

Town Council Reports for November 2022 Council Meeting

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Conservation Meadow

Dave Cosson

Montgomery Parks reports that by the end of the year the concrete debris will be removed and the missing wooden bollards along Ridge Road will be replaced. The authorized bow-hunting has resumed in the lower meadow. Lower meadow activities are discussed in Woods Committee section.

Contracts

Dave Cosson

Landscaping/Maintenance: I continue to recommend that the Council evaluate and decide whether to continue to use contractors for all or most of the landscaping and maintenance work and whether to retain the large inventory of motorized equipment.

Dog Park Committee

Christine Dibble

Nothing to report.

Emergency Preparedness and Safety Committee (EPSC)

Gray Yachup

- EPSC continues to discuss and work on overgrowth and line-of-sight issues prevalent on Town roads.
- EPSC is coordinating with the Gateway Committee to remove the dumpsters at the Commercial Corner.
- EPSC is working to install permanent guards around several of the culverts in Town. EPSC is also working to repair the Railroad Street culvert in conjunction with the County.

Forestry & Beautification Committee

Barbara Raimondo

At the November 9 meeting the Committee reviewed the Fall tree planting. To date a total of 10 trees for the F&B group have been installed and two more will come in the next week or two. These trees are spread between the Circle, Chapel Park, Zoe Park and Woodward Park north of Oak Street.

Jay Everhart and Audrey Maskery have done a walkthrough of the residential forest. They came up with a ballpark figure of 80-90 sites for canopy trees. This will change, of course, as we continue to lose more of our old oak trees. We discussed ways to best manage replanting. We are working on a draft plan which we hope to finalize for submission to the Mayor and Council at the December or January Council meeting. We would like to implement the plan next spring.

A major concern for F&B is the lack of a firm contract with RJ Landscaping for 2023. If a new set of watering personnel has to be trained the F&B group is concerned that our tree planting will need to be reduced next year. Tree installation is indeed a matter of F&B “bandwidth”. That bandwidth cannot be replaced with money and outside contractors. The process of monitoring the trees and planning for care and upkeep currently takes all of our time and energy. Breaking in new contractors would seriously impede our progress.

Gateway Committee

Eva Patrone

Held a meeting via Zoom on October 13 at 7:30 pm. Highlights of the meeting include:

- **Grove Ave Walkway from Washington Grove Lane to McCauley**
 - Peter and Bruce did lots of work to clear this area
 - No identity fencing here because it’s inside of town
 - Need to put up signage on WGL to identify the Grove Ave walkway
 - Discussion about who will maintain this walkway

- **Fourth Ave Walkway from WGL to McCauley**
 - **Georgette and Peter put forth and seconded the following motion:** Fourth Ave *and* Grove Ave from McCauley to WGL will be smoothed out with fill dirt and surfaced with gravel. – The motion was approved

- **Identity Fencing Updates**
 - Not putting any fencing on McCauley
 - Fencing should be getting done soon.
 - Peter talked to Steve about doing the bollards on Center St.
 - Available Gateway Committee members met with Steve at Center St. and WGL on Oct. 14 at 10am to get his suggestions for that area.

- Joan suggested yellow striping on the pavement to alert cars that this street is closed.
- **Commercial Corner News**
 - Final welcome sign at Commercial Corner is up.
 - Members of the HPC say the sign should say “Est. 1873, A National Register Historic District” and have asked that the sign be changed.
 - Peter has asked Sign City for a price to replace the bottom piece in order to make this change
- **Other Business—Guidance doc and speed limit**
 - Looked at guidance document and after a few small corrections doc was approved. This doc was given to Christine so she can add the Gateway Committee to the town website
 - In November the speed limit signs on WGL will be changed to 25 mph

Historic Preservation Commission

Darrell Anderson

The HPC held a virtual meeting on October 18, 2022; the next meeting will be held on November 15, at 7:30 pm by virtual means.

The HPC had no projects to review.

There was a discussion for a Public Ways and Means Permit for Jane Seegal, 315 Grove Avenue. There would be a sidewalk replacement from flagstone to concrete which will encroach about 6 feet into the avenue. The HPC voted in favor of the permit.

There will be an update to the Agricultural Survey.

The HPC gave new Historic District language to the Gateway Committee for the revision of the labeling of the most recent WG signs.

There was discussion of suggestions made by the Town archivist regarding the 150-year WG celebration. The HPC decided to send the information to the Town Council.

Lake Committee

Gray Yachup

No official updates due to Winter committee recess.

Lighting Committee

Barbara Raimondo

Additional Bollard lights for McCathran Hall: Bollard lights at McCathran Hall were successfully installed. Barn light on the side of McCathran Hall was removed, and the motion flood light by Grove Avenue was moved to illuminate the steps on the side of the office.

The Pepco and Municipality Streetlight Purchase Process: Due to advocacy on the part of some Maryland Municipalities including The Town of Washington Grove, the Maryland Public Service Commission (MD-PSC) rejected Pepco's new streetlight tariff and directed them to meet with Maryland municipalities concerning options on streetlight ownership.

Pepco announced a series of four meetings to discuss "The Pepco and Municipality Streetlight Purchase Process." Town Councilor, Dave Cosson and the Chair of the TWG Streetlight committee, Virginia Quesada attended all four meetings. Dave Cosson and George Woodbury represented TWG in Baltimore on October 12th where Pepco and the municipalities discussed their progress on the process of streetlight ownership in front of the MD PSC.

The municipalities and Pepco were far apart in concerns after all four meetings; nevertheless, the meetings were valuable in getting the process moving. The MD-PSC seemed aware that Pepco was not really making progress and another meeting is set for January 26th, 2023.

Maintenance

Darrell Anderson

The following maintenance and landscaping tasks were completed by RJJL:

- Mowed soccer field, playground, adjacent areas and began cleaning leaves in those areas.
- Removed branches and debris from Town property

- Moved street sign at McCauley and Fifth where WSSC had placed it too far left
- Pruned and cleaned McCathran Hall shrub beds
- Repaired Dog Park entrance gate
- Re-located light on the side of McCathran Hall
- Installed new LED light outside the Town Office
- Dug trench for McCathran Hall bollard lights and backfilled all trenches
- Installed bollard lights and sensor box connecting to them

Maryland Municipal League

Darrell Anderson

The MML held a virtual meeting on October 20, 2022; the next meeting will be November 17, 2022 at 6:30 pm by virtual means.

Guest speakers for the MML meeting were the Superintendent of MCPS and other Central Office staff.

They reviewed post COVID student achievement data. The most progress occurred in literacy and the least growth occurred math. School staffing is almost complete, but there is a shortage of substitute teachers. Sign language tutors also are needed. Supply chain issues have delayed school construction. An MCPS priority is mental wellness and school security.

Another focus is to identify individual struggling students and work with schools to customize support. A plan devised by PTA, community leaders, and MCPS staff for preventing more fights at sports events was shared.

The MML Legislative Dinner is December 6. The cost is \$75.00. MML pays for the legislators.

The PEPCO meetings with municipalities regarding municipality ownership of streetlights continues to be PEPCO talking rather than collaborating. The Commission seems to listen to municipality concerns. They want a status report by January 25. Municipalities must decide what issues they want to cover and what issues may be common to many municipalities. A working group will be formed. PEPCO will be invited to meet after MML sets the agenda.

There was a discussion about the county ban on leaf blowers. There were questions about whether municipalities are bound by the ban or if they can opt out.

McCathran Hall

Barbara Raimondo

There is a sprinkler system pipe that leaks from time to time. Kathy has a company lined up to repair it, and the job requires scaffolding. Two bidders have come by to provide a quote. One provided an estimate, we are waiting on the other.

Mid-term elections were successfully held in the Hall.

Montgomery Municipal Cable

Gray Yachup

MMC held their Board meeting on the 26th, where they discussed the outcome of the financing discussions with our local network providers, as well as approval of the draft version of MMC's Internal Financial Controls document.

Planning Commission

Christine Dibble

- The PC has begun discussion of Article VII, Sections 3.141, 3.142, 3.143, as they affect building permits, especially in the RR2 area. Specifically, the PC is looking to determine whether as written, these sections allow for the flexibility needed to preserve the historic cottages. The PC is coming up with a list of potential action items to help preserve these cottages.
- The PC is requesting that the Council address the request from the Van Nostrand/Ambrose household to purchase town land adjacent to their property at 404 Fourth Avenue.

Racial and Social Equity Committee (RASEC)

Barbara Raimondo

Restrictive Covenants: The first collection of Restrictive Covenant Modifications will be submitted for filing in the Land Records for Montgomery County in accordance with the recent advice from Town Attorney Suellen Ferguson. These are submissions with the signatures of property owners.

The Town will work with State representatives for legislation to modify the Maryland Code to allow submissions with only the mayor's signature on behalf of the Town.

Communications: The Committee is:

- working on ways to phase out the original Gmail address so the domain address is either the only address or the main address. The goal is to have the transition completed by January.
- simplifying and re-organizing the resource list. It will continue to send relevant, time sensitive notifications of events.

Town Inclusivity: The committee is working on different aspects of the data analysis of the inclusivity survey. It is aiming for data completion by January.

Housing: There were 20 attendees at the first ADU program. Eleven attendees completed the post program survey. Most of the comments were positive.

Town Anti-Racist Statement Workgroup: The committee has drafted a statement and is vetting it for feedback from various history experts.

Town Council: Council is working on a list of holidays that WG employees will observe.

Recreation Committee

Eva Patrone

The Haunted East Woods Spooktacular on Oct. 30 was a success. Residents enjoyed snacks by the gazebo and a spooky trail through the woods.

Recreational Facilities (Woodward Park, Playground and Tennis Courts)

Eva Patrone

- Edible Garden
 - Volunteers quickly harvested the sweet potatoes before frost damage rendered them inedible. The harvest is being “cured” for a week or so at elevated temperatures to enhance their sweetness and flavor and harden off the skins for better storage.

- Manna, which previously received a sample bucket, was happy to receive the sweet potatoes “as-is” and even before curing. The sweet potato leaves have also been well received by Manna.
- Next step will be to plant the garlic in the sweet potato bed. Most of the garden will remain in cover crop over the winter.

Roads and Walkways

Gray Yachup

- Working with Maintenance to ensure that the recent WSSC work near 418 5th Avenue is appropriately repaired.
- Worked with the Woods Committee to create a comprehensive Stormwater Management RFP, which is currently pending acceptance by the Council.
- 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

Lorem ipsum

Sustainability Committee

Dave Cosson

The Sustainability Committee met by Zoom on November 1st and discussed the following:

Passive Solar Home. Town resident John Tomlin spoke to the Committee regarding the improvements he has made to his home since 1979 to utilize passive solar heating. The solar energy in the south facing house is captured in an extended enclosed porch with a roof designed to let the sun in during the winter and provide shade in summer. Dark tiles and rocks help to retain the heat. He estimates his oil usage was significantly reduced by the modifications.

Green Team. The Green Team met on October 24th and continued work on preparation of the Town’s application for certification to Sustainable Maryland. Coordination. Communication with other Town committees has continued. A draft application will be ready by January to be completed by spring.

Renewable Electricity Follow-Up. A video summary of the September presentation at the Women’s club on renewable energy is being edited with the intent of making it available to all residents.

There are presently no available “slots” for the Town to move to utilizing a renewable energy supplier. Rates for Municipal and Commercial customers are lower as a result suppliers focus on residential accounts. The Committee suggests that the Town prepare its application in advance to be able to move quickly when an opening occurs.

Leaf Blowing at Maple Lake Parking Lot. In response to a request for comment from Councilor Anderson on a proposal to reduce blowing leaves off the parking lot, the Committee agreed to respond that it should be done only once a year in late fall. An alternative to blowing would be to recruit volunteers to rake the leaves into the woods.

EGG Status. As reported in the Town Bulletin, the first harvest of sweet potatoes was completed, which will be donated following a “hardening” process. Planning has begun for next year’s garden which will be planted earlier in year.

EV Chargers. The HPC has reviewed the Pepco application and it is now before the Planning Commission.

Biochar. The Committee continues to study the process by which woodchips, sawdust, even possibly leaves can be reduced to biochar which both sequesters carbon and can be used to enhance compost. Areas of study include inexpensive devices that can be used in home fireplaces and scalability of the process.

Communications. The Committee will continue to prepare articles on sustainability topics for the Town Bulletin. Topics have been scheduled through March 2023.

Building Decarbonization Bill. The County is considering Bill 13-22 which would require the County Executive to issue all-electric building standards for new construction, major renovations, and additions by January 1, 2024. A Council workshop was scheduled for November 3rd. The Committee was not prepared to recommend one way or the other whether the Town should support the bill.

Next Meeting: December 1st.

Website and Communications

Christine Dibble

- New content:
 - Posts:
 - The Washington Grove Campground and the Early Camp Meetings
 - Agendas and minutes for Council, HPC, Planning Commission
 - Home page features re: upcoming events of note (e.g., Fall workday in the woods, ADU information session)

Woods Committee

Dave Cosson

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

Deer Management. Unleashed dogs. One of the authorized bow hunters reported that for the at least the second time this fall unleashed dogs in the East Woods have disrupted his hunt. The latest incident involved a town resident releasing three dogs in the woods who roamed far off the trails. The Committee expressed its concern that not only are the deer management objectives impaired but that unleashed dogs pose a safety risk to trail users and themselves. It also noted that the County requires dogs to be on leashes when off their owner's property. The Committee recommends that the Town publish clear guidelines for dog owners as to their responsibilities.

Lower Meadow Activity. Montgomery Parks has advised that the heavy equipment operating in the Lower Meadow last month was working on developing a proposed pathway for roadway, bikeway and pedestrian path extending Amity Drive and connecting to the future Washington Grove shared use connector.

Stormwater. The October 4 Assessment and Recommendations from the Soltesz engineering firm was reviewed with the Committee which documented the areas of damage in the West Woods and identified the need for short- and long-term solutions for protecting the Town. These recommendations were then utilized in further revising the draft RFP which is being coordinated with Councilor Yachup. The Committee identified the need for further clarification of a few terms from the Soltesz report and in the RFP. The Committee expressed its desire that a final version be presented to the Town Council on November 14th.

Fall Workday. The workday has been scheduled for November 12 from 9:30 to noon. Given the forecast of possible inclement weather, a rain date was established for November 13 from noon to 2 pm. Volunteers to meet at the Maintenance Shed.

IPC Work Schedule. IPC has been working on invasive plants both in the East Woods and in Town under F&B direction. It will resume work in the spring, including treating the grass which this year tended to overgrow several trails.

Washington Grove Lane Culverts in West Woods. A county contact has been identified to work with to have guard rails installed to prevent vehicles and pedestrians from falling into the open culvert.

Tree City Application. The application for recognition as a “Tree City” was filed but returned by DNR with the request that it be filed electronically. Committee co-chair will follow up to see that is done.

Next Meeting: December 5, 2022.