

**MINUTES of November 19, 2024 MEETING of the Commission
(via Zoom)**

Adopted December 17, 2024

Members Present: The meeting began at approximately 7:35 p.m. Bob Booher, Bill Earl, Wendy Harris, David Stopak, Mimi Styles, Sam Suzich (alternate) and Barbara Raimondo (TC liaison) were present.

Approval of Agenda

The proposed agenda was unanimously approved.

Adoption of Minutes

The minutes of the October meeting were reviewed, some clarifying modifications were made, and they were unanimously approved.

Review Session

There were no projects submitted for review.

Commemorative Signage

Prior to the meeting, Wendy had distributed photographs of “lost structure” posters that had been made for various tours, including the 150th Anniversary Celebration. Being considered for the commemorative signage project are the following: Tabernacle, Hotel, B&O Passenger Station & Depot, Superintendent’s Cottage, Auditorium, Men’s Athletic Clubhouse and the Girls’ Athletic Association Clubhouse, and possibly the fence as seen from Railroad Street. Wendy presented a photo of a sample commemorative sign that could be a prototype for the project. Next steps will be working up a budget; Samantha and Wendy each have some signage resources to explore. Once cost estimates are obtained, a decision can be made about the number of sites to be included in the next fiscal year’s budget. Samantha said she should be able to do the layout work for the signs. Ownership of the photographs will need to be considered.

Meadow Restoration

Barbara reported on the recent Special Town Council Meeting. Concerned residents were encouraged to work closely with the Meadow Committee and a meeting for those parties has been scheduled. The Meadow Committee is currently ad hoc; there is consideration to make it a permanent committee. Wendy reported that she had participated in the previous Saturday’s meadow walk that had been led by Tom Land. She had brought the Viewshed Analysis document to the walk, and she reinforced to the participants the importance of the meadow’s historic aspect. The groups are working towards a consensus on what trees should be removed.

Vacant House Group

Bob reported that the group is headed by Mary Warfield, joined by Bob, Kris Grisham, and Kathy Lehman. The group’s focus is life safety, rather than demolition of structures “by neglect” (i.e., concern about what is dangerous vs. concern about preservation of vacant houses). Inhabited

houses are not being included. Ordinances from other municipalities, such as Takoma Park, are being reviewed. The group hopes to recommend a draft ordinance, covering residential, commercial and institutional properties, to the Town Council before year's end.

Lighting Committee

Pepco's previous "tariffs" had received pushback from affected municipalities who were unhappy about the type of LED fixtures Pepco presented, along with high conversion fees. The Public Service Commission told Pepco to coordinate with municipalities, and the results are encouraging. The Town will be able to purchase its streetlights. A complete inventory of streetlights has already been made; the poles have been numbered and locations identified. Town streetlights have already been converted to LED (by simply screwing in LED bulbs rather than converting to LED fixtures.) Since most of our streetlights are over 50 years old, they are well depreciated and the cost to Town will be reduced accordingly. Once we own the lights, the question of maintenance will need to be addressed. Maintenance by Pepco, a third-party contractor, or self-maintenance are options. Once we own the lights, we can consider how we might want to modify them; for example, we may wish to change the lighting on the walkways (design and intensity).

Multi-Use Path

Bob reported that the Town has received a 35% design for the path. The path's trajectory and the trees that will need to be removed were reviewed. New landscaping, consisting of native species trees, was also outlined. It is important that the county make provisions for watering the new plantings, so they do not suffer the fate of previous landscaping efforts adjacent to the salt barn. The committee is working on a list of questions to be presented to the county. The county presented two designs for the Picea Court/Ridge Road connection; the shorter, simpler one is preferred. Three different lighting options for the path have also been presented by the county. Town has several questions to present to the county, starting with "is lighting required." If so, we would like it to be "dark sky" compatible. How other paths are illuminated was not immediately known by the committee.

Stormwater Management

There are two projects in Town. The Town Council has awarded a design-build contract for the "in town" project. The contractor's engineer will do the analysis; there will be surveys, soil tests and modeling of flows. The goals are to correct flooding that occurs in town and to slow down stormwater that is being dumped into the West Woods, causing the gully near the lake entrance. The existing asphalt swale and path that starts at the church parking lot simply accelerates water flow. It will be removed in favor of a bio-detention facility plus a walking path. A "wetland" has been identified for the end of Center Street between Hickory and Washington Grove Lane. This portion of Center Street is no longer used as a vehicular entrance to town; the pavement would be removed, and a bio-retention facility constructed.

For the West Woods, the Town is partnering with the Montgomery County Green Bank. The bank is funding and managing the project and has already hired a civil engineer to do design work to address the three flows that traverse the West Woods.

Bulletin Material

Mimi plans a piece on the Damascus Camp Meeting site for the next edition of the bulletin.

Planning Commission Meeting

David attended the meeting and reported on permit approvals. He said Commercial Corner discussions did not yield any new information or progress on a draft ordinance.

Town Council Meeting Report

Barbara stated that Bob's thorough reporting covered much of what she would have shared; her only addition was to advise that the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) training that the town sponsored the previous weekend was well attended (by about 30 people) and well received. Post-event surveys will go back to Leadership Montgomery, who will provide their report to the Town Council. The Council will then work with Leadership Montgomery to develop DEIB plans for each committee/commission. Barbara also reported that no one has stepped into the leadership role of RASEC. Rob will speak with a few people to determine interest in assuming leadership.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:30 pm. The next meeting will be on Tuesday, December 17, at 7:30 pm via Zoom.