



SOMERSET TOWN JOURNAL



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Somerset Elementary Annual Book Fair Do Your Holiday Shopping While Supporting Somerset Elementary!

On **Sunday, December 7**, and **Monday, December 8**, *Somerset Elementary* will have its annual **Book Fair** at *Barnes & Noble* in Bethesda. The Somerset PTA will receive a percentage of the proceeds from every sale made during those two days when Somerset's voucher number (403592) is used when checking out. (All cashiers will have the voucher number available—you just have to let them know you'd like Somerset to receive the credit.)

The higher our total sales figure is, the larger the school's rebate will be! Also, our voucher number can be used at any B&N nationwide during those two days, so feel free to email it to your friends and relatives across the country. You can even use the number when purchasing items at the B&N Café!



The B&N Book Fair not only benefits our school, it is also a really fun event! Both evenings from **5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.** there will be various activities going on in the children's department, such as Somerset teachers reading their favorite books aloud, first grade book reviews, musical entertainment provided by students, and a craft table and game table for all. And, everyone is invited to

the children's section for coffee and snacks on **Monday, December 8**, at **9:30 a.m.** to hear a presentation from **Debbie Wiener**, the very entertaining author of *"Slob Proof! Real-Life Design Solutions."* A local interior designer, Debbie will share her secrets for keeping your home looking great despite the "slobs" in your life!

So please get your holiday gift lists ready and head to **Barnes & Noble on December 7 & 8!** *Thanks for supporting Somerset Elementary!*

Any questions? Contact Somerset residents **Maura Vanderzon** (301-951-7172; mauravb@verizon.net) or **Alex Acosta** (301-718-6312; alexandra.acosta@verizon.net).

Calendar

Monday, December 1

Town Council Meeting

Sunday, December 7 and

Monday, December 8

Somerset Elementary Book Fair

Saturday, December 13

Community Service Day

Monday, December 22

MVA Mobile Office

Thursday, December 25

Town Hall Closed, Christmas Day

Thursday, January 1

Town Hall Closed, New Year's Day

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 "Town Calendar."

Somerset's Community Service Day Set For December 13



By Jeffrey Z. Slavin, Mayor

Mark your calendars for our annual **Community Service Day**, which will take place on **Saturday, December 13, from 10:00 a.m. to 12 noon** at the **Town Hall**. This annual event provides adults and children with the chance to help those less fortunate in our County and immediate neighborhoods during the Holiday season.

There are a number of projects planned, and all ages can participate. We are collecting toiletries, toothbrushes, and small individually packaged snack foods and gum to make gift kits, and there will be a barrel for canned and packaged food. The **Somerset Community Service Corps**, consisting of **Sarah Morse** (Dorset), **David Kathan** (Dorset), **David Stern** (Warwick) and **Mary Geffroy** (Essex) will again be hosting this event and are open to suggestions.

If you have any project ideas or questions, please email **Sarah** at morsekathan@gmail.com.

It will be helpful to RSVP, especially if you are bringing a group. See you there!



On My Mind

By Mayor Jeffrey Z. Slavin

Community Service and Related Topics

As the holiday season is upon us, and given the country's financial decline, it is more important than ever this year for Town residents to step up to the plate to help fill in the gaps for people in need. I am recommending four specific ways for all of us to help accomplish this.

First, consider participating in our Community Service Day on Saturday, December 13, details for which are available elsewhere in this Journal. The charities that are the recipients of our goodwill give directly to the people who are suffering most. And, if you can't participate at that time, the *County's Volunteer Center* has a list of a multitude of other one-time-only events of a similar nature that will be taking place within a short car or metro trip during the season.

Second, since food banks in the region have been experiencing vastly increased demand in recent months, please empty your cupboards of canned and dry foods and take them to our Town's collection site or other appropriate locations. You might also consider helping a military family by sending a care package abroad or adopting a local family to provide them with holiday gifts and meals. Get in touch with me for further information.

Third, it is important that we thank properly the individuals who provide us service during the year, because many of them are also struggling and often helping families back in their home countries. This would include our household employees, workers who clean our offices, the Town's own staff, and employees of contractors like the trash company. I know that so many of us are generous, but perhaps we can give a little extra this year.

Finally, consider increasing your year-end tax deductible donations, especially to one of the hard hit non-profits in Montgomery County. The recent federal takeover of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, both of which had foundations and giving programs that poured millions of dollars into the coffers of local groups, has led to serious cutbacks in staff and services and even the possibility of some organizations shutting their doors. Yes, there are people suffering all over the globe, but I am suggesting that you give where you live at this critical time.

Thank you for anything you are able to do.



Best wishes for safe and healthy holidays.

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Monday thru Friday
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TTY users call Maryland Relay

Maxine Finkelstein, Editor
Deadline for ads and copy is December 15, 2008, 4:30 p.m.

Council Activity

At the November 6 meeting, the Town Council:

1. Reported the Council had met in closed session on October 22 to discuss bids and proposals in response to the bathhouse RFP and to negotiate strategy.
2. Heard the independent auditor's report for fiscal year 2008 presented by Bob Diss of Lindsey & Associates.
3. Authorized an additional \$4,520.60 to cover the final expenses of architect Lou Balodemas in preparing the bathhouse improvement RFP.
4. Discussed options for placement of generators.
5. Denied a permit to Steve Friedman, 4908 Essex Avenue, to install a generator in his back yard and recommended he contact his contractor for equipment that will meet the County noise requirement of 55dB at the property line at night.
6. Approved a permit for Ann and Ken Brown, 4713 Trent Court, to add a small, one-story addition to the right side of their house, add a side entrance on the left side and relocate the air conditioning units on the left side, subject to receipt of a County permit.
7. Approved the contract offer of Francis O. Day of \$542,847.25 to repave selected Town streets in 2009.
8. Agreed to record only Parcel 215 at the pool as required for bathhouse improvements.
9. Directed architect Lou Balodemas to prepare a contract for Council consideration at their December meeting regarding hiring Balodemas as consultant/project manager to oversee the bathhouse contracting and construction.
10. Introduced changes to the Town Hall rental rules for action at the December meeting.
11. Postponed discussion regarding Pepco's plans for streetlight replacement and other options until the December meeting.
12. Confirmed the Mayor's appointment of Ann Brown as chair of Special Events Committee for a one-year term and the reappointment of Lyndsey Van Vliet-Gerber to a two-year term.

Tree Removals

The Town's *independent arborist*, **Barb Neal**, has been inspecting Town trees, some more closely than others. At our request, she prepared **Tree Hazard Evaluation Forms** (*developed by the International Society of Arboriculture*) on seventeen trees. This form contains basic information—location, tree characteristics and health, site conditions and tree defects. Three items are then considered to assess a rating failure. They are: *potential, size of the tree or part thereof, and tree's target* (building, parking, traffic, pedestrian, utility lines, etc.). Each of these three items is given a number from 1 to 4; the three items are added to obtain the final hazard rating—3 being the lowest and 12 the highest.

She has recommended that some be *pruned, vertically mulched, monitored or a combination of the three*. But, she has also recommended that ten trees be removed.

These trees are:

#152 – northern red oak—located near the Dorset Avenue entrance into Town on the south side—it has hypoxylon cankers all over its trunk. **Hazard rating 7.**

#176 – red maple—4602 Dorset Avenue—it contains a wound that runs from the base up the tree, hiding a 12"–deep cavity. **Hazard rating 10.**

#222 – silver maple—4728 Dorset Avenue—it is very hollow—3 drill tests around tree and only 1 ½"–2" solid wood found. **Hazard rating 11.**



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It is with great pleasure that I inform you that Dorset Avenue resident **DONNA HARMON** has accepted my offer to become the *new chair of the History Committee*. Many of you know of Donna's long residency in Somerset and her passion for our history. She co-authored the recent book about the Town written around the time of the centennial celebration. I encourage everyone to work with Donna to ensure the success of future programs the committee will be sponsoring. In the same vein, I am hoping that up to thirty residents will come forth to help the *Security Committee* and its chair **BIRDIE PIECZENIK** accomplish the important door-to-door task of completing a comprehensive survey on our security needs.

Council Vice President **MARNIE SHAUL** and I attended the **Maryland Municipal League Fall Conference** in the up-and-coming city of **Cambridge, MD**. In addition to participating in seminars on "*greening*" and "*how to prepare for an audit*" (among others), we were also present at the business meeting where the League membership unanimously approved its legislative agenda for the next year. For those interested, further information on this is available on the League's website at www.mdmunicipal.org.

There was a very lively group in attendance at last month's **Brown Bag lunch** and we were briefly joined by one of the Town's police officers, **SHERIF ALMIGGABBER**. The next lunch will take place in January so look for an announcement in the next *Journal*.

From reports I received after the fact, trick-or-treat night on **Halloween** was once again a big success, and there were no serious incidents or lots of extra trash on the streets. Some neighbors had not one child come to the door, but I had **192 visitors**, relatively close to the **200 in 2007**. I heard that the traditionally heavily travelled Cumberland was indeed rockin' and rollin' once again. Please let us know if we need to make and/or communicate any changes to the schedule in upcoming years.

On a sad note, *Town Attorney* **NORMAN KNOPF** recently informed me of the passing of **BILL MOHLER**, who had been very active for years in the *Citizens Coordinating Committee* on Friendship Heights, of which our Town is a key member. He lead the Committee's efforts to limit traffic (and thereby, development) and had served as Chair. Bill is fondly remembered by many in Somerset who worked with him in an effort to bring about rational land use planning.

Town Code Amendment for Measuring Trees

At the recommendation of the Town's arborist, an amendment to the Town Code is being introduced at the **December Town Council meeting**. The amendment is to increase the height at which a tree's diameter is measured to 4-1/2 feet above ground level from the current 4-foot requirement. This will bring the Town's measurement in line with industry standards in order to avoid potential mistakes. The difference in six inches should have no negative impact on our trees.



Somerset Residents Protect Themselves From Flu

By Barbara Marblestone, Trent

More than 120 residents received flu and/or pneumonia inoculations at the Town's **annual Flu Clinic** on October 24, 2008. The **MedStar Visiting Nurse Association** administered the shots with efficiency and good cheer, according to **Barbara Zeughauser**, who so graciously stepped in on short notice to assemble the volunteers and manage the clinic at the Town Hall. We are all extremely grateful for Barbara's service; she is a very special "*helping hand*" in Somerset.

Many thanks also for assistance from the Town staff and the volunteers who helped register clinic patients: **Sue Besharov, Dolores Bartning, Barbara Condos, Ruth Koffsky, Marian Scheiner, and Lesley Simmons**. Here's wishing everyone in Somerset a healthy winter.

Town Hall Tidbits | By Tom Carter, Clerk-Treasurer



Office Holiday Hours

Town Hall will be closed *Thursday, Christmas Day, December 25, and Thursday, New Year's Day, January 1*, which are **Federal holidays**. Tom will be away *December 26-29 and January 2-5*. 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.

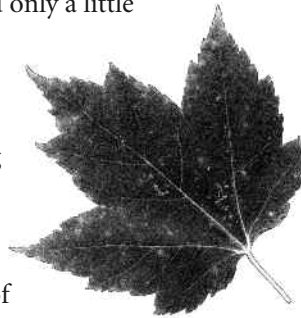
Found

A set of keys was found in Town and turned in during the *flu shots on October 24*. One key looks like a **house key** and the other is a **Volvo key**. If you think these belong to you, call Tom at **301-657-3211**.

Removal of Leaves

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

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 men can get the leaf machine through. The men 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 9:00 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.

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 and other obstructions, it behooves all of us to be considerate of our fellow drivers.

Odd Jobs List

Please take a moment to review the **Odd Jobs list** enclosed with this edition of the **Town Journal**. We have received several calls saying that listed personnel no longer are interested in doing the tasks they originally signed up to do. Some on the list are away at college and not available. Please let

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Thanks for Caring About Our Parkland

By Corrie Morsey, Chair, PNRC

The project to clean up and eliminate unwanted invasive vegetation in **Vinton Park, Saturday, November 15**, was very satisfying. Not only did Mother Nature cooperate with the balmy weather, but we had a great group of enthusiastic volunteers as well. **Patty Friedman, Chair of the Invasive Subcommittee of the Environmental Committee** and I were joined by **Judy Bowles** and her granddaughter **Grace**; **Cub Scout Pack 52-Aidan, Liam**, and their father, **Bill Farley**; **Ranson Kennelly**; **Jonathan** and his father, **Ian Lienert**; and **Jack** and his father, **Pack Leader Steve Surko**; **Janet Fernandez**; **Checker Finn**; **Brian Frosh**; **Barbara Hoover** and her grandson **Rayan**; **Carol Jason**; **Hannah Levin**; **Marnie Shaul**; **Nancy** and **Rob Soreng**; and **George Wyeth**. Special thanks to **Missy Reingruber**, who provided the ever-important Community Service forms.

The project proved to be not only fun but educational. One participant remarked that in the future when she's walking her dog in parkland, she'll have pruning clippers on hand—just a few snips can prove very beneficial. The task of keeping unwanted vegetation under control and off the trees is an on-going effort. We will be sponsoring more clean-up projects in our parkland—hope to see you at a future event.

Somerset Listserv

By Sarah Morse, Dorset

Join Somerset_list, a virtual community bulletin board just for Somerset Residents!

Have something to sell? Need a babysitter? Offering a service? Looking

for recommendations for contractors? Know of an event that might be of interest to Town residents? Want to start a walking club? Found a stray animal? These are all good reasons to join the Somerset_list, an on-line listserv for Somerset residents.

After missing the wealth of information that can be gleaned from an afternoon at the pool, I have started an unofficial Town listserv for residents to share information. It is an open board, which means that it is not moderated and anyone can post messages.

There are a few rules for posting:

- All messages must be signed with name and street.
- Messages should be courteous and members should be mindful that everyone in Town may join the board, including children.
- Discussions between two parties should be taken off-line

Violation of these simple rules can be grounds for banning the member.

There are two ways to join—go to http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Somerset_list and follow the directions for joining, or email me at morsekathan@gmail.com and I'll sign you up. Before you can join I need to know your name and address, so make sure you include that in your email!

The listserv is privately maintained and is not officially affiliated with or financed by the Town.

Tree Removals from page 3

#571 – silver maple – Surrey side of 4731 Essex Avenue – it has been dying back for many years and the trunk and root flare contain decay. **Hazard rating 10.**

#572 – silver maple – Surrey side 4801 Essex Avenue – it has been dying back for many years and it has advanced decay caused by armillaria. **Hazard rating 8.**

#584 – silver maple – 5712 Surrey Street—it contains 40” diameter cavity and has only 3-4” of solid wood in its trunk. **Hazard rating 11.**

#849 – elm – Capello Park—it's dead. **Hazard rating not done since it's dead.**

#676 – Japanese cherry – 5526 Trent Street – it has suffered from construction damage, is dying and no longer viable to prune out deadwood. **Hazard rating 6.**

#75 – pin oak – 4815 Cumberland Avenue – several roots decayed, tree is dying (expect it to die within 1–3 years), remove now and replant. **Hazard rating 6.**

#595 – pin oak – 5808 Surrey Street—tree probably hit by lightning and it's been dying back for years, estimates crown far less than 50% original size, decline is irreversible, remove now and replant. **Hazard rating 5.**

The proposed tree removals have been placed on the December Town Council meeting agenda. Residents whose property adjoins the above trees have been notified. When possible, replacement trees will be planted. Completed Tree Hazard Evaluation Forms can be viewed at the Town Hall during normal office hours.

Tom know if there are any changes, additions or deletions so this list is fully accurate. Call 301-657-3211 with changes.

MVA Mobile Office

The MVA's mobile office will be in Friendship Heights on **Monday, December 22**, from **10:00 a.m.** to **2:00 p.m.**

2009 Calendars

2009 League of Women Voters calendars are available at the Town Hall for \$7 or call Nancy Soreng at 301-986-1916.



Crime and Police Report

By Birdie Pieczenik, Chairperson, Security Committee

We Need Your Input—and Your Help

Prompted by several home invasions in nearby areas over the last few months, the Mayor and Town Council have asked the **Security Committee** to design an **Alert System** for the Town; a system that will alert **ALL** residents to an occurrence or impending occurrence that warrants immediate action or attention.

The Security Committee would like to undertake a door-to-door canvas of every household in Town to determine: *(1) what events warrant an immediate resident alert; and (2) how YOU would like to be contacted when such an event occurs.* To ensure a large number of responses, and to provide one more way of getting to know your neighbors, please start thinking about answers to these questions. Your responses to a very small number of questions (asked in a very friendly manner) will shape the Alert System we design.

In order to make this survey manageable in scope and doable within a month's time, we need your help. We will divide the Town's streets into "*territories*," and each volunteer (that means **YOU**) will be given a number of houses to survey; the more volunteers, the fewer the number of houses on everyone's list. As a volunteer you will be provided with a small group of questions, a pad to record answers, a list of households to contact, two weeks to talk with each household on your list, and a chance to make some new friends in Town!

Please call **Birdie** to volunteer: **301-652-1207**. We really do need your help to make this happen. And just to allay any fears; the alleged perpetrator of the home invasions has been captured!

SECURITY TIP OF THE MONTH: It's getting dark earlier these days. The cheapest form of nighttime crime deterrence is a well-lit home exterior. Keeping lights on all night with timers (*exterior and selected interior lights*) will also help dog-walkers see cracks in the sidewalk and make everyone feel more comfortable when walking in dark streets. *This is just good prevention, folks!*

Do not hesitate of report any suspicious activity or individuals to the **2nd District police officers** by calling **301-652-9200** or **911**.

An Invitation

By Maxine Finkelstein, Editor

Somerset residents frequently have questions regarding what goes into producing the *Somerset Town Journal* and what guidelines should be used. The rules and guidelines for the Journal have been developed from requirements of the Town Code (**Section 2-402**) and by consensus of the Mayor and other Town officials, with input from the editor.

The Mayor is the publisher of the Journal and I am the editor. Monthly input for the Journal comes from the *Mayor, Town Clerk, various members of the Town Council, Committee Chairs, and residents and employees of Somerset.* Somerset residents who have information pertaining to the Town and its activities are welcome to submit an article, or if you have an opinion or issue that relates to the Town, *Letters to the Editor* are invited—these have a space limitation of **150 words**.

All input to the Journal should be sent directly to me by email at *maxinea@comcast.net*, in plain text or **MSWord** with no formatting. The deadline for submission to the Journal is the **15th of the month at 4:30 p.m.** I will send an acknowledgement for every article or letter I receive. If you do not receive an acknowledgement, please contact me.

In addition to being mailed to each home, the Journal is posted a few days prior to postal delivery at the Town website, *www.Townofsomerset.com*.

I hope you, as a Somerset resident, feel the Journal is your paper and will take advantage of it as your resource for both receiving and providing important information about our Town.

Preliminary Agenda

Regular Meeting of Town Council

Monday, December 1, 2008 – 7:30 p.m.

1. Approval of minutes of the November 3 regular meeting – 7:30 p.m.
2. Discussion of financial report – 7:35 p.m.
3. Suggestions and questions from residents – 7:40 p.m.
4. Discussion on placement of generators – 7:50 p.m.
5. Action on contract with Balodemas Architects for bathhouse project oversight – 8:10 p.m.
6. Discussion of Swimming Pool Committee's proposed budget for 2009 season – 8:15 p.m.
7. Report by Environmental Committee of the status of its work on street light replacement and a timeline for its recommendations – 8:25 p.m.
8. Action on proposed changes to the Town Hall rental rules – 8:45 p.m.
9. Action on Town Arborist's recommendations to remove 10 trees in various locations throughout Town – 8:55 p.m.**
10. Introduction of Town Code amendment to change the measurement of tree diameter requiring application for removal to agree with industry standard – 9:00 p.m.**
11. Action setting dates for nomination and election of three Council members for two-year terms (suggested dates: nominations, Monday, March 2; election, Wednesday, April 1) and to extend the hours of voting from 5:00–9:00 p.m. – 9:05 p.m.
12. Confirmation of Mayor's reappointment of Tracy Truman and Barbara Zeughauser for three-year terms on Board of Supervisors of Elections, terms to expire December 31, 2011 – 9:10 p.m.
13. Action on Mayor's nomination of Donna Harman as replacement for Lesley Simmons as chair of the History Committee – 9:15 p.m.**
14. Action on tennis fees for 2009 – 9:20 p.m.
15. Mayor's report – 9:25 p.m.
16. Developments/plans in the vicinity of Somerset – 9:30 p.m.
17. Adjournment – 9:40 p.m.

"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.

Residents who wish to be present for a particular agenda item are advised to arrive 15 minutes ahead of the item's scheduled discussion time as discussion sometimes run ahead of schedule.

Items marked ** have related articles inside this issue of the "Town Journal."