EPSC met on March 24, 2022, to discuss the following topics:

- On March 10th, the Border Committee hosted a “multi-committee” discussion session on WGL and RR Street issues. Town committees represented include the EPSC, Woods Committee, Forestry and Beautification Committee, and Historic Preservation Commission to discuss a strategic vision for improving these roadways bordering the Town. Landscaping and road safety improvements were suggested. EPSC will focus on safety issues of vehicle speeding, road signage, bus stop shelters, and pedestrian crossings, etc. and attend future meetings to develop the common strategy.
- **Fire Department Safety Event:** EPSC will coordinate with the Women’s Club to host the Gaithersburg/WG Fire Department at a jointly sponsored event in the late spring/summer 2022. EPSC contacted the fire department to inquire about a presentation on fire safety and emergency preparedness. They also are willing to provide fire extinguisher training and children’s education on a variety of home safety hazards. EPSC will ask the Town to make a donation to the fire department in thanks for the event. EPSC also will contact the Montgomery County Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security to request a presentation on emergency preparedness for another event.

The next EPSC meeting will be on Thursday, April 28th, 2022.

Forestry & Beautification Committee

Barbara Raimondo

Had a walk to plan upcoming plantings, including butternut hickories and flowering trees. Selected nine locations and will add four more in the East Woods. Will monitor installation.

Reviewing other Spring plans.

Historic Preservation Commission

Darrell Anderson

The HPC held a virtual meeting on March 15, 2022; the next meeting will be held on April 19, 2022, at 7:30 pm on Zoom.

The HPC reviewed three permit applications - an addition at 410 4th Avenue (Greenway/Uh); an addition at 342 Ridge Rd. (Bielen); and an enclosed porch at 207 Maple Avenue (Daggy).

After discussion and suggested revisions, the HPC will write preliminary reviews and send them to the Planning Commission. The addition at 410 4th Avenue contained a possible encroachment on the set-back in one area that was noted to the Planning Commission.

The HPC is making corrections to the Architectural Survey.

The Border Committee is consulting with the HPC regarding signage.

Lake Committee

Gray Yachup

The Lake Committee's last meeting was mostly to solidify the volunteer positions as the summer season approached, as well as to finalize the pay for Lake staff this summer. While we are still looking for an all-ages instructor, some lifeguards have already volunteered to return.

Efforts are being made to translate lake signage into Spanish for accessibility and safety to all lake users. The budget for this summer and next year is still pending.

Important: Maple Lake Cleanup has been finalized for April 16th at 10am.

Lighting Committee

Dave Cosson

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

Lighting Consultant: The process of identifying the specific tasks for the consultant is dependent on whether the street light legislation passes (see note below), the final budget allocation for FY 23, and the potential availability of state or federal funding. Clarification of these points is expected in the next few months

Regardless of the outcome of the current street light legislation, the Public Service Commission, as it must, recognizes that the law permits municipalities to own their own streetlights. If the new street light legislation passes that would be helpful, but regardless, the Committee intends to continue discussion with Pepco on possible purchase. The Committee will follow the recommendation of lighting consultant George Woodbury that prior to meeting with Pepco, the Committee identify a “decision maker” in the company to increase the chances that such discussion could be meaningful.

Draft County and Municipal Street Light Investment Act. At the March 10 House Economic Matters Committee hearing Delegate and sponsor Al Carr was questioned at length regarding provisions in the Bill. [Note: the House version of the streetlight bill received an unfavorable recommendation from the Committee on April 6th and will not pass this year. Delegate recommended the Committee continue working using the existing process which will create a paper trail for next year.]

Committee Budget. The Committee submitted its proposed budget on March 4th.

Solar Lighting. The feasibility of using solar powered lighting to improve lighting on Town walkways was explored. The issue of the effect of all night lights on the health of the population of beneficial insects was explored along with potential improvements such as reduced illumination and utilizing timers. The consultant may be able to provide advice on this issue as well.

Website. The Committee discussed possible improvements to its website submission.

Bollard Lights at Town Hall. The staff of the Maryland Historic Trust has reviewed the application for approval of the bollard lighting along the pathway and has requested additional information which will be provided.

Maintenance

Darrell Anderson

Bidders were contacted and answered questions submitted by Town Councilors. In addition, references were checked. RJ Landscapers were notified that they won the bid.

Maryland Municipal League

Darrell Anderson

The MML held a virtual meeting on March 17, 2022, at 6:30 pm. The next meeting will be April 21, 2022 at 6:30 pm.

MML hosted County Council members to get an update on actions being taken and plans for the next year. Gabe Albornoz, Council President, defined four areas of focus in the FY23 budget.

1. THRIVE, review of the 2050 Comprehensive Plan for Montgomery County
2. Affordable Housing
3. Storm Water Management
4. Securing a strong social safety net
5. Crime prevention/re-imagining public safety

Each councilmember outlined their personal priorities, which included food insecurity and public health programs.

MML thanked the Council for providing increased funding for tax duplication and for providing \$5M in enhanced funding to municipalities in the current FY22 budget.

During the business meeting MML members discussed storm water management and the possible use of ARPA funds. In addition, FEMA is re-drawing flood maps due to increased flooding as a result of climate change which may impact individual homeowners and other residential and business properties. The maps will be available later this spring.

McCathran Hall

Barbara Raimondo

Nothing to report.

Montgomery Municipal Cable

Gray Yachup

No new reports from MMC.

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. 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 will present the CP to the Council at the April Council meeting.
- 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.
- Much discussion at the April meeting about the plans for expanding the Greenway residence (410 4th). Specifically, how can we accommodate a

reasonable expansion of the footprint, that respects the style of the house and the history of the immediate vicinity, but that increases the degree of setback noncompliance?

Playground and Tennis Courts

Christine Dibble

Nothing to report.

Racial and Social Equity Committee (RASEC)

Barbara Raimondo

Distributed inclusivity survey to Town residents. (Survey had been shared with Town Council during the TC March meeting.)

Sending welcome packet to Spanish translator for an estimate.

Continuing to improve RASEC web page.

Established workgroup for Town anti-racist statement.

Working on process to eliminate restrictive covenants from deeds. Sentence added to draft comprehensive plan noting this work.

Sent message to Planning Commission requesting that they consider adding the review of specific ordinances to support the expansion of housing options prioritized in the Comprehensive Plan.

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

Recreation Committee

Gray Yachup

Rec Committee put out a sign up for event volunteers in the Town Bulletin and on the list serve. Please check that document to participate or reach out to Emily Cavey directly.

Roads and Walkways

Gray Yachup

The new sign for the Woman's Club/Miller Drive parking is pending fabrication.

The RFP for the 2022 street repair projects will be submitted as soon as all data is available. Expedience will be key in ensuring we get a good timeline and fair price for asphalt.

Continuing to work on creating a standardized process for requesting/approving projects like speed bumps, road repairs, or other similar maintenance projects.

Shady Grove Crossing

Barbara Raimondo

Nothing to report.

Stormwater Management

Gray Yachup

Nothing to report.

Sustainability Committee

Dave Cosson

The Sustainability Committee met on April 5th by Zoom and discussed the following:

Committee Policies and Procedures and Election of Officers. The Committee adopted, with some revisions, the Policies and Procedures document circulated at its initial meeting last month. A slate of officers was elected with Robert Booher, Chairman, Monica Maher Vice Chairman, and Peggy Koniz-Booher, Secretary.

Sustainable Maryland. A detailed report was given on the March 21st virtual training session by Sustainable Maryland. The training officer reported that after touring the Town and reviewing our website he was particularly impressed with the efforts that have been made so far, including the woods preserves. He indicated that Sustainable Maryland should be able to assist with both technical advice and

identification of possible funding sources. The Committee expects to be able to apply for certification within the next year.

Communications. The Committee reviewed its communication plan including monthly topics for inclusion in the Town Bulletin through the end of the year. Plans were discussed for the April 23rd Earth Day event featuring electric vehicles and tools in Woodward Park. Seven or eight electric vehicles are expected plus a variety of lawn tools. Also expected are representatives of alternative energy suppliers.

Climate Action Plan. The Committee approved its Climate Action Plan document, a copy of which is attached for Council consideration.

Renewable Electricity Options. Issues with respect to choosing alternative electric supply providers were noted, including inconsistent information on the PSC website, suppliers' websites and direct information. Questions regarding participation in Community Solar offerings and how those interact with other alternative suppliers were also discussed. The use of a broker who could resolve information questions and obtain options was again discussed.

Heat Pump Information Paper. A primer on residential heat pumps has been drafted and will be finalized following further review.

Gasoline-Powered Leaf Blowers. It was noted that several jurisdictions have explored or adopted restrictions on use of gasoline powered leaf blowers. The issue will be discussed in depth at the May meeting.

Next Meeting May 3rd, 7:30 p.m.

Website and Communications

Christine Dibble

- New content:
 - Pages:

- Supporting Ukraine
- News You Can Use Archive
- Posts:
 - News/business/announcements:
 - Various minutes and agendas
 - Participate in the Inclusion and Equity Survey
 - Presentation: Going Native—How to Turn Your Yard into a Habitat for Nature
 - Subscribe to Community Solar Electricity
 - Former White House Butler Alan DeValerio to Speak Thursday, April 7th
 - The Historic Context of Minimal Traditional-Style Houses in the Washington Grove Historic District
- Features:
 - Take the Inclusion and Equity Survey
 - Various Woman’s Club activities
- Home page feature boxes:
 - Updates to News You Can Use

Woods Committee

Dave Cosson

The Woods Committee met on April 4th by Zoom and discussed the following:

Review of Draft Comprehensive Plan (CP). Following a special work session on March 13th, and subsequent discussions with a member of the Planning Commission and a Town Councilor, the Committee submitted a final clarification statement on Section 1.3 of the CP to the Planning Commission prior to its March 16th meeting. The focus of the clarification was the recommendation that the current FR zone be changed to FP (Forest Preserve) to be consistent with precedent and longstanding use of this term in town official documents and town signs. The change is intended as a change in nomenclature, not in permitted land uses.

East Woods Activities. In coordination with Forestry and Beatification, at least 3 Hickory trees will be purchased for planting in the woods. In a separate transaction, Dogwoods will be acquired and planted behind the new Welcome sign on the corner of Washington Grove Lane and Daylily Lane and probably near the

Ridge Road boundary to the East Woods. Some Holly trees will be planted within the East Woods to support understory growth.

There was further discussion of blocking the persistently wet portion of the Maple Ave. trail between Dorsey and McCauley and rerouting the trail to higher ground. The existing trail may be blocked with fallen timber and wet tolerant plantings.

Stormwater Management. The Committee expects the General Assembly will soon take final action soon on the bond issue that could provide \$250,000 for stormwater management in the West Woods. It is also possible that some ARPA funds will be available for that purpose until 2024; Committee co-chairs will discuss with Mayor Compton.

A letter to Frank Dawson at MC DEP was drafted to be sent by Mayor Compton. The letter will focus on the deterioration of the County installed culvert and riprap drain field that sends stormwater runoff from the Town Crest development and other surrounding areas into the West Woods causing soil erosion and tree root damage.

Arbor Day Work Event. A work session celebrating Arbor Day is scheduled for April 30th from 9:30 AM to 12:00 PM to remove invasive plants and pick up trash. Multiple measures will be used to publicize the event and encourage participation by all Town residents.

Next Meeting: Monday, May 2nd, 7:30 pm