

Mayor's Den

By Walter J. Behr

COUNCIL MOVING AHEAD ON LONG-RANGE PLANNING

At its May meeting, the Town Council agreed to establish a Long-Range Planning Committee. At the June 4 meeting, the Council is expected to specify the goals of the committee, how large it should be, how members will be selected and when it should report its recommendations to the Town Council for action.

My hope is that the focus will be on personnel, facilities and communications. I expect the committee to be composed of residents with various backgrounds, including location within the community, age and years of residence in, and experience with, the Town.

If you are interested, please write, E-mail or fax Tom Carter a brief statement of your background and reason for wanting to serve. The deadline for applying is June 15.

ACTION ON BUDGET, TAX RATE SET FOR JUNE 4

A hearing and action by the Town Council adopting a budget and real and personal (business) property tax rates for Fiscal Year 2002 are scheduled for 9 p.m. at the June 4 Council meeting.

I am recommending the following two minor changes to the budget and tax rate which were summarized in last month's *Town Journal*:

- Because of his superior work and leadership ability, I am asking the Council to grant a 12 percent salary increase to Enrique Cabrera, our newest maintenance man. This compares with a six percent raise recommended for all other employees.
- Instead of applying the proposed real property tax rate of 5 cents per \$100 assessed value to personal (business) property, I am proposing a rate of 22 cents, the same rate in effect this year. Personal (business) property is primarily applied to public utilities for use of our rights-of-way. This tax results in a very small part of the Town's revenue.

For real property (lot, house, garage) the proposed 5-cent rate will be applied to 100 percent of assessed value rather than 40 percent as in previous years, resulting in a 43 percent reduction between FY-01 and FY-02.

The complete revised budget is available at the Town Hall.

NEW SURFACE PLANNED FOR TENNIS COURTS

Somerset tennis players know that the numerous cracks on the Town tennis courts grow longer and wider over the years despite conventional filling and color-coating. After prolonged searching, I have found only one product that will solve the problem. The Town Council is scheduled to consider authorizing this improvement at 9:40 p.m. on June 4.

"Premier Court" is the name of the product. It is a rubber-like mat that covers the courts and is guaranteed against cracking for 15 years. Another advantage, reiterated by the numerous tennis professionals, managers and just, plain players I have contacted is that it is easier on the knees and legs than conventional hard courts. It's almost like HarTru or clay, one owner said, but it requires no maintenance.

Premier Court is expensive: \$59,140, including the 15-year warranty, but I am convinced that it will be a wise investment in the long run.

If you have played tennis on a Premier Court surface, I urge you to attend the June 4 meeting to give Councilmembers the benefit of your experience.

CALLING ALL (ANTIQUÉ) CARS

Do you have or know about an automobile in Somerset or the vicinity that is at least 20 years old? We invite you - them - to participate in our annual July Fourth classic car display, which is part of the Town Independence Day celebration at the Town Hall.

To enter your vehicle or advise of an acquaintance who might be eligible, call the originator and chairman of the show, Howard Byron at 301-656-9496.

Look for details of Somerset Independence Day activities and attractions in next month's *Town Journal*. They will begin with a picnic in the Town Hall yard at noon and include a variety of games there and at the swimming pool.

A WORD OF THANKS TO PEPCO

On behalf of the hundreds of children who walk to and from Somerset School five days a week, I extend a big thank-you to Pepco for removing the utility pole from the sidewalk near the school entrance and installing a new pole on the nearby slope.

Parents, neighbors and Principal Alfred Sklarew agreed that the old pole was a hazard, but no one wanted to pay the quoted price of \$18,000 to remove it. It took almost a year, but Pepco

finally agreed to do the job at their expense. We are, indeed, grateful to John C.M. Murphy, Pepco's Construction Manager for Montgomery County.

JUDY FRANKEL IN HALL OF FAME

Congratulations to Judy Frankel, Vice President of the Town Council. She will be inducted into the Maryland Municipal League Hall of Fame at the organization's annual convention in Ocean City, Maryland, on June 26. To qualify, a person must serve as an elected town or city official for 20 years.

Making Waves

SWIM SEASON IS HERE!

By Norm Schneider, Chairman, Swimming Pool Committee

By now I hope everyone has visited the pool and begun swimming and lounging and playing. It is truly one of our Town's treasures. If you encounter any problems at the pool or wish to make suggestions about it, feel free to call me at (301)652-5509 (home 6 - 9 pm) or (202) 347-5141 (office 9 am - 5 pm), or e-mail me at nshneider@kamerowlaw.com. I look forward to feedback so that we can make this a smooth season.

The committee has begun to review the completed pool use questionnaires, and I will be reporting results in the *Town Journal* and to the Town Council. The response was not great (32 responses), and thus the results may not be indicative of the Town at large. Nevertheless, I can report that those who did respond had a variety of usage levels of current programs and physical facilities and, generally, a high ranking of the importance of each of the current uses.

Similarly, the respondents generally expected to have some use for each of the potential programs or renovations, but had a varied ranking of the importance of each of the items. Overall, it appears that there is a groundswell of support for the various ways that the swim season can be lengthened and lap swimming expanded. Many wrote helpful comments about how facilities can be improved, and I have passed those suggestions on to the Pool Committee and pool management. I thank each of you who took time to answer the survey.

Reviewing Rules Should Prevent Problems

Rules for the pool are on the Town's Web site and at the pool. Please review them so that there are no misunderstandings. If you have any questions or suggested changes, please contact me. Remember that although food and drinks (no glass bottles) are allowed at the pool, they are only allowed in the picnic area, and may only be taken there by walking on the elevated path on the right side of the pool area. There are trash cans present, but if you see that one is full, please ask

the staff to replace the bag so that we can keep the area clean and free of bugs and animals. Thank you for adhering to the rules and keeping our pool clean.

Enclosed with this *Town Journal* is a calendar of pool activities. This will also be posted and updated at the pool. Sometimes events are rescheduled because of weather or other unforeseen circumstances, so please remember to check the calendar at the pool to avoid surprise changes.

You are welcome to join the Pool Committee meetings, which will take place regularly throughout the summer. Please check the message board at the pool for dates and times.

Don't Forget to Register

If you are new to Town this year or have added a family member, please contact Tom Carter at Town Hall to arrange for a new or updated pool registration form. The pool is free to all resident of the Town, but you must fill out the form and return it with pictures of each pool user. Please complete the form and return it to Tom Carter before you come down to the pool for your first swim.

Classes Galore

Water aerobics classes start Tuesday, June 5, at 1 p.m. and continue on Tuesdays and Thursdays through the end to the month at the same time. July sessions will be conducted at 10 a.m. every Tuesday and Thursday beginning Tuesday, July 10.

Classes will be taught by Maggie Lutz, who will supply the requisite equipment (known as "noodles").

To register, come to the pool before 1 o'clock on June 5, and bring a check with you. Total cost for all six June sessions is \$24. Individual lessons are \$6. The seven lessons in July will cost \$28, and again the "drop-in" rate is \$6 per lesson.

Call Florence Gang at 301-656-3430 with questions.

Also, WaterBabies and AquaticTots classes (adult-assisted - one adult per child) will be offered this year by Pool Manager Karen Kay, as well as private and semi-private swim lessons. See or call Karen at the pool.

Town Hall Tidbits

By Tom Carter

OFFICE SCHEDULE IN JUNE

Tom will be out of the office June 25-27. Corrie Morsey expects to be in the office during Tom's absence except for June 27. During these dates, please call first to be sure someone is in the

office before coming over or leave a message on the answering machine and someone will get back to you as soon as possible.

TOWN MAINTENANCE VEHICLES AND MEN

Please use caution when driving behind the Town tractors and trucks. They are often moving very slowly as the men work alongside or in front of the vehicles. Kindly resist riding on their bumpers; give them some space and yourself room to see around them so you are sure it is safe to pass. Also, be particularly cautious when passing the maintenance men working along the streets with power equipment and wearing ear protection. They cannot hear approaching cars.

RECYCLING REMINDERS

Please remember to remove the caps from your recyclable bottles before you place them in the blue bin. The caps are **not** recyclable.

Also, don't use plastic bags for your recyclables. J&J will not pick up any recyclables in plastic bags. The plastic bags are recyclable through many grocery stores, but not through J&J. Additionally, newspapers should not be placed loose in the blue bins. Please put newspapers and mixed papers in separate paper bags. If any papers are commingled with the real commingled (glass, cans and plastics), J&J will not pick them up. It takes them too long to sort into the truck.

BEWARE OF CON ARTISTS

With spring weather here, the annual visitation of itinerant con artists to the area is at hand. Be sure you do not fall for their excuses to get in your home. They will often engage you in conversation or distract you while a partner enters the house and steals cash and valuable small items. Sometimes they just ask to use your restroom. Never allow strangers into your home.

Always keep your doors locked, even if you are just in your yard. Call the police if you see someone suspicious hanging around the neighborhood.

POOL MEMBERSHIP AND GUESTS

Don't forget to register any new family members or care providers at the Town Office. If you have anyone registered with your family who is no longer eligible, please notify Tom as well.

We will be using the same two types of guest passes for the pool as last year:

Weekly: A 7-day pass for out-of-town house guests that can be purchased **at the Town Hall** for \$5 each.

Daily: A 5-visit pass for one-day or short visit guests that is sold **at the pool** for \$10 (\$2 per visit).

Remember, these passes must be purchased with a check made out to the "Town of Somerset." Cash cannot be accepted.

PARKING

Residents should advise lawn services and guests that it is illegal and dangerous to park on the "NO PARKING" side of the street.

HAZARDOUS WASTE DISPOSAL

Saturday, June 23, is the next date for collection of hazardous waste at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda. The site is on Wilson Drive, which is off Wisconsin Avenue/Rockville Pike.

The following materials will be accepted between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.: pesticides, oil-based paint, brake fluid, fuels, herbicides, solvents, antifreeze, photographic chemicals, paint thinners, motor oil, auto and household batteries and fluorescent lights.

PLEASE NO LATEX PAINT: Tens-of-thousands of tax-dollars are spent each year disposing of latex paint, which is not hazardous. In fact, latex paint can be safely dried up and put out for regular refuse collection. Simply remove the lid and place it in a safe, well ventilated area. Cans with that are one-fourth or less will dry in a few days. For cans with greater volume, add mulch, cat litter, shredded paper, or Waste Paint Hardener available at area hardware stores.

For more information, call 240-777-6410 or 301-840-2370.

CONTRACTORS FILE

Tom maintains a listing of contractors who have provided excellent service in the past to the Town or Town residents. Give Tom a call at 301-657-3211 for a referral if you are stumped over what to do. We welcome any referrals you might have, good or bad, for our records. Keep in mind that the Town is not responsible in any way for work done by any of these contractors. The decision on whom you choose to do your work is solely up to you.

Call with your favorite and least favorite handymen, painters, plumbers, electricians, builders, landscape designers, lawn services, floor finishers, window washers, roofers and cleaning services.

SOMERSET RAIN GAUGES

A few Somerset 90th birthday rain gauges are still available at Town Hall for \$3 apiece. Call Tom at 301-657-3211 or stop by Town Hall if you would like to purchase one for your garden.

TOWN HISTORY

Copies of the Town history are available at the Town Hall office. The first copy per household is free. Additional copies are \$3 apiece. Please contact Tom at 301-657-3211 if you are interested in obtaining this informative document.

PERMITS GRANTED

The following permits were issued by the Mayor during the past month. (Building permits are approved by the Town Council.)

Trees: John and Jennifer Mesirow, 4701 Cumberland Avenue, to remove a maple from their front yard.

Patty Friedman, 4811 Grantham Avenue, to remove a badly leaning cherry tree from her back yard.

Fences: Michael and Abby Nolan, 5807 Surrey Street, to replace a cedar fence along their rear property line.

Driveway Aprons: Michael and Abby Nolan, 5807 Surrey Street.

Carl and Lilian Paul, 5702 Warwick Place.

Jeffrey Slavin, 5706 Warwick Place.

Legislation

At the May 7 meeting, the Town Council adopted amendments to the Building Code to:

1. Require certain building permit applications to include information on front setback, height, percent of lot coverage and a photo of the property;
2. Modify the front setback requirement for primary buildings; and

3. Increase the setback of certain garages and other accessory structures.

Council Activity

At the May 7 meeting, the Town Council:

1. Reelected Judy Frankel as Vice President of the Council for a one-year term.

2. Approved the following General Fund transfers:

Amount From To

\$4,500 Contingency Truck

\$2,000 Contingency Snow/Sand

\$1,100 Contingency Misc/Engineer

3. Approved a building permit application by Diego and Alicia Calderon, 4922 Dorset Avenue, to construct a garage in their back yard, subject to receipt of the County building permit application and permit, and the contractor's Maryland Home Improvement Commission license number.

4. Approved a building permit application by Sandy Spring Builders to modify their plans for a garage at 4717 Essex Avenue by reducing the width of the front dormer and adding a dormer with clerestory windows in the rear, subject to receipt of the County permit and payment of a \$1,500 fine for three Building Code violations (Vote: Eldridge and Frankel for; Kessler opposed; Gubser abstained.)

5. Heard a report by Bethesda District Police Captain Luther Reynolds on the homicide in the 4800 block of Drummond Avenue last week.

6. Approved a building permit application by Rodd and Jodi Macklin, 4817 Dorset Avenue, to construct additions to their house. Also approved a tree removal permit for the removal of one tree at the east front corner of the house, which will be in the way of construction.

7. Approved a building permit application by Jerry and Donna McDougal, 5015 River Road, to erect a shed in their back yard.

8. Heard a report by Councilmember Richard Kessler on the modernization plans for Somerset School.

9. Heard a report by Jeffrey Slavin on the latest meeting of the Friendship Heights Transportation Management District (TMD).

10. Authorized the purchase of lane dividers with reel and cover for the swimming pool for no more than \$3,000.
11. Conducted a hearing on the Mayor's proposed budget and real and personal (business) property tax rates for FY-02 .
12. Discussed the establishment of a Long-Range Planning Committee.
13. Passed a resolution authorizing consent to and approval of the Seventh Amended and Restated Local Government Insurance Trust Agreement.
14. Discussed management of the Town Web site and gave the Mayor discretion to pay \$75 per hour to Connecting Links for additional work beyond that which was on a voluntary basis.
15. Directed the Mayor to obtain bids for landscape consulting.
16. Authorized \$6,277.50 to purchase a 20' x 60' tent for use at the pool and for other Town functions. (Vote: Eldridge, Gubser and Kessler for; Frankel opposed.)
17. Heard a report by the Mayor on his emergency authorization of \$3,065 for PoolService Company to caulk the pool deck after the concrete work is completed.

Expert Evolving Plan for Vinton Park

By Corrie Morsey, Chairman

Parks and Natural Resources Committee

The Parks and Natural Resources Committee met on April 28 and May 11 to act on a number of projects as well as requests of the Mayor, Councilmembers and residents. The committee is very excited that Todd Ericson, Urban and Community Forestry Program, Maryland Department of Natural Resources, has begun work on a plan to ensure the continuing vitality of Vinton Park.

Following is a summary of actions taken by the committee:

- Place a few pieces of flagstone around the right side of the gate at the pool driveway to allow passage through the landscaping.
- Ask the Town staff to cut both English and poison ivy from Town trees in parkland on the left side of the pool entrance.
- Add a couple of trees in Vinton Park upstream of the bridge, adjacent to where erosion control was recently done. Ask Town to cut back Japanese knot weed in area.
- Request that the Town repair the fence along the path behind North Park Apartments.
- Recommend annuals for Town entrances and Town Hall.

- Clean up the area along Cumberland Avenue between the street and tennis courts until it is possible to remove grass from the hill and plant appropriate shrubs and ground cover. (It is a very difficult area to mow, and planting a solid line of shrubs now would eliminate room needed to maneuver mowing equipment.)
- Recommend that the Town hire a new horticulturist/gardener and in the interim hire an appropriate contractor to transplant, prune and weed as needed.
- Enhance the plantings around the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission sign announcing entrance into Somerset on lower Dorset Avenue, but not pursue installation of a more elaborate sign, walls, pillars or lights as it is not Town property.
- Do not install planters around Town.

Residents Speak Up

HAVING TROUBLE WITH CABLE TV RECEPTION?

I noticed several problems in my Comcast cable TV reception. I would appreciate hearing from residents whether or not they are experiencing similar problems.

Double imaging, snow and hazy reception are experienced on at least two channels (65 and 77). According to Comcast, the problem is that the increase in bandwidth to accommodate more channels (and thus larger cable TV rates) is resulting in interference from channels being broadcast on neighboring band widths. The solution proposed by Comcast is that a customer rent additional converter boxes and either rent from Comcast remote controls or purchase universal remotes.

Since noticing this problem, I have learned that it is widespread in Montgomery County. I would like to survey Somerset residents who have this problem in order to bring it to the attention of Montgomery County.

Please call me at 301-654-2699, write me at 4914 Cumberland Avenue or E-mail me at RJKessler@aol.com. In addition, you may want to contact the Cable Consumer Affairs Office directly at

Montgomery County Division of Consumer Affairs
Office of Cable Communications
100 Maryland Avenue, Suite 250
Rockville, MD 20850
Tel: 240-777-3636

You may also E-mail your complaint to: catv.complaints@co.mo.md.us or fax it to: 240-777-3770.

Richard Kessler
Cumberland Avenue

SUGGESTS REACTIVATING GARDEN CLUB

It has been brought to my attention that the Somerset community does not have a garden club.

The National Capitol Federation of Garden Clubs has a number of resources to help gardeners establish and organize themselves into a club tailored to their own interests and needs. This could provide us with the opportunity to meet other neighborhood gardeners, compare experiences and, through the Federation, have access to speakers.

Anyone interested in discussing this possibility please call me at 301-951-2769.

Judy Bowles
Surrey Street

Hear About Plans to Relieve Congestion

If you are concerned about congestion on Wisconsin Avenue/Rockville Pike and other Montgomery County roads, you will have an opportunity to hear about plans to relieve the problems.

On Tuesday, June 12, the community will have a chance to hear about the progress of the Planning Board's Transportation Policy Task Force and ask questions.

The briefing will take place from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. in the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Service Center, 4805 Edgemoor Lane. The building includes a large, public garage.

For further information, call Jenny Sue Dunner (301-657-3568) or Pat Baptiste (301-654-7825).

Gain Fame With Your Camera

Attention, amateur photographers! Montgomery County is sponsoring a photo contest to show off your skill and the beauty of our area. Only one entry per person will be accepted. Deadline is June 15.

Winners will be selected for each of the following five categories: Montgomery County - By Day, By Night, Landmarks, Her People and At Work.

Pictures up to 8 x 10 inches will be accepted. They must be dry mounted on mat board. No entry fee is required. Photos will not be returned. Winners will be announced at a ceremony in the fall. All entrants will receive a certificate of recognition.

Further details and application blanks are available at the Town Hall and from Web site www.dpwt.com, or you may call 240-777-7155.

Enjoy Free Concerts in Friendship Heights

The array of talented musicians performing every Wednesday night in the Friendship Heights Village Center seems endless. Concerts are free. They start at 7:30 and last about an hour. Here is the lineup for June:

June 6 - Quartet des Santos features guitarist Richard Miller and Patrick de Santos, who sings in Spanish, English, French and Portuguese.

June 13 - United States Navy Band Commodores stars 18 of the Navy's top jazz and big band musicians.

June 20 - David McLaughlin leads the bluegrass band known as the Johnson Mountain Boys. He sings and plays mandolin, twin fiddle and lead guitar.

June 27 - Corrine Simons, a Washington, D.C. native, sings jazz and gospels.

Weather permitting, the concerts will be held in Hubert Humphrey Park, which is bounded by Village Center, South Park Avenue, Hills Plaza and Friendship Boulevard.

Obituary

RICHARD SCAMMON, ELECTIONS EXPERT, DIES AT 85

Richard M. Scammon, political scientist and elections analyst who advised Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson, died April 27 at the Asbury Village in Gaithersburg of Alzheimer's disease. He was 85.

He lived on Greystone Street for 40 years, departing in 1998.

His knowledge of statistics - election results, public opinion polls and census data - was legendary. After four years as director of the Census Bureau, he resigned because it kept him too far removed from the numbers.

Mr. Scammon was born in Minneapolis, graduated from the University of Minnesota, received a master's degree in political science from the University of Michigan and studied at the London School of Economics.

Survivors include his wife of 49 years, Mary of Gaithersburg; a daughter, Anne of Alexandria; and a sister.

Agenda

REGULAR MEETING OF TOWN COUNCIL

MONDAY, June 4, 2001 — 7:30 P.M.

1. Approval of minutes of the May 7 regular meeting -- 7:30.
2. Discussion of financial report — 7:35.
3. Action on the following transfers — 7:40.

Amount From To

\$1,000 CPF Contingency CPF Erosion

\$2,000 GF Contingency GF Street Supplies

4. Reappointment of Tom Carter as Clerk-Treasurer for FY-02 — 7:45.
5. Action on tree removal permit application by Rodd and Jodi Macklin, 4817 Dorset Avenue, to remove 18 trees from their yard — 7:50.
6. Recommendation to Historic Preservation Commission and action on building permit application by Margaret Farrell. 4719 Cumberland Avenue, to reduce the depth of the addition to the west side of her house as approved by Town in 1999 — 8:05.
7. Action on building permit application by Jim Losey and Alex Acosta, 4700 Essex Avenue, to increase the length of the front porch and add a porch in the rear and a bay window on the Warwick side — 8:10.
8. Action on extension until October 31, 2001, of building permit to Bill McPherrin and Keith Robinson, 4812 Essex Avenue, for addition to rear of house — 8:15.
9. Action on extension until December 31, 2001, of building permit to Ted Woodings, 4923 Dorset Avenue, for additions to his house — 8:20.
10. Mayor's report — 8:25.
11. Developments/plans in the vicinity of Somerset — 8:40.
12. Suggestions and questions from residents — 8:50.
13. Hearing and action on ordinance adopting budget and real and personal (business) property tax rates for FY-02 — 9:00.

14. Discussion of request to install speed hump at Pepco pole just west of 4819 Essex Avenue — 9:10.

15. Action on establishment of Long-Range Planning Committee — 9:25.

16. Action on resurfacing tennis courts with "Premier Court," a rubber-like mat guaranteed against cracks for 15 years, at a cost of \$59,140 — 9:40.

17. Agreement on special responsibilities of Councilmembers from June 2001 through May 2002 — 9:50.

18. Action on request by Middletown (Maryland) High School for contribution to school band, which will represent State at ceremony in Hawaii on 60th anniversary of attack on Pearl Harbor — 10:00.

19. Action on contract to paint fence around baby pool, lifeguard stands, posts and rails — 10:05.

20. Action on submittal of legislative action request to Maryland Municipal League on undergrounding wires and cables or any other subject - 10:10.

21. New business — 10:20.

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