

# Town Council Reports for December 2022 Council Meeting

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## **Conservation Meadow**

### **Dave Cosson**

No new developments. Clearing of debris still expected this month by Montgomery Parks.

## **Contracts**

### **Dave Cosson**

**Landscaping/Maintenance.** Treasurer Jean Moyer has compiled an inventory of the mechanical equipment and vehicles which will be useful if the Council determines that some of it should be sold.

## **Dog Park Committee**

### **Christine Dibble**

For the second time, the gate to the dog park has been vandalized. There is a temporary chain securing the outside gate until repairs can be made. The lock and combination are the same.

## **Emergency Preparedness and Safety Committee (EPSC)**

### **Gray Yachup**

No official updates due to Thanksgiving committee recess.

## **Forestry & Beautification Committee**

### **Barbara Raimondo**

F&B has completed their regular meetings for 2022 and will not have another regular meeting until March 8, 2023.

We are still working on the proposal Mayor Compton asked for adding more tree planting to our schedule. The Committee discussed it at our last meeting in November and agreed on what we'd like to do. Georgette, Audrey, and Jay are writing the draft document. Once we have a final draft, it will be sent to the other F&B members for feedback. We expect to have the final proposal for the Mayor and Council at the January 9 Council meeting.

Otherwise, F&B will be pretty quiet until March/April.

## Gateway Committee

### Eva Patrone

- On November 15, a resident noticed graffiti at the Washington Grove train station and alerted the Gateway Committee, who contacted MTA. MTA sent out a crew that same day to paint over the graffiti.
- The speed limit on Washington Grove Lane has officially changed to twenty-five mph. The new signs were put up by the County.
- The Gateway Committee is now on the Washington Grove town website. Agendas, Minutes, and the committee guidelines can be found there.
- The Gateway Committee held a meeting via Zoom on November 10 at 7:30pm. Highlights of the meeting include:
  - Grove Ave Walkway and Fourth Ave Walkway from WGL to McCauley – gravel and fill-dirt needs to be put down. Will make another request.
  - Discussion of if/where to place identity fencing on the Woods-side of Washington Grove Lane.
  - Discussion of unsafe portion of sidewalk on Washington Grove Lane near the post office.
  - Discussion of potentially getting guardrails along Washington Grove Lane in the areas where there are unsafe drop-offs.

## Historic Preservation Commission

### John Compton

**Project Reviews:** *404 4th Avenue – Susan Van Nostrand/Kevin Ambrose Request to Purchase Two Parcels of Property.* The purchase request was discussed in detail. It is unclear to HPC whether Article XVII applies to both the parcel adjacent to Acorn Lane and the 4th Avenue parcel, or to just the latter parcel. HPC will seek clarification from the Town Council whether the previous 1988 Ordinance naming Judy Banachowski as owner of the Acorn Lane parcel applies to the current owners.

The HPC will begin the preparation of a document describing the portions of the structure on town land to accompany the ordinance under Article XVII. It will require a fair amount of research and preparation, so the Town Council is being advised that it will not be available for their December meeting.

**150th Year Celebration:** A variety of activities were discussed, including a history booklet with maps (possibly as a fund-raiser), a campout and baseball game as held during the 125<sup>th</sup> celebration – possibly as part of the July 4<sup>th</sup> activities, staking out the footprint of buildings the Town has lost: – the Auditorium, the Hotel, the Tabernacle, and the train station.

**Bulletin Material:** The series of articles based on excerpts from Robinson & Associates’ Historic Context Report continues.

**Historic Context Report, Washington Grove Architectural Features:** Wendy was complimented on the report she prepared for the Montgomery County Parks Archaeology Division; it was distributed to HPC members before the meeting. Wendy will consider whether the document should be provided to the TC; she will discuss this with the Archeology Division. Wendy also reported that the MCDOT contractor has started starting to do “geotech” (boring) work in the lower field (for the Amity – Crabbs Branch connector and bike path); they are getting very close to the “Washington Grove Steatite Quarry and Agricultural Features” site. Apparently, they had not coordinated with the Archeology Division before starting their work. Wendy has contacted Heather Bouslog in that division to advise of the situation.

**Corrections to Gateway Signs:** Peter reported that correction to the Gateway signs had been discussed at the previous evening’s Town Council meeting, with particular focus on punctuation. Wendy cautioned that some of the recent back-and-forth emails between TC members were not limited to punctuation but rather changes had been made to her suggested “Historic District” wording. Peter assured that Wendy’s wording will be used (possibly to include punctuation). He will get sign-off from the mayor to proceed with corrections to the three existing signs, at a cost of \$2,000. The original cost of the signs was \$15,000.

## Lake Committee

### Gray Yachup

No official updates due to winter committee recess.

## Lighting Committee

### Barbara Raimondo

The Committee and the Mayor had a meeting with Pepco on November 10th in the Town Hall in Washington Grove. Pepco initiated this meeting. The topics were:

- Understanding of where the Town of Washington Grove is at in relation to the streetlight ownership process, and
- The opportunity to address any direct concerns.

This discussion was very useful, but there is still a very long way to go in the process of negotiation.

We will be meeting again next week on December 14th. Pepco has also scheduled a virtual meeting for December 14th at 1 pm to continue the discussions surrounding streetlight ownership process.

## Maintenance

### Darrell Anderson

Nothing to report this month.

## Maryland Municipal League

### Barbara Raimondo

Councilors Cosson and Raimondo have attended recent meetings, including the legislative dinner. Common interests include public lighting and social justice. During the legislative dinner Dave and Barb met the Gaithersburg mayor and a Councilor, and many other state and local representatives. The MML president expressed her interest in working with the Town on the covenants legislation and also shared information with attendees. An MML member involved in the streetlight issue said she didn't see much prospect of legislation on the subject in the coming session, but did expect Pepco to file a new tariff with the Public Service Commission.

## 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, and we are waiting on the other.

An electrical line came down near Town Hall. Kathy Lehman and Steve Werts contacted Pepco to fix the line; reset the alarm; had the battery for the generator recharged; and took care of many tasks that became necessary as a result of the line coming down. Now all is well.

## **Montgomery Municipal Cable**

### **Gray Yachup**

MMC continues to create and film original content around Montgomery County and provided coverage of the Town of Kensington's Council meeting. MMC also filmed the promo video for the Montgomery County Thanksgiving Parade.

## **Planning Commission**

### **Christine Dibble**

- No new permit applications.
- The PC has been grappling with issues related to residents of historic homes wanting to purchase Town-owned land on which portions of their homes are encroaching. The PC will send the Council a memo outlining PC requirements for considering such purchases.
- The PC also discussed steps to ensure that all occupants of owner-occupied group housing are safe (e.g., all bedrooms and sleeping rooms have at least one operable outside window or an exterior door that provides a safe, unobstructed means of escape and which can be approved for emergency egress or rescue, and any escape windows have not been barred).

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

### **Barbara Raimondo**

In November, the Town's first collection of Restrictive Covenant Modifications were filed in the Land Records for Montgomery County in accordance with the advice from Town Attorney, Suellen Ferguson. The packet contains documents of six properties signed by the property owners. Since this is the Town's first submission of such actions, we will request feedback from the Clerk regarding any recommendations to help facilitate processing of follow-on submissions.

Delegate Kirill Reznik has begun discussions with the Maryland Municipal League and Maryland Association of Counties regarding legislation to modify the Maryland Code to allow submissions with only the mayor's signature on behalf of the Town. These groups are supportive but cannot take an official position until their legislative committees meet to review pending legislation. Kirill also has spoken with Senator Nancy King, who is supportive. He has requested a bill draft, and he and Nancy plan to cross-file the bill.

**Housing.** The second and third ADU programs were held with Montgomery County Planning Department and Permitting Department officials and Nick Patten, housing attorney, respectively. MoCo is slowly reducing barriers via ordinances and permitting process to promote easier building of ADUs. They also want to be responsive to community concerns, so they are maintaining regulations concerning parking and safety. Future initiatives will include investigating ways to promote diversity possibly through ADU incentives. During the discussion portion, the mayor encouraged the WG Planning Commission to prioritize discussions regarding ADUs and to proceed incrementally as the county is doing.

**Neighboring Communities: Emory Grove/Washington Grove (EG/WG).** Heritage Emory Grove is now established as a non-profit entity. There are 25 people on the board from surrounding communities. Habitat for Humanity and the Housing Opportunities Commission are working with Heritage Emory Grove.

The vision includes the building of a new, diverse community that embodies the original Emory Grove community values and serves all age groups. The project has been embraced by the county executive and is expected to be a multi-year project. Ideas will be solicited from communities and reconciliation with neighbors is part of the plan.

**Town Anti-Racist Statement.** The draft resolution, statement, reference list, and letter of review from a town historian was shared with the committee. Suggestions were made and there is planned to be a vote during the December meeting regarding ratification. Then comments will be solicited from the Historic Preservation Committee. The documents will eventually be submitted to the Town Council and there will be a period of time for community comments as well.

**Council Updates Related to RASEC.** During the December Town Council meeting, Town employee holidays will be discussed. RASEC believes that holidays represent

values and that since we are in the process of reconciliation with Emory Grove, formal observance of Juneteenth as well as Indigenous Peoples' Day is a symbol of our future intentions and should be designated as employee holidays. RASEC would like the Town Council to include these days as scheduled holidays.

***Storytelling Project.*** If implemented, this project would relate to RASEC's neighboring communities and education goals of building trust and getting to know each other. People from WG and neighboring communities would be invited to share stories around a theme. We may meet several times and have different themes. We will continue to work to develop this project.

## Recreation Committee

### Eva Patrone

Neighbors gathered at McCathran Hall on Saturday, Dec. 10 to watch the livestream of the annual WG Holiday Show, "Clueless in the Grove: A Musical and a Mystery."

## Recreational Facilities

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

### Eva Patrone

#### Edible Garden:

- Planted garlic on November 11, just before the first frost. Garlic was shallow planted and covered with a good layer of loose straw. Ready to harvest end June 2023.
- The purple sweet potatoes finished curing and were sorted into three piles: donations to Manna (23 pounds, delivered on November 17); not good enough for Manna but the volunteers can try them (about 2-1/2 pounds); and for the compost pile.
- Most of the garden will remain in cover crop over the winter. Next year they anticipate planting the short rows with potatoes in row one, nearest the shed, then two rows of tomatoes, then two of greens under row covers and finally a row of sweet potatoes, growing perpendicular to the long bed. They will be looking for volunteers to start some of the seedlings at home.
- The garden will be worked more intensively next year, and the group is actively looking for volunteers, especially for harvesting.

## Roads and Walkways

### Gray Yachup

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 this month.

## Stormwater Management

### Gray Yachup

See the Woods Committee update.

## Sustainability Committee

### Dave Cosson

The Sustainability Committee met on December 6<sup>th</sup> by Zoom and discussed the following (based on the chair's notes, as I was attending the MML Legislative Dinner):

**Green Team.** The Green Team met by zoon on November 28. First discussed was the status of Community Solar and the procedure for potential enrollment of Town electric accounts. Next, the process of preparing the certification documents for Sustainable Maryland was reviewed. The Team expects to have a rough draft by the end of January.

**Sustainable Maryland.** The discussion continued as to how best to adapt information on the Town website and in the Committee's Google Drive to meet the requirement for Sustainable Maryland certification.

**Renewable Electricity.** Utility Advisors, with guidance from a committee member, is developing a custom website for Grove Residents to use in signing up for various community solar programs. The Committee has recommended that the Council pre-

approve action by Utility Advisors to obtain a “slot” for the municipal accounts on a community solar program if and when one becomes available.

**Changes to Refrigerant Standards.** Some refrigerants currently in use in heat pumps will begin a phase out process in 2023, but that should not deter residents from converting to heat pumps now.

**Community Inventory of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions.** The Committee continues its efforts to accurately inventory GHGs using an ICLEI program by gathering data on all material sources.

**County Decarbonization Legislation.** On November 29<sup>th</sup>, the County Council passed a decarbonization bill to limit use of oil or gas in new construction. Several modifications to the introduced bill were adopted over the objection of the County Executive which extended the effective date and created what he called exemptions for what he called “frivolous” uses such as gas fireplaces and outdoor fire pits.

**Maryland Greenhouse Gas Abatement Survey.** A draft of a final survey by utilities on GHG abatement indicates substantial shortfall of goals established by the legislature. The final report will be filed next month.

**Montgomery County Food Council.** A Committee member will be working with the Food Council’s Environmental Impact Working Group to develop ways to reduce food waste and encourage local food production.

**Climate Action Plan.** The Committee is reviewing its 2022 Climate Action Plan to identify actions accomplished and identify new requirements in order to develop a revised plan for 2023.

## Website and Communications

### Christine Dibble

New content:

- Posts:
  - Washington Grove – A Comfortable Summer Resort
  - Maintenance and Groundskeeping Guidance for All Residents: Who to Contact?

- Pages:
  - Gateway Committee
- PDFs:
  - November 2022 Report of the WG Connector Liaison Committee
  - Guidance for Landscaping and Maintenance Task Requests
  - Agendas and minutes for Council, HPC, Planning Commission; Council Reports
- Home page features:
  - Upcoming events of note (e.g., Film Society event, leaf collection ends, Holiday Show)
  - Toys for Tots box
  - Notices from the Mayor box

## Woods Committee

### Dave Cosson

The Woods Committee met on December 5th by Zoom and discussed the following:

**Deer Management.** A total of three does have been harvested so far, which allows the hunters to now take a buck. The Committee discussed the importance of enforcement of the dog leash requirements and noted that no further incidents have been reported in the last month of off leash dogs disrupting the hunters.

**Fall Workday.** The November 12 event was considered successful. Seven residents participated in activities such as repairing the fencing adjacent to the Maple Trail bridge, spreading wood chips where needed, cutting greenbrier and clearing blocked culverts.

**Stormwater RFP.** Following Council approval subject to edits, the RFP has been revised to incorporate the changes. Remaining tasks include revising the map to eliminate the references to zoning and to identify and update the list of potential vendors. It was expected that these actions will be completed prior to the Town Council meeting December 12<sup>th</sup>.

**West Woods Trails Gully Crossings.** Alternatives such as bridging, installing culverts, or constructing rock steps to improve the safety of two Poplar Trail gully

crossings in the West Woods were discussed. The Committee decided it should wait for engineering recommendations expected from the Stormwater RFP so as not to limit those alternatives.

**East Woods Bridge Repairs.** Some deterioration of the bridge on the Cherry Trail was noted. The Committee will further evaluate the need for repair or replacement.

**Washington Grove Lane Guard Rails.** Initial contact with responsible County official was established to request installation of guard rails to protect the West Woods ditches adjacent to the culverts under Washington Grove Lane. Follow up will be made to seek commitment to the installation.

**Tree City Application.** Changes requested by DNR in the application for recognition as a “Tree City” have been made and the application will be resubmitted.

**Next Meeting:** January 2, 2023.