



SOMERSET TOWN JOURNAL



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Mayor's Den

by Walter J. Behr

Sledding Is Safe in Somerset

If you are new in Town, you will be pleased to know that after every snowfall of two inches or more, a portion of Cumberland Avenue, beginning at Surrey Street, is left unplowed and is blocked off for sledding. The fun continues a second day if conditions permit.

Following are rules, which are posted at the top and bottom of the slope:

- Children Sledding – Drive Carefully!
- Be courteous to those who live on Cumberland.
- Respect parked cars and private property.
- Vehicles: Enter from top of hill and depart downhill.

Devon Lane becomes one-way from Cumberland to Dorset. Vehicles are not permitted to enter Devon (the alley) from Dorset since they would have to go uphill to reach most of the houses on Cumberland.

Sledding on Cumberland is an old Somerset tradition. Enjoy!

Charter Amendment Would Enlarge Election Board

Although our three-member Board of Supervisors of Elections has functioned well over the years, I have drafted an amendment to the Town Charter that would enlarge the board to five members. The following three reasons prompted me to propose the change:

First, the board's responsibilities have increased since the Code was written. Instead of merely maintaining a Town registration system, the board must integrate our system with the Montgomery County registration system. Also, the board plans and conducts candidate forums whenever we have competitive elections, and, recently, the board tabulated responses to a Town-wide survey.

Second, in recent years members have been out of town on some election days, which necessitated recruiting residents not on the board to assist in conducting elections and counting ballots.

Third, there is a feeling on the part of some families with young children that they are not adequately represented in the Town government. Enlarging the board from three to five members would provide an opportunity for one or two of this group to be involved in a basic function of our local government.

The Charter amendment was introduced at the December Council meeting and is scheduled for action at the next session of the Council on Tuesday, January 3.

How High Is Up?

The agenda for the January Council meeting includes a proposal that would amend the Town Code to define the height of accessory buildings. It seems like a no-brainer. Obviously, it's the distance from the bottom to the top.

But it's not that simple. As for the bottom, on a sloping lot are you allowed to measure from the highest point? The proposal says you measure from the finished grade in the center of the front of the structure.



As for the top, any child knows that you measure to the top of the roof. The reason we need to specify this in our Building Code is that the County Zoning Code, which applies in Somerset, is not clear. For **houses**, the County gives builders a choice: 30 feet to a point halfway up the roof or 35 feet to the top. We need to specify how to measure the height of **accessory structures** since the County Code does not say whether you measure to the middle or top of the roof.

Accessory structures are things like garages, sheds and studios. They are permitted only in back yards. The significance of height is that the higher the structure, the farther it must be from side and rear property lines.

Rank, Enrollment High at B-CC High

Our neighborhood public high school, Bethesda-Chevy Chase, continues to grow and thrive.

The number of students has gone up steadily in recent years, from 1,061 in 1997 to 1,695 this year, an increase of 60 percent. Almost two-thirds of students are white, 16 percent African-American, 14 percent Hispanic and 7 percent Asian, making B-CC one of the most ethnically diverse high schools in Montgomery County.

Among County public schools, B-CC has the highest percentage of students enrolled in at least one honors-level course (92 percent) and the highest percentage of students taking at least one foreign language (85 percent). SAT mean score for the class of 2005 is 1183 (total), the school's highest-ever. Comparable scores for County public schools are 1101 and for the nation, 1028.

Newsweek magazine recently ranked B-CC the 29th best public high in the country (out of 27,000). The basis for this ranking was the number of Advanced Placement (AP) and/or International Baccalaureate (IB) tests taken by all students at each school in 2004, divided by the number of graduating seniors at that school.

A Stitch in Time . . .

Preparing for a natural disaster or terrorist attack takes just a few easy steps. Have you started?

A first step could be completing a simple written plan for you, your family and your pets. The plan should include such information as family emergency phone numbers, emergency meeting places near home and away from home, and medical information.

In October with the *Town Journal*, every family received a copy of "Be READY, Make a PLAN," produced by the 12 jurisdictions of the Metro area. If you have misplaced yours or want additional copies for family members, they are available at the Town Hall. There is no charge for this valuable, handy packet.

A wise second step would be assembling basic supplies such as three days' worth of bottled water (a gallon per day per person), a three-day stock of non-perishable food, a first-aid kit and extra prescription drugs. Very important are a battery operated radio, flashlight and extra batteries.

Keeping Informed of Emergency Conditions

As announced in the September *Town Journal*, Montgomery County has activated a new system of notifying residents not only about emergencies, but also severe weather threats and significant transportation disruptions. Individuals who desire the service select the way or ways they want to receive the text message alerts -- e-mail, cell phone, Blackberry, personal digital assistant (PDA) or pager.

To sign up for the free service, visit the County Web site at www.montgomerycountymd.gov and click on "Alert Montgomery." If you have a question, call the office of Scott Reilly, (240) 777-2533.

Whether or not you sign up to receive text messaging from the County, you will get emergency information from Town Hall by telephone -- unless you opted out of the system or telephone lines are down. Somerset joined a plan several years ago that enables us to call every number on the network almost simultaneously to broadcast emergency updates and instructions.

It's the Season for Giving and Thanking

Turnout for Community Service Day was overwhelming. My heartfelt thanks to all who participated and especially to **Jeffrey Slavin** and **Sarah Morse**, who organized the event.

I am equally grateful to **David Herbick** for his terrific job of designing the Town centennial stamp and banners. Both are as colorful, tasteful and appropriate as the Town of Somerset flag that Dave created several years ago.

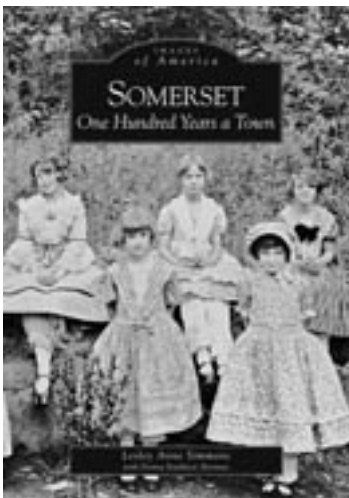
Happy Holidays ...

From the Council, staff and Mayor. May 2006 be your best year ever! We pledge to help you achieve this goal by operating the government closest to you as efficiently and pleasantly as we possibly can.

Calendar

Monday, December 26 – Town Office Closed
Friday, December 30– Curb side leaf pick up ends
Monday, January 2, 2006 –Town Office Closed
Tuesday, January 3 – Town Council Meeting
Wednesday, January 11 – Curb side Christmas
 Trees pick up
Thursday, January 19 – Potomac Conservancy
 Slide presentation

Thursday, January 19 – Journal Deadline, Ads
Friday, January 20 – Journal Deadline, Copy
Friday, January 20 – Brown Bag Lunch
Monday, January 30 – MVA's mobile office in
 Friendship Heights
Sunday, April 30 – Town Centennial Celebrations



If you haven't got your copy of the Town's new history book – "Somerset: One Hundred Years a Town" you can get one from Tom at the Town Hall for \$20 cash or check made out to Town of Somerset. They make great holiday gifts for those with a Somerset connection, too.

Water Main and Sewer Report

By Jason Hipkins, Director of Operations, Callahan Pipeline Inc.



Work Completed This Month

The intersection of Dorset Avenue and Surrey Street is complete and everything is running on the new water main. All houses have been hooked up to the new mains on all streets. We installed five new fire hydrants on Dorset Avenue -- all fire hydrants are now completed. We have begun to replace the main sewer with about 200 feet completed. This is a much slower process than replacing water pipes as we have to work 8 to 10 feet deep and up to 12 feet in some places. The good news is that there is less sewer to replace than there was water pipe.

What's Next?

We will be working on the sewer until the end of February. We should complete the section of Dorset Avenue toward Surrey Street by early January. Then we will move to Essex Avenue where we will work until the end of February. During this time we will also be renewing sewer house connections, which require installing the new sewer from the property line to the new sewer main. Also there are two intersections that still need the water tie-ins -- at Essex Avenue and Surrey Street and Falstone Avenue and Warwick Place.

During the installation of the sewer house connections we will have to dig on your property. Please have patience with us as this has to be done. There is a possibility that we will need to dig in your front yard or driveway.

Traffic Concerns:

I am aware that our detour signs have not always been put up and that traffic has had a problem getting around our construction area. I have talked with the foreman and he will have the detour signs set up each morning to move traffic around our work area. We apologize for this problem.

As always, do feel free to contact me with any concerns at jason@callahanpipeline.com or by phone at (301) 898-3003.

Editors' Note: Don't forget that you can check on the Town website www.townofsomerset.com each day to find out which roads will be closed.

Somerset Community Safety Campaign and Police Trial Period Update

by Council member Tom Eldridge

Chevy Chase police worked a total of thirty-four hours in Somerset in November. During that time the police issued 15 warnings and one ticket. Most of the incidents involved failure of motorists to stop at a STOP sign. In addition a first incidence since the police coverage began, of speeding in Town was issued.

More information about the police activity throughout the period of the trial project -- which began in September -- will be available at the January 3 meeting of the Town Council. We also expect to have statistics of citations issued during the month of December at that time.



The trial period for the police presence in Town is coming to a close and a discussion of its future will be scheduled for the February meeting of the Town Council. Meanwhile, we would appreciate hearing from residents about their views on the trial. Please call me at (301) 656-3354 or e-mail me at t.eldridge@verizon.net to let me know your views.

Town Hall Tidbits

By Tom Carter

HOLIDAY GREETINGS from the staff at Town Hall -- Tom Carter, Corrie Morsey, Enrique Cabrera, Angel Alba and Tomas Villanueva.

Christmas Tree Disposal



Christmas trees will be picked up by J&J on **Wednesday, January 11**. This is the only day for pickup this year. J&J will make only one pass through Town that day, so be sure to have your tree at the curb no later than 7:00 a.m. Trees must be free of tinsel, lights and ornaments, removed from any bases or stands, and not in plastic bags.

Sidewalk Clearing

Residents are reminded that our contractor will clear Town sidewalks only after a 2-inch accumulation of snow occurs. Residents are still responsible for clearing accumulations of less than two inches and sanding for ice.

Leaf Season Ends

If the weather cooperates, we expect to end leaf collection season on **December 30**. We will, however, pick up any leaves that are raked to the curb by this date, even if we don't get to them until after January 2. In the spring, we will reseed any areas of grass that may have died from the piles of leaves before they were picked up.

The way to get rid of any remaining leaves is to put them in your mulch pile or at the curb on Tuesdays in **paper** bags or reusable containers.



Broadcast E-mails Bounce Back to Town Office

When sending Town broadcast e-mails we receive several returns, sometimes from full accounts, but more often from bad addresses. In checking these, we have discovered residents who have changed their e-mail addresses and not informed us. Our policy is to delete these bad addresses.

Please remember to notify the Town Hall if you change e-mail addresses so you will continue to receive these informational and emergency e-mails.

Last Chance for 2006 Calendars

2006 League of Women Voters calendars are still available at the Town Hall for \$6, or call Nancy Soreng at (301) 986-1916.

MVA Mobile Office

The MVA's mobile office will be in Friendship Heights on Monday, January 30, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Permits Granted

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

Trees

Elizabeth Thompson and Steve Surko, 5500 Uppingham Street, to remove a large dead oak in the rear corner of their yard.

Ellen and Gabriel Roth, 4815 Falstone Avenue, to remove two failing trees, an oak and a dogwood, in their back yard.

Alice Grochal, 4909 Falstone Avenue, to remove two small dead trees in her back yard.

Legislation

At the December 5 meeting, the Council:

1. Introduced a resolution amending the Town Charter to increase the number of members of the Board of Supervisors of Elections from three to five.
2. Approved an amendment to Town Code Section 5-303, Swimming Pool Committee, to clarify membership of the swim team representative, redefine term lengths, add a meeting attendance requirement and eliminate officer positions that have never been filled.
3. Approved a Town Code amendment removing the section allowing residents to prune Town trees with a permit from the Mayor.
4. Approved a Town Code amendment to eliminate the option of insurance for contractors to cut down a tree as a result of a new State law requiring them to have a Maryland tree expert license.
5. Introduced a Town Code amendment changing the publication and adoption dates of the annual budget to comply with Montgomery County submission requirements.

Council Activity

At the December 5 meeting, the Council:

1. Confirmed the Mayor's reappointment of Tracy Truman to the Board of Supervisors of Elections for a three-year term expiring December 31, 2008.
2. Confirmed the Mayor's reappointment of Donna Harman, Zola Schneider and Lesley Simmons to three-year terms on the History Committee and reappointment of Lesley Simmons as chair for three more years.
3. Set dates for nominations of Mayor and two Council members for two-year terms on Monday, March 6, and for elections on Wednesday, April 5, 2006. The Candidates Forum, if necessary, will be held between March 19 and 23. The regular April Town Council meeting will be on Monday, April 3.
4. Set the dates of the July, September and October 2006 and January 2007 Council meetings on Wednesday, July 5; Tuesday, September 5; Tuesday, October 3; and Tuesday, January 2, 2007.
5. Set 6:30 p.m., January 3, 2007, for the Council to meet as a committee of the whole, chaired by the Vice President of the Council, to recommend the Mayor's salary for the term beginning in 2006.
6. Set tennis fees for the 2006 season at \$5 per household.
7. Approved 2006 election poll booth hours from 5 to 9 p.m.
8. Heard the police report regarding enforcement during November.
9. Approved a contract with Shemro Engineering to design repairs to the pool pump room ceiling at a cost of \$2,480.
10. Heard a report by Alan Proctor, chair, Undergrounding Committee, on the engineer's study of burying cables in Somerset. The final report is expected by this spring.
11. Approved the removal of a northern red oak, #31, 4707 Cumberland Avenue, with considerable dieback.



Permission to Remove a Declining Town Tree

by Corrie Morsey

The January Town Council Agenda lists action on the recommendation of Davey Tree to remove a pin oak, #541, in the 5500 block of Surrey Street. Sadly they have diagnosed the tree as having hypoxylon canker. If not removed, the spores, which are transported by wind, can cause new infections on stressed and wounded trees.

On My Mind

by Council member Jeffrey Slavin

We live in a County where citizen activism and participation on every issue, particularly involving land use, is nothing short of legendary in the State of Maryland.

This notion was reinforced at Councilmember Floren's recent land use forum, which I have written about elsewhere in this issue.

In our own municipality, many of you have been following the proposal Council member Simmons and I have made about our two major town properties at the Town Hall and the pool site, which was also the subject of a recent article in the Gazette. I am glad that so many residents have shown such a keen interest through your calls and e-mails.

While a proposed rather rigorous schedule for decision making was laid out in the Journal and the Gazette, it has become obvious to me that before we start discussing specific proposals, we need to take a step back and do some visioning and planning. We have been reminded that at the last major public discussion of the future of the Town Hall last March, Renovation Committee leaders promised the large audience that the next step would be a public planning process.

In light of this, and as a result of some discussions with a number of you, I have been convinced that we must start with a serious public planning process so that we can reach consensus and make compromise on the specific type of buildings that we want, need and can afford over the next 30 years.

I believe that such a process will involve an outside facilitator and more public meetings. While it is my hope that this exercise will not take another five years, I also do not want to see projects rushed through and I want there to be ample time for residents to weigh in by way of the various forms of communication.

So stay tuned.

How should we Proceed on Possible Town Hall and Pool House Renovation?

By Councilmember Tom Eldridge



Both the Town Hall and the Pool House are not in good shape. Both structures have passed their useful life. Both are deteriorating and face the prospect of significant repairs in the near future. While I appreciate the proposal by my fellow Council members Lesley Simmons and Jeffrey Slavin, I think there is a better approach to addressing possible renovation of the Town Hall and Pool House. I think the Town Council should sit in special session (as many as are necessary) to work through the facilities issues we face as a Town. No other body can effectively forge consensus among residents with diverse viewpoints on these controversial issues. Since the Town Hall has received a great deal of attention including from a special committee charged with examining its possible renovation, I believe we should begin by gathering data similar to that gathered by the Town Hall Renovation Committee with regard to the pool house. Specifically, we should establish what we would be permitted to do at that location from a zoning and regulatory perspective. We have begun that process. We also should interview several architects familiar with the Town and its character with an eye toward hiring one to prepare preliminary sketches of a renovated (or replaced) pool house structure. Our goal should be to develop a comprehensive facilities program that involves both the Town Hall and the Pool House. While we must ensure that all Town funds are spent wisely, we should not prejudge the amount we will spend on these possible renovations. In other words, the process could result in our spending more on a pool house renovation versus the amount spent on the Town Hall or visa versa. I believe this approach will help us resolve these issues with greater dispatch than the one recently proposed. However, I welcome the recent proposal, and commend my fellow Council members for moving the ball forward on these important and pressing issues.

SOMERSET NEEDS YOU... To help us build our historic legacy.

by Donna Harman

The new Somerset history and our earlier histories have all relied on people's memories, in particular memories that have been preserved in letters, essays, and pictures. The only way we can continue this tradition is to have YOU write up your memories so that fifty years from now these can be passed to the next generation of Somerset historians. As one of the Town's centennial projects, the history committee will be creating a scrapbook of letters, short stories, and other types of correspondence from townspeople (past and present) that will become part of the Town's archives. We would like to have something in the scrapbook from every Somerset family. There are no rules but here are a few suggestions of topics that might get your writing juices flowing.

- For long-term residents—what was the town like when you came? How have things changed? What kinds of town activities do you remember (describe some of our major events such as the Big Storm).
- For newer residents—what brought you to Somerset? How is Somerset different from where you lived before? Describe some Town activities you have enjoyed, such as the July 4th party or trick or treating on Halloween night.
- For our youngsters—describe things you have done in Somerset, like the swim team, the Fourth of July egg toss, or activities with your friends. Or you might describe what it was like to have your old school torn down or to be one of the first students in the new school.

There is no limit on the length of your write-up—long or short is fine. Please send your contributions by March 1, by e-mail to Donna Harman at dch34@cornell.edu or on paper to 4719 Dorset Avenue. Future generations of Somerseters will be very grateful.

News from the History Committee

By Lesley Simmons, Chair



Mayor Biggs

At the November Town Council meeting the Mayor noted that a subsection of the History Committee had been functioning unofficially as an *Anniversary Task Force*. He proposed officially acknowledging its existence, and the Council voted to establish this "100th Anniversary Task Force". It is currently made up of Town residents Katherine Kosin, Corrie Morsey, Alice Rowen, and Phyllis Wiesenfelder, who have been working judiciously to help plan an event worthy of our Town's 100 years of history (to be held on April 30, 2006). If you would like to join the Task Force please be in touch with History Committee Chair, Lesley Simmons at (240) 497-1876 or Lesley.simmons@earthlink.net

Long Lost Mayor is Found!

If you have read the Town's new history – "Somerset: One Hundred Years a Town*" you will know that we have photographs of each of the men who have served as Town Mayor going back to 1906. Apart, that is, from Warren W. Biggs who served as Mayor from 1912-1916. We are grateful to the early work of Town Historian Dorothy O'Brien who collected these Mayors' photos some 30 or more years ago. Knowing how diligent her research was we were not surprised to find that endless searching in local libraries and even the Library of Congress Photo collection failed to turn up a photograph of the lost Mayor.

About a year ago I came across a collage of photographs of members of the Kiwanis Club of Washington taken in 1920 when I was searching the Washington Post online archives. Among them was Warren W. Biggs. After endless searching, and thanks to Jane Chapman, office manager for the Kiwanis, a few weeks ago I got to see Mayor Biggs' picture. Too late for the history book, but not too late to fill the gap in our photo collage of the Mayors of Somerset on the Town Hall wall. The photograph was very small, but thanks to modern technology and the help of my husband, we now have a fairly good idea of what Mr. Biggs looked like. Thanks Jane. You have filled a gap in Somerset's history!

*Available at the Town Hall, price \$20 cash or check.

Somerset's Centennial

By Lesley Simmons, History Committee Chair

Commemorative Postage Stamps

The History Committee is recommending purchase of a postage stamp to commemorate the Town's centennial. The colorful stamp has been designed by Town resident David Herbick (who designed our Town flag). We propose purchasing one hundred sheets of 20 x 39 cent postage stamps (the first class stamp rate goes up to 39 cents on January 8, 2006) in this design. Sixty sheets will be made available for sale to residents and the public, and forty will be used by the Town office for regular business purposes. The Centennial stamps will be available to residents, by the sheet, at \$13.00 per sheet of twenty stamps.

(This compares with the regular price per sheet of \$7.80: the special stamps cost us \$5.19 extra per sheet of 20, or 26cents extra per stamp)

Banners

David Herbick has generously designed colorful banners to hang from utility posts during the centennial year. At the January meeting the Council will consider a request for up to \$4,000 to purchase 24 banners and the hardware from which to hang them.

Report on Community Service Day 2005 and Future Plans

by Council member Jeffrey Slavin

This year's Community Service Day at the Town Hall was a rousing success. Many thanks to all those who participated.

I was overwhelmed by the number of citizens who joined in this worthwhile activity. It is heartening that so many people are enthusiastically willing to help others--and are motivated to do so with very little prodding. Major kudos again go to Co-Chair Sarah Morse for her leadership and hard work in making this activity such a major accomplishment.

More than 50 Somerset residents, the majority of whom were children, made hundreds of sandwiches, sewed mailbox surprises, decorated and assembled gift bags and created bookmarks. The recipients of our good work included the County's Men's Shelter on Gude Drive, the Community Council for the Homeless at Friendship Place (which serves people in our immediate area) and the Children's Inn at NIH.

We received a lovely letter from Andie Sante, director of Rainbow Place (www.rainbowplace.org), a Rockville shelter serving 75 of the County's homeless women, thanking us for our donations. Ms. Sante says that many of their women come to them with nothing and nowhere else to go. When they arrive at the door they are often cold, tired and hungry. When I visited the shelter to make the delivery I learned that many of these women have been abused, have drug and alcohol issues or have been rejected by loved ones. The facility itself provides a warm, safe and caring environment and it was clean and nicely appointed.

Merrily Ansell, Founder of Books, Bears and Bonnets of North Bethesda (www.booksbearsbonnets.org) sent us a Certificate of Appreciation for the "fantastic" bookmarks our volunteers made, which will be included in whimsical gift boxes to be provided to individuals fighting cancer and other life threatening illnesses. While the holiday season is a time of joy for most of us, others will be in the hospital. Receiving an uplifting gift from a person they don't even know brings encouragement and strength to each recipient. This is doubly important because this small non-profit has a limited budget so our kind deed sustains their ability to help many.

I feel it important to continue to strengthen our community spirit through these types of joint activities in Town. To help achieve this goal, I am putting together a group of people to be called the Somerset Community Service Corps, which will meet occasionally to plan and implement charitable activities and maintain a list of residents who want to do this on a more regular and organized basis. Mary Geffroy of Essex Avenue and David Stern of Warwick Place have already agreed to assist but anyone else with a little free time is encouraged to join us. We would particularly like to develop some youth leadership in this area.

As a first step, within the next month we want to locate a barrel somewhere in Town, probably at a resident's house, to continue to collect individual size toiletries, clothing and office supplies for Rainbow Place. We will bring the collected items out to Rockville on a regular schedule.

Secondly, we would like to lead a Somerset group to Montgomery County's Martin Luther King Holiday community service event at the Marriott Conference Center on Rockville Pike on Monday, January 16 from 12:30 to 3:00 PM. Last year David took his family for this highly rewarding and energizing event which will include making lunches, arts and crafts and picture frames for the County's needy.

Some people have pointed out to me that even within our Town, there are residents, especially our older citizens, who might need a simple task performed from time to time. This could include putting out the trash, taking in the mail or newspaper, changing a light bulb, etc.

Sarah, David, Mary and I will work with others to put together a program to identify how our Town and its residents can make the best efforts to show how much we care about each other and the less fortunate in the County.

Blind E-mails See You through the Spam Explosion

Gayley Knight (Cumberland) and Gail Werner (Surrey)

None of us wants to add to the growing spam in others' inbox, yet many group e-mails do just that. Traveling through cyberspace, e-mail is prey to spidering programs looking for e-mails with many addresses. Spiders capture the addresses from the "to" or "cc" line, using these addresses for their own spam. Many of us wonder how we got on a list discussing body-part enhancements or get-rich quick schemes? The answer could be your next-door neighbor forwarding you and 50 other residents his latest doctor joke!

A simple way to counter spiders is to blind carbon copy (bcc) when sending group e-mails. BCC keeps others from being the unwilling recipients of forwarded e-mail as well as protecting everyone's e-mail address from those who "reply all." BCC also protects you, the sender, from being viewed as a spammer by e-mail servers who might then blacklist you, resulting in your e-mail never reaching the intended inbox.

Your e-mail program's "help" will show you how to use bcc.

Be a good neighbor to the Potomac River

By George Wyeth

How can you, as a homeowner, be an environmentally good neighbor? You might be surprised at how many things you can do that will benefit both our immediate neighborhood and the entire Potomac River watershed. Find out about them: On Thursday, January 19 at 7:30 p.m. at the Town Hall the Potomac Conservancy will give a slide presentation on its new "Good Neighbor Handbook" to the Town's Parks and Natural Resources Committee and interested residents. The handbook provides practical and useful advice on topics such as:

- avoiding invasive plant species that upset the ecological balance
- creating habitat for birds and wildlife
- using the right amount of fertilizer
- controlling excessive stormwater runoff.

It's important to recognize that many of these steps are only effective if many homeowners become good neighbors. If we don't act as good stewards when we garden, build or maintain our properties, no one else can take care of the environment for us. Questions? Contact me at george.wyeth@verizon.net

For an advance look at the handbook, visit www.potomac.org/pdfs/good_neighbor_handbook.pdf

First Brown Bag Lunch of 2006 Set for Friday, January 20

by Council member Jeffrey Slavin

Oops. Last month I failed to schedule our fourth brown bag lunch of the year, so to make amends, let's get together on Friday, January 20 from noon to 1:00 p.m. at the Town Hall. The Mayor and I will be there, hopefully with many of our regulars and some newcomers. Don't forget to bring your lunch, perhaps an item to share, and a drink. Plates, cups and ice will be provided. For those not in the know, this lunch is open to all Town residents and is an opportunity to get to better acquainted with your elected officials, make a new friend or talk about issues, particularly those in Somerset. Guests are welcome. I will continue to schedule the lunches on a quarterly basis in 2006. For further information, call me at (301) 654-6767.



Councilmember Floreen's Planning Forum and Next Steps

by Council member Jeffrey Slavin

Council member Floreen is to be commended for bringing together so many people to address the future of County planning and the growing awareness that there needs to be a high level of a You may have read about County Councilmember Nancy Floreen's well-attended community forum on current planning issues in our populous jurisdiction. I was able to somehow secure a front row seat for the three-hour session that was quite useful and instructive. Many of the major players in the planning arena were there -- from every part of the County, including citizen activists, land use professionals, nine current or past Planning Board members, seven current or past Council Members, and an outstanding panel of experts on all sides of the debate.

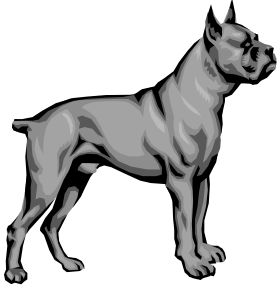
Our Town has long been at the center of some of the most significant public discussions on land use over the past 35 years and our long time commitment to the Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights demonstrates our high-level of interest in ensuring the consideration of the views of neighboring residents in the development of parcels of land. She has made it clear that she believes the government must do a better job of notifying residents -- at the earliest possible time -- of the dates and hearings and discussions at the Planning Board and Council.

I am aware of the continuing high level of interest on planning by many of our Town residents, so I would encourage everyone to contact the councilmember at Councilmember.Floreen@montgomerycountymd.gov to be put on an e-mail list to receive "Heads Up" -- a list of important dates of hearings, committee work sessions and scheduled votes on matters relating to this topic. In addition, contact Nancy if you would like a summary document of the planning forum, which captures many of the ideas and comments that were generated.

All About People

by Council member Jeffrey Slavin

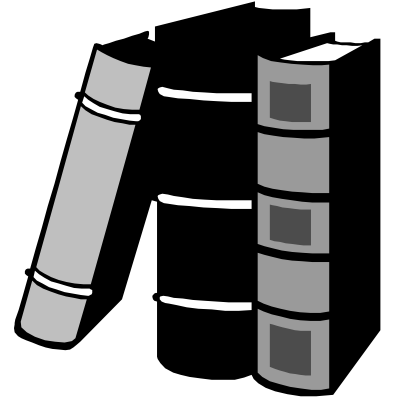
One of the hard working members of our Somerset Board of Elections, **ELLIE FINK** (Dorset), reports to me that son **OWEN FINK** is engaged to marry **KIMBERLY COOK**. Owen is in his second year of graduate school in veterinary medicine at the University of Georgia. Kimberly is working as an events planner at the same university, hails from Greensboro, Alabama and is a graduate of Hampshire College. Ellie and husband **MATTHEW** are very proud of their son, who graduated from B-CC High School and Brown. After graduation, he worked as a cook in Ireland and for an architecture firm in the District before deciding to become a vet. The happy couple met when they both worked on a ranch in Montana several years ago. Hopefully we will have wedding news in the near future...Down the street, **HARRY** and **LUCY FREEMAN** (Dorset) are still celebrating the birth of a new granddaughter and third grandchild **TAYLOR SOPHIA PYLE**, named for Lucy and Harry's grandmothers. Taylor lives with her parents **ALEXANDRA FREEMAN** and **DOUG PYLE** and brother **NICHOLAS** in our neighboring municipality of Glen Echo. Lucy says that Nicholas, who visits often, loves all the equipment digging up our streets (ouch!) She says her household has been bustling with activity this month with visiting daughter **RACHEL**, grandson **JEM** and nanny **NORGULIA** (a native of Kyrgyzstan). Rachel and company live in Johannesburg where she works for the International Finance Corporation. Hope the holidays bring a pleasant respite...



I received a nice email from **MATEY SCHEINER** (Uppingham), a 9 year old resident, who shares of love of dogs with brother, **DANNY**. (Proud parents are **STANLEY** and **NANCY**). One day last year the kids were out in Town petting a dog. Matey said, "I love dogs. Let's do something to be able to get to know these wonderful animals." So, Danny and Matey hosted their first dog contest in 2004. The criteria for winning were both personality and good looks. Voting took place at the corner of Dorset and Wisconsin Avenues on the first Sunday in November of that year. Danny and Matey loved it so much they did it again this year with the help of **ELENA BURGER** (Dorset). The winner this time was "**MUNSON**" **BERNARD** (Greystone), whose story has graced this column in the past. Munson was given a ribbon and squeeze toy. The children are planning to put together another contest in 2006, will announce it in the Journal first and hope that all Somerset dogs will enter. Sweet story...

Got a newsy electronic Holiday card from the ever-popular **LUCKY and BILL MARMON** (Cumberland) who have been working in Singapore for almost two years but hope to return permanently to Town by the winter of 2007. In the meantime, they are scheduled to be at our 4th of July parade and picnic next summer to elaborate on all their activities. Lucky tells me that daughters **JESSE and CHAPPELL** will be with them for Christmas and the family plans to all float together through the backwaters of Kerala, India for one short week of reunion. Jesse moved to New York last September where she is a veep for Tommy Hilfiger and adores the Big Apple. Chappell is working in Boulder in the University of Colorado's counseling office. She will return to Northampton, Massachusetts in the summer to complete her MSW. Happy parents miss them terribly but are glad they are thriving. Bill and Lucky say they "adore being in a part of the world where age is revered." Even though thousands of miles away, no different than Somerset!...

It is my understanding that **FRANK JOSEPH** (Warwick) will have a new book published next April. Entitled "To Love Mercy," it is set in 1948 Chicago where two boys—one white, one black—are thrown together on a quest for a missing silver talisman. This tale about race, religion and how children see the world, and how the world has --and has not changed -- sounds intriguing. In conjunction with this publication, I am planning an "Author's Night" at Town Hall in the spring so that we can show off a number of our talented writers with some individual readings and book signings. All those interested in publicizing their work please contact me within the next month...As the year ends, I want to thank all those who have contributed to this column in 2005 and wish everyone a bright and even better year in 2006.



Classifieds

SERVICES

PIANO & FLUTE LESSONS
 (with THEORY) Wash. Post music
 critic. CBS RECORDINGS writer.
 FACULTY: G.W.U.,
 MARYLAND U., SIDWELL.
 Music Degrees: A.B. Harvard;
 M.A. Columbia; Ph.D. Maryland.
 Studied: PEABODY
 CONSERVATORY & BERLIN
 (GERMANY). 30 years teaching
 all ages, levels.
 Call Cecelia Porter,
 301-654-2165.

SERVICES

HOME REPAIR CONTRACTOR.
 We have been very pleased with
 contractor - carpentry, dry wall,
 cabinet repair, painting, roof
 repair. Call us for a reference.
 Howard Simkowitz or Katherine
 Lacy, 301-656-5637.

MISCELLANEOUS

BCC COOPERATIVE NURSERY
 SCHOOL in Norwood Park has an
 immediate opening for a child who
 turned three by September 1, 2005.
 This is a fantastic opportunity for a
 family to join a small community with
 experienced, nurturing teachers and
 supportive parents. Please contact
 Frazier Blaylock at frayblay@aol.com
 or (301) 652-7661.

MISCELLANEOUS

FAMILY LOOKING FOR 3-4
 bedroom house with full basement and
 nice sized lot. Willing to renovate "as
 is" property.
 Call Lila, 301-656-7028.

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 Town residents. The Town
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 as to quality, safety or
 otherwise regarding the
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 advertised. Readers should make
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 AN AD, submit typed or neatly
 printed copy to the Clerk-
 Treasurer. \$1 for 25 words or
 less; \$2 for 26-50 words. Check
 or exact change. MUST
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 PHONE NUMBER.*

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MAYOR

Walter J. Behr, 4809 Grantham Ave., 301-654-1258/654-0224

CLERK-TREASURER

Tom Carter

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 Tom Eldridge, 5605 Warwick Pl., 301-656-3354
 Judy Frankel, 5528 Uppingham St., 301-657-8875
 Lesley Simmons, 4723 Cumberland Ave., 240-497-1876
 Jeffrey Slavin, 5706 Warwick Pl, 301-654-6767

TOWN HALL

Open 9 to 4:30
 301-657-3211/Fax 301-657-2773
 Web site: www.townofsomerset.com
 E-mail: clerk@townofsomerset.com
 TTY users call Maryland Relay

Deadlines: Ads January 19, Copy January 20

PRELIMINARY AGENDA

REGULAR MEETING OF TOWN COUNCIL

Tuesday, January 3, 2006 - 7:30 P.M.

1. Approval of minutes of December 5 regular meeting – 7:30.
2. Discussion of FY 05 annual audit by Jim Lindsey and Bob Diss of Lindsey & Associates and Town Audit Committee – 7:35.
3. Discussion of financial report – 7:50.
4. Discussion of analysis of Town's financial condition and borrowing potential by Institute for Governmental Service – 7:55.
5. Action authorizing payment of \$100 annual dues to Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights for 2006 – 8:10.
6. Recommendation to Historic Preservation Commission and fact finding hearing and action on Town building permit application by Arne and Ruth Sorenson, 5810 Warwick Place, to add a bay area to the north, enclose the covered porch in the rear, expand the second floor and add a second story over the porch in the rear – 8:15.
7. Mayor's report – 8:30.
8. Developments/plans in the vicinity of Somerset – 8:40.
9. Suggestions and questions from residents – 8:50.
10. Discussion of 2005 swimming pool financial report – 9:00.
11. Discussion of continuing police enforcement in Town – 9:10.
12. Action on Town Code amendment changing the publication and adoption dates of the annual budget to comply with Montgomery County submission requirements – 9:25.
13. *Introduction of Town Building Code amendment to define the height of accessory structures as the distance from the ground in the front center of the building to the top of the roof – 9:30.
14. Introduction of Town Code amendment changing the name of the park on Dorset at Surrey from Minipark to Founders Park – 9:40.
15. *Action on Town Charter amendment to expand Board of Supervisors of Elections from three to five members – 9:45.
16. *Action on recommendation of Davey Tree to remove a diseased and rapidly declining pin oak, #541, at 5515 Surrey Street – 9:50.
17. *Action on recommendation of History Committee to purchase commemorative first-class (\$.39) Town centennial stamps for office use and sale to residents at total cost of \$1,299, net cost of \$519 if none sold, \$208 if all sold – 9:55.
18. *Action on recommendation of History Committee to purchase 24 centennial banners and mounting hardware for up to \$5,000 – 10:00.
19. New business – 10:10.
20. Adjournment – 10:15.

* Items marked have corresponding articles included in this issue of the *Town Journal*.