

# Town Council Reports for September 2022 Council Meeting

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## Conservation Meadow

### Dave Cosson

Montgomery Parks has now installed permanent metal hunting notice signs and has cleaned and reorganized the information kiosk. Our Parks contact reports that the extensive surveying in the Piedmont Crossing Park (lower Meadow) is related to consideration of the path that would accompany the road extending Amity Drive, but that it remains uncertain whether the project will proceed. Also unresolved is definitive information as to whether the afforestation area below lower Brown Street is state or county property.

## Contracts

### Dave Cosson

**Landscaping/Maintenance.** Last month I recommended that the Council begin now to evaluate whether the Town should continue to use contractors for all or most of the landscaping and maintenance work, including snow removal. Related to this issue is the inventory of riding and walking lawn mowers in storage as well as a truck. Regarding the latter, used vehicles in good condition are being actively sought by dealers and are bringing premium prices at present. These issues still need discussion. RJ Landscaping has proposed a new snow removal contract for the coming winter.

## Dog Park Committee

### Christine Dibble

Nothing to report.

## Emergency Preparedness and Safety Committee (EPSC)

### Gray Yachup

EPSC has worked out a schedule for closing the field gate to ensure that loitering in the parking lot is curbed. Thanks to everyone who volunteered for this task.

EPSC continues to discuss and work on overgrowth and line-of-sight issues prevalent on Town roads and had a brief walk to surveil the most affected sights. EPSC continues to have talks with Montgomery County on the installation of speed cameras and speed humps on Washington Grove Lane and Railroad Street

## Forestry & Beautification Committee

### Barbara Raimondo

At the August 10 meeting the Committee reviewed a map of large (old) trees removed over the past 1-8 years. For planting this fall we decided to concentrate on the area around the Circle, Chapel Park, Zoe Wadsworth Park and the North end of Woodward Park (comprising mostly the playground). The Stadler Fall sale will begin around September 8 and we'd like to start buying in the early part of the sale. Two walks were scheduled for Committee members to survey the areas in question and choose locations and types of trees. These took place the last week of August and first week of September. A total of 12 tree locations were chosen and staked for Miss Utility.

The tree list has been divided into two groups of six and assigned to our team leaders, Audrey Maskery and Jay Everhart. They will each take committee members who wish to join them and place our order at Stadler.

The Committee also discussed a project to have structural pruning of trees planted in the past 3-10 years. This would be done by Davey Tree Expert Company who has worked for us previously. In addition, we decided to get an assessment of what has been damaging several high value trees in Woodward Park. Georgette and Audrey met with the Davey arborist who identified issues with lacebugs, web worms, sunscald, and severe soil compaction in the trees we looked at. We now have a bid for treatment of these trees and the arborist is preparing a bid for the structural pruning of young trees we asked for.

The Trees In the Grove Series continues in September with an article by Jay Everhart on "Tree of Heaven" (*Ailanthus altissima*), a non-native invasive, which is also a host plant for the invasive and destructive spotted lanternfly.

## Gateway Committee

### Eva Patrone

(Formerly known as the Border Committee)

Held a meeting via Zoom on August 11. Highlights of the meeting include:

- **Welcome sign**
  - The HPC has some criticism about the language of "National Historic Register."
  - The third sign will go up as soon as RJ gets back to Peter

- Still waiting on Mike Schank to change the date on the signs
- **Grove Ave. to MARC train stop access - Update**
  - Peter sent in request to RJ to put in more identity fencing down to the bus stop and move one section of fence so it's parallel to the street.
- **Street and Walkway signage**
  - Peter has signs for Grove Ave, Chestnut, Railroad St. -- Put in request with RJ to install these signs.
  - Susan will make the walkway sign for Shady Grove Crossing
- **Other Business**
  - Peter will check in about the speed limit signs on Washington Grove Lane. They still say 30 mph but should say 25 mph.
  - Some discussion about recruiting more people to pick up trash along WGL. Need to consider safety.
  - Eva will work with Peter and Christine to get information about the Gateway Committee onto the town website.

Held an in-person, on-site meeting on August 21 to discuss improvements to the intersection of Center St. and WGL and Oak St. and WGL.

- Main idea for Oak St. is to make it look more like a walkway – probably do what was done to the end of Brown Street.
- Many ideas were discussed for Center St. It was decided that while the committee is still planning and getting cost estimates, the chains should be removed from both streets and the bollards moved down closer to where the streets intersect WGL. This way, it will be immediately obvious to any car attempting to turn that the street is closed to vehicles.

## Historic Preservation Commission

### Darrell Anderson

The HPC held a virtual meeting on August 16, 2022; the next meeting will be held on September 20, at 7:30 pm by virtual means.

The HPC had no projects to review.

Two HPC members will meet to discuss their priorities for a preservation/ demolition ordinance.

The HPC discussed the new WG signs. They noted there was an incorrect date, and some felt the wording was not accurate. They will discuss further.

The HPC invited a RASEC attendee to describe the upcoming three-part virtual Accessory Dwelling Unit informational series.

### **Lower Ridge Road Water Main Project**

Over the last two months I have talked to WSSC a few times, six engineering firms, and nine contractors. WSSC said they will not do anything until they see an engineering report. The contractors said they could not address an RFP until they had the engineering report. Therefore, our first step should be to issue an RFP for the engineering report.

However, I need to confirm information gleaned from queries with contractors and engineering firms regarding the process with WSSC before we proceed to the engineering RFP. I hope to have the questions answered by WSSC in the next week or so.

### **Lake Committee**

#### **Gray Yachup**

*Lifeguards:* No additional reports.

*Maintenance:* No additional reports.

*Wildlife:* No additional reports.

*RASEC:* Current efforts with RASEC are to review documentation for appropriate wording and to review de-escalation training for lifeguards.

### **Lighting Committee**

#### **Barbara Raimondo**

Due to the Lighting Committee's diligence and advocacy, individually and in concert with other municipalities, the Maryland Public Service denied PEPCO's proposed tariff, directing PEPCO to work with municipalities to come up with a

plan that is more acceptable to the municipalities. The Lighting Committee has been advocating for greater autonomy for WG to own its streetlights and thus have more control over the type of lights used and the cost. The Committee drafted a statement from the Mayor for a press release issued by Delegate Carr, who is the legislator currently championing this cause. PEPCO has reached out to the Mayor to begin a dialogue.

## **Maintenance**

### **Darrell Anderson**

The contractor regularly mowed, string trimmed, picked up sticks and debris, and responded to requests from the Town.

The contractor responded to residents' requests to the Town office for specific tasks such as pruning hanging brush from stop signs and other signs as needed.

RJ installed signs as needed.

RJ contractor continued to refurbish the playground including repainting where necessary, adding wood chips to the entire playground, and fixing playground equipment as necessary.

RJ replaced rotted wooden posts and rails at the playground and parking lot.

The contractor pruned vegetation growing over Ridge Road.

The contractor re-installed bumper on Brown Street.

RJ worked with the Woods Committee to place barriers on 3 culverts along WG Lane that were exposed due to MC DOT tree trimming.

RJ worked with the Woods Committee to install signs regarding bow hunting in the Conservation Meadow.

## **Maryland Municipal League**

### **Darrell Anderson**

The next meeting of the MML will be September 15, 2022 at 6:30 pm by virtual means.

The 2022 MML Fall Conference will be held in Annapolis from October 9 – 11. This conference will be in person.

At the September meeting, I will inquire about the process used by other municipalities regarding the removal of restrictive covenants, and the possibility of a future legislative process to address the issue.

## **McCathran Hall**

### **Barbara Raimondo**

Nothing to report.

## **Montgomery Municipal Cable**

### **Gray Yachup**

Nothing to report.

## **Planning Commission**

### **Christine Dibble**

Nothing to report (Councilor on vacation).

## **Racial and Social Equity Committee (RASEC)**

### **Barbara Raimondo**

The Committee:

- Adopted a logo.
- Discussed feedback from Pastor Warner's Virtual Talk and EG/WG Walk. There was interest in sharing the video from Pastor Warner's talk, but permission from attendees to use their likeness or comments had not been requested, so it is not appropriate to share the video. Permission will be requested during future events.

- Established RASEC email address using the Town’s domain.
- Is analyzing survey data and possible patterns identified. After a data summary is presented around October, there will be discussions regarding the best way to present the data.
- Changed the name of the ADU workgroup to “The Housing Workgroup” because they will review various housing ordinances and policies when they relate to RASEC goals, not only ADUs.
- Confirmed ADU speaker series. All of the programs will occur at 7:30 PM. The first program is virtual and it is likely the others also will be as well. The first program is confirmed for September 22. The other two programs will occur October 26 and December 1.
- Held an Ice Cream Social between Emory Grove and Washington Grove residents. The purpose of the event was for residents of both communities to get to know each other, have fun, and begin to build trust. Small, facilitated discussion groups were part of the event.
- Sent mission statement and list of accomplishments to Sustainability Committee to help acquire Maryland Sustainability Certification.

A RASEC work group drafted an anti-racism resolution which will be edited by the RASEC Leadership Team and presented to the RASEC voting members for ratification in November. It will then be presented to the Mayor and Town Council for their consideration and approval.

The PC is considering whether to keep the 3rd Wednesdays of the month to discuss ordinances; it had been reserved for CP meetings. Housing Workgroup members) will attend the regular and/or the ordinance meetings when relevant to RASEC.

To test the Town’s authority to file to remove illegal racial restrictive covenants for the Town’s residents whose deeds contain them, the Council and Mayor under Charlie’s guidance submitted four applications for covenant removal to the WG Town attorney to endorse and then file with the Clerk of the Circuit Court or to provide other legal advice regarding Town actions.

## Recreation Committee

### Eva Patrone

Labor Day Events were held this year:

- Friday, Sept. 2: Pickleball
- Saturday, Sept. 3: Field Games and Softball Game
- Sunday, Sept. 4: Tennis Mixer and Dog Agility Course
- Monday, Sept. 5: Bike Races, Croquet Tournament, & Potluck/Awards

## Recreational Facilities (Woodward Park, Playground and Tennis Courts)

### Eva Patrone

- New toddler swing installed to replace broken one
- New mulch chips put down and barricades around parking area repaired
- Merry-go-round oiled and sanded
- Two new signs were installed on the kiosk (see photos below).
- Greg (hall janitor) will begin cleaning and restocking the bathrooms at the park every other week
- Gate to the parking lot
  - Gate will be closed at sunset by a group of volunteers, and we will rely on early morning walkers to open it.
  - The volunteers have notices to place on vehicles that are still in the parking lot after sunset.
  - A new sign has been ordered for the entrance to the parking lot. It will say (in English and Spanish) that vehicles are not permitted in the park between sunset and sunrise.
  - If you see the gate open after dark, close it. If you see it closed after sunrise, open it. ☺
- Edible Garden
  - On Friday, Sept. 2, a resident (not a member of the garden group) pruned an edible plant that had begun to grow through the fence into

the clay tennis courts. This was done a few hours before the group had planned to meet to prune the plant and harvest the leaves for donation. Some members of the garden group felt this was vandalism.

- Eva met with Bruce Daggy and Anne Vincent to debrief about what happened Friday.
  - Bruce will speak directly with the resident who pruned the plant
  - Everyone should encourage those with concerns/complaints about the garden to speak to someone in the garden group directly or lodge an official complaint with Kathy.
  - The garden group will put up a sign saying something to the effect of “Edible Garden: please do not disturb.”
  - In the next garden update, the group will remind residents that this is a pilot program. Residents should voice their concerns to the garden group, and they will have a chance to share their opinions about the garden with Town Council before the 18-month trial period is over.
  
- For some reason the garden update did not make it into the September town bulletin. Bruce posted it on the listserv instead and will make sure an update goes into the October bulletin.

## **Roads and Walkways**

### **Gray Yachup**

The new sign for the Woman’s Club/Miller Drive parking is pending fabrication. Roads in the 2022 cycle for repair have been completed. All speed bumps and humps have been replaced.

Several graveling/seeding projects are pending completion. Namely, investigating the leveling of the street near Johnson Alley/Acorn Lane intersection. Will be messaging requesting Town residents and discussing at TC meetings when applicable.

Working with utilities and delivery services to close Johnson Alley to large vehicles due to house damage.

Stormwater Management RFP is currently pending acceptance by the Council.

Notes from Woods Committee meeting will be incorporated into the final draft.

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**

See Woods Committee report.

## Sustainability Committee

**Dave Cosson**

The Sustainability Committee met by Zoom on September 6<sup>th</sup> and discussed the following:

**Green Team.** The Green Team met on August 23<sup>rd</sup> and discussed finalizing its Action Plan and its progress toward organizing its information in a Google Folder. An important factor in obtaining certification from Sustainable Maryland will be quantification of the Town's Green House Gas emissions and efforts at reduction. Through the ICELI program the Town may be able to use a UMD graduate student to work on the quantification. The Green Team has been working with Town Committees to describe the various sustainability actions that have been undertaken over several years and will formalize that cooperation through a letter to be sent next week. The Woods Committee is preparing the Tree City application which may require the mayor's signature.

**Heat Pumps.** The Committee will host meetings September 13<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> for residents considering conversion of their existing heating systems to heat pumps. Residents who have recently converted will aid in the presentation. A future meeting will discuss geothermal systems.

**Renewable Electricity Meeting.** Sponsored by the Women's Club, a presentation on sources of renewable energy for residential uses by Kevin Cheung from Utility

Advisor has been scheduled for September 24th at the Town Hall. Coffee and donuts will be available. Options for recording and/or livestreaming the event are under study.

**Edible Garden.** On the positive side, the sweet potato crop is doing well, and the potatoes will be harvested before the first frost. The buckwheat cover crop is also doing well. Crimson clover will be planted which will fix nitrogen in the soil. On the negative side, the lack of Town residents' understanding of the effort has become apparent. Shortly before the edible sweet potato leaves were to be harvested, a town resident cut and pruned most of the intended harvest without discussion with the gardeners or the Committee. The sweet potato plants were not otherwise harmed, and the rest of the leaves intended for harvest were collected over Labor Day Weekend and distributed to residents.

Other residents have incorrectly identified the buckwheat as garlic mustard. These events lead to a discussion of how to improve communication including various options for posting signs explaining the purpose and operation of the garden. Alternatives could include a small kiosk or posting on the exterior walls of the tennis shed. It was noted that an article prepared for the Town Bulletin did not make this month's edition.

**Greenhouse Gas Spreadsheet and ICLEI.** A committee member provided an explanation of the Clear Path software available through ICLEI which may be helpful in quantifying the Town's carbon footprint. The spreadsheet uses inputs of several factors including power usage, fuel, food, water and sewer. There was considerable discussion of the impact of food, especially meat, with beef production having significantly higher emissions than other types. WSSC will be asked for assistance with respect to the water and sewer inputs. The graduate student assistant being considered by the Green Team could be of substantial assistance in improving the data and making the impact projections. The complexities of using averages as compared with individual inputs were discussed, as well as the need to factor in the carbon sequestration accomplished by our forests.

**Communications.** Information on various sustainability topics has been completed or is under way for publication in the Town Bulletin. The "News from the Garden" article that somehow missed the September Bulletin will be resubmitted for October. Other information may be put on the listserv.

Forthcoming articles include information on induction cooking, and a summary of the energy and climate portions of the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 (IRA). With respect to the IRA, ICLEI has webinars on the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grants (EECBG) and the Inflation Reduction Act.

**Next Meeting.** Due to schedule conflicts, the next meeting date has not been determined at this time but will be resolved soon.

## Website and Communications

### Christine Dibble

Nothing to report.

## Woods Committee

### Dave Cosson

The Woods Committee (WC) met on September 2d by Zoom and discussed the following:

**Deer Management.** Resolution 2022-05 requires the posting of informational signs regarding the Town authorized deer bow hunt by Town-permitted and state-licensed volunteer hunters at trail entrances to the Woods. The WC approved the design of the required signs, in English and Spanish, and will have them produced. The WC submitted a request to Councilor Darrell Anderson for RJ Landscaping to assist the WC to install posts and attach these signs at the East and West Woods trail entrances in time for the hunting season.

**Washington Grove Lane Trimming.** Following requests by several town Committees (WC, EPSC, and Gateway Committee), the County DOT finally sent a crew to trim back several feet of overgrown brush in the West Woods perimeter along Washington Grove Lane. DOT did not, however, notify the Town of their work schedule so that no one from the Woods Committee was present to oversee the extent of trimming conducted. The crew cut foliage up to 10 feet deep and cut down multiple small trees. Most of the cuttings were tossed into the Woods and not removed. The extensive cutting also exposed three storm water culvert ditches (four to six feet deep) emptying into the West Woods that present substantial risk to anyone walking along the newly cleared roadside edge on WGL. The WC will

request temporary caution tape posted markings of these culvert ditches be installed as soon as possible. [Subsequently this work has reportedly begun.]

**Stormwater Management.** The August 11 Zoom meeting with Soltesz Engineering, Mayor Compton, and Committee members was summarized. Mayor Compton stated that Washington Grove seeks an analysis and design to manage the volume and velocity of damaging waters coming into the West Woods and guidance in preparing a request for proposals. The Soltesz representatives agreed to prepare a high-level memo and schedule a site visit in the near future. With no response to date, WC co-chairs will follow up. Soltesz also recommended that the town discuss its issues with Low Impact Development Group, a non-profit group, which can assist municipalities with flood issues and help create a Request for Proposals.

The amount of funding available to the Town for stormwater management in the West Woods includes approximately half of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds and the \$250 K state bond designated for the West Woods mitigation. It is uncertain if the remaining ARPA funds will be used for installing water mains on lower Ridge Road or could be used for storm water mitigation plans in the residential sections of town.

**Trail Maintenance.** There was continued discussion of alternatives to address the problem of the continually wet and muddy north end of the Maple Ave. Extended trail between the Dorsey and McCauley trails. Rather than attempting to improve that section of the trail, the Committee is considering rerouting that section diagonally uphill to higher location to intersect with the Pine and McCauley Trails.

**Reforestation and NNI Plant Control.** Committee co-chairs will be discussing fall actions with contractor IPC. Also, the WC will contact Bill Bond, the forester who surveyed the East and West Woods and prepared the 2015 Forestry Stewardship Report, to ask if he will do a follow up assessment on the effectiveness of his recommendations and whether changes in woods management policy are needed. The Davey Tree Company will be considered as an alternative.

**Tree City Application.** The application to the Arbor Day Foundation for designation of Washington Grove as a “Tree City” should be ready for filing within

the next few weeks. This action is expected to assist the Sustainability Committee's efforts to designation under the Sustainable Maryland Program.

**Next Meeting.** October 3, 2022