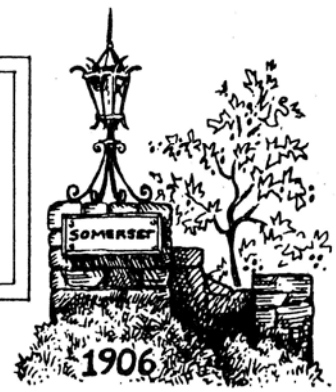




SOMERSET TOWN JOURNAL



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January 23, 2006

1906 – 2006 Celebrating One Hundred Years A Town

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Local Election Lowdown- Voters to Select Mayor and Two Council Members on April 5

By Tom Carter

Election Day for the Town of Somerset is Wednesday, April 5, for Mayor and two Council members. Incumbent Jeffrey Slavin has decided to run for Council member and Walter will run again for Mayor. Incumbent Lesley Simmons has decided not to run. At the Town Council meeting on March 6, nominations for the incumbents and other candidates will be accepted for the two-year terms. Additional nominations may be made by petition of 20 registered voters filed with the Clerk-Treasurer no later than 4 p.m., Wednesday, March 15.

The Town Charter requires its elected officials to be:

- citizens of the United States;
- residents of Somerset for at least 18 months preceding the election; and
- qualified voters in the State of Maryland.

Registration Day is March 6

A member of the Board of Elections will be at the Town Hall on Monday, March 6, from 7:30 – 9:00 p.m. to register new voters. In addition, Town residents may register at the Town Hall Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. or by mail (call Tom Carter, (301) 657-3211, to mail the registration form to you). The deadline to register for the April 5 election is 4:30 p.m. on March 22. If you are currently registered in Montgomery County, you are eligible to vote in the Town of Somerset.

One hundred years ago a first class stamp cost 2 cents. This month first class stamps went up by 2 cents to 39 cents. In Somerset one hundred years ago there were 35 families, today there are more than 410!

Qualifications for voting in the Town of Somerset are:

- Be at least 18 years old by April 5, 2006;
- Be a resident of Somerset for 14 days preceding the election (actual residency is required except for individuals absent from the Town only temporarily and intending to return, such as students, military and other overseas government employees);
- Be a citizen of the United States or an alien legally authorized to reside in the country; and
- Be a registered to vote in the Town of Somerset and/or Montgomery County.

If you have any questions about whether you are registered in the Town or know former residents who are still registered in Somerset, call Tracy Truman, chair of the Board of Supervisors of Elections at (301) 652-4596.

Mayor's Den

by Walter J. Behr

Keeping Informed

Did you know that the *Town Journal* is available in two downloadable formats on the Town Web site, Microsoft Word and PDF? If you have the capability of receiving it in PDF format, you will find that it looks the same as the printed version. Whether or not you download the monthly newsletter on your computer, you will continue to receive a printed version by mail unless you notify Tom Carter that you want your name removed from the mailing list.

The majority of residents have signed onto the Town's e-mail network, but if you haven't, it's never too late. Simply call, write or e-mail the Town office (clerk@townofsomerset.com) of your desire. Announcements are limited primarily to committee meetings, trash and recycling irregularities and emergency information and instructions. An alternative e-mail network is maintained for residents who want to be notified only of emergency situations.

If an emergency should arise, you will also receive up-to-date information via an automated telephone network unless you opt out of the system. Please see a separate article on Page 5 in this *Town Journal* on the procedure for updating the phone numbers on this network.

Finally, this is a reminder of a new Montgomery County system for notifying residents not only about emergencies, but also severe weather threats and significant transportation disruptions. To sign up for the free service, visit the County Web site at www.montgomerycountymd.gov and click on "Alert Montgomery." If you have questions, call Scott Reilly at (240) 777-2533.

What Caused Power Outages?

It probably comes as no surprise that the two electric power outages affecting most Somerset families in mid-January resulted from gale-force winds that caused trees to blow over and sever Pepco lines.

The problem started at 9:14 p.m. Saturday, January 14, with a broken line on Walhonding Road near MacArthur Boulevard in the Glen Echo area. Power returned around 3:30 on Sunday morning. The second episode occurred that afternoon at 1:46 p.m. when a tree in the 6700 block of Goldsboro Road fell on the power line. Fortunately, power was restored before dark, at 4:46 p.m.

At our request, Pepco is checking its data to determine whether we are experiencing more than our share of outages. I hope to be able to report Pepco's findings at the Town Council meeting on February 6.

Consultant Examines Town Borrowing Potential

For an objective look at the Town's financial position and borrowing potential, we commissioned a study by the Institute for Governmental Service of the University of Maryland. Their report has been received and copies are available at the Town Hall. Here are a few of their conclusions:

"Applying the International City Manager's Association standard, the Town requires an unreserved fund balance of only about \$60,000 in the general fund; thus almost all of the \$1.7 million in existing reserves is available either for capital project funding or to guarantee financing for capital borrowing."

"The Town of Somerset may incur up to approximately \$2.8 million in debt, based on peer benchmarks from five municipalities in Montgomery County. This level of outstanding debt ... can be described as easily affordable by the Town..."

"The Town of Somerset has the capacity to carry an annual debt service load up to approximately \$212,000 ... this level of debt service can be described as easily affordable by the Town ..."

The report should be of interest as we discuss capital improvements to the bathhouse, Town Hall and, later, street repaving.

Water/Sewer Project Nears Completion

Callahan Pipeline, the WSSC contractor that is replacing water and sewer lines, mostly on Dorset and Essex Avenues and Warwick Place, promises to complete its work by early March – barring delays that might be caused by major snowstorms and extended subfreezing temperatures.

Next summer, another contractor will restore damaged curbs and mill and pave the streets or portions thereof which have been excavated and temporarily patched. The delay in starting milling and paving is intentional for two reasons: (a) to be sure there are no problems with the new water and sewer mains, and (b) to give the fill material a chance to settle before the new asphalt is installed.

If you have any problems with Callahan Pipeline or any other Town contractor, I would appreciate you contacting me directly, either by e-mail at mayor@townofsomerset.com or phone at (301) 657-3211 or (301) 654-1258.

Trail Rail

Thanks to a suggestion by Town resident Tom Ainora, the trail from the swimming pool bathhouse to the back of the North Park Apartments will be safer for users following snowstorms and the inevitable thawing and freezing.

Tom recommended that we erect a railing. The Council approved the low bid (\$5,733 by Long Fence), and installation is scheduled for February 7. Town maintenance men will continue the practice of applying sand to the slippery surface.

Vandalism Is No Joke

Several incidents of vandalism in the past month have been reported to the Town Hall – cars driving over lawns, raw eggs tossed onto parked vehicles, truck windows broken and, in one case, oranges smashed against a front door.

Perpetrators may think of these acts as harmless fun, but the police and Mayor and Council consider them petty crimes. If you observe vandalism in process, call the County police emergency number, 9-1-1. To report incidents that have already been inflicted, please call the police at (301) 279-8000 and the Town Hall at (301) 657-3211.

Somerset Becomes Famous in New Orleans

Everyone in Somerset knows about the devastation inflicted by Hurricane Katrina on New Orleans, but did you realize that thousands of New Orleans residents now know what a great place the Town of Somerset is?

Chris Rose, a columnist with the New Orleans *Times-Picayune*, grew up on Essex Avenue and fled there in late August with his wife and daughter to be with his parents, Dorothy and John Rose. When Chris returned to Louisiana, he wrote a column about his hometown. Here are a few excerpts:

“People gave us clothes and toys and tuition ... and such an outpouring of generosity that it boggles the mind to realize just how kind strangers can be ... My wife and daughter became social mavens in Town; the women of Somerset smothered them with attention and invitations. They thrived. It is a great place, that old Town ... My parents are heroes ... I felt like we broke their hearts when we left.”

Chris Rose can be reached at chris.rose@timespicayune.com

Town Staffing Roles and Requirements to be Discussed

by Council Member Rick Kessler

The February Town meeting agenda includes a discussion of the evolving role of the Mayor and the town staff. The current job description, that the Mayor is “chief executive of the Town and the planner, ceremonial chief, and supervisor of the Clerk-Treasurer,” is extensive.

The Mayor is responsible for planning, consultations with the Clerk-Treasurer and Town Attorney, editing and writing the Town Journal, reviewing incoming correspondence, preparing and reviewing applications and reports, preparing correspondence and official testimony, inspecting buildings, grounds, and trees, receiving incoming phone calls, recommending appointments, enforcing Town ordinances, preparing a monthly report to the Council, supervising and disbursing certain funds, carrying out public relations, and overseeing public works.

The Mayor’s salary of \$15,000 per annum, which was last raised in 2002, is a reflection of the Mayor’s extensive responsibilities and is up for reauthorization.

In 1995, an outside human resource company provided an independent assessment of the Town’s needs, recommending at that time a redefinition of the Mayor’s job to emphasize its “external, ambassadorial and Town issue management roles.” In addition, it recommended a full time Clerk/Treasurer and a part-time assistant – a recommendation that the Town followed. There have been ongoing discussions of hiring an additional part-time assistant but, to date, one has not been hired.

Against this backdrop, up for discussion at the Town Council meeting is the town staffing requirements in light of current and future developments in the Town and its environs, and the evolving role of the Mayor.

Police Pilot Extension

By Council member Tom Eldridge

At the February Town meeting, the Council will take action on whether to continue the pilot project of hiring Chevy Chase police to enforce speeding and STOP sign laws in Somerset -- part of Somerset’s broader traffic safety program. I have heard from several residents that they have observed an improvement in driving habits in our Town since the pilot began in September. In addition, one resident wrote that they observed the police pull over a driver the resident saw engaging in dangerous behavior.

The police have reported that they issued tickets to 41 people between September 20 and December 31, 2005. They have stopped people for STOP sign violations on Cumberland, Deal, Devon, Dorset, Essex, Falstone, Surrey and Warwick. Although some residents were stopped, there do not appear to have been repeat offenders among Town residents -- which is a good thing.

Although there is not a great deal of data upon which to draw conclusions, I think the program shows sufficient promise to make it worth extending for further study. I propose continuing the pilot project for another five months (February through June) under the same terms that have been operating. The cost would be not more than \$6000, which would allow us to hire the police for up to 8 hours per week for five months. The same task force (made up of Council members Eldridge, Slavin, and Simmons) would oversee the project in the same consultative relationship with the Mayor. I urge all residents to provide input to the Council so we may make an informed decision on whether to continue this pilot project as part of our traffic safety program.

Calendar

Monday, January 30 – MVA's mobile office in Friendship Heights

Monday, February 6 –Town Council Meeting

Monday, February 13 – Council work session to discuss facilities' renovations

Thursday, February 16 – Journal deadline, Ads

Friday, February 17 – Journal deadline, Copy

Monday, February 27 – MVA's mobile office in Friendship Heights

Monday, March 6 – Nomination for Mayor and two Council members

Monday, March 6 – Somerset voter registration day

Wednesday, April 5 – Somerset Election Day

Sunday, April 30 – Town Centennial Celebrations

On My Mind

by Council member Jeffrey Slavin

At the next Town meeting, the Council will consider extending the pilot project of hiring police to enforce several of our traffic laws in Somerset (details in the above article by my well-intentioned colleague Tom Eldridge).

You may recall that I have opposed this program from the start. Based on my conversations and correspondence with residents, I felt that a majority did not want a police presence in Town and that it was an unnecessary expenditure. Although my view did not prevail when the decision was made, I have followed the project closely and participated in the implementation as a member of the task force.

From the start records show that many of the offenders live in Town. Do we really feel that having police give tickets is the best way of controlling the driving behavior of our own citizens? I walk around town a lot and I haven't really noticed a change in the number of people who come to a complete stop at the signs or keep their speed down.

However, at this point, I think I am wavering. Several people I have talked to that I would have expected to oppose the project actually like the police. And every e-mail that we have received has been in support.

Moreover, I am not sure that the test results mean anything because unfortunately police schedules have been inadvertently announced each month at Council meetings.

So, perhaps we should continue the test for a few more months, make some changes based on our experience, and evaluate the data later in the year. But I want to hear from more citizens about this, so please get in touch with me before the February Town Council meeting. Additionally, I will try to send a reminder e-mail to those of you in my address book in the hope that it will be easy for people to respond quickly by hitting the reply button. So look for that message.

Please Help Us Update the Town Emergency Phone Network

by Corrie Morsey



Eighteen months ago the Town Council authorized an automated messaging service for Town residents in cases of emergency. The service permits us to call everyone in Somerset within an hour of an impending emergency and/or afterward to provide information, for example about dry ice, shelter, food or cleanup.

We will use the 2006 Town directory to update the network. If you are in the current directory, you will be included in the emergency network **unless you notify the Town Hall, in writing (e-mail at town@townofsomerset.com regular mail or note) by March 1 that you do not want to be included**. Each household may include up to three phone numbers in the emergency network. If you have a second or third number - regular or cell - you want included, let us know in writing by March 1st.

PORI, the company operating the automated messaging service, has assured us that phone numbers on the system will, under no circumstances, be released to any other source.

Town Hall Tidbits

By Tom Carter

FORM 502 MARYLAND RESIDENT INCOME TAX RETURN
OR FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING 2004, ENDING

SOCIAL SECURITY #		SPOUSE'S SOCIAL SECURITY #	
Your First Name	Initial	Last Name	
Spouse's First Name	Initial	Last Name	
PRESENT ADDRESS (No. and street)			
City or Town		State	Zip Code
Name of county and incorporated city, town or special taxing area in which you were employed on the last day of the tax period (See Instructions)		Maryland county	City, town or taxing area TOWN OF SOMERSET

Tax Time Again -- Remember: 'Town of Somerset'

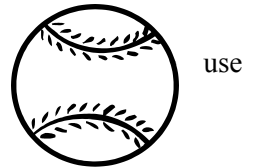
Somerset's largest source of revenue is a portion of the State income tax paid by Town residents. Unfortunately, Somerset will not get its share of income taxes unless its name appears on the Maryland income tax form in the box marked, "City, Town or Taxing Area." A sample of the form appears below. Please don't forget to complete this section when filing your taxes.

2006 Tennis ID Cards

Tennis ID cards for 2006 are available from Tom at the Town Hall office. Fees are still only \$5 per family for the annual card. Please make your checks out to "Town of Somerset."

Batting Cage Annual Fees

Batting cage users are reminded that their annual fees of \$5 for 2006 are due for continued use of the equipment. Checks should be made out to "Town of Somerset."



MVA Mobile Office

The MVA's mobile office will be in Friendship Heights on Monday, January 30, and Monday, February 27, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Permits Granted

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

Trees: Richard Feldman, 5517 Uppingham Street, to remove two double-trunk cedars in his front yard and a dead maple and a dead magnolia in his back yard.

Legislation

At the January 3 meeting, the Council:

1. Approved a Town Code amendment changing the publication and adoption dates of the annual budget to comply with the Montgomery County submission requirements.
2. Introduced a 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.
3. Introduced a Town Code amendment changing the name of the park on Dorset at Surrey from Minipark to Founders Park.
4. Approved a resolution amending the Town Charter to increase the number of members of the Board of Supervisors of Elections from three to five.

Council Activity

At the January 3 meeting, the Town Council:

1. Heard the independent auditor's report for fiscal year 2005 presented by Bob Diss of Lindsey & Associates.
2. Heard the Institute for Governmental Service's analysis of the Town's financial condition and borrowing potential.
3. Authorized payment of \$100 annual dues to the Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights for 2006, subject to receipt of their bill.
4. Received the 2005 swimming pool financial report.
5. Heard the police report regarding enforcement during December and continuation in January.
6. Approved the removal of a diseased and rapidly declining pin oak, #541, at 5515 Surrey Street.
7. Approved the purchase of commemorative first-class (\$.39) Town centennial stamps for Town office use and sale to residents at a total cost of \$1,299, a net cost of \$519 if none sold, or \$208 if all are sold.
8. Approved the purchase of 24 centennial banners and mounting hardware for up to \$5,000.
9. Took no action on the request from Nancy Hooff, Uppingham Street, to: designate two or more pick-up points for all public and private school buses in the Town of Somerset; and prohibit the Town from contracting for services with tractor trailers to pick up leaves, or other such tasks for which smaller and more appropriate vehicles could be used.
10. Set Monday, January 23, and Monday, February 13, for Town Council work sessions on Town Hall and swimming pool bathhouse renovations. Meetings will be at 7:30 p.m. at the Town Hall.
11. Approved a letter of intent to join the National Flood Insurance Program.
12. Accepted the bid of Long Fence to install a rail on the trail from the bathhouse to the rear of the North Park apartments for \$5,733.



Council Hears Residents' Input on Facilities and Asks for More

On January 23, the Town Council held its first work session to address possible renovations to the Town Hall and pool facilities. Approximately 30 residents attended. A second facilities work session is scheduled for Monday, February 13, at 7:30 p.m.



The Council first addressed structural and other problems with the pool house and surrounding facility. The Mayor mentioned a serious leak, the lack of administrative space for the swim team, the lack of shelter in the event of a thunder storm, and residents' suggestion for an increased terrace area on the east side of the pool. Two Council members commented that the structure was near the end of its useful life.

Residents offered a variety of viewpoints on what changes they believed should occur at the pool. They discussed designing a structure to meet the Town's future demographic needs, their concerns about creating a facility that would require full-time administrative support, the need to learn what is permissible to build on the site, concerns about the effects of any development on the creek and on neighbors, and the consideration of pool developments in concert with proposals to renovate the Town Hall.

Council member Eldridge proposed a set of basic requirements be established for the pool house (and surrounding area), and asked for comments on those requirements from fellow Council members, the Pool Committee, and other residents. A copy of those draft proposed requirements follows.

Eldridge proposed that the Town refine those requirements – delineating those that are basic and those that are not but that we nevertheless want considered in the planning process -- hire an architect to develop plans to meet those requirements, and work with County regulators to determine what development proposed by the Town in fact would be permissible at the pool site.

The Council then discussed structural and other problems with the Town Hall. The Mayor mentioned eleven problems: a failing foundation, a virtually useless upstairs space, inadequate office space for Town employees, practically no storage space, fire hazard, lack of handicapped accessibility, one bathroom, inefficient single pane windows, inadequate insulation, a cramped conference room and rotting exterior siding.

Three Council members and a number of residents expressed tentative support for a preliminary design done by town resident and architect Bill Brenner which would allow for a two-phase renovation of the facility with the older, front part of the structure being renovated first. A copy of those preliminary plans are on the town website and can be seen at the Town Hall.

Residents pointed out that the meeting space had problems as well, including its lack of handicapped access to the older portion and a leaky roof. Tom Carter stated that the administrative space needs would not be completely met by the first phase of Bill's plan and that the Town needed more space to lay out plans. Several residents urged that the Town Hall renovation not be put off since the structure had deteriorated substantially. Some residents expressed concern about use of the Town Hall by non-residents. Some suggested that the meeting room could be used as administrative space if a larger meeting space were built at the pool and used for Town meetings.

The Council agreed that next steps should include: (1) seeking proposals from engineering/construction firms that could perform repair work on the Town Hall's foundation, and (2) seeking greater input from residents on a set of basic requirements for the pool house and surrounding area by the February 13 work session.

Residents are encouraged to provide input to the Mayor and Council on these important facilities issues, and to attend the February 13 work session.

Draft Proposal for Basic/Core Requirements for a New/Improved pool house structure

- Must meet Montgomery County standards for location in a flood plain. May require staying close to current "foot print." Architect will need to work with engineering firm and county officials to ensure design will be approved. Obviously all proposed facilities must be handicapped accessible.
- Improved bathroom and shower facilities. Showers should be modern, clean, and provide more privacy including, if feasible, through the use of a small separate changing area with a bench. There should be diaper changing areas, and lockers in changing rooms instead of cubbies.
- Improved flow throughout facility. Currently can't get strollers or rafts easily through turns, for example.
- Indoor multi-purpose space sufficient for people to get inside safely during a thunder storm. Space could be used for parties or for some indoor games. It would have a small kitchen at one end. This space probably should be accessible separately from the bath house facilities if it were on the second floor.
- Adequate administrative, mechanical and storage space for equipment, lifeguards and swim team.
- Microwave on first level accessible by residents.
- Improved communications and technology. Currently has only one phone line, manual check-in. May want to have a wireless hot spot.

Additional desirable requirements that should be considered for inclusion in proposed plans for new/improved pool house structure:

- Small quiet room for study, internet use, or small meetings.
- Indoor lap lanes for year-round swimming.
- Space for vending machines that serve healthier food. Currently all that is served is soda and ice cream containing many unhealthy ingredients.

Basic requirements for space outside of pool house structure:

- Increased picnic space on terrace level overlooking pool. People, particularly those watching children, prefer to be close to the pool. Current picnic area is too far away and is too soggy.
- Functional water fountains.

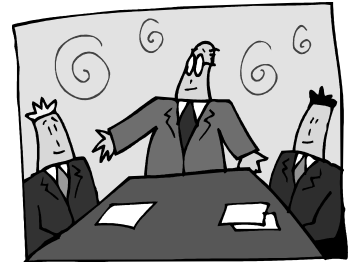
Resident Input on Proposed Renovations Vital

by Council member Judy Frankel

By the time you read this, the Council will have held its January 23rd work session, which was open to the public, to start discussion on how to proceed with renovations at the Town Hall and swimming pool. I hope some of you were able to attend and that you will plan to be at the next session on Monday, February 13. We want to hear what residents would like to see done and how we might proceed.

We expect to put progress reports in both the *Town Journal* and on the Town Website and we will hold several open meetings. I urge everyone to read the reports as they become available and to attend the open meetings.

I will welcome any comments and suggestions you may have.



Open Letter to the Town

At the most recent meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee for a Better Town Hall, the members present brought forth the following resolution:

We the undersigned members of the Ad Hoc Committee for A Better Town Hall believe that the proposal by Council members Simmons and Slavin in the last Town Journal, to spend approximately \$1.6 million on a renovation to the Town Hall, is a grave mistake. Having considered all similar proposals we are opposed to any such unwarranted action. There is no need to expend more money than is necessary to structurally augment the current building. We estimate, based on prevailing studies, that the maximum for such work should not exceed \$116,000 – \$125,000. We oppose any council action that further delays that structural repair and we oppose any Council action to investigate and/or implement any plan to renovate the Town Hall more than is necessary for those repairs.

Leslie Bascomb (Grantham)
 Marie Cohen (Falstone)
 Jennifer Gibson (Greystone)
 Haya Hakim (Greystone)
 Jeff Hakim (Greystone)
 Harry Holzer (Falstone)
 Linda Kanefield (Greystone)
 Stephanie Lynn (Surrey)
 Harry Rand (Greystone)
 Norm Schneider (Greystone)
 Deborah Shulman (Falstone)

Learning to be Good Neighbors

by Corrie Morsey, Chair, Parks and Natural Resources Committee

On Thursday evening, January 19, members of the Parks and Natural Resources Committee and Town residents benefited from an informative presentation by the Potomac Conservancy on protecting our streams. In our case this means Little Falls Branch in Vinton Park, which ultimately feeds into the Potomac River and Chesapeake Bay. George Wyeth (Falstone) spearheaded the presentation, which was given by Bryan Seipp, Forester and Director of Restoration of the Potomac Conservancy.

We learned that all of us can participate in protecting our streams by implementing simple gardening techniques in our own yards. To learn more about keeping our water cleaner and lessening stormwater runoff, you may wish to begin by going to the Potomac Conservancy's website, www.potomac.org and click on the link to the Good Neighbor Handbook.

In the meantime, we are delighted to report that Bryan Seipp has agreed to tour Little Falls Branch in Vinton Park with us in an effort to provide the Town suggestions, direction and assistance in coping with our immediate and future needs to enhance our stream's water quality and to address our erosion problems. We'll keep you posted.

Somerset Centennial Stamps Now Available

by Lesley Simmons, Chair, History Committee

New (39 cent) first class postage stamps commemorating the Town's centennial are available for purchase from the Town Hall only. The colorful stamps designed by Town resident David Herbick (who designed our Town flag) are available in sheets of 20 at a cost of \$13. (Make your check out to "Town of Somerset".) The price represents the cost to the Town, which is \$5.20 above the cost of twenty regular first-class stamps.



Somerset Centennial License Plates Available Soon

by Council member Jeffrey Slavin

Our Town is now in the process of applying to the Maryland Department of Motor Vehicles to ask the State to issue special license plates with the Somerset centennial logo to all interested residents. We are doing this at the suggestion of the History Committee in conjunction with this year's centennial celebration.

You probably notice the variety of commemorative plates on your daily drives. The Council encourages you to participate in this project, as we recognize the accomplishments and traditions of our wonderful "hamlet" over the past 100 years.

If you would like to join us, the cost for each plate is \$25 and we need the plate number. Please make checks payable to "Town of Somerset" and send to the Town Hall. Once we have 25 firm requests, we can make the official application, so please don't delay. All those who have already expressed interest need to act now, and I will be contacting you individually.

This is a great way to show your pride for Somerset.

Any questions? Call me at (301) 654-6767 or e-mail jzslavin@aol.com

Swim Team News

by Sarah Morse



Summer is coming soon. Well, maybe not, but it's never too early to make plans for the swim team. Indeed, season planning is well under way. So, mark your calendar with the following important dates so you don't miss out on any of the fun when making camp and vacation plans.

The season officially begins on June 17 with an away meet against Stonegate. Somerset Swim team has moved up to the G division. (Can it be, we're in G?!?) Seeded fourth, we will also swim Lake Marion, Glenwood, Tallyho and neighboring pool Mohican.

There are dual meets every Saturday until the final Divisional championship meet on July 22. We have home meets on June 24 and July 7. The relay carnival for A-meets has not been scheduled, but must fall between June 25 and July 9. For more information, check out the MCSL league web site at www.mcsl.org

The B-meets begin on Wednesday night, June 21 with a home meet against Little Falls. We will swim four or five Wednesday night meets until the season ends. So far we are scheduled to swim Little Falls, Bethesda and North Chevy Chase. For something new this year, we are having a B relay carnival on July 19 -- it promises to be a fun meet with opportunities for everyone to compete in a relay.

The social calendar begins on Saturday, May 20 with a welcome back breakfast party and team sign-up. The end of the season banquet is Saturday, July 22 at 6:00 p.m. Other social events will be scheduled as the season draws nearer.

Who can join the swim team?

For those new to the neighborhood, the swim team is Somerset's only Town sponsored sports team. It is open to all swimmers up to age 18 whatever their ability. (No try-outs, but fabulous uniforms for boys and girls. And no speed-o's required for the boys. They wear fashionable "jammers"). We practice every weekday from the day after Memorial Day to July 21. We have meets on Wednesdays and Saturdays starting in late June. There is also a developmental team, the Minis, for kids under 8 years old who can swim at least 15 yards. These younger swimmers practice only 3 afternoons a week.



So when you're making your summer plans, leave time for the swim team. Whether you're here for 3 weeks or the whole season, whether you can practice 3 times a week or everyday, whether you're the fastest breast-stroker or can barely get across the pool - we want you on the team. It's fun, it's healthy and you get to meet a lot of your neighbors and kids of all ages. A strong swim team builds a strong community. Call Sarah Morse (301) 907-3298 for more information.

All About People

by Council member Jeffrey Slavin

This month's highlights start in New Zealand, which two of Somerset's most active families recently visited. Former Council member **ANNE PROCTOR** (Cumberland), husband **ALAN** and three sons journeyed to that beautiful faraway land where son **HALEY** is spending his junior year away from Vanderbilt. It was a memorable several weeks. And to recap, Anne says that despite their great affection for each other, the four boys are scattered across the globe, no two living closer than 2,000 miles of the other! **DOUG** is spending his high school junior year from Sidwell Friends in China, **CHRIS** is in California as a senior at Stanford while **DEVON** is holding down the home fort as a senior at Richard Montgomery and has been accepted at Stanford -- following in the footsteps of both parents, who are growing increasingly dependent upon the attention of their yellow lab, **TANNER**...

GAIL and RALPH WERNER (Surrey) and son **FRED** also spent the holidays in New Zealand where their youngest daughter **SUSAN** has lived for almost three years. Susan won a scholarship to study there and is now a college lecturer. The Werners crisscrossed the magnificent terrain, climbing in the Southern Alps, hangliding in Lord of the Rings territory, swimming with dolphins, whale watching and enjoying the N.Z. summer days... Another former Council member **CHARLES HAYWOOD and wife MARIA** (Trent) are delighted to announce the December birth of grandson **COLE FRANKLIN UPSTON**, son of **CHRISSEY HAYWOOD UPSTON** and **BENNETT UPSTON**. Cole and big brother **SPENCER HAYWOOD UPSTON** (wasn't there an NBA basketball player by that name?) live in nearby Green Acres, so the Haywoods consider themselves very fortunate grandparents...



Lots of good news from Town Hall Renovation Committee Chair **CAROLINE** and husband **HOWARD COOPER** (Cumberland) who became grandparents for the first time in late December as daughter **JENNY COOPER SHEEHAN** and son-in-law **JON** presented them with "the most beautiful baby girl in the world"—**MAEVE MARGARET SHEEHAN**. The Coopers traveled to Milton, Massachusetts to visit the baby soon after the birth. Meanwhile, earlier in December son **DAVID** married **JESSICA STUART** in Warren, Ohio with many of David's Somerset friends joining in the wedding festivities. The couple now resides in the District where the Coopers' other children, daughter **SARAH COOPER** and son-in-law **JAMES JOYCE** also live... Don't miss the January/February issue of glossy new DC Style magazine, with a nice profile of the athletic **TONI FARRELL** (Warwick) late of the Swimming Pool Committee, who is a sports psychiatrist and triathlete. Toni, who is known professionally as **DR. ANTONIA BAUM**, notes that her

specialty -- treating athletes for disorders such as eating issues and anxiety -- differs from sports psychology, the discipline of using psychological tactics to improve performance. I have a copy of the magazine if you are interested, or you might catch Toni on one her daily training runs about town. She has already competed in seven marathons and six triathlons. Fascinating...Proud grandmother **ANN BISCONTI** (Greystone) informed me that 11 year old granddaughter **REBECCA ANN WILKES** has started a website called "Animal Talk -- Fun with Furry Animals" at www.animaltalk.us. She said that all are welcome to take a look and contribute animal related stories, articles, tips, poems, jokes and funny or cute pictures. I checked out this very professional address and even signed up for the free newsletter. Rebecca is the daughter of **SANDY BISCONTI WILKES**, who grew up in Town...



Another talented young lady, dancer **MOLLY RESNICK** (Grantham), daughter of **ROCHELLE ZEIDMAN** and **ANDREW RESNICK** sang "You Gotta Have Heart" with other kids in the Temple Sinai Choir on two dates earlier this month in the highly acclaimed new version of "Damn Yankees" currently playing at Arena Stage. Do I hear Broadway calling?.. After running into sleek **ELLEN BUTTS** (Dorset) and Somerset security expert **BIRDIE PIECZENIK** (Essex) at an art show recently, Birdie gave me an extensive update on household happenings. Husband **STEVE** has just published his newest book, "My Beloved Talleyrand: The Life of a Scoundrel by his Last Mistress". Anyone interested in the French Revolution or the Napoleonic era won't want to miss it.

BIRDIE herself is learning to be a literary marketer, not quite trusting the established publishing industry, in between renovating/renting/managing apartments in the District and South Beach. Daughter **SHARON** is a second year graduate student in a Discovery Channel funded program in documentary filmmaking at Montana State University. Last summer Sharon was selected as one of eight contestants (out of 14,000 applicants) for a reality show promoted by Discovery Asia -- called "Reel Race" -- which aired all over the world, except the U.S. this past November. She was flown around the globe for six weeks making films on a 48 hour timetable. Exhausting, but exhilarating and unfortunately she didn't win. After that, Polar Bear International contracted her to fly to Hudson Bay, Canada to make a promotional film, which is now being edited. Daughter **STEPHANIE** is in her second year at Mt. Sinai Medical College in NYC and has already won several national medical education awards for creating a companion set of instructions for first year anatomy class which uses yoga lessons to explain the workings of the body, system by system. Wow to all that....

Speaking of reality shows, word from former Council member **NAT FINKELSTEIN** (Surrey) is that "Texas Ranch House," the PBS historical based reality show with daughter **MAURA** as a member of the cast is scheduled to debut on May 1, 2006 on your local PBS station. Proud Nat, presumably supported by proud mother **ESTHER**, says that Maura will be ready for interviews and limited autographs through her father/publicist on an "as available basis only." Perhaps we will all have an advantage as Town residents!...Finally, many of us had the opportunity recently to examine the exquisite redecoration that **ALICE ROGOFF**, who is affiliated with the Alaska Native Arts Foundation, has performed on the unique log cabin style house on Cumberland Avenue. More on that next month. In the meantime, have a super 'Super Sunday' and give some love on Valentine's Day to make the world a better place.

P.S. Thanks to the people who have suggested I run for Mayor this year. I plan to run for re-election to the Council.

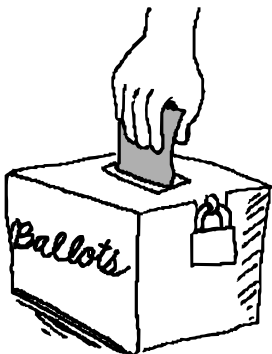
County News – Voter Registration Drive

The Montgomery County Board of Elections will hold voter registration drives at County Libraries on Saturdays in February, March and April from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. including at the following local libraries:

- February 11 at Bethesda Library, 7400 Arlington Rd., (240) 777-0970 and Chevy Chase Library, 8005 Connecticut Ave. (240) 773-9590
- March 11 at Bethesda Library, 7400 Arlington Rd. (240) 777-0970
- April 1 at Chevy Chase Library, 8005 Connecticut Ave. (240) 773-9590 and the Special Needs Library, 6400 Democracy Blvd. (240) 777-0960

For other locations and dates visit the County website at

<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/apps/news/press/DisplayInfo.cfm?ItemID=1723>



Voter registration applications are available from the Elections Office, 751 Twinbrook Parkway, Rockville. Office hours are 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday; telephone (240) 777-8500. You may have a form mailed to you by calling the 24-hour voter information line at (240) 777-VOTE and leaving your name and address after the recorded message.

The Gazette Newspaper Now Available at the Town Hall

Numerous residents have complained in recent months that they do not get, or get only irregular delivery, of our free local newspaper, the Gazette. The Gazette distribution staff is working hard to correct this situation. Meanwhile they have provided a bin at the Town Hall porch to which they will deliver multiple copies of the newspaper each week (delivery is usually on Wednesday afternoon). Residents may now pick up a copy of the Gazette from the Town Hall porch whenever they need one.

Looking back -- An Occasional column celebrating Somerset's history Fifty Years Ago

by Flora Atkin

It was nine o'clock at night. It had been a long, hot, summer day in our new home. The moving vans had just left. The children were finally in bed.



Maury and I went out on the back porch to unwind, enjoy the breeze, and the peace and quiet. Suddenly a SCREECH permeated the air. A streetcar (remember them?), its wheels squealing, was circling at the end of its line by the Hot Shoppe Restaurant in Friendship Heights. No other stores near-by. No "Chinese Wall" of high rises such as the Irene, the Willoughby and others to block the sound! It was 1956.

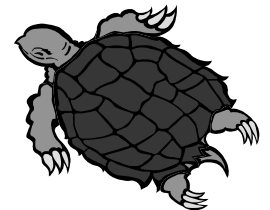
We could have played outside in our backyard in the buff. No one could have seen us through the dense Perraco-owned woods. There were no paths through the woods.

Our home, 5507 Uppingham Street, was one of a group of four houses built in the new section of town some three or four years earlier by an Israeli developer.

Sidewalks? Of course not. Until years later, when Lenell Ammerman, then at 5511 Uppingham, petitioned for them. Trees? None on the town property fronting Uppingham until Amy Goode, then at 5504, petitioned for them.

We did become a bit apprehensive about the woods behind us when rumors spread that the Perraco strip was to become a highway. Should we plan to erect a lemonade/hot dog stand in the backyard for the expected traffic?

Meanwhile, we enjoyed the tadpoles, frogs, mud bugs (crayfish) in the clean waters of the creek below, as well as the turtles that meandered up to our backyard and goldfish pond.



Somerset was a different town. It had, of course, a much envied elementary school. The renowned Mrs. Bricker was principal. Somerset teachers frequently became life-long friends of students and parents. Twenty-four psychiatrists and lots of diplomats and congressional types lived in the town.

Town activities? An active Boy Scout troop at Westmoreland Circle welcomed our young boys. The Brownie Troop was led by Libby Mitchell (5522 Uppingham). Three or four piano teachers, including Mrs. Novik, Mrs Kapelian, and myself, provided musical outlets for many of the children. Swimming privileges were extended to the town residents by the Westwood pool across River Road. The Good Humor man, according to our son Jonathan, made his young customers tell him how much change was due - a short street-side math lesson. If you were a favorite, you could ride in his half-open cab and jingle the bells.

No town hall. No town pool or park. No Ride-On busses nearby and no speed bumps. Dogs ran unleashed. No poop rules. No "mansionization."

Despite all its changes over the years, the friendly, stimulating quality of the town has continued. We are happy to have raised our three children, Joseph, Barrie, and Jonathan, in the town of Somerset, and to have lived here for fifty years.



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.

MISCELLANEOUS

FREE TO FIRST TAKER: crib (light-colored wood) and mattress (both used but in good condition); indoor/outdoor "Little Tykes" playhouse. Call 301-951-7172 or maurabv@verizon.net

Ads are printed as a courtesy to Town residents. The Town makes no representations as to quality, safety or otherwise regarding the goods and services advertised. Readers should make their own inquiries. TO PLACE 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 INCLUDE A SOMERSET PHONE NUMBER.

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.

WANTED

HOUSEKEEPER. Do you know someone for us? Every other week to clean house and similar tasks. Request English speaker with own transportation. Call Tim, 301-657-9455.

STENOGRAPHER with capacity to take and transcribe shorthand at home in Somerset as part of project to write memoirs. Flexible hours and pay. Call Freeman, 301-986-5299.

WANTED

PART-TIME NANNY/ LIGHT HOUSEKEEPER. M-F to care for one infant and one 3 1/2-year-old from 1-6 p.m. Includes cooking, dishes, laundry, ironing. Must have excellent references, experience with infants and reliable car. Must speak fluent English. Non-smokers only. Call 301-908-5577.

STUDIO SPACE sought by modern dancer. Minimum 15 X 15 for rehearsal solos. If interested or you have questions, e-mail cynthia@worddance.org or call 301-951-8222.

BRIGHT, ENERGETIC DRIVER/HOUSEKEEPER for after-school kid-sitting and driving. Light housekeeping. Requirements: legal, non-smoker, good driving record. Call Sharon, 301-657-3585.

The Town Journal is the official publication of the Town of Somerset, Montgomery County, MD. Post Office address: 4510 Cumberland Avenue, Chevy Chase, MD 20815. This issue edited by Lesley Simmons.

MAYOR

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

MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

Richard Kessler, Council V.P., 4914 Cumberland Ave., 301-654-2699
 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

CLERK-TREASURER

Tom Carter

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 February 16, Copy February 17

PRELIMINARY AGENDA

REGULAR MEETING OF TOWN COUNCIL

Monday, February 6, 2006 - 7:30 P.M.

1. Approval of minutes of January 3 regular meeting and January 23 work session – 7:30.
2. Discussion of financial report – 7:35.
3. Confirmation of Mayor's reappointment of Phyllis Wiesenfelder as chair of the Special Events Committee for one year – 7:40.
4. Recommendation to Historic Preservation Commission and fact finding hearing and action on Town building and waiver permit applications by Arne and Ruth Sorenson, 5810 Warwick Place, to add a bay on the right side; expand the second floor; and, on the rear, enclose the covered porch, add a second story over it and construct a raised flagstone terrace/deck – 7:45.
5. Fact finding hearing and action on application by Robert Menzi and Virginia Biggar, 4505 Cumberland Avenue, to add a rear deck, a one-story mud room on the left side and an open porch in the front – 8:00.
6. Fact finding hearing and action on application by Stephen Surko and Elizabeth Thompson, 5500 Uppingham Street, to add a second floor to the rear of their house – 8:15.
7. Mayor's report – 8:25.
8. Developments/plans in the vicinity of Somerset – 8:35.
9. Suggestions and questions from residents – 8:45.
10. *Discussion of evolving role of Mayor and staff – 8:55.
11. *Action on whether or not to continue hiring Chevy Chase Village police – 9:15.
12. Discussion of work session on repairs/improvements to Town Hall and swimming pool bathhouse – 9:35.
13. Action on Town Building Code amendment to define the height of accessory structures – 9:55.
14. Action on Town Code amendment changing the name of the park on Dorset at Surrey from Minipark to Founders Park – 10:00.
15. Action on bid of Superior Home Works, Inc. to reinforce ceiling of bathhouse pump room for \$1,850 plus cost of County building permit – 10:05.
16. Action on resolution adopting multi-hazard mitigation plan, in order to remain eligible for State and Federal disaster relief funding – 10:10.
17. Action accepting proposal from contractor to stabilize foundation of Town Hall – 10:15.
18. New business – 10:25.
19. Adjournment – 10:30.

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

Second Special Work Session of the Town Council

To discuss repairing/improving the Town Hall and swimming pool bathhouse and complex.

Somerset Town Hall
February 13, 2006 at 7:30 p.m.

All residents encouraged to attend and offer their ideas during the second half of the session.

Coming to consensus on Somerset community facilities at the Town Hall and Pool

Alan Proctor
Cumberland Avenue

We've reached a point in consideration of possible improvements of community facilities at the Town Hall and Pool where we need to come together as a community to reach consensus and make decisions on what the Town wants to do. These issues have been circulating for many years. The Mayor proposed expansion of the Town Hall more than six or seven years ago, and, to get more community feedback on resident priorities, that proposal and a range of additional possibilities were outlined in the Town's Long Range Planning Survey conducted almost 4 years ago, in March 2002. Since then, we've had a series of additional committees, reports and even an additional survey, capped in recent months by reports of several committees and some rather contentious meetings of the Town Council. Now, the Town Council has scheduled "work sessions" this month and next to address the issues.

Investment in Town facilities is an important topic because a number of people care about and are pushing various options and a fair amount of investment is involved. Also, in many respects, the decisions turn on our collective priorities as a community -- and our decisions and the highly visible results will reflect the kind of community we want to be.

My bottom line is that the best approach for our Town -- and the one most likely to garner consensus across our whole community -- is to make investments in both the Town Hall and the pool facility, with a heavy emphasis on investing in the "community-use" resources that bring us together as a community. Specifically, I think we should do the following:

- For the Town Hall, focus on renovating, restoring and preserving what we have there to support what I think of as the "administrative center" of the Town, supporting the "administrative functions" of the Town.
- At the pool, we should replace the current bath house with a cost-effective year-round "community center" that would be the community-oriented focus of the town. The community center would support community-use activities of the Town, including the pool during the swim season and additional community-oriented activities throughout the year.

In the remainder of this letter below, I outline the basis for this view. I summarize what I think of as "lessons-learned" from the discussion to date; the vision for a year-round Somerset community center at the pool; answers to questions I've heard on the idea of the Community center; and a couple of concluding remarks on moving ahead.

Background and lessons from discussion to date

We have learned several things over the course of the years these issues have been percolating, and I think that being clear about what we've learned to date is a helpful place to start in figuring out where we go from here. These perspectives come from my own experience as a resident over the past almost 20 years, service on the pool committee for 6 years, and involvement in a number of other related activities, including participation in the earlier stages of the Town Hall renovation committee. This learning also builds on the results of two Town-wide surveys, the Long Range Planning Survey and the more recent Pool Survey, and active engagement in the Town's consideration of these interlocked issues over the past several years.

- Two sets of uses are being considered, "administrative functions" of the town, and "community-use functions." Administrative functions include administration and support of day-to-day operation of the

town, including housing of Town staff who are engaged in this activity. Community-use functions include community activities such as support for use of the pool, a place for members of the community to gather for social and other activities (like meetings of local groups, birthday parties and other events, etc.) and an appropriate location for providing additional community services, if desired, such as a fitness center.

- A large number of Town residents are committed to retaining the current Town Hall building as a Town-owned structure and retaining administrative functions there.
- Most Town residents accept that, at minimum, some basic repairs and improvements are required for the Town Hall. These are relatively modest in scope and cost and include repair and strengthening of the foundation on the old part of the building, replacement of the heating and air conditioning system, renovation of the second floor to make it habitable for limited purposes permitted under current building use restrictions, and painting of the building exterior, among other things.
- There is a large group of Town residents who see no need for expansion of the Town Hall to meet administrative functions of the Town and are strongly opposed to undertaking such any such expansion.
- Many Town residents believe that the bath house is also in need of major repairs and renovation, and a fair number of Town residents believe the required repairs and upgrades are sufficiently large that it would be better and more cost-effective to replace it than to repair it. A fair number of these residents would also like to see upgrades to the pool facility, even in its current role as a swim-season only facility (for example, to provide covered space where children can retreat to get a break from the sun or in the event of the passing thunderstorm that otherwise requires them to leave the pool facility) and the scope of changes required to make this change further tilt the economics in favor of replacing the current structure.
- There is a considerable group of residents who would like to see the facility at the pool replaced with an upgraded facility that could be used by the community on a year-round basis, supporting a broader range of community activities, including the pool during the pool season and additional activities throughout the year.
- As clearly reflected in both the Long Range Planning Committee report and the results from the recent Pool Survey, the Town collectively places a significantly higher priority on new investments (beyond necessary maintenance) in improvement and expansion of Town facilities for community-use functions over Town administration.
- Decision on these investments must be made together, as part of a single package, and by consensus of the Town. This means that there needs to be wide support from a broad base of Town residents for whatever investments are to be made. I am confident that separating consideration of facilities at the Town Hall and pool, and staggering decisions investments to be made on administrative and community-use facilities, will be strongly opposed by a major part of the Town and will be a prescription for continued community gridlock.

Vision for a year-round community center at the pool.

My desire for a year-round community center draws on my sense of what we value as a community and the potential I see for making it even better. In this context, I'm struck by how highly we as a Town value our sense of community and, among other things, how highly (and uniquely) we value the pool as a place and a set of activities that bring us together as a Town and a community. I'm also struck from time to time how little we make of the rich experiences and diversity of the people who live in Town and how much more we could draw from the community if we spent more time together. Expanding the Town facility at the pool would not only further improve the quality of support for pool use, but would position us to extend the

community-oriented service across the whole year. This would bring us, our families and our children together more often, offer better service to the Town as a whole, and enable us to do a better job of offering value for residents who don't make much or any use of the pool, but would, for example, value activities and services for seniors.

Several themes come together in this vision for a year-round community center. It would:

- Recognize the importance and facilitate community-based activities, and the opportunity for all groups of residents to come together as a community. This is an integral part of what we are, as a small town or village within the larger metropolis. This is year-round value, not limited to just the pool season, and although we haven't made a lot of it in the past, there is great potential here, especially if we have a facility that is designed to address this use. The Town Hall and council meeting room don't come close.
- Be easy and quick to access without necessarily using a car. There is a lot of value in having a place in Town that is very close, and can be accessed quickly and without driving a car – such as by walking, riding a bike, or even potentially using an appropriate mini-vehicle.
- Because it would be “ours,” the Town would have the flexibility and authority to operate and run the facility the way we want to, and we could truly make it an integral part of our identity as a community.
- Be designed for low cost operation, with space designed for year-round community use (e.g. community activities, birthday parties, etc.) configured for access from external doors so rooms can be used without need for staffed attendance.

A year-round community center at the pool could be designed to serve a wide variety of uses beyond the changing areas, restrooms, and showers used in connection with the pool, meeting the interests and needs of all residents of all ages, from children and their families, through seniors, throughout the year. Though inclusion in a facility would depend on level of interest, cost, and practicality, among other factors, the following are examples of additional resources we could potentially include in a new community center:

- Large community-use room, to provide interior covered space where pool users can go in the event of thunderstorms, and which is otherwise available throughout the year to support various activities, such as boy & girl scout meetings, yoga classes, birthday parties, bingo and movie nights, slide shows and community discussions, resident meetings, and other social activities. (It would probably also best have adjacent food preparation & serving space to support potlucks, etc.)
- “Quiet room,” to provide a place for quiet activities like reading of current periodicals, study, bridge games, internet access for those without it at home, and maybe even a fireplace and windowed view out over our pretty creek and park.
- Fitness center, with basic exercise and workout facilities.
- Basement-level swimming lap lanes.

Questions raised in potential opposition.

I've heard several lines of questions over time that raise fair issues but don't change my mind on the value of a having a year-round community center in Town:

Do we really need a community center? This is obviously the fundamental question and it goes to our sense of community, what we value in the way of resources to support our community, and how we want to invest our Town budget. In my opinion, there's a significant need and potential to be addressed, the Town Hall doesn't meet it, and we could cost-effectively address the need in combination with replacing the

current pool bath house. I'm sometimes struck by a sense that at the same time we associate exceptional value with the pool, as a great place to gather in the summer, that there's somehow little or no value with extending at least some of that experience into a year-round resource. This is baffling to me, because although swimming is seasonal, our community is not. Sure, the pool has a proven track record of drawing us together in the summer, but this doesn't prove that other community-oriented activities and other services wouldn't draw people together during the rest of the year.

Other facilities are already available. Yes, there are other facilities within a driving radius of Somerset that can support a variety of activities, including the new Somerset Elementary School, other community facilities (such as Friendship Heights and the Leland Centers) and private health clubs, fitness centers, etc. None of these offer the same community focus or convenience as a community center in Town and I think this is one of the key "gaps" that could be met by our own facility. And back to the resource that we are familiar with – our pool; doesn't our pool offer a lot more value than simply using the Montgomery County facility just up Little Falls Parkway? Wouldn't the same likely be true of our own little community center?

We're not a country club. That's correct. We aren't a country club and I don't aspire to being a country club. That isn't the issue. We do value being a community – and I think most people recognize the potential is there to further develop and benefit from our community, and that a physical facility would support, enable and reinforce the realization of those benefits.

It's not the right location. Location at the pool may not be totally perfect, but it does seem to be the best location. It's likely to be the lowest-cost option, appears doable from a zoning and land-use perspective, can be done with limited if any impact on neighbors, already has ample parking and is clearly better than the only other obvious alternative, which would be the Town Hall site.

It's too expensive. Cost is always an issue -- for construction, operation, and maintenance. But I don't think this is a make or break issue here. Capital costs would be affordable and much lower if done in conjunction with replacement of the pool bath house that we are likely to make anyway, and improvements could be funded without any increase in tax rates or costs for residents. We obviously want to be economical, but we should also recognize the long term value and investment involved. Moreover, the facility can be designed for unattended use of many of the resources, which will limit operational costs going forward.

Moving ahead.

I'm glad to see the Council getting really involved, hopefully assuming a leadership role. This is what it is going to take to succeed in effectively addressing the issues and making the decisions that will enable us to put controversy behind us and move ahead with an approach that has broad appeal and support throughout our community. I would encourage the Council to be clear in it's work about where we are as a Town at this point (see "lessons learned" above) and disciplined in its consideration of what I see as the remaining issues that need to be resolved as part of a single package that can achieve consensus support within the Town: what minimum, but appropriate, investment is required to meet the "renovate, restore and maintain" objectives for the Town Hall; and when we renovate the pool bath house, should we take that opportunity to create a year-round community center, and if so, what should it be?

I encourage fellow residents to be involved. Attend the Council's work sessions. Communicate with the Mayor and Council members, and attend those Council meetings where decisions will be made. Moreover, and probably most importantly, speak up with your ideas on what we should include to create a community center that best meets the needs of the entire Town and all of our residents.

I would also appreciate feedback from fellow residents. I'd really like to hear from residents who support this basic approach, so I can get a sense of how large this group is and we can organize ourselves to support this approach. I'd also like to hear from others who have different views. The best way to communicate is by email, to alan@proctors.us; you can also call me at home, on evenings or weekends.