



SOMERSET TOWN JOURNAL



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From the Editor: Corrections

My apologies for the many errors in last month's Journal. Among them was an incorrect telephone number in Zola Dincin Schneider's letter soliciting interest in establishing a group of helping hands for citizens in need. If you are interested in working on a small committee to come up with ideas on how to help out neighbors in need, please call Zola at (301) 654-5889.

Mayor's Den

by Walter J. Behr

A Major Effort to Preserve Our Street Trees

An amendment to the Tree Ordinance introduced at the April 10 Town Council meeting would severely tighten the requirements – and cost –



for removal of a Town tree by a resident. Under the proposed amendment, the Council could approve such a removal only in an "extraordinary situation" and only to prevent an "extreme hardship."

The impetus for the proposed amendment was recent applications to demolish two houses and driveways and replace them with new houses and driveways on the right side of the lots instead of the left side. In both cases – one on Dorset, the other on Uppingham – the new driveways could not be built without removal of a Town street tree. In both cases, the applications were reluctantly approved with certain conditions. Council members and I asked Norman Knopf, our Town Attorney, to draft an amendment that would have the result of seriously discouraging similar applications in the future.

Under the proposed amendment, the Council would probably reject a similar application unless alternative access was infeasible.

If permission is granted to cut down a Town tree, the applicant would, under the proposed amendment, pay dearly, as follows:

- The cost of removing the tree and stump by the Town contractor;
- The cost of an appraisal by a tree expert hired by the Town;
- The value of the tree as determined by the Town Council upon consideration of the appraisal of the Town's tree expert and the appraisal of a tree expert who might be retained by the applicant.

The proposed ordinance would set minimum and maximum limits on the amount of payments, which would be used by the Town to plant one or more replacement trees on the street or in the parkland. Suggested minimums and maximums range from \$1,000 or \$2,000 minimum to \$10,000 or \$30,000 maximum.

A final provision of the draft ordinance would give the Council authority to deny or revoke a building permit if the permit applicant or holder has cut down a Town tree without approval.

Action on the proposed amendment to the Tree Ordinance is scheduled for 9:05 p.m. at the Town Council meeting on May 7.

Orange Markings on Curbs Not Graffiti

The orange markings you have undoubtedly observed on curbs and some sidewalk squares are not the product of graffiti artists. They are “official” markings indicating curb sections and sidewalk squares that are cracked, crumbling or otherwise faulty and in need of replacement.

If all goes according to plan, the concrete work will be in place this summer. Again, barring any hitches, the concrete work will be followed by milling and repaving all streets except those repaved last year following installation of new sewer and water mains.

Next steps will be completing the curb and sidewalk marking, sending out for bids, Town Council authorization and then the actual concrete work. Meanwhile, we will go through the bidding process and Council approval for the milling/repaving project.

Of course, we will make every effort to keep you informed of schedules and any necessary parking and driving restrictions.

Choose Your Tree Trimmer Carefully

You know that you need a Town permit in order to cut down a tree and that the tree contractor must have a Maryland tree expert license. But did you know that the same license is required for tree trimming or pruning – unless you do it yourself?

This week I found an attractive, two-color business card in my door from a person with a rural Virginia telephone number who offers “complete tree care and maintenance.” The card does not mention a tree expert license from either Virginia or Maryland. My guess is he has neither. The card does say “Fully Insured.” How do you really know if he has any insurance? Up-to-date liability coverage is a requirement for a Maryland tree expert license.

If you would like to be sure the tree expert you are considering really is a licensed expert in Maryland, call the State Forestry Service, toll-free, at 1-877-620-8367 extension 7.

Calendar

Wednesday, May 2

Kindergarten Orientation at Somerset E.S.

Monday, May 7

Town Council Meeting

Monday, May 7

General Assembly Delegates Town Hall Meeting

Friday, May 11

Special Trash Pickup

Thursday, May 17

Journal Deadline Ads and Copy

Saturday, May 19

Swim team “welcome back” party

Saturday, May 19

Hazardous Waste drop off

Saturday, May 19

Pool opens for season

Monday, May 21

MVA Mobile Office at Friendship Heights

Monday, June 4

Town Council Meeting

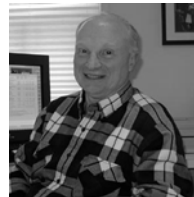
Don't forget to check the Town website throughout the month for an up-to-date calendar.

Go to www.townofsomerset.com and click on “Calendar”

Town Hall Tidbits

by Tom Carter

Special Trash Pickup May 11



The Town Council, at its April 3 meeting, approved a special trash pickup on Friday, May 11, for residents who have large items that cannot go in the regular trash collections. The Town now provides this service twice a year at no cost to residents. Residents wishing to participate need only notify Tom at Town Hall no later than May 9. This will be your reservation for the special collection service by our contractor, J&J Inc. **ITEMS WILL NOT BE PICKED UP WITHOUT A RESERVATION.**

Special trash should not be placed at the curb earlier than the night before the pickup. Special trash is defined as refrigerators, washing machines, dryers, freezers, stoves, hot water heaters, other major appliances; furniture or parts thereof; computers, large toys, bicycles, swing sets (broken down into smaller parts); bathtubs, sinks and toilets; and iron pipe, gutters/down

spouts and fence pieces under six feet long. If items are in bundles, they must be light enough for two men to carry.

Lawn mowers and other power equipment must be emptied of gas and oil. Refrigerators and freezers must have the Freon removed by an authorized agent and tagged appropriately. Propane tanks must be removed from grills.

Items that will not be picked up include: parts of junked cars, boats or trailers (including batteries and tires); loose glass; firewood, tree stumps, tree limbs or lumber; bricks and concrete blocks; paint cans; flammable or hazardous liquids or solids (including propane canisters); ammunition or explosives; large rocks; and dead animals.

Computer Recycling



Computers for Communities, Inc., will pick up your old computers, Pentium II and higher, refurbish them and provide them to low-income families and individuals at no cost. You can check them out at their Web site,

www.ComputersForCommunitiesInc.org, or call (301) 368-9253 to arrange for a pickup.

Street Sweeping

GroupCAM will begin sweeping Town streets around the first week in May. A broadcast e-mail will be sent closer to May notifying residents of the exact date they will start. GroupCAM does not set a schedule and simply comes through several times until they can finish the job. Residents are asked to park their cars in their driveways during the week of sweeping. Houses where they have not been able to clean after that week will receive notices to move their cars.

Don't Dump, Donate Program

Montgomery County has a program to recycle usable construction materials for use in low-income housing. If you have any reusable construction materials, you may take them to the Shady Grove side of the Transfer Station at 16101 Frederick Road in Derwood between 7:30 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Saturday.

Hazardous Waste Disposal

Hazardous waste may be dropped off at Silver Spring International Middle School, 313 Wayne Avenue (at Dale Drive), in Silver Spring on Saturday, May 19.

The following materials will be accepted between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.: pesticides, oil-based paint,

brake fluid, fuels, herbicides, solvents, antifreeze, photographic chemicals, paint thinners, motor oil, auto batteries and household batteries.

PLEASE NO LATEX PAINT: Tens-of-thousands of tax-dollars are spent each year disposing of latex paint, which is not hazardous. In fact, latex paint can be safely dried up and put out for regular refuse collection. Simply remove the lid and place it in a safe, well-ventilated area. Cans that are one-fourth or less full will dry in a few days. For cans with greater volume, add mulch, cat litter, shredded paper, or waste paint hardener available at area hardware stores. For more information, call (240) 777-6410 or visit www.montgomerycountymd.gov/swstmpl.asp?url=/Content/DPWT/solidwaste/collection_services/hw/hhw/index.asp#dates

Grasscycling

Several copies of the grasscycling video are available at the Town office for your use. The video demonstrates the benefits of leaving your grass clippings on the lawn. Please call Tom at (301) 657-3211 if you would like to borrow one.

Parking

Please refrain from parking cars opposite other residents' driveways. Drivers who park in these locations not only inconvenience their neighbors who are trying to back out onto the street, but also place their own vehicles in greater likelihood of damage.

Please report all illegally parked cars directly to the police at (301) 279-8000. You do NOT have to give your name to file a report.

MVA Mobile Office

The MVA's mobile office will be in Friendship Heights on April 23 and May 21 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.)

Curbs: Philip and Barbara Levine, 5524 Uppingham Street, to replace their apron.

Legislation

At the April 10 meeting, the Town Council:

1. Introduced legislation to amend Town Code Chapter 8 to control the removal of trees in the Town right-of-way, replacing an amendment introduced on March 5.
2. Introduced legislation to amend Town Code Section 6-311 to increase the building and demolition permit deposit from half of the Town building permit and demolition fees for the same project or \$500, whichever is greater to half of the Town building permit and demolition fees for the same project or \$2,000, whichever is greater.
3. Introduced legislation to amend Town Code Section 3-103 to increase the permit fee for Town sidewalk or driveway apron construction from \$10 to \$50 and minimum deposit from \$300 to \$1,000.
4. Introduced legislation to amend the Building Code making it illegal to block a street and requiring that a person must be assigned to direct traffic around a truck when only one lane of traffic can pass. (Fine for violation - \$500.)

Council Activity

At the April 10 meeting, the Council:

1. Approved the following fund transfers for FY-07:

Amount	From	To
\$30,000	GF Contingency	GF Tree Contract
\$2,000	GF Contingency	GF Misc./Engr.
\$500	CPF Contingency	CPF Office



2. Elected Jeffrey Slavin to a one-year term as Vice President of Council.
3. Agreed on the following special responsibilities of Council members:

Richard Kessler:

Swimming Pool Committee
Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights
Security Committee alternate
Bank statement alternate

Tom Eldridge:

Contract officer with architects
Batting Cage Committee
Swimming Pool Committee alternate

- Jeffrey Slavin:
Special Events Committee
History Committee alternate
Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights alternate
Bank statement reviewer
Town Journal columnist
- Lesley Simmons:
History Committee chair
Town Journal editor
Check signing alternate
Parks and Natural Resources Committee alternate
- Marnie Shaul
Parks and Natural Resources Committee
Audit Committee
Security Committee
Check signing
Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights alternate
4. Confirmed the Mayor's appointment of Barbara Zeughouser to the Board of Supervisors of Elections to replace Marc Geffroy, whose term expires December 31, 2009.
 5. Confirmed the Mayor's appointment of Brian Graham and Derek Coen to Batting Cage Committee for two-year terms.
 6. Authorized a letter to the County Council recommending they not approve the Planning Board's zoning change for the post office on Arlington Road and a letter to the Planning Board stating our concern for closing the Bethesda/Woodmont Avenues intersection for two years.
 7. Heard the Mayor's presentation of the proposed budget and real and personal (business) property tax rates for FY-08.
 8. Approved a contract with Sara O'Neil and Bill Manion for architectural services and authorized an additional \$15,000 for their services.
 9. Approved a contract with Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc., to conduct a traffic survey of the four entrances to Town and through traffic from Little Falls Parkway to Wisconsin Avenue and from Greystone Street to Wisconsin Avenue.
 10. Renewed our contract with Connecting Links for managing the Town Web site for a monthly fee of \$375, to include monthly updates and a thorough review annually.
 11. Authorized a letter of support to the County for Rollingwood's application for municipality incorporation.
 12. Approved a contract with American Tennis Courts, Inc. to repair, color coat and line the basketball court in Capello Park and color coat the tennis practice court attached to the garage for \$6,275.

13. Approved the recommendations of Davey Tree Experts to remove two Town trees: 1) a leaning tulip poplar in Vinton Park behind 5607 Warwick Place and 2) a Norway maple (#225) in front of 4819 Dorset Avenue with advanced decay from previous storm damage. Failed to approve a similar recommendation to remove a heavily rotted beech tree (#993) with flood lights in the pool upper lot. (Vote: Shaul and Simmons for; Eldridge, Kessler and Slavin opposed. Motion failed 2-3).

14. Declined to act on the proposed installation of landscaping timbers and fill along the west side of the pool upper parking lot to protect the trees and bank.

15. Recommended approval to the Historic Preservation Commission the application by Valya Ringland to erect a back yard fence at 4721 Essex Avenue and approved a Town fence permit.

Home Security Tips

by Birdie Pieczenik and the Somerset Security Committee

Home Security is about making your home and property less attractive for a "crime of opportunity," the most typical type of crime in our neighborhood.

The suggestions that follow are the first of several planned for the Somerset Journal. Many will seem obvious; most, hopefully, you already know. All should be taken seriously. Spring and summer are coming and that's when criminal activity goes up. Please don't get nervous reading the tips -- just take preventive action.

If you haven't already done so, contact Officer Dana Mathis, of the Montgomery County Police Department, at (301) 652-9200, and ask her to come to your home for a free home security inspection. You will be surprised at what she will pick up on that you have missed!

Lighting

Appropriate lighting is probably one of your cheapest forms of crime prevention. The marginal increase in your electricity bill and cost of bulbs will have exponential pay-offs when it comes to crime deterrence for your house/property and your neighbors'.

Exterior Lights

1. Install exterior lights. And not just porch lights.....
2. Position exterior lights to illuminate all bushes, crannies, and construction features, which may allow someone to hide and surprise you. Pay particular attention to doors or windows that cannot be seen from the street or from neighboring homes.
3. Use exterior lights that are bright enough to be a crime deterrent. Lighting is generally sufficient when you can read a wristwatch by it at night.
4. Place exterior lights on timers or motion detectors. (No one wants to be in a spotlight when attempting to

break into a basement window or back door or even when walking up your front walkway)

5. If you use timers, turn them on at dusk and off at dawn (it doesn't cost very much, the dog-walkers will appreciate it, and it is a crime deterrent for your neighbor's house as well)

6. If feasible, light all gates in fences that surround your property.

7. Report non-working streetlights to the Town.

Interior Lights

When going on vacation place timers on interior lights in several rooms, set to go on/off at different hours to give the impression of someone is living in the house).

When at home:

1. Use timers in various rooms to light your own way into the house at night
2. Prepare emergency lights in the event of an interruption of utility power. You can never have enough flashlights (test your batteries frequently), kerosene lanterns, and candles.
3. Try to park your car in well-lit areas, if you are not parking in an enclosed garage.
4. Carry a working flashlight in your car (and extra batteries). A heavy flashlight can also be used for self-defense!

A Bus Service for Somerset?

by Howard Byron



For the last 2 years I have attended the Friendship Heights Transportation Management District monthly meetings as a voting member representing Somerset. TMD's purpose is to reduce automobile traffic in Friendship Heights. Most of their efforts focus on motivating employees in the area to use the Metro through fare subsidies and other programs, including carpooling and telecommuting.

Lately, attention has been given to the double parking problem in front of the Barlow and the Chevy Chase medical buildings as well as the elimination of the *kiss and ride* in front of the old Hechts. At the last meeting there was discussion of offering bus rides to stores, Metro and the medical buildings. A small bus would pick up and return residents and workers in Somerset, Chevy Chase Village and the apartments of Friendship Heights and surrounding areas. The Bethesda 8 service, which is free, is a possible model for the new service. Unlike Bethesda, currently there is no public parking for local residents who want to drive to the Friendship Heights Metro station to get to DC on the Metro.

A number of issues need to be discussed, including bus size, frequency of service, hours of service, the route and the economics. One route might include Dor-

set Avenue from Wisconsin Avenue to Little Falls Parkway and through Kenwood, with possible stops at the Kenwood House apartments and Kenwood shopping center, coming back on River Road to Willard and on to the Metro.

The TMD wants to know if nearby neighborhoods support the concept. For now, Somerset only need get a sense of support or opposition from its Town Council to motivate the FHTMD to support a study -- or be silent. The topic is on the agenda for the May 7 Town Council meeting so please share your opinions with Council members (council@townofsomerset.com) or attend the meeting.

Kindergarten Orientation set for May 2 at Somerset E.S.

by Laura Ginns, Somerset ES's Kindergarten Orientation Coordinator

Kindergarten orientation is designed to help parents enroll their children, complete health forms, and acquaint children with future friends and the school environment.

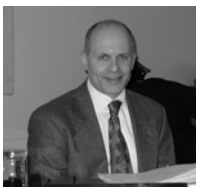
Children who will be 5 years old on or before September 1, 2007 are eligible to begin kindergarten in August. Parents are asked to register children for next year's kindergarten on the date scheduled for the elementary school that serves their neighborhood.

Parents who are not certain which elementary school serves their area should contact Nancy Conway at Somerset Elementary School (301) 657-4985.

An Early Entrance to Kindergarten application process is available to serve children whose 5th birthday falls between September 2 and October 15, 2007. Parents who seek early entrance consideration for their children should inquire at their home school.

On My Mind

by Council member Jeffrey Slavin



Many residents are following the "mansionization" issue and have noted that our neighbors in the Town of Chevy Chase and Chevy Chase Village have recently implemented building moratoriums. The Chevy Chase moratorium, now over, resulted in the implementation of changes in their tree laws (to mirror ours) and a toughening of the permit process.

Last year the State legislature passed a law giving municipalities in the ability to enact stricter codes that could limit the size of new construction. The question is to what extent these municipalities want to take

up this opportunity. Wisely, none have chosen to make any changes until a complete review is undertaken, national models are looked at and citizens are consulted.

A group of elected officials from municipalities in the County, including yours truly, have been meeting informally to come up with model ordinances. Some municipalities have hired consultants to assist them and we will all be able to take advantage of their findings. Admittedly, the process is slow, but necessary and we will probably need to reach a consensus of some kind, and come up with a plan that works specifically for Somerset.

At the last Council meeting, a resident asked why Somerset hadn't done anything yet about the "big house" problem. I think this is an appropriate question.

But the Council cannot do it alone -- you may know that the Chevy Chase moratorium was the result of an incredible public petition process and was not initiated from the "top" -- so now is the time for people to come forward and let their elected officials know their views on this controversial issue.

Residents' Letters

Please Help Needy Families

by Nathan Resnick

Somerset is a wonderful community and we are fortunate to enjoy neighbors and friends, the pool, tennis courts, and so much more. Not all families have what we do -- many are struggling and are poor.

As part of my Bar Mitzvah community service project, I am encouraging neighbors to help needy families.

Please help by donating new or used soccer equipment -- shoes, shin guards, balls, etc. -- or school supplies to help needy kids through *DC Scores*. I will pick up equipment May 6-13 from your home or you can drop it off at 4815 Grantham. Donations are tax-deductible.

Some 750 kids from 23 elementary and middle schools participate in this 13-year old after school program for disadvantaged kids. (Information at <http://www.dcscores.org>)

Or, *A Wider Circle* accepts used furniture to help needy families. They will pick up or you can drop off on certain days and times. Information is at <http://www.awidercircle.org> or phone (301) 657-1010.

I encourage everyone in our community-spirited Town to help. If you have questions please call (301) 986-9343 or e-mail me at soccer4nr@yahoo.com

County News

Volunteer Opportunities

Long Term Care Ombudsman Program

Persons interested in helping to enhance the quality of life for nursing home residents are invited to volunteer as long-term care advocates with the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, Aging and Disability Services. Ombudsmen representatives work to promote the highest quality of life for residents in nursing home settings and help to resolve problems. Volunteer training will be offered during June. To learn more go to: http://montgomerycountymd.gov/apps/News/press/PR_details.asp?PrID=3380

Planning Board -- Two Vacancies

The Planning Board serves as the Council's principal adviser on land use planning and community planning. Letters expressing interest, including a resume listing professional and civic experience, should be addressed to Council President Marilyn Praisner, County Council Office, Stella B. Werner Council Office Build-

ing, 100 Maryland Avenue, Rockville, Maryland 20850, and must be received no later than 5:00 p.m., Wednesday, April 25, 2007.

Family Volunteer Weekend

Montgomery County families are invited to spend quality time together and have fun working on volunteer projects as part of the County's Family Volunteer Weekend on April 21 and 22, celebrating Earth Day, National Youth Service Day and Volunteer Appreciation Week. To learn more go to: http://montgomerycountymd.gov/apps/News/press/PR_details.asp?PrID=3431

General Assembly Delegates' Town Hall Meeting

District 16 Members of the Maryland General Assembly delegation will hold a Town Hall Meeting on Monday, May 7 at the Bethesda Regional Library, 7400 Arlington Road in Bethesda from 7:30 to 9:00 p.m. to discuss the 2007 Legislative session

Preliminary Agenda

REGULAR MEETING OF TOWN COUNCIL

MONDAY, MAY 7, 2007 - 7:30 P.M.

1. Approval of minutes of the April 10 regular meeting – 7:30.
2. Discussion of financial report – 7:35.
3. Fact finding hearing and action on application by David and Lisa Katz, 5409 Surrey Street, to construct a three-level addition to the rear of their house (basement and two stories), add an open front porch and reconfigure their front entry – 7:40.
4. Action on request by residents on Deal Place for \$5,000 to plant 5 medium-sized (8-foot) Nelly Stevens hollies on the Deal Place berm to the left of the Somerset School driveway – 8:00.
5. Mayor's report – 8:15.
6. Developments/plans in the vicinity of Somerset – 8:25.
7. Suggestions and questions from residents – 8:35.
8. Action on ordinance adopting budget and real and personal (business) property tax rates for Fiscal Year 2008 – 8:45.
9. **Action on amendment to Town Code Chapter 8 to control removal of trees in Town right-of-way – 9:05.
10. Action on amendment to Town Code Section 6-311 to increase building and demolition permit deposit from half of the Town building permit and demolition fees for the same project or \$500, whichever is greater to half of the Town building permit and demolition fees for the same project or \$2,000, whichever is greater – 9:10.
11. Action on amendment to Town Code Section 3-103 to increase the permit fee for Town sidewalk or driveway apron construction from \$10 to \$50 and minimum deposit from \$300 to \$1,000 – 9:15.
12. Action on amendment to Building Code making it illegal to block a street and requiring that a person must be assigned to direct traffic around a truck when only one lane of traffic can pass – 9:20.
13. **Action on whether the Friendship Heights Traffic Management District should explore the feasibility of Friendship Heights-Somerset bus service – 9:25.
14. New business – 9:40.
15. Adjournment – 9:45.

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
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TOWN HALL

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This issue edited by Lesley Simmons
Deadlines: Thursday, May 17, Ads and Copy