

Town Council Reports for April 2023 Council Meeting

Table of Contents

Conservation Meadow	2
Contracts	2
Dog Park Committee.....	2
Emergency Preparedness and Safety Committee (EPSC).....	2
Forestry & Beautification Committee	2
Gateway Committee	3
Historic Preservation Commission	4
Lake Committee	4
Lighting Committee.....	4
Maintenance.....	5
Maryland Municipal League	5
McCathran Hall	5
Montgomery Municipal Cable.....	6
Planning Commission	6
Racial and Social Equity Committee (RASEC)	6
Recreation Committee.....	8
Roads and Walkways.....	9
Shady Grove Crossing.....	9
Stormwater Management.....	9
Sustainability Committee	9
Website and Communications	11
Woods Committee.....	11

Conservation Meadow

Dave Cosson

The County completed mowing both meadows, including the area adjoining lower Brown Street that had not been mowed as of last month's report. Sticks that we threaded through the fence in the lower meadow adjoining the I-370 ramp to prevent deer from getting on the highway were removed, indicating humans are using the hole to access the meadow. A follow-up call to the State Highway Department will be made.

Contracts

Dave Cosson

A report and recommendation on the bids under the Stormwater RFP will be submitted to the Council for its action. Further information is in the Woods Committee report.

Dog Park Committee

Christine Dibble

No report this month.

Emergency Preparedness and Safety Committee (EPSC)

Sylvie Favret

The Emergency Preparedness and Safety Committee (EPSC) met on March 23 and continued to discuss our overall approach to reviewing and providing comments on the Montgomery County Hazard Mitigation Plan (2018) for Town Council consideration. Submission deadline to the Town Council is mid-April.

The committee suggested that the mayor ask the County about the issues and actions taken following the June 2006 flood and dam failure at Lake Needwood.

The committee also asked that the mayor reopen the case of Roberts Oxygen about their storage practices and changes over the last few years.

The committee continued the discussion of CSX rail line and potential hazard risk issue and whether CSX is notifying the town when dangerous freight is transported.

Forestry & Beautification Committee

Barbara Raimondo

An F&B group walk was done on March 21 at 2 pm to select locations and potential tree types. Based on the map we generated that day, two trips to Stadler purchased in the specific trees to

be planted. We chose four understory, two intermediate (holly and river birch) and seven upper canopy. These 13 trees will be installed by Stadler on April 10.

We continue to work with the Sustainability Committee on the plans for Doug Tallamy's talk later this summer. His suggestions for coping with our non-native invasives and deer overbrowsing will be most welcome.

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

Gateway Committee

Eva Patrone

A meeting was held via Zoom on March 16 at 7:30 pm; next meeting will be April 20 at 7:30 pm.

- Shelters were requested for the most heavily trafficked bus stops on Washington Grove Lane and Railroad Street, and benches/improvements requested for all other bus stops. The County put these on their to-do list, but there is a backlog, so it likely won't happen any time soon.
- The Welcome Sign updates are in progress.
- RJ will install identity fencing at the bus stop on Washington Grove Lane next to the lake entrance.
- Waiting to hear back from the County about putting up guardrails to address the problem of the culverts along Washington Grove Lane (where the yellow caution tape is).
- The committee plans to have monthly trash pick-up "parties" along Railroad St. and Washington Grove. Safety vests have been ordered, and there are safety cones in the maintenance shed. The committee will have a sign-up sheet at the town Earth Day event.
- Still waiting to get 4th Avenue graveled.
- The committee discussed budgeting expenses for the next fiscal year including;
 - Fencing
 - Signs
 - Assistance with dumpster removal from Commercial Corner
 - Possible concrete aprons removal from Washington Grove Lane
 - Trash pick-up
 - Further beautification for Oak and Center
 - Safety improvements on Washington Grove Lane.
- The committee discussed how the Gateway Committee could get involved with 150th Celebration activities.

Historic Preservation Commission

Rob Gilmore

On Tuesday, March 21, 2023, the Historic Preservation Committee (HPC) met by zoom, starting at 7:30 p.m. and adjourning approximately two hours later. After reviewing and approving the agenda and minutes from the prior meeting, the HPC then discussed the planning for the Town's 150-Year Anniversary Celebration. Following that, there was discussion of the introduction of the RASEC Committee's antiracism resolution before the Town Council. Bob Booher shared a draft of a proposed statement from the HPC commenting on the antiracism resolution. There was significant discussion of the proposed statement, including comments from Wendy Harris, who shared her perspective as a historian, the Town archivist, and someone involved in similar activities in her town in New York; and also from Rob Gilmore, who shared his reactions from the perspective of a Town Councilor.

Lake Committee

Sylvie Favret

The Maple Lake Committee met on March 14. Meetings have changed to the 2nd Tuesday of every month.

The annual cleanup will be on Saturday, April 15th at 10 am. Rain date is Sunday, April 16th at noon.

A pair of geese has nested. We use the Humane Society's protocol to humanely prevent eggs from hatching in the spring.

The Lake Committee continues to look for lifeguards, lake guards and a swim instructor.

Tuesday, April 11th meeting will be a hybrid meeting; in-person and by Zoom in the Council Room.

Lighting Committee

Barbara Raimondo

HB459 was approved in the MD General Assembly House and now has moved to the Senate. Though this could be good news, at Pepco's request an amendment was added that would need to be removed or it will be a problem going forward. Since this enabling legislation would give Maryland municipalities the option to modernize their outdated streetlights and save energy and money, this bill has been supported by many environmental groups. Several members of the Lighting Committee agreed to try to get more support for this bill in the Senate by contacting other environmental groups and municipalities. Virginia promised to send some draft templates of support letters and background to Bob Booher and Anne Vincent.

We looked at Dave Cosson's counter proposal and the draft letter of support for the Senate version of HB459 from Mayor John Compton.

Small group negotiations with Pepco with Suellen Ferguson, George Woodbury, David Cosson, and Andy Leon Hardy have been continuing through the month of March. Progress in these negotiations have been slow and that may be partially due to everyone waiting to see the outcome of the impending legislation - HB459. And, also because Pepco is continuing their "foot dragging."

We discussed Pepco's response to Virginia's question about union vs. non-union. Pepco at one point wanted to add an additional obstacle to municipal street light ownership by insisting that any field survey or make ready work would have to be done by union personnel only. However, it turns out that a good percentage of Pepco's maintenance work is done by non-union personnel. Virginia's research revealed that Pepco has used and continues to use a lot of non-union personnel for their street light maintenance. This information has helped in having Pepco drop that contingency.

Maintenance

John Compton

The 2023-2025 Landscape and Maintenance Service contract has been signed and RJ Landscaping (RJL) has been at work under the contract in Town since April 1. A new part-time maintenance coordinator position at five hours per week has been proposed in the FY24 budget. Responsibilities will be monitoring maintenance needs on Town property and supervising work performed by RJL and other contractors.

Maryland Municipal League

Rob Gilmore

MML is planning its upcoming conference June 25 - 28.

McCathran Hall

John Compton

Comcast internet service has proven erratic at times. Though the service is free to the Town as part of the existing municipal cable agreement, this is not expected to continue when the renewal agreement is negotiated. High-speed Verizon Fios service has been reliable for a number of town residential users. Fios service is being considered to replace Comcast with the goal of increasing reliability and enhance access to the high-speed internet throughout the Hall.

Montgomery Municipal Cable

Sylvie Favret

Nothing to report this month.

Planning Commission

Christine Dibble

- 103 Brown Street--basement swimming pool approved
- 215 Washington Grove Lane--fence permit
- EV chargers - two bollards will be removed following a discussion with the contractor. Grand Opening tentatively scheduled for Earth Day.
- The PC is reviewing four-page proposal from HPC re: preservation/demolition ordinance plan.
- Peter spoke with Tatiana Bell re: dumpster
- We are reviewing MoCo regulations for ADUs.
- Problematic (i.e., setback-violating) shed at 412 4th Avenue (Foreman) has been removed.

Racial and Social Equity Committee (RASEC)

Barbara Raimondo

March 27 Community Hearing for Anti-Racist Resolution: All were encouraged to attend and to encourage others to attend and speak their views and/or write their statement and send it to washgrove@comcast.net addressed to the mayor and town council.

RASEC Event for 150-Year Anniversary: There are several ideas regarding activities. This discussion was tabled until our May meeting because this activity will be affected by the outcome of the community hearing and the Town Council vote to pass the Resolution which will occur at the April Town Council meeting.

Emory Grove/Washington Grove Roadway Cleaning Project: A town resident along with some Emory Grove residents are willing to organize this joint project. This discussion was tabled until our May meeting because this activity will be affected by the outcome of the community hearing and the Town Council vote to pass the Resolution which will occur at the April Town Council meeting.

Ratification of Expenses for Upcoming Forum “Are we Segregated by Design?”: \$200.00 for posters and flyers. The expense was ratified.

Charlie, who has expertise in facilitating hybrid presentations, offered to help Paul and Chazz and Mimi with the technical side of the forum. His offer was much appreciated.

Subcommittee/Workgroup Updates

Education

Charlie successfully filed the second set of covenant modifications. Now the deeds with the stricken racially restrictive covenant are mailed directly to the homeowners rather than the town as was previously done. Currently 10% of the deeds identified with restrictive covenants have been modified. This process is an opportunity to educate homeowners.

The legislation to remove the covenants in bulk is proceeding with the possibility of giving larger jurisdictions such as counties the ability to remove covenants as a group rather than individual property owners filing individually.

Documentary Viewing and Discussion Project

The dates for this project have been postponed to June.

Communications

The email address is changed on the website to rasec@washingtongroved.org. Messages that go to the old Gmail address are automatically forwarded to the new domain address.

Town Inclusivity

Housing Workgroup. The Planning Commission previously determined that WG could adopt the Montgomery County ADU ordinance and Montgomery County would be responsible for enforcement.

They sought clarification regarding the parking requirements in the Montgomery County ordinance. The MC ordinance does not require on-site parking if the site is within one mile of MARC or Metro. The whole town is within one mile so on-site parking would not be required. This is a concern since most of WG streets are narrow and not suited to a large number vehicles parking on the streets. This issue will be further discussed.

Neighboring Communities

Storytelling Project. The last session was bonding and fun with a variety of stories yet many commonalities. Next sessions: June 15 Topic – Freedom; October 19 Topic – Musical Memories.

Emory Grove/Washington Grove Workgroup. Gretchen Horlacher, a RASEC member, connected Pastor Warner of Emory Grove United Methodist Church and a RASEC member, to a project at the University of Maryland in which faculty and students do landscape architectural projects in small African-American communities. They will work on a project at the Longview School site in Emory Grove.

Paul is facilitating two separate discussion groups which focus on the upcoming Town Anti-Racist Resolution. One group includes WG residents, and the other group includes EG residents. The goal of the WG group discussions is to provide a safe space for people to

express their concerns and support about the Resolution and to explore how that relates to what they value and to understand the views of others. These sessions take place at the WG Methodist Church. The next two sessions are March 15 and April 5 from 7:30 to 9:00 pm. The goal of the EG discussion group is to provide an opportunity for people to express their views about WG and their ideas about joint events.

Upcoming Meetings/Events

Sunday, April 23 2:00 pm - 3:30 pm

Recreation Committee

Eva Patrone

- Eva Patrone has taken over as the Camp Moderator for Summer in the Parks (SITP). Camp will be held weekdays June 27-July 20, with June 26 as a set-up day for staff and no camp on July 4. The overnight camp-out will be the evening of July 21 through the morning of July 22.
- The SITP planning committee is in the process of hiring camp staff and finalizing camp logistics. Camper registration forms and staff/volunteer application forms will be up on the town website very soon.
- Weekly yoga continues in the Grove! After a successful trial period, town resident and certified yoga instructor Rachel Schwartz will continue offering a free yoga class on Tuesday evenings from 6-7pm in McCathran Hall. Class is free for residents and \$10 for non-residents (cash only). Yoga is sponsored by the Rec Committee (POC: Eva Patrone).

Recreational Facilities

(Woodward Park, Playground and Tennis Courts)

Eva Patrone

Playground:

RJ will move forward with two projects at the playground:

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

Eva has asked about timeline – when these projects might happen – and is waiting to hear back.

Community Garden Update:

- Gardeners weeded and planted onions, kale, collards, chard, and mustard green plants, inter-planted with lettuce seeds. All the beds are now planted with veggies except the two still growing the crimson clover cover crop. The clover will provide a burst of color soon,

then they will turn it under to make way for the hot weather crops. The garlic is growing well and will be harvested in June. Plans are to plant winter squash or something else.

- The native plant pollinator garden is filling in.
- The summer season seedlings are growing indoors and there will be some extras to give away on Earth Day.
- F&B discussed with David using bamboo for the garden plot at the tennis courts. They hope the gardeners could cut and use some of the older dead/dried bamboo which doesn't contribute positively to the appearance of the bamboo patch near the maintenance shed. Since some of the green bamboo may also be needed, it would be a good idea to take those from around the architectural feature on the east side of the bamboo grove. In the past Steve has removed bamboo from there so it didn't get overgrown, but it hasn't been done for a few years. So that would also be an excellent place to remove excess bamboo.

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; however, see Woods Committee report.

Sustainability Committee

Dave Cosson

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

150th Anniversary/Earth Day Functions

The Committee reviewed its plans and members responsibilities for Earth Day, April 22 which include a scavenger hunt for children, yard waste composting displays, the Community Garden, a “meatless” potluck dinner followed by screening of the film “No Impact Man” with discussion to follow. There will be collaboration with the Woods and F&B Committees on the scavenger hunt.

A guest speaker will discuss composting. Publicity of the event by multiple means will begin shortly.

Landscape Maintenance Contract

The Committee explored future means to encourage use of battery powered landscaping equipment by the Town's contractor in view of the award to RJ Landscaping that does not plan to convert at present, and the County Council tabling a proposal to restrict the use of gasoline equipment. The potential for using revenue from the sale of existing Town equipment was explored.

Green Team Submission of Application to Sustainable Maryland Status

The Green Team expects to comfortably meet the June 30th deadline for submission of the Town application and has scheduled a zoom call with Sustainable Maryland to learn about formatting of the submission.

Washington Grove Greenhouse Gas Inventory

The Committee reviewed the data collection and analysis on amount and sources of CO² emission that has been done to date. The analysis estimates the total emissions to be about 6K tons and describes the proportionate contribution of the housing, transportation, and food to sectors to the total. The calculation includes the estimated 4% offset of sequestration attributable to the Town's forests. The information has been organized in charts and a PowerPoint slide deck which the Committee will propose be shown during the annual Town Meeting. As the Town Council and residents consider this information, the Committee will be preparing proposals for possible incentives to residents for conversion of fossil fuel heating to heat pumps for the Council's consideration. A potential survey to determine interest in incentives is also under consideration.

Renewable Electricity

Several issues with renewable electricity arrangements were discussed, including involuntary changes of suppliers. The proposal from Arcadia to enroll the Town meters in a Community Solar operation was discussed with Utility Advisors' Kevin Cheung, including the issues of no discount for street light usage, and lack of control over change of suppliers and terms and conditions with billing agent as well as mandatory arbitration. An additional potential supplier has been provided with electric usage data and is expected to submit a proposal.

Dr. Doug Tallamy Talk May 31st

A Committee member has discussed the Town's particular situation and concerns with Dr. Doug Tallamy to assist him in preparation for his talk. More details are in the Woods Committee report.

Grant Writer

Additional venues for advertising the committee's solicitation of a grant writer, some of which are free were discussed. The solicitation will also be posted on Facebook.

The next meeting will be May 2, 2023.

Website and Communications

Christine Dibble

New content:

- Agendas and minutes for Council, HPC, Planning Commission; Council Reports; Town Bulletin
- Posted 25+ comments on the proposed RASEC resolution
- New posts:
 - Sustainability Committee Seeks a Grant Writer
 - Proposed Resolution “Acknowledging Washington Grove’s Racially Exclusionary Past”
- Home page features/announcements:
 - Celebration of Darrell’s life
 - Upcoming events of note
 - Collections of yard waste and leaves
 - SITP

Woods Committee

Dave Cosson

The Woods Committee met by Zoom on April 3, 2023, and discussed the following:

Earth Day Webinar

The Woods Committee will co-sponsor a webinar event with the Sustainability Committee and the Forestry and Beautification Committee featuring Doug Tallamy, nationally known entomologist with the University of Delaware and New York Times best-selling author. The webinar is scheduled for May 31 at 7:30 pm. Dr. Tallamy will discuss how at least a 70% cover of native plants supports native insects and other animals, such as birds, lizards, frogs, and other animals higher up the food chain. Bruce Daggy is soliciting suggestions from Town residents so that the webinar will be particularly relevant to Washington Grove.

Arbor Day Woods Preserves Event

The Woods Committee will sponsor a morning work session in the West Woods on Saturday, April 29 from 9:30 to noon. Volunteers will pick up trash, pull non-native invasives such as garlic mustard, mile a minute, and Japanese barberry. If the newly planted holly trees in the East Woods have not been protected before April 29, some volunteers will fence holly trees along the Frankland Trail to prevent deer over browsing. The WC will ask Mayor Compton to prepare a proclamation for Arbor Day to satisfy this year’s Tree City USA application and will publicize the event as the date approaches.

150th Anniversary Project – Whetstone Spring Restoration

The Woods Committee is looking for a volunteer who can do a drawing of the Whetstone Spring Restoration Project. Mayor Compton has requested the drawing before approving the project costs to move forward. RJ Landscaping has submitted an estimate of \$2,600 for restoration based on a 1961 historic photograph. The Committee would like the restoration to be completed in time for the August 150th Celebration. The HPC requested that archeological data be collected before the project begins and during the restoration itself.

Storm Water Mitigation RFP Update

Woods Committee Co-chairs and our Council Liaison are preparing a comparison sheet of the three bids received for consideration at the April 10 Town Council meeting. In addition to cost, attention will be given to the anticipated time frame for scope of work completion by each bidder. The WC is looking for the most efficient use of time and money for this initial phase to identify and prioritize stormwater mitigation work in the West Woods and western portion of town, considering that the ARPA money must be used by the end of 2024.

Woods Preserves Updates

Mayor Compton requested that the Woods Committee discuss the dedication of a Memorial Section of the Woods Preserves for the formalized distribution of human cremation ashes. The Woods Committee needs more time and information before providing a recommendation to the Mayor and Council such as a written proposal/request from the town resident and evaluation of the legal ramifications. It was agreed that there should be no digging solely to bury cremation ashes in the Woods and no official signage denoting a dedicated area. Several issues were discussed:

- What area(s) would be designated? Would this set a precedent to extend to other public areas of Town (Lake, Parks, etc.)?
- What would be the procedure for permission? Who would process and make decisions on requests?
- Would funeral processions for the distribution of ashes be appropriate?
- How would this use relate to Ordinance 2021-07 and Resolution 2021-02 regarding Permits?
- What are the legal ramifications of an official Memorial Site?

It was agreed that burial customs are changing rapidly and that any decision should be made with discretion, courtesy, and good judgment. It was also pointed out that an informal process by Town residents to discretely and confidentially distribute cremation ashes of family members on town land may be more appropriate.

[*Addendum: WC members sent subsequent comments on the existing town policy for requesting dedicated memorials on public land and if planting ‘legacy trees’ that include the use of cremation ashes in the various Woods and Town Parks locations would be a better way to memorialize our town residents.*]

The Stadler Nurseries will plant a replacement dogwood along the Dogwood Trail for a tree which did not survive the year. Members will tour the East Woods and make suggestions for other tree plantings this spring. Two areas to look at are the top left of the McCauley Trail and the area between Town residences and the Frankland Trail where several large trees have died. Members will talk to Meghan O'Connell about using the remaining \$1850 in the Nicho's Trees Fund to purchase trees for the latter area.

The next Woods Committee meeting will be Monday, May 1st.