

Town Council Reports for March 2023 Council Meeting

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Conservation Meadow

Dave Cosson

The County has completed its annual mowing in the Meadow, leaving a portion adjoining lower Brown St. standing. The bollard replacement and other tasks agreed to last year remain in the pipeline. In the lower meadow (Piedmont Crossing Local Park) the State DOT has not yet repaired the whole in the fence adjoining the I-370 ramp, allowing deer to access the highway.

Contracts

Dave Cosson

The ongoing evaluation of the Stormwater RFP responses is discussed in the Woods Committee section, below. Responses to the Landscape RFP will be opened at the March Council meeting. Informational meetings with two potential bidders on that RFP are discussed in the Sustainability section, below.

Dog Park Committee

Christine Dibble

The Dog Park Committee met on February 23. We discussed:

- Organization of play groups
- Scheduling a spring cleanup
- Informing/marketing to new residents
- Scheduling a Memorial Day weekend event to welcome everyone to the park
- Scheduling monthly “Yappy hours” during the summer

Emergency Preparedness and Safety Committee (EPSC)

Sylvie Favret

The Emergency Preparedness and Safety Committee (EPSC) meet on February 23rd and discussed our overall approach to reviewing and providing comments on the Montgomery County Hazard Mitigation Plan (2018) for Town Council consideration. The Town's comments will be submitted to the County per their request from municipalities for inclusion in the 2018 Plan update.

The Committee also reflected on the recent train derailment in East Palestine, OH and our concerns for the CSX rail line running adjacent to our Town. This potential hazard risk issue had been discussed several years ago and one of our past Committee members made an effort to communicate with CSX and County officials on their hazard mitigation and response plans. The EPSC recommends to revisit this communication for current updates.

The next EPSC meeting is scheduled on March 23rd.

Forestry & Beautification Committee

Barbara Raimondo

Structural pruning of 15 young trees was done by Davey Tree Experts on February 29. Georgette and Jay watched the work to see how it was done and learn more about the pruning process. We agreed the results were positive and we would select another group of trees for FY24. However, it might be better to do this type of pruning in the late fall after the trees are dormant and the ground is firm, rather than in the spring when the ground can be muddy, and the tree sap is starting to flow.

The Committee discussed Mayor Compton's idea for doubling the number of trees installed by planting two next to each other with the intention of removing the weaker one after 15-20 years. We feel trees planted too closely grow smaller/weaker and do not generate the "specimen trees" we encourage in our parks and avenues. A compromise might be to "double up" on some of the upper canopy trees in areas where we could plant them at least 20 feet apart. Planting the same tree in a similar site would reduce the planning needed and make watering and post-planting supervision easier. The eventual canopy overlap would be acceptable, and both of the trees would be retained going forward. We decided to work on trees along Chestnut Avenue this spring. There is enough space there for a larger number of trees and some of this type of planting could be done. An F&B group walk is scheduled for March 19 at 2 pm to select locations and potential tree types.

We discussed the Sustainability Committee's proposed talk by Doug Tallamy. This is an excellent idea and F&B will gladly join the Woods Committee in co-sponsoring it if the Sustainability Committee feels it would be appropriate. It seems a natural synergy to support the talk since F&B and the Woods Committee will be instrumental in implementing suggestions Mr. Tallamy has for coping with non-native invasives and deer browse in our parks and woods.

Our next F&B Committee meeting will be on Wednesday April 12.

Gateway Committee

Eva Patrone

- **Identity Fencing Updates – West Woods**
 - Peter met with RJ to discuss starting with the fence at the bus stop, as well as cleaning up the platform there. RJ said he could do that but hasn't given an updated price (because the last quote was incorrect).
 - Peter suggested that instead of doing all four identity fences now, start with the bus stop fence and do the rest later.
- **WG Lane:** A suggestion was made about removing the concrete aprons on Washington Grove Lane (the ones that don't lead to driveways and/or lead to driveways that aren't being used). Replace them with permeable surfaces – there are programs sponsored by the County to do this. Discussion followed.

- **Street and Walkway signage:** “Walkway only” signs will be ordered for places that need them.
- **4th Avenue and Grove Avenue updates:** Mayor approved putting dirt and gravel on 4th Avenue. Waiting on approval for Grove Ave. because of water concerns and also because it was decided to take the tree down that is in the middle of the walkway. Might be better to wait until the spring to do Grove Ave.
- **Gaithersburg Shared Use Path Presentation**
 - Peter shared the PowerPoint from the “Brown Street to Diamond Ave” presentation.
 - Members of the Committee liked Option 2 the best – would only cause the loss of one parking space, would be the safest, and would allow for plantings and trees.
- **Action Items**
 - Jonathon will use County request form to request shelters at all bus stops in Washington Grove
 - Peter will check with Susan about what street and walkway signs she has.
 - Peter will contact Tatiana, the owner of Commercial Corner, and offer to assist financially in moving the dumpster.

Historic Preservation Commission

Rob Gilmore

No report this month.

Lake Committee

Sylvie Favret

The Lake Committee met on February 16 and discussed:

Wildlife: The committee will monitor wildlife at the lake – geese at the moment but also turtles, beavers, bees, fish, etc.

Maintenance: Workdays will be scheduled for Lake Committee members to fix fencing/barbed wire, work on cables for video cameras, water seal dock new boards, check compressor and bubblers, check sheds and equipment.

Pond Water Management: NatureWorksCWA has provided algae and pond weed control until now but announced that they will no longer work in Maryland. The committee is investigating a replacement. Water Testing Labs continues to provide testing for *e. coli* monthly from May through August.

Lifeguards, Lake Guards and Swim Instructor: This summer, Tom and Jean will handle the timesheets. Call Tom Land or John Hutchinson for details on hiring lifeguards and lake guards, call Sung Chang and John H. about the swim instructor.

RASEC: The committee will continue using the sign and lake rules translated in Spanish last year and also will monitor the possible need for training lifeguards on de-escalation.

Important Dates:

- The annual lake cleanup will be on **Saturday, April 15th at 10 AM.**
- Change to Lake Committee Meetings day: Second Tuesday of every month through September. **Next meeting is Tuesday, March 14th, 2023 at 7:30pm.**

Lighting Committee

Barbara Raimondo

Maryland Municipal League (MML): MML has informed us of its support for HB 459, the streetlight ownership bill.

Maintenance

John Compton

No report this month.

Maryland Municipal League

Barbara Raimondo

No report this month.

McCathran Hall

John Compton

No report this month.

Montgomery Municipal Cable

Sylvie Favret

No report this month.

Planning Commission

Christine Dibble

- Addition to 405 Brown Street approved.
- Pool addition to 103 Brown should be approved next meeting (received too late to approve this month)

- EV chargers - Peter met with representatives of many teams from PEPCO. The planning process has begun. We expect that it will not end until late summer or early fall.
- The PC is reviewing four-page proposal from HPC re: preservation/demolition ordinance plan.
- We are reviewing existing regulations (usually health and safety) that, if enforced, will help prevent demolition by neglect
- We are reviewing MoCo regulations for ADUs.
- We drafted a letter for review and signature by the mayor pro tem re: enforcing setback requirements at 412 4th Avenue (Foreman).

Racial and Social Equity Committee (RASEC)

Barbara Raimondo

Anti-Racism Resolution: This resolution was introduced at the February 13 Town Council meeting. A Special Town Council Meeting to hear public input is scheduled for March 27th and Town Council consideration of the resolution is scheduled for the April 10th Town Council meeting.

Educational Programs:

Deconstructing Karen

More information is soon to come on an upcoming event to watch and discuss this documentary.

Segregated by Design

We will have a forum on discriminatory housing policies and their lasting impacts, tentatively called “Segregated by Design,” on March 25th 1-4pm. We will watch a short film, followed by 3-4 expert speakers, and Q&A.

Financial: We reviewed the proposed budget for July 23-June 24, including \$7000 for community-building events and \$500 for administrative expenses and ~\$120 expense for the restricted covenant modification project (first class mailing to 120 households). Proposed budget passed.

For the Segregated by Design forum, we reviewed the event budget. Committee approved expenditures out of this year’s budget of up to \$1100.

Survey Results: Two committee members have done excellent work deciding on a data analysis plan and getting an initial glimpse into the data. Work is still in progress.

They presented a subset of the data, including demographics and the first few survey items (overall desirability of living in WG; ratings of the importance and quality of various town attributes). There were 123 responses, which represents a response rate >20%.

We discussed the challenge of handling comments, as they can be highly informative but can in many cases be too revealing of individual identities. A word cloud is one solution to presenting qualitative data while protecting privacy.

Parts of the results will be shared with the Town Council and available publicly.

Covenants: Legislation is in MD House and Senate.

Washington Grove Lane Cleanup: A joint new Emory Grove/Washington Grove project to clean-up Washington Grove Lane is in the planning stages.

Recreation Committee

Eva Patrone

- Emily Cavey will be stepping down as head of the Rec Committee after the Music Weekend in June. She is planning to have a meeting for those interested in helping with Summer in the Parks this year, as well as a meeting for the entire Rec Committee to discuss plans for once she steps down. TBD when these meetings will be held.
- Weekly yoga is back in the Grove! Town resident and certified yoga instructor Rachel Schwartz is offering a free yoga class on Tuesday evenings from 6-7pm in McCathran Hall. Rachel practices Ashtanga and teaches a vinyasa (flow) class with modifications for all levels. Yoga will be offered every Tuesday in March, and if there's interest Rachel will continue teaching weekly classes, sponsored by the Rec Committee. POC: Eva.

Recreational Facilities

(Woodward Park, Playground and Tennis Courts)

Eva Patrone

Eva got estimates from Jim of RJ Landscaping on two solutions to reduce muddiness at the playground:

- creating a wood-timber-surrounded wood-chip area under the picnic tables —\$3,355.00
- re-grading some of the low-lying spots in the playground area by bringing in more dirt and reseeding the grass — \$2690.00

Jim then said he found a way to do the picnic table area for less money, so Eva is waiting to get that new estimate. Jean (Treasurer) said there was enough money in the budget for these two projects, so Eva will seek approval from the Mayor and hope to get these projects started soon.

Roads and Walkways

Sylvie Favret

No report this month.

Shady Grove Crossing

Barbara Raimondo

No report this month.

Stormwater Management

Sylvie Favret

No report this month.

Sustainability Committee

Dave Cosson

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

Earth Day Planning: Logistics and communications issues for Earth Day programs on Saturday, April 22 were discussed in detail. Programs will include a Kid's Scavenger Hunt, Yard Waste Composting Display, visits to the Community Garden and a Meatless Potluck Dinner. The dinner will be in McCathran Hall, where vendor displays may also be located in event of inclement weather.

On April 19th Alan Pultyniewicz will give a Zoom talk on composting and recycling.

Landscape RFP Status: Bids are due March 10, to be opened at Council meeting March 13. Two potential bidders have been given Town walk-arounds at their request, one of which says it will use all electric equipment.

2023 Climate Action Plan: Components of a draft update of the prior plan were reviewed and revised and the setting and meeting of goals discussed. The attached plan (see the end of this document) was adopted by the Committee.

Green Team: The Green Team is finalizing the request for certification by Sustainable Maryland and plans to submit it no later than May in order to be ahead of the end of June deadline.

Town participation in Community Solar: Utility Advisors provided a sample contract prepared by Arcadia Power under which the Town would purchase credits against its Pepco bill (except streetlights) from a solar operator at a 5% discount. Although this agreement is more clearly written than others, there are several substantive issues to discuss with Utility Advisors before determining whether to recommend the Town sign the agreement.

Electric Vehicle Chargers: A meeting was held March 1st with Pepco representatives at the Center Street parking lot where the chargers will be installed. Pepco expects to begin construction later in the month and to have the stations ready for use sometime between May 8 and 12th. A potential ribbon cutting ceremony was discussed.

Leaf Management: Legislation is being considered by the County to phase out gasoline powered leaf blowers, but current status was not available at meeting time. At least one of the potential bidders on the Landscaping RFP has indicated it would use all electric equipment.

An outline of potential steps to reduce the volume of leaves picked up and carried off from both Town and residential property was discussed. Alternatives include mulching in place and composting in place or centrally. The Committee will be seeking expert advice and planning communications to educate and encourage residents to reduce or eliminate the volume of leaves pushed to the curb. The Committee will coordinate with F&B as to Town lawn areas.

Doug Tallamy Webinar: The Committee is coordinating with the Woods Committee and F&B to arrange a Webinar lecture for Town Residents by Doug Tallamy. Tallamy is a professor in the Entomology and Wildlife Ecology Department at the University of Delaware and founder of [Homegrown National Park](#). The mission of that organization is to “regenerate biodiversity and ecosystem function.” Members of the both the Sustainability and Woods Committees have heard him talk and highly recommend him. The Committees are looking for a date in May or June that doesn’t conflict with other Town activities and when Dr. Tallamy is available.

Grant Writer Search: The Committee approved a notice seeking a grant writer who could provide assistance in obtaining funding for the Town’s sustainability efforts. Further work will explore ways and means to make the request known to qualified individuals. The recent designation of the Town as a “Tree City” is expected to increase the number of potential grants available.

The next meeting will be April 4, 2023.

Website and Communications

Christine Dibble

New content:

- Completed major update of the metadata for all 1,800+ media items (images and documents)
- Began development of a new page that houses a table with links to Planning Commission evaluations of applications for building permits and subdivision plans
- Agendas and minutes for Council, HPC, Planning Commission; Council Reports; Town Bulletin
- Home page features/announcements:
 - Notice from the mayor re: proposed RASEC resolution
 - Yoga returns to the Grove
 - Upcoming events of note
 - Collections of yard waste and leaves
 - Updated the carousel/gallery of images
 - How Do I...? box

Woods Committee

Dave Cosson

The Woods Committee met on March 6th by Zoom and discussed the following:

Earth Day/Arbor Day. Committee Co-chairs have proposed to Sustainability and Forest and Beautification Committees that they co-sponsor a webinar for the Town by ecologist Doug Tallamy. He is an excellent speaker and very knowledgeable about restoring land to its state prior to the introduction of invasive species. The Webinar is planned for May or June. A Woods Committee workday may be scheduled for Arbor Day.

150th Anniversary Project—Restoration of Whetstone Spring. RJ Landscaping quoted a price of \$2,600 for the work. At Mayor Compton's request the Committee will arrange for drawing to be created of the proposed result. It will be based on historic photographs of the spring. A commemorative plaque will be designed and permanently fixed to a large boulder to protect from vandalism. The work would be completed in time for an August dedication planned by the 150th Anniversary Committee.

Trail Maintenance and Repair. RJ Landscaping has rebuilt the Cherry Trail bridge over the East Woods drainage ditch.



Residents have notified the Committee that an East Woods oak tree on the border of Ridge Road Extended (across from Mike Shank's house) shows signs of disease at the trunk base and poses a threat to the power lines along the roadside should the tree fall in that direction. The tree has been monitored and treated for a destructive insect infestation. The Committee co-chairs consulted with Tom Laws who recommended removing 2 large limbs overhanging the road to rebalance the tree so it would fall into the woods. Tom Laws may be asked to chainsaw the trunk of a large tree that fell across and is blocking the western end of Poplar Trail in the West Woods,

Discussions are planned with the stormwater management director in Gaithersburg to repair an obstructed culvert at the border of the West Woods and Kelley Park. The original metal culvert collapsed 2 years ago. It was removed and the site filled with gravel which now obstructs a stream outflow and results in back flooding into the West Woods.

Stormwater RFP - Three bids with significant price differences were received and opened at the February Town Council meeting. Bidders were Soltesz at \$15,000; Bayland at \$55,960; and Dewberry at \$161,669. A Soltesz representative was contacted for clarification regarding the lack of detail in the proposal bid submitted. The other bidding companies will be contacted for clarification on their bid estimates. The City of Gaithersburg's stormwater manager was contacted as a reference for all of these bidding companies. Additional references may be contacted by the co-chairs. A comparison spreadsheet will be prepared and submitted to the Town Council for the March meeting.

The next Woods Committee meeting is scheduled for Monday, April 3rd.

Washington Grove Sustainability Committee

2023 Climate Action Plan

- I. Greenhouse Gas Emissions Mitigation Path
 - A. Update Plan, Data, and Set Goals
 1. Set plan framework
 - a) Review other climate action plans
 2. Set Goals and Measure Emissions Progress (Collecting Data)
 - a) Update baseline GHG inventory spreadsheet
 - (1) Total carbon debt starting (from 1-1-2021)
 - (2) Annual CO₂ produced and sequestered
 - (3) Project the value of mitigation strategies
 - b) Set short- and medium-term quantitative goals for CO₂ reduction in the following sectors:
 - (1) Heating/cooling
 - (2) Power
 - (3) Transportation
 - (4) Waste
 - (5) Sequestration
 - (6) Others?
 - B. Choose Actions and Develop Plans for CO₂ Reduction Achievable in Next 12 Months
 1. Municipal (Town) Actions
 - a) Promote conversion of municipal accounts to renewable electricity
 - b) Plan for energy audits and retrofits for Town buildings
 - c) Explore municipal conversion to electric vehicle equipment
 - d) Develop municipal yard waste/composting policy
 - e) Explore forest and field sequestration
 2. Residential (private) Actions
 - a) Increase % converting to renewable electricity
 - b) Encourage energy audits of residences
 - c) Promote conversion of residences from fossil fuels to electricity
 - d) Encourage purchase of EVs
 - e) Composting yard and food waste
 - f) Encourage reduction of gas-powered homeowner yard equipment
 - g) Develop community garden

II. Sustainable Maryland Action Plan

A. Submit for certification

III. Communication and Education Actions

A. WG Community Education

1. Use established communication vehicles
 - a) Website: continue enhancement of site including Kids Corner and other new features
 - b) Bulletin: continue monthly articles: relevant to residents, timely
 - c) Listserv: continue regular posting of tips, etc. Solicit responses from residents
 - d) Annual presentation to Town
2. Establish new communications vehicles and activities
 - a) Speaker series: (need topics)
 - b) Establish subcommittee of residents to promote family-oriented climate actions
 - c) Town events: Activities for Earth Day (April 22)
 - d) Commend/award people's adopting actions

IV. Ongoing Coordination

A. Town Committees to tap relevant expertise and plan joint activities

1. Woods, Forestry and Beautification, Lake
2. HPC, Streetlighting
3. Emergency Preparation

B. Montgomery County and Other Nearby Communities

1. MoCo Climate Action
2. Gaithersburg, Poolesville, Rockville, Amity
3. Montgomery Green
4. Montgomery County Food Council

C. Statewide organizations

1. MEA, MDE Climate Change Programs
2. Maryland Coalition of Cities and Counties for Climate Action (MC4A)
3. Maryland Municipal League