

Volume 49, No. 4 October 20, 2004

[Index of Journals](#) | [Town Office](#) | [Home](#) | [Email Town Hall Staff](#)

Mayor's Den

By Walter J. Behr

Should the New STOP Signs Stay or Go?

Whether the four STOP signs erected for a 90-day trial should remain or be removed is scheduled for action by the Town Council at 9:30 p.m. on Monday, November 1. Two of the signs are on Dorset Avenue at Devon Lane, one is on Devon at Cumberland Avenue, and the fourth is on Cumberland at Devon.

As of press time, 41 families have e-mailed their positions on the Dorset signs to the Town Hall. Of the total, 27 opposed the signs, and 14 favored them.

Those who want the Dorset signs removed consider them at minimum a nuisance and, perhaps, a hazard. (One car on Devon pulled out and was almost struck by a driver on Dorset who either didn't see or ignored the STOP sign.) Some have observed backups to Little Falls Parkway. Others cite the low volume of traffic on Devon (where a STOP sign has been in place for years). Some agree with the Federal Highway Administration advice that STOP signs should not be used for speed control. Still others feel that overuse of STOP signs causes disrespect for them generally.

Of the 14 who like the Dorset signs, ten live on that street. They feel that the STOP signs will slow down vehicles and, perhaps, reduce the volume of commuter and other through traffic. They have not observed a traffic backup to Little Falls Parkway as some had feared. In any case, they believe that Dorset would become a safer street.

As for the signs at Devon and Cumberland, two residents wrote in favor and seven in opposition. The latter group mentioned the low volume of traffic and the good visibility.

Council Will Discuss Traffic Count

Discussion of the just-completed traffic count of all five Town entrances is scheduled for 10:40 p.m. at the Town Council meeting on Monday, November 1. Gorove/Slade Associates of the District, under contract with Somerset, counted the volume and turning movements at the following

intersections on Wednesday, September 15, from 7:00 to 9:00 a.m. and 4:30 to 6:30 p.m.

- Dorset and Little Falls
- Dorset and Wisconsin
- Greystone and River
- Cumberland and Wisconsin
- Cumberland and Warwick Lane (alley)

In accordance with standard practice of traffic engineers, our consultant reported traffic movements during the peak one hour in the morning and one hour in the evening. Morning peak was found to be 7:45 to 8:45, and afternoon, 5:30 to 6:30.

In the past, discussions for limiting traffic have often considered the Dorset/Little Falls intersection. Peak hour counts at that Town entrance are as follows:

Morning peak hour

- Southbound on Little Falls: 36 left turns into Dorset
- Northbound on Little Falls: 21 right turns into Dorset

Afternoon peak hour

- Southbound on Little Falls: 63 left turns into Dorset
- Northbound on Little Falls: 31 right turns into Dorset

Prohibiting left turns from Little Falls into Dorset during rush hours or peak hours would, in all likelihood, reduce the volume of cut-through traffic, but it would inconvenience Somerset residents, employees and guests and Somerset School families and staff. Laurie Gross, Principal of Somerset School, has advised us that any restriction on entering the Town would be a major problem for the school staff. The complete traffic count report is available at the Town Hall.

Basketball for Little Guys

No longer do you have to be six-feet tall to play or practice basketball in Somerset. We now have a second hoop in the swimming pool lower parking lot, the height of which is adjustable. Enjoy!

Other Ways to Prevent Flu

By now, everyone knows that the flu shot clinic scheduled for Town Hall had

to be cancelled because of the severe shortage of vaccine. However, the Visiting Nurse Association, which was going to administer the shots, did send us an important flyer prepared by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, entitled "Vaccination is Not the Only Way to Help Prevent the Flu". It is reproduced on page 14 of this Town Journal and more information is available at www.findaflushot.com or www.cdc.gov/flu or by calling (800) 232-0233.

Residents Experience Burglary, Bike Thefts

Between 1 and 3 a.m. on October 6, Somerset had its first burglary in many months. A thief entered an unlocked kitchen door of a house on Uppingham Street and stole a laptop from the dining room, leaving a purse that was in plain view. Lights were on in both the kitchen and dining room. Police responded, but have not apprehended a suspect.

Also within the past month, bicycles were stolen from carports in the 4700 and 4900 blocks of Falstone, as was a moped in the 5600 block of Warwick. All three vehicles were unlocked and have not been found.

To reduce the chance of burglary or theft, please lock doors and bikes. Also, register your bike with the County police (at no charge). Doing so, vastly improves the chance that you will get it back.

Street Lights Are Brighter

Have you noticed that the street lights throughout Somerset are brighter? Pepco recently completed replacing all bulbs and cleaning the light fixtures, which they do every two or three years.

One feature of mercury vapor lights, which is what we have, is that they gradually deteriorate and emit less light. What we experience now is that all street lights in Somerset are shining at full capacity.

New Traffic Pattern on Little Falls

In about a month, northbound traffic on Little Falls Parkway between Dorset Avenue and Hillandale Road will be shifted to one of the two normally southbound lanes in order for work to start on repairing the bridge. Shortly

thereafter, A. & M. Concrete Construction Co. of Virginia will start the bridge repair by removing the deck.

Steps to follow include modifying – but retaining – the abutments, replacing the deck with reinforced concrete slabs and paving with asphalt. Trees in the median that are damaged will be replaced.

Opening day for the renovated bridge is scheduled for next April, at which time the normal traffic pattern will resume.

Right on Red at Wisconsin Nixed

Right turns on red lights from Dorset to Wisconsin Avenues, as proposed by several residents, is not a good idea, according to State and County traffic authorities, even though the intersection has been widened. The main reason is that trees and shrubs on Wisconsin north of Dorset limit visibility, which would make right turns on red unsafe.

Both the State Highway Administration and the County Department of Public Works and Transportation were involved in the decision since the State owns Wisconsin Avenue and the County controls the traffic signals on State roads in Montgomery County.

3 Fire/Rescue Stations Serve Somerset

From time to time when residents have been asked to donate to the three nearby fire and rescue stations, they have asked which installations serve our Town.

The Bethesda Fire Department at Bradley Boulevard and Wisconsin Avenue is our first response station for fires. In case of severe fires, other stations are also summoned, starting with Glen Echo and Chevy Chase, the former on Massachusetts Avenue at Sangamore Road, the latter on Connecticut Avenue opposite Columbia Country Club.

If a person collapsed or were injured in a traffic accident, the 9-1-1 operator would send the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Rescue Squad along with the Bethesda and Glen Echo Fire Departments. Whoever arrived first would administer first aid.

All firefighters are trained as emergency medical technicians. B-CC Rescue Squad personnel – mostly volunteers – have advanced training and equipment and take over serious problems such as suspected heart attacks.

Finally, in the absence of an emergency, Glen Echo would be summoned to transport a patient to a hospital since the Bethesda Fire Department has no ambulance.

Town Hall Tidbits

By Tom Carter
OFFICE STAFF

Please help me welcome Christine Pantaleo who has joined the administrative staff as a part-time employee through a temp agency. Christine will be helping with the typing, Town Journal, filing and other administrative functions twice a week. She lives in Olney and has been a resident of the D.C. area since 1979. Drop by and meet Christine sometime.

FOUND

A tennis racket was left on the courts in early October. If you think it belongs to you, call Tom Carter at (301) 657-3211.

PHONE BOOK RECYCLING

Remember that your old telephone books can be placed in paper bags in your blue bins every Tuesday for recycling.

LEAF PICKUP UNDERWAY

Vacuuming of leaves piled on the grass near the curb has begun and will continue into December. PLEASE DO NOT PUT LEAVES IN THE STREET. KINDLY INFORM YOUR LAWN SERVICE OF THIS REQUEST.

We also ask that you ensure the piles consist only of leaves - NO STICKS, STONES, BRICKS OR OTHER DENSE OR SHARP DEBRIS. These materials will damage the machinery blades.

We are following the same procedure as in previous years. Each morning the maintenance men survey the Town streets and start vacuuming where the biggest piles exist. They then move on to the next biggest piles, and so on. Through streets will still be done regularly to keep the traffic moving smoothly.

Residents who prefer to bag their leaves or dispose of them in a mulch pile in their yards are urged to do so. Leaves in PAPER BAGS or REUSABLE CONTAINERS will be picked up on TUESDAYS AND FRIDAYS by our trash company, J&J Inc. Please place in front yards near the curb. Plastic bags may NOT be used. Leaf burning is PROHIBITED!

TOWN HALL MAINTENANCE VEHICLES

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. Now, during leaf season, the vehicles will often be stopped while picking up leaves. It is not feasible for them to move out of the way immediately. If they did, they would never finish their work. You might save time by using another street to go around them.

TOWN DIRECTORY REVISION

If you are new to the community, if you wish to be included in the Town Directory for the first time, or if you wish to amend your family's entry, please complete and return the postcard enclosed with this Town Journal to the Town Hall at 4510 Cumberland Avenue no later than November 24. If you do not return this card, your name will appear as it does in the present directory. Here is your chance to add your e-mail addresses as well. Children may be listed, too. If you are new in Town and have not completed a similar form from your newcomer's packet, you must complete this card to be added to the 2005 version. Questions? Please call Tom at (301) 657-3211.

BETHESDA PARKING STORE

The Bethesda Parking Store at the Cheltenham Parking Garage, 4720 Cheltenham Drive, offers cash keys that work in all of Bethesda's parking meters as well as other parking permits and payment of parking tickets. For more information, call (240) 777-8770.

2005 LEAGUE of WOMEN VOTERS CALENDARS

2005 League of Women Voters calendars are still available at the Town Hall for \$6, or call Nancy Soreng at (301) 986-1916.

PERMITS GRANTED

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

Trees: Marnie Shaul, 5509 Uppingham Street, to remove an ailing honey locust in her back yard.

Peter and Laura Kennedy, 5805 Deal Place, to remove a huge, failing, leaning wild cherry and locust in their front yard.

Margaret Farrell, 4719 Cumberland Avenue, to remove a failing black cherry in the back yard.

Curbs: David Kahn and Sherry Bindeman, 4605 Dorset Avenue, to replace their apron. Legislation

At the October 4 meeting, the Council:

1. Amended the Building Code to change the size and number of building and site plans required for consideration by the Town Council.
2. Introduced legislation to require building permit applicants to include generators on site plan.
3. Postponed action until the November meeting on legislation requiring no Town tree of four inches in diameter or more be removed unless approved by the Town Council upon a recommendation of the Mayor.

Council Activity

At the October 4 meeting, the Town Council:

1. Heard a report from Caroline Cooper, chair, on the progress of the Town Hall Renovation Committee. The Committee agreed to meet with the architect to finalize three initial options on Thursday, October 14, at 5:30 p.m. at the Town Hall.
2. Approved the following permits for Patrick K. Keating & Co., 4904 Essex Avenue: (a) a demolition permit; (b) a building permit for a two-and-one-half story house with attached two-car garage, subject to receipt of building deposit and permit fees; (c) a tree removal permit for two trees, subject to the completion of the landscaping plan, replacement of five trees, three of which must be 3"- 4" caliper, with one of these to be an oak, and a deposit of \$200 per replacement tree and (d) a curb cut permit, subject to

submission of the width of the cut to the Mayor and \$310 for permit fee and deposit. Additionally, stipulated that no more than two cars would be allowed to park on the street and that this project would share a dumpster with 4902 Essex Avenue to be parked in the front yard between the houses. Also designated a citizens committee composed of neighbors Frank Ephraim, Tom Cohen and Hali Edison to work with the developer on compliance and required the developer to designate one employee to supervise trash removal from the site daily.

3. Approved the following permits for Chase Builders, 4902 Essex Avenue: (a) a demolition permit; (b) a building permit for a two-and-one-half story house with attached two-car garage; (c) a tree removal permit for three trees, subject to the completion of the landscaping plan, replacement of three oak trees of a minimum of 4" diameter, two of which must be placed on site and one for the Town to locate elsewhere, and a deposit of \$200 per replacement tree; (d) a curb cut permit, subject to submission of the width of the cut to the Mayor and (e) a fence permit. Additionally, stipulated that no more than two cars would be allowed to park on the street and that this project would share a dumpster with 4904 Essex Avenue to be parked in the front yard between the houses. Also designated a citizens committee composed of neighbors Frank Ephraim, Tom Cohen and Hali Edison to work with the developer on compliance and required the developer to designate one employee to supervise trash removal from the site daily.

4. Approved the following permits for Cathedral Investments, 5526 Trent Street: (a) a demolition permit; (b) a building permit for a two-story house with attached garage, subject to receipt of a County building permit and Town building deposit and permit fees, and (c) a tree removal permit for three trees, subject to a deposit of \$200 per replacement tree. (Tom Eldridge recused himself for the vote.)

5. Approved a building permit for Jerry and Donna McDougal, 5015 River Road, to add a sunroom to the rear of their house.

6. Postponed action on demolition, building, driveway apron and tree removal permits for Andrew Bartley and Jill Herscot, 4909 Cumberland Avenue, pending submission of complete plans.

7. Denied the request of Mark Dutz and Ceyla Pazarbasioglu, 5603 Warwick Place, to retain a tree house and pond erroneously placed in Town parkland behind their house and required enforcement of the parkland and removal of the pond and tree house. (Tom Eldridge recused himself for the vote.)

8. Denied the request of Mark Dutz and Ceyla Pazarbasioglu, 5603 Warwick Place, to plant four Norway spruces and two southern magnolias in the Town parkland behind their house, but accepted their offer to donate trees, selected and located by the Parks and Natural Resources Committee in the parkland, and planted by the Town maintenance staff. Vote: Tom Eldridge, Judy Frankel and Richard Kessler for; Lesley Simmons and Jeffrey Slavin opposed.

9. Postponed discussion of a suggestion to retain an independent expert to assess tree removal applications.

Dear Neighbors – Letters from Residents

New Deals for Old Wheels!

by Miles Batson

My church school class is working with Pedals for Progress to recycle bicycles to people in developing countries. If you have an adult or child's bicycle in repairable condition you can donate it to this worthy cause by dropping it off from 9 am to 12 noon on Saturday, December 4 at Westmoreland United Church of Christ, 1 Westmoreland Circle, Bethesda. My class will be waiting to receive them and put them in a shipping container.

Pedals for Progress transfers the bikes to those in need of reliable transportation in Latin America, Africa, and the Pacific Islands. There the bikes are reconditioned by partner agencies and distributed at low cost to poor working adults. It costs \$28 to collect, process, ship, rebuild and distribute each bicycle so a donation toward shipping costs is necessary (suggested \$10 per bike). Cash and material donations are tax deductible and we will give you a receipt at our collection site. Working portable sewing machines, soccer and baseball equipment, and donations of tools, especially wrenches for the overseas shops are also accepted. For more information call Miles Batson, (301) 907-8826.

Stop Stop Signs

by Dennis and Diane Horn and Bill and Lucky Brenner

The new stop sign at the corner of Dorset and Devon Lane has prompted us to form the "Stop Stupid Stop Signs" Movement. Our objective is to stop a "nuisance" sign from stopping all Somerset residents. We are also concerned that a cornering car could crash into a line of cars waiting to get through the stop.

Stop signs regulate traffic to allow safe vehicle entry and pedestrian crossing.

The Phoenix Street Transportation Department published a study that concluded that "nuisance" stop signs, designed primarily to slow traffic, have the opposite effect. While traffic does slow at the stop sign, it increases between intersections as drivers try to "make up for lost time". "Nuisance" stop signs "do not stop speeding, [instead, they] increase air pollution, waste fuel" and encourage otherwise reasonable drivers to "develop contempt for all traffic signs." (see www.Phoenix.gov/STREETS/stop.html)

Somerset should not retain the "nuisance" stop sign on Dorset.

On My Mind....

by Council member Jeffrey Slavin

On the day of the October Town Meeting a resident sent us an e-mail asking that we consider closing Cumberland Avenue for trick or treaters this year, given that so many children and parents would be ringing doorbells there. After discussion, and input from several residents who live on the street, the Council decided to take no action on this request, but I agreed to seek out citizen views for possible future consideration.

The discussion indicated that some residents of Cumberland already feel burdened by having to "host" sledding each winter when we have adequate snow. In the past there have been attempts to get other streets to help share this civic responsibility but it seems that the majority of Cumberland folks are willing to accept the role. Thus we have an official sledding policy, which makes Somerset unique and increases our community spirit.

Should the Town encourage another official Somerset activity and close down Cumberland Avenue on Halloween night? I understand the geography and why Cumberland is most appropriate for sledding but is there a reason why it is the most desirable street for trick or treating, too? Or should we rotate this responsibility each year and close down other streets, thereby officially endorsing another community-wide activity?

Obviously, this will not be considered again for another year but it would be nice to hear some opinions during the current season. So please let me know your views: call (301) 654-6767 or e-mail jzslavin@aol.com Happy Hollween!

Committee News

Parks and Natural Resources Committee

Examines Little Falls Branch Erosion

by Corrie Morse, Committee Chair

During the past several years the Town has taken action to stem erosion along the banks of Little Falls Branch within its borders. In spite of these efforts, erosion continues as an on-going problem. Much of the cause can be attributed to the loss of impervious surface not only in Town but in surrounding communities.

Jeff Lape served as guide to Parks and Natural Resources Committee (PNRC) members during its October meeting pointing out and describing the erosion process of the creek banks and bed within Town borders. It is very apparent the creek's bank has risen 2-3 feet since the last erosion control measures were implemented. In many areas, stakes once holding bio-logs were evident but the bio-logs have vanished. Much of the vegetation impregnated along the creek beds and in bio-logs did not take hold. During heavy rainfalls such as the storm we experienced this past August, the vast amount of water and intense pressure caused by its flow scours out the bottom of the creek bed. In some areas it was very evident that water had risen several feet above the banks and over-flowed, displacing vegetation and moving soil and rocks – some of them very large.

PNRC concluded that the Town should continue to monitor the erosion and plan for future implementation of additional erosion control measures. In the meantime, we noted areas where large trees should be planted and identified an area where invasive plants should be removed so that existing young, healthy trees can continue to grow.

History Committee Needs Help

by Lesley Simmons, Committee Chair

Do you have a tape recorder that can make copies of audio tapes? The History Committee has begun its oral history project with a first one-hour interview with former Somerset resident Ralph Crump who lived in Somerset in the early part of the 20th century. For conservation reasons we cannot work from original tapes to prepare transcripts or summaries. So the Committee is looking for help in copying one 60 minute tape twice over.

Tapes will be provided. If you think you can help, please contact Lesley Simmons, Committee Chair at Lesley.simmons@earthlink.net or at (240) 497-1876.

Forthcoming Town Events

Council Members to Convene Panel on "Large Homes" in December
by Council Members Lesley Simmons and Jeffrey Slavin

There has been mounting discussion among Town residents about the size, mass and scale of new construction in Somerset as an increasing number of older homes are sold to buyers who wish to tear them down and develop anew or make significant changes. Somerset adheres to the County guidelines on height of new construction but has its own set back rules, which are more restrictive than the County's. In addition, we have a tree ordinance, which has an impact on what property owners can do.

This is an emotive topic. But it is a topic we feel should be discussed openly and publicly among those who have strong, or even not so strong, opinions. We are therefore planning to convene a panel to discuss the pros and cons of what has come to be known, rightly or wrongly, as "mansionization". The event will aim to educate us about our rights and responsibilities under the current Town and County Codes and to air options available to the Town should we decide to make changes to the current law.

We have tentatively planned the event for the evening of either Monday December 7 or 14, at the Town Hall (the final date will depend on the availability of speakers). If you would like to help in creating the format for this discussion or help with the publicity, please contact either Jeffrey Slavin at jzslavin@aol.com or (301) 654-6767 or Lesley Simmons at Lesley.simmons@earthlink.net or at (240) 497-1876.

Final Brown Bag Lunch for 2004
Set for Monday, November 8
by Council member Jeffrey Slavin

The fourth brown bag lunch of this year is planned for Monday, November 8 from Noon to 1 pm at the Town Hall. As usual, the Mayor and I are hoping to see many of the regulars for this popular activity and we always welcome

newcomers! The discussion will be on anything of interest to those present with a special emphasis on issues that arise at Town meetings.

Don't forget to bring a sandwich cut in quarters so that it can be shared and some chips or veggies and a drink. Special food items are always encouraged, too. For further information, contact me at (301) 654-6767 or by e-mail at jzslavin@aol.com.

County News

Resident's Guide to Services now available

The Community Outreach program of the County's Department of Public Works and Transportation has published an updated version of its popular Resident's Guide To Services. This useful brochure lists more than 85 of the services offered by the department. From potholes to streetlights, bus shelters to bikeways, you'll find useful telephone numbers and e-mail addresses that let you get right to the office responsible for handling your public works issue. For a free copy, call (240) 777-7155 or send an e-mail to dpwt.outreach@montgomerycountymd.gov Bulk copies are also available for your work site, civic association, or organization.

Montgomery County Marathon

The 5th Annual Montgomery County Marathon in the Parks will take place on Sunday, November 14, beginning at 7:00 a.m. on Redland Road near the Shady Grove Metro station, and finishing on restaurant row in Downtown Bethesda at 12:45 p.m. The course is designed to showcase the beauty of our county and our park system and proceeds benefit park preservation. Both participants and volunteers are needed. For information go to www.marathonintheparks.com or call (301) 767-0002 or e-mail information@marathointheparks.com.

Chevy Chase Library

Did you know that the Chevy Chase Library offers numerous events for toddlers through adults? Visit the Library website at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/library for information.

All About People

By Council Member Jeffrey Slavin

Proud mother NANCY ZIVITZ SUSSMAN (Greystone) writes that son NICK, a Bullis alum who will be graduating from Kenyon College next June, was

recently selected to the 2004 Jewish College Division All-America Baseball Team. Nick, a third baseman and designated hitter, had a monster year at the plate this past season and his .421 batting average was the highest for a Kenyon player in almost twenty-five years. Sounds like Nick should be playing for the Orioles or Expos/Grays in the near future!...There is double wedding news from the household of CAROLINE and HOWARD COOPER (Cumberland). Oldest daughter JENNY married last October to JON SHEEHAN of Quincy, MA and they now reside in Cambridge, MA. Youngest daughter SARAH married this month to JAMES JOYCE, originally from Sligo, Ireland and they are now living in Cleveland Park. Many of James's family from Ireland and England came to the wedding celebration which included a ceremony with three languages: English, Hebrew and Gaelic. Both Jenny and Sarah were avid soccer players at BCC and Sarah also played field hockey. They both played soccer at their alma mater Smith College. All three Cooper children, including son DAVID who now lives in the District, graduated from our local public schools...Cancer survivor STEVE FRIEDMAN (Essex) was the subject of a recent article in the Washington Post about his experience with testicular cancer and the need for early detection. To his great credit, Steve is raising public awareness about the previously taboo topic and has been speaking to various groups. The reporter covered the speech Steve gave to a group of 12th grade boys at Wilde Lake High School in Columbia, which was organized by the Ulman Cancer Research Fund for Young Adults and Hadassah. Copies of the article are available at the Town Hall. Good job, Steve...Energy-laden GAYLEY KNIGHT (Cumberland) continues to amaze us with her whirlwind of activities. Recently re-elected as president of Women Business Owners of Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce, has been appointed to two committees there and has joined the Communications Committee of Leadership Montgomery. She also finds time to attend virtually all Town meetings and has qualified to play the steam calliope along the inland waterways of the USA - - - that's something you will definitely have to ask her about...Finally, I wish everyone a safe and healthy Halloween and hope residents will pay particular attention to speed limits and stop signs on trick or treat night.

ODD JOB HELPERS TO TAKE ON A NEW LOOK!

The handy insert to tack to your notice board or fridge for easy reference will begin in the November Journal, not this month's Journal as previously advertised. "Odd Job Helpers" will no longer appear in each issue, but as an insert 3 times a year: in the November, February and June issues.

