



SOMERSET TOWN JOURNAL



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1906 – 2006 Celebrating One Hundred Years A Town

Calendar

Monday, November 27
MVA Mobile Office in Friendship Heights

Monday, December 4
Town Council Meeting

Thursday, December 7
Holiday Brown Bag Lunch

Saturday, December 9
Somerset's Community Service Day

Wednesday, December 13
Journal Deadline, Ads and Copy

Tuesday, January 2, 2007
Town Council Meeting

Don't forget to check the Town website throughout the month for an up-to-date calendar. Go to www.townofsomerset.com and click on "Calendar"

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Mayor's Den

By Walter Behr

It Took Guts, but Council Acted

Like legislators everywhere, Town Council members would like to please everyone, but, of course, this could happen only in a dream. When they voted at the last Council meeting to continue using the pool complex only during the summer season, it took guts because they knew that some residents strongly believe it should be remodeled for year-round use.

I, too, would like to please all residents, but realize this is impossible. Whether it's street or parking-lot lights, STOP signs or extra police, whatever the decision, some residents are bound to be upset. I, for one, agree with the pool decision and commend the Council for taking a stand. I still hope that we can decide exactly what improvements to implement at the pool and get them in place before the filter room ceiling collapses.

As much as we need major repairs and improvements in the Town Hall, I favor limiting work there for the time being, to fixing the foundation. My thoughts on major improvements in Somerset are: -

First, do a first-class job on the pool complex, replacing the bathhouse, adding a shelter for 200, improving the wading pool and widening the walkway to the picnic area.

Second, repair broken curbs and sidewalks. Then repave all streets - except those that were just done -- the pool and Town Hall/tennis parking lots and the Town Hall driveway.

Third, improve the Town Hall. This would include restoring the exterior, making the second floor accessible and usable, adding a sprinkler system, a second restroom, insulation and a new meeting room to accommodate 150 people.

Our surplus of \$2.2 million will make it easy to get started. Of course, we will have to borrow (which we can do at a very favorable rate). And, in time, we will probably have to increase property taxes from the current 4 cents.

We've taken the first step. Let's keep moving!

Reverse 9-1-1 Coming in Montgomery County

Montgomery County will soon be implementing a reverse 9-1-1 system to notify residents of weather, crime and other emergency situations. Somerset has had a similar phone network arrangement for several years with a private company. (Fortunately, we have never had occasion to use it.)

The County system, which should be in operation no later than January, is designed to alert the entire County or limited parts such as zip code areas and school districts in case of emergency. If Somerset were to have a localized problem such as the horrendous windstorm of 1989, Town officials could take advantage of this technology to inform and reassure all Town residents with listed phone numbers. Instructions will be issued later for those with unlisted phones to join the system if they so choose.

Reverse 9-1-1 will supplement the County's Alert Montgomery message system, which has been in effect for over a year, sending text messages via e-mail, cell phone, Blackberry, personal digital assistant (PDA) or pager. To sign up for this 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.

Secret to Obtaining Flood Insurance

Two Somerset families have actually succeeded in obtaining flood insurance under the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) program. The key is to supply the following three numbers to your homeowner insurance company:

Community (Panel) Number

240134

Map Numbers

24031C0455D, 24031C1NDOA

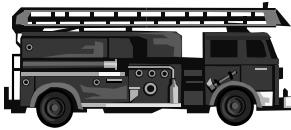
Maximum coverage is \$250,000 for a house and \$100,000 for personal property, with \$500 deductible. Premium is approximately \$360 a year for most locations in Town.

As some of you know from bitter, costly experience, you do not have to be located near a body of water to be at risk of flood damage. Floods are often caused by storms, melting snow, wind-driven rain and rapid accumulation or runoff of water from neighbors' properties. In order for an event to be considered a flood, two or more properties must be affected.

For further information visit www.fema.gov/business/nfip/ or www.floodsmart.gov If you prefer to phone, call (800) 638-6620 or (800) 427-4661. The State of Maryland has its own coordinator for the Flood Insurance Program, John Joyce, whose number is (410) 537-3914.

In order to assist other Somerset families, I would very much appreciate hearing from you about your experience getting, or trying to get, FEMA flood insurance.

What to Do When a Siren Wails



Suppose you are driving in the middle lane on Wisconsin Avenue and you hear an emergency vehicle approaching from the rear. Do you stop in the middle lane or pull right or left and stop? More than once I've been caught in this predicament and not been sure what to do. Here is the advice of Larry Gaddis, Bethesda Fire Chief.

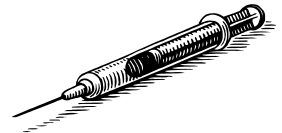
Do not stop in the middle lane. Pull to the right or left lane, whichever is easier, and stop. Of course, you know not to block an intersection because the fire engine, ambulance or police car might have to turn. Also, it goes without saying that you wait until all emergency vehicles have passed before going on your way.

This advice, which I found very helpful, appears in the latest edition of "The Firefighter," the newsletter of the Bethesda Fire Department. Questions may be directed to Dr. Sanford Kay, P.O. Box 30384, Bethesda, MD 20824. Sanford is Somerset's official representative on the Bethesda Fire Board and chair of the Department's Community Relations Committee. Nat Finkelstein, though not officially representing Somerset, is vice president of the Bethesda Fire Board.

150 Take Advantage of Flu Shot Clinic

More than 150 residents and Town employees took advantage of the opportunity to get a flu shot in the Town Hall on October 27. The new hours, from 3 to 7 p.m., made it possible for more working residents to sign up than in previous years.

The operation proceeded without a hitch thanks to the pleasant, experienced nurses from MedStar Health and the Somerset resident volunteers. We are extremely grateful to chief organizer Barbara Marblestone and Sue Besharov, Barbara Condos, Betty Lou Hummel, Louise Koffsky, Marian Scheiner and Marnie Shaul.



Town Hall Tidbits

By Tom Carter

Office Holiday Hours



Town Hall will be closed the Monday, Christmas Day, December 25, and the Monday, New Year's Day, January 1, which are Federal holidays. Tom will only be in the office sporadically between December 21 and January 2. Please call first before coming to the office to be sure someone is in. The Mayor will be in Town and may be called either at home or at Town Hall. Some of the maintenance personnel will also be in, so if you need their help, please call (301) 657-1992 and leave a message. One of them will return your call as soon as he gets back in the garage office.

Leaf Removal

We are still vacuuming leaves and will be picking them up until the end of December. Our machine is working great and only the occasional rain has slowed collection.

As always, when the majority of the trees decide to drop, they do it at the same time and it is impossible to get to everyone at once. Please help us by parking in your driveways during the day so the staff can get the leaf machine through. The staff will try to notify owners of parked cars the day before if they have time. This is particularly important for those of you living on lower Essex Avenue, lower Trent Street and lower Warwick Place. Remember to rake your

leaves to the curb, NOT into the street. You can also put them out in paper bags or reusable containers for pickup on Tuesdays by J&J.

Please remind your contractors that they cannot start blowing leaves before 9 a.m. on any day of the week.

Yard Waste Pickup

Don't forget that yard waste will only be picked up on Tuesdays during the months of December, January and February. We do not resume Tuesday and Friday yard waste collection until March.

Winter Storm Warning

The Town will have our snow removal contractor shovel and sand public sidewalks alongside your property for you as we have in the past. If you want help clearing your driveway or the walkway to your house, you can make arrangements with one of our young people in Town who is on the list of Odd Job Helpers (an insert to this month's Journal).

As we do every year, we will be setting out sand for vehicles that get stuck on our streets. Remember to get sand, kitty litter or ashes from your fireplace to spread on slippery sidewalks. If you have trouble finding sand for sidewalks, you may use the sand in the barrels. And, if you have trouble getting out to go to the store, call the Town Hall and we will find a way to get sand or kitty litter to you as soon as possible.



Parking and Driving Courtesy

Please refrain from parking cars opposite other residents' driveways unless there are no other spaces in the vicinity. While this is a common courtesy year-round, drivers who park in these locations when the roads become slick not only inconvenience their neighbors when they are trying to back out onto the street, but also place their own vehicles in greater likelihood of damage.

If vehicles are parked illegally, call the police at (301) 279-8000. You do NOT have to give your name to file a report.

As you know, our streets are narrow. Please remember that traffic on the side of the street where no parking is allowed has the right of way. That doesn't mean that courtesy doesn't work both ways. With house construction projects in progress it behooves all of us to be considerate of our fellow drivers.

MVA Mobile Office

There will be no MVA mobile service in Friendship Heights in December due to State holidays.

2007 Calendars

2007 League of Women Voters calendars are available at the Town Hall for \$6 or call Nancy Soreng at (301) 986-1916.

Permits Granted

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

Trees: Cliff Mendelson, 4807 Cumberland Avenue, to remove a failing wild cherry and a tulip poplar, both in a ledge adjoining a driveway that is to be replaced.

Curbs: Ruth and Arne Sorenson, 5810 Warwick Place, to replace the Town sidewalk and driveway apron.
Joshua Rozen, 5525 Uppingham Street, to replace his driveway apron.

Legislation

At the November 6 meeting, the Council:

1. Introduced a Town Code amendment to update Chapter 7, Utility Line Construction.
2. Introduced a Town Code amendment to lower the Town speed limit from 25 mph to 20 mph.
3. Introduced a Town Code amendment to add a 2-HOUR parking restriction to Cumberland Avenue from Warwick Lane to the property line between 4715 and 4719.
4. Approved a Town Code amendment to allow the Swimming Pool Committee an extra month to submit its budget request so that it is received in time for consideration at the November Council meeting.
5. Approved a Town Code amendment to require building permit applications to show location and screening of portable toilet or statement that there will be none.
6. Approved a Town Code amendment to prohibit construction by contractors on Sundays except for interior work that cannot be heard by neighbors.
7. Introduced a Town Code amendment to increase authority of Clerk-Treasurer, under direct supervision of Mayor, to make non-emergency purchases or sign contracts from \$1,000 to \$2,500 without approval of the Council.

Council Activity

At the October 30 special meeting, the Town Council voted to develop a master plan as prescribed in Phase II of the Professional Services Agreement with the architects (i) limiting options at the current pool site to Options 1G* and 1A,** for seasonal use only, which should include consideration of amenities and improvements to the wading pool, terrace, a protected covered area for storms, and a secondary space, such as an exercise facility, in a slightly expanded 1G, and consideration of green construction, and (ii) consideration of an expanded year-round community center at the Town Hall site, which would include renovations to the existing Town Hall office, storage and kitchen space and exploring options for a larger meeting hall, a smaller meeting room/exercise room, and indoor lap lanes.



The exercise facility is also included in the pool even though it would be for seasonal use only and only if space permits, given the fact that the design was being limited more or less to the existing footprint.

*Option 1G. Replace existing bathhouse - main level, replace existing lower level, replace attic, new electrical vault, new sewage ejector, demolition, new rain shelter for 200 people, pool improvements - grill, picnic area, steps, shoring site work and landscaping, stream protection, bio-hazard disposal and soil erosion control.

**Option 1A. Renovate and update the existing facility within its existing footprint. Rebuild the failed structure on the west side.

(Vote: Eldridge, Frankel, Kessler and Simmons for; Slavin opposed.)

At the November 6 meeting, the Town Council:

1. Approved the removal of Town tree #757, a diseased pin oak, at 5603 Warwick Place.
2. Discussed possible plan to build an island in the Warwick Place/Falstone Avenue intersection to enhance pedestrian safety.
3. Approved modification of new speed humps to return to original style.
4. Approved installation of rumble strips at Dorset Avenue/Warwick Place, Dorset Avenue/Surrey Street, and Dorset Avenue/Devon Lane intersections on the Dorset sides only at a cost of up to \$1,000.
5. Approved revised Batting Cage Rules.
6. Approved the purchase of new computer for Town office at cost of up to \$2,600.
7. Approved an application by Cindy and Michael Yuffee, 5524 Trent Street, to remove a double magnolia tree in the front yard with trunks approximately 4½" and 6½" in diameter, in the path of the approved 22+' driveway, subject to

receipt of a full landscaping plan prior to the next Council meeting, replacement of two trees (minimum of 2" diameter) and receipt of a \$400 tree deposit.

8. Approved an application by Ellen Globokar and Robert Chlopak, 4919 Dorset Avenue, to remove five diseased, aging hemlocks on the east side of their property and replace them with three "Green Giant" arborvitae, subject to receipt of a \$600 tree deposit and full landscaping plan prior to the next Council meeting.

9. Approved the request of Chevy Chase West and the Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights for a \$2,000 contribution toward legal fees for opposing a home occupation permit to operate a furniture showroom in a house at Wisconsin and Hunt Avenues.

10. Approved the bid by CRH of \$4,387 to build three handicap ramps and 35 feet of sidewalk at the Falstone/Warwick intersection.

Rumble Strips

by Council Member Rick Kessler

At its November meeting, the Council approved, for a trial basis, the installation of adhesive backed rumble strips on Dorset Avenue near the Warwick, Surrey, and, possibly, Devon Lane intersections. These strips are designed to create a visible, audible, and physical alert to drivers of areas where caution is critical. We hope they will result in improved adherence to stop signs while traveling in Somerset. The strips are of minimal height and will not deter bicyclists. A request was also received by the Council to install strips at the intersection of Warwick and Falstone and Warwick and Essex. The public's opinion is sought on the effectiveness of the strips once installed, on any problems, and any thoughts concerning the placement of them elsewhere in Somerset, especially in the suggested areas of Warwick. Please contact me at rjkessler@verizon.net or (301) 654-2699, or Tom Carter at the Town Hall concerning your views.

County Cable Franchise Agreement with Verizon Up for Adoption by Somerset

Alan Proctor (Cumberland)

The Council has scheduled for action at the December meeting possible adoption by the Town of the Cable Franchise Agreement negotiated by the County with Verizon. This agreement applies to new FIOS cable television and related broadband services that Verizon is planning to install across many of its service areas – including Montgomery County – and it is modeled after the County's existing cable franchise agreements with Comcast and RCN Communications.

The issue is before the Town because, as a separately incorporated municipality, the agreement negotiated by the County does not apply within Somerset unless it is explicitly adopted by and agreed to by the Town. Once accepted, the County will enforce the agreement as to Somerset and the rest of the County in the same way as it currently does for other cable franchise agreements. The agreement accepting the County's franchise agreement has been prepared by counsel representing independently-incorporated municipalities (like Rockville, Tacoma Park, and the Chevy Chase cluster of towns, including Somerset) and the negotiating process that led to this agreement included representatives of the Town. Terms include a modest franchise fee that would be paid to the Town (or our designee), one no-cost service drop for the use of the Town, County-driven quality of service processes, and a raft of other provisions that generally track those of the existing Comcast and RCN franchise agreements.

Approval of the agreement will lead to installation of yet another set of overhead wires in Somerset, and with them, access to new services that may well benefit Somerset residents. Verizon will bring competition to the delivery of cable TV service, and will also be able to offer additional, very high speed broadband services. Importantly, the agreement also preserves the rights of the Town to manage the way in which wires and related facilities associated with this new service are installed within the Town's rights of way.

Copies of the proposed agreement with the County and Verizon, adopting the County's franchise agreement, and the County's proposed franchise agreement with Verizon, are on the Town's web site.

Status of Pool and Town Hall Renovations

by Council member Rick Kessler with Council members Tom Eldridge, Judy Frankel, and Lesley Simmons

At a Special Meeting on October 30, 2006, the Town Council voted 4-1 to move forward into Phase II of a three step process for making decisions concerning the Pool and Town Hall Renovations. Phase I required the architectural firm of O'Neill & Manion to obtain "sufficient construction and operation cost information for the Town to narrow the range of options before further planning and architectural work is undertaken."

During Phase II, options will be refined and a master plan and timetable for completing all work will be prepared. It will involve (i) holding one or more public meetings using charettes to help determine the general layout and design for each remaining option; (ii) programming (that is, determining the spatial requirements and relationships, equipment needs, and specific location for each option); (iii) checking to ensure that the options meet county zoning and environmental requirements; and (iv) developing a master plan and schedule for building the various elements of the plan.

The charrette process, which will be led by the architects, Sara O'Neill and Bill Manion, and will be open to all residents, will provide the input for the architects to develop options and cost projections for both the pool and the town hall.

The plan approved by the Council at the Special Meeting called for the development of a master plan that would (a) limit options at the current pool site to those outlined in Options 1A and 1G of the Architect's Report (these are described on page 5) for seasonal use only, and including consideration of amenities and improvements to the wading pool, terrace, the addition of a covered area for protection during storms, and a secondary space, such as an exercise facility; and (b) consider the possible development of an expanded year-round community center at the Town Hall site, which would include renovations to the existing Town Hall office, storage and kitchen space and exploring options for a larger meeting hall, a smaller meeting room/exercise room, and indoor lap lanes. Special consideration for renovations at the pool to be along "green" lines was recommended.

An exercise facility is included as a possible option at the pool although its location there would be limited to seasonal use.

This is the first step forward in a process that hopefully will lead to approval of plans and a financing program to permit construction to begin in the fall of 2007 in time for opening the new pool house by the summer season of 2008.

The main option that was excluded going forward to Phase II was the construction of a new year-round facility at the pool, which would be substantially larger than the current footprint and would have included a large indoor assembly area.

Renovating the Town Hall and pool house has long been under consideration by the Town. So far the process has included deliberations and a report by a Town Hall Renovation Committee, a Town-wide Pool Survey, recommendations from the Pool Committee, reports by VIKA Engineers, separate reports by architects concerning the Pool and the Town Hall, structural assessments of the Town Hall and the Pool House, legal assessments concerning zoning issues by the Town's attorney, and various comments submitted by residents.

In coming to its decision, the Council considered the need for the Town to address in a holistic way the renovation needs of both the pool and Town Hall facilities. Both are in need of substantial repairs and expensive improvements in the short term. Improvements should enhance our sense of community and increase our amenities while being realistic about the limitations on the Town's ability to use the pool site in light of environmental laws and zoning regulations now in place -- which were not in place when the facility was originally built. The pool sits in an environmentally fragile area and acts as a key buffer against encroaching development in Friendship Heights. Limiting the proposed development makes completion of improvements to the pool facility more likely in the near term, diminishing the risk of protracted and expensive litigation that would force postponement of renovations and possibly prevent use of the facilities.

The Council also is acutely aware of the need to be fiscally responsible in making decisions about improving Town facilities -- and balancing their costs with other pressing capital projects, including street repaving -- through initial capital outlays and borrowing, and longer-term maintenance costs.

It is our belief that there is a consensus in Town that we must do something to address the declining state of our facilities as a matter of some urgency. We believe that taking the middle-ground and proceeding with the proposal that was agreed by a majority, gives the Town the ability to move forward to create space that provides residents' needs for the next 30 years or more. We look forward to even more resident involvement as we move ahead to planning exciting new spaces.

On My Mind

by Council member Jeffrey Slavin

Many residents have asked why I voted against the Council's initial steps to renovate and/or reconstruct the Pool House and the Town Hall. I feel an explanation is required.

I applaud the hard work of the architects, my colleagues, and the Town staff in getting a lot of information on the table quickly and many questions answered over these past several months. And I am pleased that we are moving to Phase II of the project that includes public planning, charrettes, and the ability to have more input from members of the community.

What I am concerned about, however, is that we have decided to no longer truly think "outside the box" as far as the future use of the Pool House site for possible year round occupation, whether it is for swimming or just to have a nice sized community room, whose hours could be highly regulated if necessary so as not to disturb neighbors nor impact the budget with staff time. I am also not sure that we are prepared to limit the size of the building--yet.

Yes, I appreciate the views of various experts that getting County approval for some of this would be difficult, but no one said that it would be impossible. And given the fact that we won't be able to start construction until October 2008, about 22 months hence, I don't think it was correct to eliminate this discussion now.

Furthermore, while a great deal of information has been distributed lately and over the past several years, I don't feel that enough residents are at the same level of knowledge about the reasons why the Council felt compelled to move forward in this way at this time. Plus, I don't think that a clear consensus exists as to what the needs of the Town residents are for the next 40 years, which will be the lives of the new or updated structures. Finally, there were a large group of residents whom I might call the "loyal opposition" on this issue who communicated to me that there were not properly informed about the decision making process. We need to better engage these folks.

So, to summarize, my vote was based on the fact that I was not ready to limit discussion before it was appropriate. We certainly could have waited another month for knowledge and views to be disseminated and processed more completely. Along the same reasoning, if you look at our Town Charter you will note that new ordinances cannot be voted on in the same month they are introduced. Our forefathers and foremothers knew something when this charter was drafted. This was not an emergency; this was not so urgent that it couldn't have waited a month or two, so that a more widely supported position could have become the public policy.

Residents' Letters

From the editor: This is a reminder of your right to write the Town Journal and have your letter published, subject only to guidelines below. Letters will be published, provided they are:

- About Somerset or vicinity
- Not repetitive of other published letters
- 150 words or less
- signed (although your name may be withheld if requested)
- not slanderous, libelous or profane.

Communications over 150 words may be published as submitted, but may be cut as space and readability demand. The Town does on occasion allow a resident to prepare and print, at his or her own cost, a longer piece, which may be mailed with the Town Journal. The content of such correspondences may or may not be endorsed by the Mayor, members of the Town Council or the editor.

Driving Division, Not Consensus

Alan Proctor (Cumberland)

The Council's statement that it won't consider any year-round community facilities at the pool site is premature, hypocritical, and wrong. It serves only to further confuse the issues and distract discussion from the kinds of facilities that will best serve our community, which may well be the point, clearing the way for mc-mansionizing the Town Hall.

The Mayor and members of the Council also control "air time" in the Town Journal and on the Town's web site. They get space to explain their views, but individual residents get 150 words and the ad hoc committee we've formed of 28 residents supporting discussion of year-round community facilities gets nothing. I urge you to read the insert we've paid to include with the Journal, and to visit the web site we've established to engender the discussion we would have hoped would be embraced by leadership of the Town, @ adhocsomerset.org .

Town Council Needs to Rethink its Action

Jeff Lape (Dorset)

After years of discussion about major capital projects, like Town Hall renovation, the Town Council seemed to have recognized the need to engage residents in a good and transparent planning process. The Town engaged the architectural firm O'Neil & Manion to begin a three phase effort. Phase I would assess a broad range of options; Phase 2 would engage the community in "charrettes", a collaborative planning technique that can achieve ideas and solutions that cannot be envisioned at the outset.

I, among many others, recognized the need to narrow the list of options for the pool site; however the Council's action at the October 30 meeting had the effect of corrupting the process. In the face of clear desire, by a significant number of residents, to explore the option for enhanced facilities at the pool site, the Council has taken that option off the table. It is premature to do so. The Council needs to recommit to the planning and fact finding process rather than limiting and directing a narrow set of choices at this stage, particularly when based on a number of flawed assumptions.

Vote Made Things Harder

Mark Muro (Dorset)

Responding to the town's facilities and amenities needs just got harder.

That's because, by truncating a rational effort to explore potential enhancements of the pool area and its bathhouse, the Town Council has now placed too much burden on the Town Hall site as the possible location for such diverse items as a meeting room or a lap pool.

Most town residents will now likely oppose most or all of what might be placed there--and who can blame them?

They like the Town Hall as it is, and have watched an erratic discussion of town facilities lurch from one course to another without careful and broad-based consensus-building.

It is a shame that the Council moved prematurely to shut down a rational fact-finding and temperature-taking process. By doing that the Council has compromised its ability to build support for needed upgrades at the Town Hall as well as at the pool. That's too bad.

Editor's Note: Letters expressing similar concerns as these were submitted by Cathi Davis and Frank Loversky (Warwick) and by Joel Peters and Sandra Zacharia (Warwick).

Leaf Blowers

Robin Barr (Essex)

On many fall mornings the angry-bee noise of squads of gas-powered leaf blowers violate our town's calm. They discharge a haze of noxious, carbon-loaded pollution into our "green" Somerset. The visual gain of uniform lawns seems less than worth their cost.

My flaring temper wants to ban these brutal tools. Yet a ban, if achievable, would lead to more community emotional cost than our town can rightly afford. So I suggest that we prepare a town leaflet, as some other communities have done, on leaf-blowers and maybe other tools of lawn-service companies (fertilizers, weed-killers). The leaflet would point out the community costs of various lawn and garden maintenance strategies and offer environmentally-friendly alternatives. Owners would be asked to share the guidance with potential contractors and to weigh these community costs in choosing how best to enhance the landscape around our homes. Will it make a whit of difference? There is but one way to find out.

Medicare Part D Drug Coverage: Here we go Again

by Pat Barry (Cumberland)

Somerset seniors who are enrolled in a Medicare prescription drug plan need to be aware that almost all plans will change their costs and benefits in 2007. This means that the plan that seemed “best” for you in 2006 may not be the best next year -- and the only way you can find out is to compare the details of plans available in Maryland all over again.

A case in point: the popular Humana Complete plan, which covers a wide range of generic and brand name drugs in the “doughnut hole” in 2006, will cover only generics in the gap in 2007. Other plans will change their premiums and copays or offer different choices next year.

Tedious as it seems to compare plans again during the present enrollment period (November 15 through December 31), it would be wise to do so. Somerset resident Pat Barry, an expert on Part D, offers help to those wanting to find the least expensive plan that covers their medications.

People who are used to Internet searches (or have someone who can do this for them) can quickly find out which plan covers their drugs at the least expense by going to www.aarp.org/bulletin/medicare/quick_route.html. This step-by-step guide provides a short cut through the official plan-comparison finder at www.medicare.gov. All you need to enter is your zip code, the name of each of your drugs, their dosage and how often you take them. Results will show all out-of-pocket costs, including copays (which vary greatly among different plans) for all of 2007.

For people who can't do this online (and have nobody to help them) Pat Barry offers to run the numbers at no charge. Email her at patbarry@erols.com (preferably) or call (301) 657-4096. But please, this is for Somerset residents ONLY!

Garden Matters

Gardeners Corner -- Ornamental Evergreens Need Winter Care

by Janet Fernandez PNR Committee Member

This is a reminder that evergreen ornamentals never go fully dormant during winter months and can therefore be damaged by winter burn. And they may even experience total desiccation if the weather is dry in late summer and autumn. To protect your evergreen ornamentals, use a slow drip from a hose -- or use a soaker hose for larger shrubs and trees -- before cold weather sets in. Evergreens in exposed sites could benefit from burlap wind breaks or by using an antidesiccant spray. Prune off any damaged foliage in spring before new growth starts.

Holiday Brown Bag Lunch Planned for Thursday, December 7

by Council member Jeffrey Slavin



Our final brown bag lunch this year will have a holiday theme, so don't miss it on Thursday, December 7 from noon to 1 p.m. at the Town Hall. As always, the Mayor and I and hopefully several other council members will be there to talk about local and national issues, exchange information and make new relationships. All are invited.

Remember to bring a sandwich or salad that you can share and a beverage. Ice, plates and utensils are provided. For more information, please call me at (301) 654-6767.

Community Service Day Scheduled for Saturday, December 9

by Council member Jeffrey Slavin

Somerset will continue its yearly tradition of helping others in need at the holiday season as the new Community Service Corps invites you to participate in Community Service Day on Saturday, December 9 at 10 a.m. at the Town Hall. This meaningful activity is open to residents of all generations. Many thanks to Sarah Morse, David Stern and Mary Geffroy for their help.

There will be a number of projects such as making sandwiches for the homeless and assembling mailbox “surprises” for terminally ill children. We hope to break production records again.

For those unable to attend, please consider dropping off a donation of canned or dry goods and/or unopened toiletries (especially in small plastic bottles) as these are vitally needed by a number of organizations in Montgomery

County. This will give you the opportunity to clean out the clutter in your kitchen and bathrooms and help the needy at the same time.

It is not necessary to reserve a place in advance, but if you can let us know if you are coming it would be appreciated. You can call me at (301) 654-6767 or e-mail jzslavin@aol.com. We are looking forward to once again having a big group.

Join the Somerset Table for Committee for Montgomery Breakfast

by Council member Jeffrey Slavin

The Committee for Montgomery (CFM) is a coalition of 40 leaders representing a broad cross-section of our county's business, labor, education, civic and community based organizations. Each year CFM selects its state legislative and budget priorities based on the goal of preserving and strengthening the County and the State as a place to live work and learn.

Each year CFM sponsors an annual legislative breakfast that is a must for civic-minded citizens. This year's event is set for Monday, December 11 at the Bethesda North Conference Center at 7:30 a.m. Invited speakers include the new governor, county executive and county council president. Somerset's own Nancy Soreng (Uppingham) of the League of Women Voters is co-chairing the breakfast and tickets are \$60. I am putting together a Town of Somerset table. Please call me at (301) 654-6767 if you are interested in joining us.

County News

Volunteers Needed to Work with Crime Victims

County residents interested in assisting sexual assault victims and their families are needed to serve as volunteers with the Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program of the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services in the Rockville and Silver Spring District Court locations. For more information or to arrange an interview, call (240) 777-1355 or go to www.montgomerycountymd.gov/vasap and click on the link for volunteering/donating.

PRELIMINARY AGENDA

REGULAR MEETING OF TOWN COUNCIL

MONDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2006 - 7:30 P.M.

1. Approval of minutes of the November 6 regular meeting – 7:30.
2. Discussion of financial report – 7:35.
3. Confirmation of Mayor's appointment of Joan Rabinor to the Swimming Pool Committee for term ending in September 2008, replacing Jamie Heller, who resigned – 7:40.
4. Confirmation of Mayor's reappointment of Ellie Fink to Board of Supervisors of Elections for a three-year term expiring December 31, 2009 – 7:45.
5. Action on landscaping plan submitted by Cindy and Michael Yuffee, 5524 Trent Street – 7:50.
6. Action on landscaping plan submitted by Ellen Globokar and Robert Chlopak, 4919 Dorset Avenue – 7:55.
7. Fact finding hearing and action on application by John Wittstadt, 5514 Uppingham Street, to demolish the existing house and construct a 2½-story house with attached one-car garage – 8:00.
8. Fact finding hearing and action on application by Ruth Lis and Mark Perlis, 4518 Dorset Avenue, to renovate their front portico and utility room entrance – 8:15.
9. Action setting dates for nomination and election of three Council members for two-year terms (suggested dates: nominations, Monday, February 5; election, Monday, March 26) – 8:25.

10. Action on dates of April and September 2007 Council meetings (suggested: Monday, April 9, and Tuesday, September 4) – 8:30.
11. Explanation of blogs (Web logs) by Gayley Knight and decision whether or not to operate a Town blog – 8:35.
12. Action on tennis fees for 2007 – 8:45.
13. Mayor's report – 8:50.
14. Developments/plans in the vicinity of Somerset – 9:00.
15. Suggestions and questions from residents – 9:10.
16. Action on swimming pool management contract for 2007 season – 9:20.
17. Discussion of Swimming Pool Committee's proposed budget for 2007 season – 9:30.
18. **Action on resolution granting a non-exclusive franchise to Verizon Maryland, Inc. to install and operate a cable communications system within the Town of Somerset – 9:40.
19. Action on resolution authorizing Montgomery County as agent of the Town to administer franchise with Verizon Maryland, Inc. to operate a cable communications system within the Town of Somerset – 9:45.
20. Action on bid by Select Contractors of \$118,000 to repair Town Hall foundation – 9:50.
21. Discussion of proposed amendment to Town Code Chapter 7, Utility Line Construction – 10:05.
22. Discussion of amending Town Code Chapter 11, Article I. Cable Communications by adding required fees – 10:20.
23. Action on Town Code amendment to lower Town speed limit from 25 mph to 20 mph – 10:30.
24. Action on Town Code amendment to add 2-HOUR parking restriction to Cumberland Avenue from Warwick Lane to property line between 4715 and 4719 – 10:35.
25. Action on Town Code amendment to increase authority of Clerk-Treasurer, under direct supervision of Mayor, to make non-emergency purchases or sign contracts from \$1,000 to \$2,500 without approval of the Council [no change proposed in authority to make emergency expenditures not to exceed \$5,000] – 10:40.
26. Action on increasing Town Attorney's rate from \$240 to \$260 an hour, effective January 1 – 10:45.
27. New business – 10:50.
28. Adjournment – 10:55.

This is a preliminary agenda prepared to meet the Journal press deadline, which typically is two weeks prior to the next Town Council meeting. During this period there will likely be changes to the timing of items, and some items may be added or deleted. Please consult the bulletin board on the Town Hall porch or the Town web site for the most up-to-date agenda. Items marked ** have related articles inside this issue of the Town Journal.

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
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TTY users call Maryland Relay

Deadlines: December 13, Ads and Copy



Special Insert

SOMERSET TOWN JOURNAL



Paid for by Ad Hoc Committee for Year-Round Community Facilities – November 21, 2006

Focus on the vision and the facts

We formed our Ad Hoc Committee for Year-Round Community Facilities in Somerset based on the value we place on the sense of community. We believe that the whole Town will benefit a lot if we can extend the sense of community that many of us experience around the pool during the summer into a continuous tradition of year-round community interaction that includes everyone in our Town. We think that enhanced facilities for community use would help accomplish this objective – by creating a focal point and more shared places for all-kinds of community gatherings and activities for all of our residents -- and it's toward that end that we have been pushing for an open, town-wide planning process that would bring us together in exploring the kinds of facilities that would be appropriate for our town.

The Ad Hoc Committee for Year-Round Community Facilities supports an inclusive planning process that explores reasonable options for year-round facilities. We believe residents should be integrally involved in helping to frame the options and that residents need accurate information on the different alternatives. At this stage of the planning process, we believe it is premature to dismiss a key option.

We thought we were on track when we helped convince the Town to hire an architect to assist in the planning process, by furthering the process of envisioning and understanding our goals and alternatives, gathering additional information relevant to the discussion (documenting the full range of possible amenities, estimating costs and identifying other relevant considerations, etc.), and supporting a robust, collaborative, and cooperative community-wide discussion aimed at building consensus and identifying the best path ahead.

Regrettably, we were deeply disappointed by the Council's action at the October 30 special meeting where it decided to limit any future discussion about expanded year-round community facilities to one site, the Town Hall. We think that this decision was premature, potentially distracting, and not the best outcome to decide at this stage of the planning process. We believe that year-round facilities should be considered at the pool site, at least until all the pertinent factors are considered, including any limitations at the Town Hall site. We are concerned, not because we feel necessarily driven toward doing something at the pool versus the town hall, but because this decision seems to depart from the planning process that had been agreed

Get involved!

- Check out our web site, at adhocsomerset.org.
- Join our ad hoc committee
- Sign up to be included on our email list

upon and was based at least in part on the flawed first draft of the architects report. What we had hoped for and expected was a continuing process, in which the vision would be evolved and supporting data and other information would continue to be gathered and refined, all hopefully leading to a clear vision of affordable investments that could be supported by a broad base of the community.

The decision was premature for two key reasons. First, picking a location before clarifying requirements and interests isn't the best way to proceed. The fact is, there are two sites that are most plausible for expanded community facilities – the town hall and pool – and rational planning should keep both options open until what the community wants has been defined and what that means has been determined, in terms of requirements as to space, structures, parking, operations, maintenance, etc. We had started, but certainly not finished, the process of identifying community needs and communicating the vision and possible choices to the community at large, when the Council kind of reached out and, we think, kind of arbitrarily and without much sensitivity to the contrary opinions of many residents, took the pool site off the table. There was no need to take this action at this time, and it serves only to chill the discussion of what could be possible.

The decision was also premature because it was most likely based in part on a draft report from the architects, the Executive Summary of which was distributed by the town to every household even though it was an unvetted draft that suffers from a number of errors. We documented these errors and misperceptions for the Architect and the Town Council. (Our letter is posted on the website at adhocsomerset.org)

The Ad Hoc Committee intends to continue participating in the process going forward and urge our fellow residents to renew and extend your involvement. We take exception to the soundness of the decision taking the pool site out of consideration, but will focus, as the Town should at this time, not on the “where” but the “what” of year-round community facilities.

Expanded year-round community facilities is an important issue and a great opportunity for the Town; it's an initiative that should benefit each and every one of us who lives in Somerset -- as one of our members earlier put it, “from strollers to walkers.” We need to redouble our efforts and focus on the process of defining what we, as a community, envision we could be, for ourselves and our families and friends, and fellow residents, and the kind and extent of affordable year-round community facilities that support this vision. This will only work well if people speak up and participate.

At the same time, and as part of this work, the draft Architect's report needs to be corrected and updated. We have provided extensive comments on a number of ways in which the draft can be improved, to make it a better resource to support the planning process, and would be happy to work with the architects further to address those points. The report can and should be part of any evolving base of information available to support the Town's planning process, complemented by additional information gathered around the Town Hall site as well.

For more information about the ad hoc committee, the challenges and opportunities we have at hand, and ways in which you can be involved, (and even a copy of our comments on the draft report!), please visit the little web site we have set up, at <http://adhocsomerset.org> .