



SOMERSET TOWN JOURNAL



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Mayor's Den

By Walter Behr



have a chair; Channel 16, our municipal TV station, needs new leadership; and the Special Events and Batting Cage Committees each have three members whose terms are about to expire. If you are eager to grab one of these positions, submit a statement of your qualifications to mayor@townofsomerset.com by Tuesday, February 12.

At its meeting on January 7, the Town Council voted to set up an Environmental Committee to “advise the Council on environmental matters and draft a Town environmental policy statement and a statement of work for an environmental assessment.” The first step is for the Mayor to appoint, and the Council to confirm, a committee chair. Consult the Somerset Web page for the text of the resolution authorizing the committee or get a copy at the Town Hall.

As members and contributors to Channel 16, the municipal television station, Somerset is entitled to a director and an alternate. Nat Finkelstein has been serving as director, and we have not had an alternate. Although the station has willingly filmed and broadcast Somerset events, it has its problems, so there is clearly room for an improved operation.

Terms of three members of the Special Events Committee are about to expire. Jeffrey Slavin is eager to continue as a member; Phyllis Wiesenfelder

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Four Opportunities to Serve Somerset

Chances to enhance life in Somerset abound – in addition to the elective offices. A just-authorized Environmental Committee must

From the editor:

I will be out of Town next month and therefore unable to edit the Town Journal. Please send your Journal submissions to Tom Carter at the Town Hall, clerk@townofsomerset.com by the Journal deadline date: Wednesday, February 13.

Calendar

Monday, February 4	Town Council Meeting
Sunday, February 10	CC Historical Society lecture
Wednesday, February 13	Journal deadline, ads and copy
Monday, February 25	Mobile MVA in Friendship Heights
Wednesday, February 27	CC Historical Society lecture
Friday, February 29	Willy Wonka performance at Somerset ES
Saturday, March 1	Willy Wonka performance at Somerset ES
Sunday, March 2	Willy Wonka performance at Somerset ES
Monday, March 3	Town Council Meeting
Monday, March 3	Somerset Voter registration Day
Monday, March 3	Nomination day for Mayor and 2 Council Members
Monday, March 10	Deadline for additional nominations by petition
Friday, March 14	Somerset ES Used Book Fair
Saturday, March 15	Somerset ES Used Book Fair
Tuesday, March 18	Deadline for registering to vote in Town elections
Tuesday, March 18	Candidate Forum
Tuesday, April 1	Somerset's Election Day
Monday, April 7	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 "Town Calendar"

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and Lyndsey Gerber are not reapplying. For information on the responsibilities of the committee, you may consult the chair, Ann Brown at 301-986-8811.

Like Special Events, the Batting Cage Committee has three members whose terms are coming to an end, Rod Macklin, David Sacks and David Sapin, who is chair. All are interested in another term. For details on the job of committee members call David Sapin at 301-654-4631.

Please remember that the deadline for applying for all of the positions mentioned above is Tuesday, February 12.

Creek Work Complete Except for Planting

By the time you receive this Town Journal, the erosion control work in the creek, below the swimming pool bridge, will be completed except for planting. Trees and shade-tolerant grass seeds in compost will be planted as soon as the weather allows in late February or early March. At that time the soil will still be moist and sun will help germinate the seeds before the trees leaf out.

Rocks – *some huge* – have been placed along the sides and bed of the creek to slow the natural erosion problems. The contractor is Highway and Safety Services, which is working for Montgomery County. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is footing the bill as a result of serious erosion by a 100-year storm in June 2006.

Chevy Chase Club Wants to Build

The Chevy Chase Club has filed with the Board of Appeals for an administrative modification of a special exception that would permit the Club to replace its swimming pools, pool house, tennis courts and tennis shop, all to be located near Bradley Lane. The pool complex would include a main pool that meets international competition standards, a smaller pool and a kiddie pool.

The Board of Appeals found "that the requested changes are minor in nature and will not increase the outward impact of the use or its effect on traffic." The Club must submit to the Board for its approval the proposed access plan for the construction. The plan must also be

approved by the State Highway Administration and/or Montgomery County. After the framing of the new tennis building, the Board of Appeals will decide if the landscaping along the north edge of the Club property is adequate.

Construction is not expected to start before next fall.



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Legislature Changes Property Tax Procedure

You may have read that the General Assembly has amended the law that limits the increase in value of your house and lot that is used to calculate your property tax. Known as the "Homestead Property Tax Credit," it applies to homes that are the primary residences of the owner. The law was amended to combat instances of taxpayers claiming more than one property as their primary residence.

Homeowners used to receive the tax credit (10 percent in Montgomery County) automatically. Under the new law, they must apply for the credit, but only once. The good news is that you need do nothing now. You will receive your one-time application at the end of December 2009 with your next triennial reassessment.

If you have a question about the new procedure, feel free to call me at 301-657-2229 or the Department of Assessments and Taxation at 410-767-2165.

B-CC High School Ranks High

Bethesda Chevy Chase continues to rank among the best high schools in the country. It placed 46th on the

latest Newsweek "best public high schools" list, which ranks schools on the basis of the number of Advanced Placement (AP) and/or International Baccalaureate (IB) tests taken by all students at a school, divided by the number of graduating seniors.

Montgomery County Public Schools recently honored B-CC for being the only high school in the County that has met the enrollment target of each racial group taking these advanced courses – African Americans, Latinos, Asians and Whites. (Student profile is: *White*, 61.2%; *Black*, 16.5%; *Hispanic*, 14.7%; *Asian*, 7.4%.) Nine out of 10 B-CC students are enrolled in at least one honors course, and eight out of 10 seniors are taking at least one AP or IB course.

Past Years	Rank	School	Location	State	Index	Subs. Lunch	E & E
44	44	South Side **	Rockville Centre	N.Y.	4.433	12	70
45	45	Lincoln Park Academy **	Fort Pierce	Fla.	4.345	30	32
46	46	Bethesda-Chevy Chase **	Bethesda	Md.	4.322	8	64.2
47	47	Lincoln Park **	Chicago	Ill.	4.294	46	71
48	48	Los Angeles Center for Enriched Studies	Los Angeles	Calif.	4.249	59.6	60.1

Despite the success of most students, some need help, and the school is looking for mentors willing to meet with ninth-graders for an hour a week. Training and periodic workshops are provided. If you are willing to assist a child to succeed in high school, call Deborah Newman at 301-529-0702 or e-mail her at Deborah-Newman@mcpsmd.org

Rowland Roberts Dies at 79

Rowland Roberts, who led the effort that resulted in Somerset being named a Tree City USA, died at age 79 in Wilmington, Delaware. He lived on Dorset Avenue for 40 years until suffering a stroke in 2001, eight months after losing his wife, Jane. He served on the Town council for three years, including two years as Vice President of the Council.

Born in Byrn Mawr, Pennsylvania, Rowlie graduated from Princeton, served briefly in the Navy and worked for the federal government in England, Denmark, Belgium and Switzerland.

He is survived by his son, Brian; daughter, Liz; and three grandchildren.

Permits Granted



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

Trees:

Bruce Lawson, 5502 Trent Street, to remove a leaning maple tree in his back yard.

Curbs:

Tom Eldridge, 5605 Warwick Place, to move his driveway apron slightly to the north of its current position.

Local Election Lowdown

Voters Will Select Mayor and Two Council Members April 1

Election Day for the Town of Somerset is Tuesday, April 1, for Mayor and two Council members. At the Town Council meeting on March 3, nominations for the incumbents and other candidates will be accepted for the two-year terms. Additional nominations may be made by petition of 20 registered voters filed with the Clerk-Treasurer no later than 4:00 p.m., Monday, March 10.

The Town Charter requires its elected officials to be:

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

Registration Day is March 3

A member of the Board of Supervisors of Elections will be at the Town Hall from 7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. on Monday, March 3, to register new voters. Residents may also register at the Town Hall Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. or by mail (call Tom Carter, 301-657-3211, to mail the registration form to you). The deadline to register for the April 1 election is 4:30 p.m. on March 18. If you are currently registered in Montgomery County, you are eligible to vote in the Town of Somerset.

Qualifications for voting in the Town of Somerset are:

- Be at least 18 years old by April 1, 2008;
- Be a resident of Somerset for 14 days preceding the election (actual residency is required except for individuals absent from the Town only temporarily and intending to return, such as students, military and other overseas government employees);
- Be a citizen of the United States or an alien legally authorized to reside in the country; and
- Be registered to vote in the Town of Somerset and/or Montgomery County.

If you have any questions about whether you are registered in the Town or know former residents who are still registered in Somerset, call Bonnie Thomson, chair of the Board of Supervisors of Elections, at 301-657-2923.

Candidates Forum

The Town Council has set the candidates forum on Tuesday, March 18, at 7:30 p.m. in the Town Hall. Come and ask the candidates where they stand on Town issues.



Crime and Police Report

By Council member, Lesley Simmons

Crime

Several incidences of graffiti to Town and individuals' property, including a new home under construction, were reported in early January.

Police Report

During December, Officer Sherif Almiggabber issued:

- **5 STOP** sign citations – 3 to non residents and 2 to Town of Somerset residents,
- **6 parking citations** for **NO PARKING ANY TIME**, – 5 to non residents and one to a resident,
- **2 parking citations** for parking in a fire lane/hydrant, both to Town residents
- **4 vehicle registration citations** – 2 to residents and 2 to non-residents

In addition, Officer Almiggabber solved one parking complaint by locating the vehicle's owner who subsequently moved the vehicle that was blocking a neighbors driveway, went to the scene of 3 alarm calls (all were clear), responded to one traffic management incident and one traffic dispute, and assisted Town residents in three incidents, including providing a jump start to a vehicle that wouldn't start. He also located owners of one vehicle with a door left open and another with a trunk left open, both of which had valuables in full view – in one case he locked the vehicle until the owner could be found.

Town Hall Tidbits | By Tom Carter



Tax Time Again; Remember: 'TOWN OF SOMERSET'

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

Found

A scooter was found in the area of the upper parking lot of the swimming pool in the first week of January. If you think it belongs to you, please call Tom at 301-657-3211.

2008 Tennis ID Cards

Tennis ID cards for 2008 are available from Tom at the Town Hall office. Fees are still only \$5 per family for the annual card. Please make your checks out to "Town of Somerset."

Batting Cage Annual Fees

Batting cage users are reminded that their annual fees of \$5 for 2008 are due for continued use of the equipment. Checks should be made out to "Town of Somerset."

MVA Mobile Office

The MVA's mobile office will be in Friendship Heights on Monday, January 28, and Monday, February 25, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Voters Guide

The League of Women Voters Guide will be available at Town Hall after February 1.

Recycles

Many of you have noticed our recycles being picked up by a regular trash compactor truck lately. I, too, had noticed it and questioned our trash company, J&J. Owner John Cavell says that he is using a Waste Management recycling facility, Recycle America, in Howard County that accepts the recycles in this manner on an irregular basis, depending on the status of his recycling truck. Please continue to separate your recycles as you normally do or we will have pickup problems on the days he uses his regular recycling truck.

Town Permits Available Online

Town permits are now available for downloading (in PDF format) from the Town web site. The permits can be accessed from the home page. Included are forms for construction, fence/wall, batting cage, tree removal and reforestation, curbs/sidewalks/driveway aprons, setbacks, Town Hall and Town Tent Rental permits, along with information sheets and rules.

Computer Recycling

In response to recent residents' requests, the Town will accept computers and computer components from Town residents for recycling at

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the County Transfer Point at Shady Grove. Residents may drop off their old equipment at Town Hall during office hours (9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) the week of February 11-15 or on Saturday, February 16, from 10 to noon.

Kudos Somerset!

The National Arbor Day Foundation has named the Town of Somerset a **Tree City USA** for the twenty-sixth consecutive year. This honor not only speaks volumes as to the importance of trees to all of us but also is aptly descriptive of our Town.



2007: The Year in Review

By Council member
Lesley Simmons

How best to renovate Somerset's facilities – **the pool house and Town Hall** – dominated attention and discussion in 2007. Three public charettes held early in the year set out to determine the spatial requirements and needs for each location. These continued in the fall with three meetings facilitated by Lou Balodemas – in October, November and December. Two subsequent meetings in early 2008 will bring the planning process to closure and the decision making phase to the fore.



Traffic and crime remained high on the agenda of both residents and Town officials. A traffic survey of the Town's four main entrances was undertaken and a special meeting held with a traffic engineer and a public works contractor to examine options for calming traffic. Through the summer several experimental curb extensions were laid out at the corner of Falstone and Warwick and one at Grantham and Uppingham. At year end

RFPs were sent to nine companies invited to perform a study and make recommendations to the Town to help it calm and reduce traffic and improve public safety.

In late summer an off-duty Montgomery County police officer was employed to patrol Somerset to apprehend speeders, drivers who ignore **STOP** signs and illegal parkers and watch out for suspicious individuals and activities. While some residents and many non-residents received citations and/or warnings for failure to stop at **STOP** signs or for parking in no parking zones, the officer has not issued any speeding tickets. Many have benefited from the officer's assistance and have expressed their support of his presence

both as a deterrent against crime and as a way of improving adherence to traffic regulations.

Early in the year the crumbling stone foundation beneath the Town office was replaced with concrete. A stretch of declining sewer on Cumberland Avenue was replaced by a **WSSC** contractor, and the bridge from the parking lot to the swimming pool was repaired. Repairs to disintegrating curbs, damaged sidewalks and handicap ramps began late in the year and were near completion by year end. Curbs were installed along Devon Lane.

Following receipt of a permit from the Town, **Verizon installed fiber optics cable (FiOS)** throughout Somerset and now offers what the company calls "*the most significant advance in telecommunications technology in 100 years.*"

The **Sadoff litigation** was settled in October after a two day trial before the Circuit Court. The plaintiffs' complaint alleged that the builder and the Town had unlawfully interfered with the flow of water from the plaintiffs' property and sought injunctive relief, including removal of the driveway and culvert. The position of the builder and the Town was that plaintiffs' complaint was without merit because, among other reasons, the storm water run-off was properly and adequately handled by the culvert and that the plaintiffs were unable to show any damage to their property due to storm water in the over two years the elevated driveway and culvert have been in place. By the end of the year, the lawsuit had cost Somerset \$106,953 in legal and engineering fees.

At an April party Town residents expressed thanks and a sad farewell to Council member **Judy Frankel**, who retired from the Council after 26 years of service. Judy moved to Maine to be near her son, his wife and their daughter. At the March 20 election Council members Rick Kessler and Tom Eldridge were reelected and Marnie Shaul elected for two-year terms on the Town Council.

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In February six colorful markers were installed atop street name signs to mark the borders of the Town's 54-home historic district. The project was completed with the generous support from Preservation Maryland and the Maryland Historical Trust, which provide funding for fabricating the signs.

During 2007 the Mayor and the Council approved permits for the removal of 72 trees. In addition, 30 Town trees that were diseased, dead or dying were removed. The Town planted 20 replacement street trees in the fall.

The Town was named a Tree City for the 25th year in a row and also received the **GREEN Award** from the Maryland Urban and Community Forest Committee of the Department of Natural Resources Forest Service in the spring in recognition of its environmental stewardship and enhancing its urban forest.

Three building demolition and 10 building permits (including two recommendations to the County Historic Preservation Commission) were issued.

Somerset's community spirit was as pronounced as ever. A group of Somersettters established "**Helping Hand,**" a volunteer service of neighbors helping neighbors in time of need. Hundreds of residents gathered in the sunshine of a perfect day for the Fourth of July picnic at the Town Hall and subsequent parade to the pool. In September a welcome party at the pool honored more than 20 families who had moved into

Town through the year. And as summer ended and the pool closed for the season, many of Somerset's canine residents enjoyed a dip in the pool at the annual dog swim.

Indeed, another spectacular pool season was reported with early bird swim, water aerobics, and numerous social events for residents of all ages. The **Dolphins swim team**, while finishing a 1-win, 4-loss season in the I division, reported that every meet was a cliff hanger. More than 30 personal bests were recorded and six new team records were set.

Residents were able to display their pride in the Town with attractive Town of Somerset Centennial License plates, which became available in the summer.



Somerset was one of 14 Maryland Municipalities named a Banner City/Town at the **Maryland Municipal League (MML) Convention** in late June.

MML President Stewart Combo and Executive Director Scott Hancock presented a certificate at the October meeting.

Among several amendments to the Town Code during the year were those that:

- extended Somerset's quiet hours so that residents are protected from construction noise all day on Sunday;
- more tightly controlled removal of trees in the Town right-of-way;



On My Mind

by Council member
Jeffrey Slavin

You might recall that I serve on the County's Friendship Heights Transportation Management District (TMD) Advisory Committee. The Committee is working to improve and increase taxi service in our area by establishing a taxi call button and new taxi stand near the Metro stop, including new signage.

The project is in a trial period and we vitally need input from residents. So, if you have noticed the changes and like them – and are taking advantage of them – let me know. More importantly, if you have constructive criticism or suggestions please call or write to me now.

I am not sure if folks are aware of the changes, or if they use taxis, but when I get off the Friendship Heights Metro and its raining heavily or if I am loaded down with "stuff," it is nice to know I can easily call or find a cab near the Metro exit.

Since my plan for this year is to get more people engaged in community and civic life, even if you are not interested in taxis, why not take the time to tell me about something else on your mind, or let me help

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- granted authority to the Mayor and Clerk-Treasurer to enforce parking restrictions.

At the last Council meeting of the year the Town's combined fund balance was at just over \$2.6 million.

you find a volunteer opportunity – either for one time only or on a regular basis?

Since we last communicated, I have gone through the holiday season suffering some major losses in my life. When this happens at such an emotional time of year, it makes you doubly realize how important each day is and that plans, tasks, and actions you always wanted to take should not be postponed any longer.

So, my final message is simple – don't delay anything in your lives, and have an incredibly productive 2008.



Heads Up! Book Sale Coming Soon at Somerset ES

by Elizabeth Hurwit

Somerset Elementary School's Annual Used Book Sale will be on Friday, March 14 and Saturday, March 15 with donations accepted from March 10 – 13.

This is one of the school's most popular and successful events. So start clearing off those shelves of no longer needed children's books, adult books (fiction and nonfiction), videos, games, audio tapes, cds, and dvds and look for more information in next month's Town Journal.

We welcome volunteers to help sort books or work at the sale. For information, please call Cathleen Leipold at 301 657-1946 or Elizabeth Hurwit at 301 652-0608.



Classified Ads



Services

PIANO & FLUTE LESSONS (with **THEORY**). Cecelia Porter, Ph.D., musicologist. Washington Post music critic. 301-654-2165.

ACADEMIC TUTOR. 20 years experience teaching all ages, subjects. Math through Algebra II. Reading comprehension and writing. Test preparation, organizational/study skills. M.A. in Biology and Special Ed. Call Sheryl Gilbert, 301-656-1753.

Miscellaneous

SOMERSET HOME FOR RENT. 4 bedroom, 3 full bath, sunroom, carport. Available now: \$3,800/month. Call Georganne, 304-763-4287 (H) or 304-673-0332.

SOMERSET HOUSE FOR RENT beginning May 1, 2008. 4-bedroom, 3-bath rambler near Somerset Elementary School. For more information, call Rob McGarrah at 202-431-9838.

FABULOUS HILTON HEAD VACATION BEACH PROPERTIES FOR RENT: 6 BR home 3 minutes from ocean and 3BR and 2BR oceanfront villas; to view availability, go to www.vrbo.com, #92786, #33362, and #147822 or call 301-913-5973.

AWARD-WINNING SOMERSET AUTHOR Frank Joseph is going to discuss his new book "To Love Mercy" with Somerset book group on February 6 at 8:00 p.m. The book group, which meets monthly and reads a wide range of fiction and non-fiction books, is actively seeking new members. Please call Maxine at 301-654-7779 or e-mail maxinea@com-cast.net for more information.

Ads are printed as a courtesy to Town residents. The Town makes no representations as to quality, safety or otherwise regarding the goods and services advertised. Readers should make their own inquiries. To place an ad, submit typed or neatly printed copy to the Clerk-Treasurer. Ads must include a Somerset phone number.

Price: \$5 per advertisement per issue. Check or exact change. 50-word limit per advertisement.



When You Need a Helping Hand

If you become sick or have an accident, or for some reason need a little help, call on **Somerset's Helping Hand volunteers** who can run an errand, give you a ride to a doctor's appointment or otherwise help out in an emergency.

Call Zola Schneider at: 301-654-7481 or 301-654-5889.

Legislation

At the January 2 meeting, the Council:

Did not act on a proposed Town Code amendment to require invisible fences for pet containment to be installed at least three feet from Town sidewalks and curbs and increase penalties for violation of animal control requirements from \$50 to \$100 for a first offense and from \$100 to \$300 for each repeat offense. Council member Rick Kessler will redraft the legislation for introduction at the February meeting.



Council Activity

At the January 2 meeting, the Town Council:

1. Authorized payment of \$100 annual dues to the Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights for 2008.
2. Confirmed the Mayor's appointment of Ilene Heller and reappointment of Joan Weiss to three-year terms on the History Committee.
3. Approved a permit for Steven Guttentag and Stacy Winick, 5608 Warwick Place, to add a screened porch to the back of their house, subject to receipt of a County permit and the Town fees for the building permit and deposit, and protection of the two Town trees in the front yard.
4. Set the candidates forum for Tuesday, March 18. (Vote: Eldridge, Shaul, Simmons and Slavin for; Kessler opposed. Motion passed 4-1.)
5. Heard the Swimming Pool Committee's report that they will honor the existing contract with High Sierra for the 2008 season, but make additions to rectify problems last year.
6. Received the 2007 swimming pool financial report.
7. Extended the hiring of off-duty police from February 1 to June 30, 2008.
8. Established a Town of Somerset Environmental Committee by resolution.
9. Postponed approval of a building permit application by Sandy Spring Builders to revise plan for garage/studio at 4520 Dorset Avenue until the January 23 special meeting and the submission of neighbors' signatures.
10. Extended building permit issued to Tom Dimond and Joan Ebzery for new house and garage at 4914 Dorset Avenue for six months, subject to receipt of the Town permit fee.
11. Approved the bid of Sequeira Construction to paint Town Hall in the spring for up to \$15,500.
12. Authorized the expenditure of an additional \$14,100 for the services of Balodemas Architects: \$2,600 for work already completed, \$1,000 for updated Town Hall drawings, \$2,000 for updated pool drawings, \$3,000 for an additional pool drawing that includes a second floor, and \$5,500 to finalize the plans and prepare RFP documents.
13. Accepted an increase in Town Attorney's hourly rate from \$260 to \$275 beginning January 1, 2008. (Vote: Kessler, Shaul, Simmons, Slavin for; Eldridge opposed. Motion passed 4-1.)
14. Approved an application by Cathi Davis and Frank Loversky, 5415 Surrey Street, to remove a 9-inch red maple in their front yard that is impeding new construction, subject to receipt of a \$200 tree deposit and the planting of a two-inch diameter red maple replacement.

Chevy Chase Historical Society Invites You to Two Upcoming Events

Information at: http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/apps/News/press/PR_details.asp?PrID=4164

Sustainable Landscapes - Green Matters Symposium

Brookside Gardens invites the public to its annual symposium on Green Matters, a discussion of sustainable landscapes, on Friday, February 22. Topics include sustainable sites, zero-waste sites, right plant-right place, permeable paving design, rain gardens and more.

Brookside teamed up with Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, American Society of Landscape Architects, United States Botanic Garden, Annie May DeFrank and Winding Orchard Citizens Association in developing the program.

Fee: \$89. Register at www.mc-mncppc.org/parks/brookside/ or call 301-962-1470 with questions.

Volunteer Opportunities

County Executive Isiah Leggett is committed to having the County's boards, committees and commissions representative of residents. Public participation contributes to the County government's work and provides a valuable service to the community when a variety of concerns and viewpoints are presented. Currently, there are opportunities to serve on the following (application deadline January 25):

- Commission on Child Care
- Board of Investment Trustees
- Local Management Board for Children, Youth and Families (Collaboration Council)

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On Sunday, February 10, at 4:00 p.m. an illustrated lecture, **“Jewish Washington: Scrapbook of an American Community”** will feature Chevy Chase resident Laura Cohen Apelbaum, coeditor of *Jewish Washington: Scrapbook of an American Community*, which recounts the Jewish community's contributions to Washington area business and civic life. The book will be available for purchase. Reservations not required. Questions: hgr@chevychasehistory.org or Susan Elwell at 301-657-1874.

On Wednesday, February 27

C. Dudley Brown, a noted interior designer specializing in historic properties and traditional home design, will deliver the Chevy Chase Historic Society's 2008 winter lecture. Brown's slide-illustrated talk, **“Taste of the Times – Early Chevy Chase,”** will focus on the styles of house decoration during the early days of this streetcar suburb. Brown's lecture will follow a brief CCHS annual meeting. Questions? Contact Marilyn Montgomery at 301-656-2295.

Both events are free and open to the public and will be held at the Chevy Chase Village Hall, 5906 Connecticut Avenue.

County News

Earn Student Service Learning Hours and be a Web Adviser!

Teens between the ages of 13 and 18 with an interest in surfing the web, blogging, reviewing new books, interviewing authors and local artists, or producing a podcast or video for the library are invited to serve on the Montgomery County Public Library's (MCPL) Teensite Advisory Group.

- Recreation Advisory Boards

Details at <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov> then click on "Volunteers" in the side bar

Summer Fun at MCRD Camps

MCRD Summer Camps. Maybe it's the wide variety of camps that cater to so many different interests. Available January 11 with registration opening January 22, the MCRD Summer Camps Guide is a parent's resource for summer kids activities. Information at: http://montgomerycountymd.gov/content/rec/RECORD/articles/january2008/camps_overview08.html

Register for Department of Parks Summer Camps

More than 50 different options are being offered in Department of Parks Camps for 2008. Select from nature facilities, ice skating rinks, tennis facilities public gardens and more. Week-long choices include the department's signature Week in the Park summer day camp and archaeology camps for both children and adults.

Meet parks officials at the 2008 Camp and Summer Programs Expo at White Flint Mall in Rockville on Saturday, January 26 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Sunday, January 27 from 12 noon to 6 p.m. Summer camp managers will be on hand to answer questions and accept registrations.

Register online at www.ParkPASS.org or for more information on the White Flint Mall Expo visit White Flint.

Election Judges Needed for Primary and General Elections

The Montgomery County Board of Elections is looking for registered voters to work in the polls as election judges. Training is provided and election judges receive a stipend for attending training, attending a pre-election meeting at their polling place and working on Election Day. Bi-lingual voters are also needed.

Election Dates

Presidential Primary - February 12

General - November 4

If you are interested, please call or email:

240-777-8533 or electionjudge@montgomerycountymd.gov

240-777-8570 or democrats@montgomerycountymd.gov (Democrats)

240-777-8576 or republicans@montgomerycountymd.gov
(Republicans/Others)

You may also download an application from our website:
www.777vote.org



Do you have an idea for a TV show or want to help others make a TV show?

Learn how at a FREE TV Production Orientation

March 5, 2008 7:00 pm

To reserve your space and for more information call:

Access Montgomery

301-424-1730, ext 301

www.accessmontgomery.tv

Become an AMTV Volunteer Today!

a service of
Montgomery
COMMUNITY TELEVISION, INC.



Preliminary Agenda

Regular Meeting of Town Council

Monday, February 4, 2008 – 7:30 p.m.

1. Approval of minutes of January 7 regular meeting and January 23 special meeting – 7:30.
2. Discussion of financial report – 7:35.
3. Fact finding hearing and action on application by Matthew Zaft and Erin Chlopak, 4820 Dorset Avenue, to demolish the existing structure, build a two-story house with two-car attached garage and remove three trees – 7:40.
4. Action on changes to swimming pool management contract for 2008 – 7:55.
5. Discussion of proposals for traffic calming master plan – 8:10.
6. Mayor's report – 8:20.
7. Developments/plans in the vicinity of Somerset – 8:30.
8. Suggestions and questions from residents – 8:40.
9. Discussion of requesting bids for legal services – 8:50.
10. Introduction of Town Code amendment to require invisible fences for pet containment to be installed at least three feet from Town sidewalks and curbs and increase penalties for violation of animal control requirements – 9:00.
11. **Confirmation of Tuesday, March 18, as time for candidates forum – 9:10.
12. New business – 9:15.
13. Adjournment – 9:20.

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.

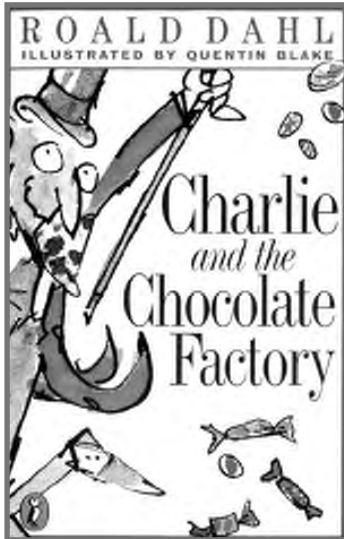
Residents who wish to be present for a particular agenda item are advised to arrive 15 minutes ahead of the item's scheduled discussion time as discussion sometimes run ahead of schedule.

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

Come See Willy Wonka!

By Gina Cappo Pack

Somerset Elementary School proudly presents **WILLY WONKA** as this year's musical and we'd like all our friends and neighbors to know!



Based on **Roald Dahl's** book, "*Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*," this story takes us through the fantastical tale of Charlie and his Grandpa as they tour the chocolate factory run by candy maker Willy Wonka. We run into greedy, gluttonous, spoiled, and TV-addicted kids along the way – along with plenty of Oompa-Loompas – as Charlie learns the importance of good character and saves his starving family.

There will be singing, dancing, and candy-filled kids having a great time! Performances will take place on Friday, February 29th at 6 pm, Saturday, March 1st at 7:00 p.m. and Sunday, March 2nd at 2:30 p.m in the Somerset E S All Purpose Room with an all-star cast of Somerset's own. Advance sale ticket forms can be picked up in the school office or from students from January 28 - February 15. Tickets are also available at the Box Office one hour before each performance. Tickets for **WILLY WONKA** are \$6.

You won't want to miss this show!

The **Town Journal** is the official publication of
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This issue edited by Lesley Simmons

Town of Somerset – Special Journal Insert

Residents' Views -- Town Hall and Pool Renovations

January 2008

In last month's *Town Journal* residents were invited to submit written views on renovating the Town Facilities. The submissions are presented here, in the order in which they were received.

From Tracy and Edwin M. Truman

We are responding to Tom Eldridge's invitation in the December *Somerset Town Journal* to share our views on proposals for the renovation of the town hall and pool. Discussion of these issues has gone on a long time. So far, one or both of us have attended most of the meetings. We are appreciative of the thought and effort by everyone involved that has gone into the process of trying to reach a consensus. We have tried to keep open minds. At the same time, we have been concerned about the tension and potential ill-will within this community that have been revealed during this process. This drawn-out process has frayed a lot of nerves.

We have been asked for our views, they are as follows. We think that the basic proposals for both projects outlined in the December 5 document prepared by Balodemas Architects go about as far as the town should go at this point. In both cases, they push our personal envelope in terms of adding amenities, but not dramatically beyond our level of tolerance. We note that the public meeting area of the Town Hall would be expanded slightly more than some would prefer. The facilities at the pool would be replaced and substantially enhanced more than some think is either necessary or desirable. On balance, the nature of the Town and the Town's facilities would be upgraded and maintained, which we think is appropriate.

We do not think the case has been made in terms of benefits and costs for any of the "options" listed in the December 5 document. We understand that a group of residents would like to have additional facilities within the Town that are available on a year-around basis. However, based on our 34 years of living in this Town and the immediate availability of other near-by facilities, we do not think that the demand is there or the return to the community is there to justify further additions to the facilities in either location. Moreover, the cost in terms of good will within the community would be high. The limited expansion of the Town Hall facilities and the limited expansion of the pool facilities will already impose continuing non-financial burdens on near-by residents as well as during the construction.

The total estimated cost of the overall project as it stands is \$5 million. Our guess is that the final figure will be significantly higher. The estimated basic cost of the "options" listed in the December 5 document is an additional \$1.36 million or at least \$3 million when the various overhead costs are included at the rates listed in the December 5

document. We would be surprised if the total construction cost of the enlarged project came in under \$10 million, about \$25,000 a family before interest. Moreover, none of the estimates counts the ongoing financial costs of staffing and maintaining those added facilities.

In addition, the economist contributor to these views shares the concerns articulated by Harry Rand in the recent *Somerset Town Journal*. Revenues for the Town are not likely to increase over the next five years at the rate they have over the past five years. Even if the Town's revenues do not suffer from the economic slowdown that is in front of us, residents directly or indirectly will be paying more for public services offered by other layers of government – county, state and national – where the effects of slower economic growth will be felt. (Exhibit A is the recent increase in Metro fares.) This will occur at a time when the incomes of many residents will be essentially stagnant.

From Janet Lowenthal

I share the desire to renovate the Town Hall so that it will have improved office space and a very modest increase in seating space for the meeting room. However, in looking over the proposed expansion depicted in Lou Balodemas' drawing, I was stunned to see a projected increase of 40% in the size of the meeting room as well as a substantial expansion of other public spaces. Despite the continued promotion of a renovation on this scale by a small group of Town residents, I do not believe this plan accords with the needs, interests or desires of most Somerset residents. The 2003 Survey by the Long Range Planning Committee clearly documented the fact that only a small percentage of residents favored a major expansion of the Town Hall. I doubt that opinions have changed substantially in the intervening years.

In this context, I am disturbed that Lou's Report suggests that a major renovation is supported "by a consensus." I am equally disturbed that objections voiced repeatedly by neighbors and others, in meetings and in written communications to the Council, are given disproportionately little weight in Lou's report.

The financial costs to the Town, the loss of green space, the increase in traffic and parked cars in the vicinity of the Town Hall, and resulting changes in the nature of this end of the Town – already the site of the tennis courts, basketball court, batting cage, picnic area and the Town Hall itself -- are all major reasons why I urge the Council to drastically scale back these plans.

Thank you for considering my concerns, as the Town proceeds toward the conclusion of this long process.

From Jack Frink

Hello Neighbors,

Vicki and I live directly across Cumberland from the Town Hall, love it, and strongly support its renovation for authentic Town business and resident activities. It is wonderfully antique and deserves respect.

I have attended all the open planning meetings but do not agree that there was Town consensus on the large (seems 75%) increase in size of the Town Hall. In addition, the Long Term Planning Committee survey and the Town Hall Renovation Committee report strongly did not support this conclusion. (Results are on Town website). How can there be claimed consensus?

Our concern is commercialization of the Town Hall. "Build it bigger and they will come" is a cliché, but often true. It happens all the time but we don't want outside interests to profit from our Somerset renovation dollars, which seem to be approaching several million. All neighbors we have spoken with agree.

At one meeting there was broad attendee and Council support for a Town regulation (yet to be introduced and passed) that at least 50% of attendees at a Town Hall events live in or be strongly affiliated with a Somerset resident, such as a school friend, or family member or other close connection, and that the Town staff would enforce.

We like the Town dialogue with Lou Balodemas but disagree with his assertion of consensus of significantly enlarging the Town Hall.

We support Janet's words: "The financial costs to the Town, the loss of green space, the increase in traffic and parked cars in the vicinity of the Town Hall, and resulting changes in the nature of this end of the Town – already the site of the tennis courts, basketball court, batting cage, picnic area and the Town Hall itself -- are all major reasons why I urge the Council to drastically scale back these plans."

Again we request that the Town Hall be renovated but not significantly enlarged.

From Sue Besharov

The Town Hall is in need of renovation and larger and more comfortable space for administration. Expansion of administrative space will require the meeting room to be rebuilt and is an opportunity to improve it. However, rebuilding does not mean the size should be significantly increased, certainly not by the 40% in the architect's preliminary plans. When the adjacent reading room/lounge is added the increase is 88 %, and adding the entrance/foyer, *the public space is more than doubled.*

Contrary to the report, Town residents should know that there is no “consensus” for such a major expansion of public space at the Town Hall. Meeting attendance on the plans has been modest and opinion about increasing public space quite divided, as Tom Eldridge addresses in his Journal article.

The cost of such a large expansion is more than financial. We also lose the surrounding green space, a major attraction of the Town Hall, and will likely have more traffic from nonresidents for larger classes and other activities in the expanded building. A large expansion of the Town Hall public space should only be considered if it would be widely used by a majority or at least a large percentage of Town households, and there is currently no indication of that.

The challenge for the Council is to determine the need when those with little interest in using the public space are unlikely to participate in the process, especially with the current planning fatigue. The survey results of the Long Range Planning Committee are old, but we don't have more current general information. In addition, we should keep in mind the great new facilities in the school a block away for occasional larger meetings. In fact, the Town will most likely get used to these spaces during the Town Hall renovation.

Thanks for your consideration of these concerns.

From Alan Proctor

After several years of preliminaries, the Town is finally making some slow, steady and very welcome progress in planning possible improvements to Town community facilities at the Town Hall and pool sites. With the support and focus of the Council, the Town has hired a professional architect to assist us in this process. Work over the past few months has focused on creating several lists of possible improvements that could be made at the two sites. Also, a conceptual design for one possible choice of options for each site – at the Town Hall and at the pool -- was illustrated at the most recent planning meeting, which was held in December.

Here's my “top-three” list of observations on where we are and what still needs to be done:

We need to explore additional alternatives that are possible at both sites. To its credit, the Council voted at its January Council meeting earlier this month to have the architect develop several additional conceptual drawings (with related cost estimates) that are extremely valuable in illustrating other approaches that have been advocated by participants in the process. One option is to include a large community room at the pool site, in either a first or second-floor configuration; the other would show a smaller scale version of improvements at the Town Hall, presumably maintaining and not expanding the footprint of the existing structure. These drawings unfortunately haven't been produced, much less distributed yet, so they aren't available to comment on now or share in this special edition of the Town Journal -- but they may represent some even better

alternatives than what we've already seen and they and other alternatives need to be thoroughly vetted and discussed within our community.

We haven't yet even started taking on as a community the potentially much tougher topic of the priorities that will inform decisions on alternatives and costs. The rough estimate of cost for the first set of options presented was \$2 million for the Town Hall and \$3 million for the pool – \$5 million total. What we would get for this would be a larger and somewhat fancier Town Hall, still largely focused on town administration, with a somewhat larger meeting room for the council that would be marginally better for use as a community room (but still, in my view, substantially smaller than would be desirable). We'd also get a new facility at the pool, plus a number of other improvements at the site (but without the large community room that I and the two other former chairs of the pool committee have urged should be located at the pool if we build one anywhere). My own preference is to go light on the Town Hall (emphasizing renovation and preservation of the existing administrative facility there) and to focus our resources on non-administrative community facilities at the pool (replacing the existing pool facility and including a large community room as a second floor on top of the bath house that could be used as desired on a year-round basis. I'm pretty convinced that this approach would offer best benefit for our Town, but the point is that we're at the beginning, not the end, of this discussion on which decisions can be based – as to our priorities among various alternatives. And those decisions, which will drive investments that could benefit our community for decades, are far too important to be rushed.

We have also not yet succeeded in engaging a sufficiently large portion of the community in the discussion. I've attended every one of the Council's planning meetings to date, and my bet is no more than something like maybe 60 people, maximum, out of our whole community, have attended the meetings, with most of us coming from various partisan camps within Town. This is not a sufficient, nor necessarily even representative, basis of opinion on which to make important investment decisions the costs of which will be borne by the entire community for a long time. I hope that this little piece and others that accompany it will draw more people in and broaden the discussion. But whatever the case, this is, again, the start and not the end of that important process. Also, in my view, we need to get far more creative and effective in confronting and discussing these issues as a community, so that in the coming months we can hopefully achieve a reasonable degree of consensus as the necessary basis on which investment decisions can be made.

From Josh Bobeck and Alan Proctor

The Pool Site is the Best Location for a Town Community Room.

We urge that if the Town should decide to invest in a new multi-purpose room to support community activities among Town residents, a room of this type should be built as part of the renovation at the pool – and should the Town decide to focus the investment in this kind of resource at just one site in Town (a decision that we do not believe is necessary), that this community room would be much better located at the site of the pool facility, not the Town Hall.

We write as two of the three former Chairs of the Town's Pool Committee for more than ten years, from 1997 to 2007. We have a deep appreciation of what a great asset the pool is for our community and excellent insight into the many advantages of locating a new community room at the pool site.

As we see it, the pool site is the preferred location for a community room because it offers the following advantages, among others:

The community room would further enhance use of the pool facility during the swim season. It would offer needed shelter during swim meets from occasional thunderstorms that now end up ending those meets without the necessity of building a separate structure that would take up valuable open space on the pool deck or in the picnic area. It would offer an additional indoor area for summer-season activities, such as a break from the sun; a place to go if rain or cold interferes with activities like movie nights, potluck dinners, and the like; and a location for additional activities (such as an exercise or art class, or other indoor activities).

There is much more parking available at the pool than the Town Hall site. The pool site is somewhat more centrally located within Town than the Town Hall site, which would facilitate access and use by residents.

The community room could be designed for convenient and cost-effective use on a year-round basis, even after the pool is closed, just like the similar community room located in the nearby Carderock community. Moreover, given the value of the community room during the pool season, and further value of the flexibility of making year-round use of it in the future, it makes sense to construct the room as a possible year-round resource even if the Town decides in the near term to use it only during the swim season. This is smart planning and fiscal prudence.

Building the community room at the pool site could potentially save the Town \$1 million or more in capital costs. Locating the community room at the pool site would eliminate the need for building a separate rain shelter at the pool, and it could dramatically cut the cost of expanding and renovating the Town Hall by enabling the Town to focus on making priority renovations on the existing structure rather than largely replacing, rebuilding and expanding it.

Locating the community room at the pool site would also avoid the frequent complaint of administrative staff at the Town Hall who say they are bothered by community activities held during the work day.

Locating the community room as part of the pool facility would also be consistent with the original plan and construction of the pool, which as originally designed and built, included a large second floor room intended to be used for a variety of activities.

We make this recommendation fully aware of the fact that renovating or replacing the current facility at the pool site would need to be done with care and sensitivity to the environment. In this regard, however, the Town has been repeatedly advised by County regulators, and our own environmental experts who live in Town, that the environmental issues are manageable and that we actually have an opportunity with this work to be a model of environmental best practices and to measurably improve the environmental-friendliness of the Town's facilities at the pool site.

For all of these reasons, we strongly recommend locating a community room at the pool, and not at the Town Hall, should the Town decide to invest in this option. If the Town makes this investment, it's a facility that will be use for many decades to come, and it makes practical, financial, and environmental sense to assure that we do the best job we can designing, locating, and building it.

From Joan McWilliams Weiss

The Somerset Town Hall does need vital repairs and some improvements, in support of our Town Government's central efforts, and citizen participation in Town Meetings, committees, activities and celebrations. Working on Town History back in 1976, I saw how much we need archival quality storage space for our precious documents, going back to the minutes of "The First Session of the Common Council of Somerset", in 1906! A show-case for exhibits of historic photos, documents, and current news, would be useful.

There is a lot of talk about the value of a sense of community, these days. The most important revelation from Somerset's early history is how that was achieved, distinctly in the spirit of President Kennedy's words – "Ask not what your country can do for you, but ask what you can do for your country!" Here are but a few examples, from the amazing "Minutes of the Women's Club of Somerset": In 1917, they gathered papers and magazines to sell, planned rummage sales, a card party, and collected money for the Belgian fund. They contributed money for milk for needy school children under the care of the Welfare League.

Following a meeting with the Mayor of Somerset, Club members organized the Boy Scouts to clean the streets of Somerset and Drummond, and it was reported that the boys did excellent work! The women also shared a steam pressure cooker, and discussed

oleomargarine, butter and nut margarine. In 1920, a member coached the children in a play, which raised funds for the Montgomery County General Hospital. The Club went together to the Corcoran Gallery. In 1921 they raised the issue of women voting in Somerset elections. The Council replied that they could vote in local elections, but not hold office till the charter was amended.

Of course that's "Ancient History" now, and Lesley Anne Simmons -- current Town Council Member and Chair of the Town History Committee -- published (with Donna Harman) a grand pictorial history: "Somerset -- One Hundred Years a Town"! It includes a photo of Edna Miller Gish who led the effort to establish our Somerset School in 1928 -- the same year she was elected as the first woman to serve on our Town Council. Many have contributed greatly to our community and now the Town must weigh our needs and the choices before us as a community.

We really do not need a year-round swimming pool, or exercise equipment there, as (1) other exercise and pool facilities are available in our area, (2) the ongoing cost of operation and insurance of such facilities would be high, (3) our pool site is fragile and (4) our youngsters are quite occupied with school activities, except in the summer. We do need a facility that is environmentally outstanding for this site. It would be thrilling to see a wonderfully "green" pool house and storm shelter -- and why not literally green, with a "planted" roof, and flowers blooming, as I've seen in photos!