



SOMERSET TOWN JOURNAL



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Mayor's Den

By Walter Behr



July 1 instead of a deficit of \$492,000. That one line item is \$900,000 for paving all streets that have not been done within the past year or so following installation of new sewer and water lines.

It would be nice if my final budget were comfortably in the black, but I feel that we need to fix our streets. Actually, *this* year's budget includes funds for that work, but I refrained from asking the Council for approval so that they could first act on traffic calming measures, which might well involve paving (e.g., additional speed humps, raised crosswalks, etc.).

The ideal time for paving is August, when the temperature is favorable, there is no school, and many families are away. September would also work. Although school will be in session then, Warwick Place – except for the dead-end block – would not be involved since it was repaved last year.

I urge the Council to authorize going out for bids at the May meeting and accepting a bid a month later. Any delay could well mean that contractors were committed through September, which is the end of the paving season. The request for proposals could include unit prices for speed humps, raised crosswalks and any other calming devices that seemed likely to be authorized. If repaving is not done this summer or early fall, I fear that it won't be done for at least four or five years, following renovation of the swimming pool complex and Town Hall.

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From the Editor

A public hearing on the proposed budget and property tax rates is scheduled for 8:55 p.m. at the Town Council meeting on Monday, April 7. On May 5, the Council will adopt a budget and tax rates. The complete proposed budget has been posted on the Town Web site, and copies are available in the Town Hall.

Calendar

Tuesday, April 1	Somerset's Election Day
Monday, April 7	Town Council Meeting
Thursday, April 17	Journal deadline, ads and copy
Monday, May 5	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"

Mayor's Den from page 1

Major Income Sources

Two-thirds to three quarters of Town income in recent years has come from 17 percent of County Income Tax paid by Somerset residents that is refunded to Somerset by the Comptroller. Good estimates are hard to come by, but \$890,790 seems conservative, being higher than our estimate for this year, but less than we received last year (FY-07). Actually, over the last five years, the average annual increase has been 18 percent.

Our second largest income source is Town Property Tax. My proposed budget jumps the rate from 4 cents per \$100 valuation of house and lot to 8 cents. Although 8 cents is double the current rate, it is well below half of Montgomery County municipalities, including, for FY-08, Chevy Chase Village 11.1 cents; Garrett Park, 19 cents; Glen Echo, 12 cents; and Takoma Park, 61 cents. In Somerset, the property tax rate was 53 cents in 1979, 38 cents in 1996 and 22 cents as recently as FY-01. With the 8-cent rate, owners of property assessed at \$1 million would pay the Town \$800 instead of \$400 if the rate were 4 cents.

A second part of Property Tax is shown in the budget as (Real/Personal), which has been 22 cents per \$100 assessed value for many years. It applies to the few businesses with a Somerset address and, more importantly, to public utilities. This year, we will receive about \$6,600 from this

source. I am proposing for FY-09 that the 22-cent rate be increased to \$1.00, which should yield about \$30,000. The same \$1.00 rate is in effect this year in Garrett Park. Takoma Park charges \$1.525; Cumberland \$2.568; and Seat Pleasant, \$11.00!

We depend upon two other income sources, which we believe will remain basically unchanged in FY 09. The \$62,800 we expect in Highway Users from the State is

based on the number of vehicles registered in Somerset. The \$55,300 we are counting on from County Revenue Sharing is to pay us – by formula – for street maintenance since part of the property tax Somerset residents pay the County is for the very same street maintenance.

Our Larger Operating Expenses

Staff Salaries will cost \$179,000 this year. That is for the Clerk–Treasurer, part-time office assistant, a second temporary office helper and three maintenance men. Based on a 4.9 percent increase in the Washington–Baltimore Consumer Price Index, the budget includes a 5 percent across-the-board increase in salaries for the new fiscal year, resulting in an expense of \$192,000.

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Summary Of Proposed Budget For Fiscal Year 2009 With Audited Figures For FY-07 and Estimates For FY-08

REVENUE			
Line Item	FY-07 Audit	FY-08 Estimate	FY-09 Proposed
Property Tax Per \$100 Assessed Value	136,411 at .04/22	151,471 at .04/22	347,674 at .08/1.00
State Income Tax	939,779	809,809	890,790
Highway Users	60,931	62,905	62,745
County Revenue Sharing	55,335	55,335	55,335
Swimming Pool	9,795	8,300	8,500
Tennis	439	400	400
Baseball Cage	295	125	125
Interest	118,096	114,510	80,130
Town Hall Rental	2,213	6,075	6,000
Building Permits	9,494	6,000	6,000
Cable TV Franchise	11,007	9,700	9,700
Miscellaneous	14,618	3,794	5,269
FEMA	0	0	0
Total	1,358,373	1,228,484	1,472,668

End Of Year Fund Balance (Reserve, Cumulative Surplus, Rainy Day Fund)

	2,375,784	2,539,470	2,373,784
Percent of Current Year Expenses	211.2	238.9	211.2

EXPENSES			
Line Item	FY-07 Audit	FY-08 Estimate	FY-09 Proposed
Salaries	178,188	194,030	207,276
Fringe Benefits	57,054	60,466	63,764
Legal	92,287	35,000	50,000
Auditor/Accounting	6,283	6,000	7,000
Building Inspector	3,610	14,665	20,000
Police	0	14,465	30,000
Journal/Notices	19,787	22,476	23,150
Civic Affairs	20,956	24,091	20,000
Office Operations	15,479	17,095	17,480
Office Equipment	2,429	0	2,500
Town Hall/Garage Operations	18,286	36,500	16,500
Town Hall/Garage Improvements	158,304	0	30,000
Insurance	2,970	1,570	870
Streets, Sidewalks, Curb	91,119	189,170	974,000
Trees & Gardens Maintenance	94,714	74,420	75,000
New Trees & Park Improvement	8,808	6,000	6,000
Refuse	49,584	52,257	52,500
Recycling	49,728	46,827	48,200
Leaves	6,145	21,552	22,200
Pool Operations	133,445	135,600	140,000
Pool Improvements	74,788	60,000	50,000
Tennis Courts	9,025	500	1,000
Baseball Cage	368	1,627	1,550
Major Equipment	5,029	30,000	5,000
Miscellaneous	25,468	14,987	10,700
Erosion	0	3,900	0
Contingency	0	0	90,000
Total	1,123,854	1,062,798	1,964,690

Operating Surplus

Current Year Revenue Minus Expenses	2,34,929	166,686	-492,022
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The jump in Building Inspector from \$3,600 last year to \$14,600 this year is for overseeing sidewalk and curb repairs. \$15,000 next year assumes that he will be inspecting street repaving along with checking building plans and construction.

Patrolling by Montgomery County Police officer Sherif Almigabber for an average of 18 hours a week next year will double this year's estimated cost of \$14,500 to \$30,000.

Legal fees of about \$35,000 this year will jump to an estimated \$50,000 next year due to advice to Somerset and negotiations with County authorities on planned swimming pool and Town Hall improvements. The Town Hall, Garage "bump" this year, \$36,500, is the result of almost \$15,000 for painting the exterior of the "red house." Finally, in the General Fund, the huge increase in Sanitation – Leaves in '08 and '09 is due to the cost of removing leaves from the pool parking lot every other week instead of just at the end of the season in order to minimize creek pollution.

\$140,000 for operating the swimming pool is the second largest General Fund line item (Staff salaries of \$192,000 being the largest). This includes \$74,095 for High Sierra, the company that runs the facility, chemicals, utilities and furniture.



Capital Projects and Combined Fund Balance

As mentioned above, the big capital project is \$900,000 for repaving all streets not repaved recently by a

WSSC contractor. In other words, \$900,000 will cover milling and paving all streets except:

- Essex
- Dorset from Little Falls to Warwick
- Warwick from Cumberland to Falstone
- Most of the 4900 block of Cumberland where WSSC replaced the sewer last year

The \$135,000 spent this year on Streets, Storm Drains, Curbs and Sidewalks was for replacing cracked and uneven sidewalks and failed sections of curbs and installing curbs for the first time on Devon Lane.

The Town Hall \$30,000 is for architect's fees, and the same amount is included in the \$50,000 budgeted for pool capital expenses. More than two-thirds of the \$30,000 for Major Equipment this year was the cost of a replacement for our eight-year-old pickup truck.

Total planned expenses for FY-09 will exceed income by an estimated \$492,000, leaving a Combined Fund Balance, or Surplus, of \$2,047,000. Half of this could, in my opinion, be used for pool and Town Hall improvements, leaving a comfortable cushion of \$1 million.

Permits Granted



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

Trees:

Bonnie Lewin, 4817 Cumberland Avenue, to remove leaning Leyland cypress trees near her rear property line as a result of construction of a

retaining wall on adjoining property. Cynthia Schollard, 4906 Dorset Avenue, to remove a dead maple and a dead spruce in her back yard.



Crime and Police Report

The Town office received several reports of cars being broken into in Somerset in recent weeks and in one case valuables were taken. Some of the cars were believed to be unlocked.

Police

Officer *Sherif Almigabber* worked only four shifts in February due to his annual training commitments. During that time he issued three warnings for failure to stop at **STOP** signs, all to Town residents; he issued three parking citations (No parking any time) to non-residents and one parking citation to a Town resident; he also provided assistance to two people.

*Please Remember to
Lock Your Car.*

Travel the World on April 27 with Two Somerset "Ambassadors"

Over the years, several Somerset young adults have traveled throughout the world as "ambassadors" of good works. Among them are two who have recently returned – **David Gottfried** and **Roseanne Steller**.

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Town Hall Tidbits | By Tom Carter



Final Reminder on State Tax Returns

Somerset's largest source of revenue is its share of the State income tax paid by Town residents. But 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." Please make sure you fill out this box and the "Maryland County" box correctly so that both jurisdictions receive the proper payments from the State.

The image shows a 2007 Maryland Resident Income Tax Return form (Form 502). A handwritten note "Town of Somerset Here" with an arrow points to the "City, town or taxing area" box on the form. The form includes sections for personal information, filing status, and exemptions.

Do not dump your yard waste at the Swimming Pool parking lot or at the end of Warwick Place. Please remind your yard workers of this, too.



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.

Somerset Quiet Hours

As the weather improves, don't forget **Town noise limitations** between the hours of 9:00 p.m. and 9:00 a.m. daily. This applies to noise from sources associated with residential living, such as blowers, power mowers and chain saws.

The same hours apply to **construction** on Saturdays and holidays; that is, it may occur only between 9:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m. On weekdays, it is legal to start at 7:00 a.m. Only **interior construction** work that cannot be heard by neighbors is allowed on Sundays.

MVA Mobile Office

The MVA's mobile office will be in Friendship Heights on March 24 and April 21 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

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 are due for continued use of the equipment.

Spring Cleanup

Spring cleanup has begun in Town. Please remember the following:

Do not put your yard waste in plastic bags; use paper bags or marked trash cans. Place your cans or paper bags on the curb, not in the street.

Residents' Letters



To the Editor

From Joan L. Burka

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to "Somerset's Helping Hand" group. Recently, unable to have a family member bring me home after an exam at Sibley Hospital, I reached out to Helping Hand. Zola Schneider, chairperson, called some of the volunteers and within minutes I had a friendly and happy response.

I believe I am the first resident in Town to be helped and it was indeed a heartwarming experience to be rescued so graciously. If any Town members should be in need some day, run, don't walk, to your nearest telephone!

With great affection.

From Nancy Zivitz Sussman

As a service to the community, particularly for parents with young children, refer to the link below to learn about fire safety. This piece was developed for the Today Show by the Home Safety Council and illustrates the need for specific types of smoke detectors, particularly when young children are in the house. Since kids tend to sleep more soundly than adults, it is important that alarms are placed strategically.

<http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/21134540/vp/23348652#23348652>

Somerset E.S. Kindergarten Orientation

By Laura Ginns

All children who are 5 years old by September 1, 2007 are eligible for enrollment in MCPS Kindergarten for the 2007-08 school year. Somerset ES will hold its Kindergarten Orientation – by appointment only – on Wednesday, May 14. Please contact Nancy Conway at the Somerset Elementary school office at 301-657-4985 to put your name on the list. Registration packets will be mailed out in April. Looking forward to seeing you there!

Sixth Annual Bethesda Chevy Chase High School PTSA Used Book Sale Expands



Two Days of Great Books at Rock Bottom Prices

Saturday, April 05, 12:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Sunday, April 06, 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

On Saturday, April 5 and Sunday, April 6 Bethesda Chevy Chase High School (B-CC) PTSA will host its sixth annual used book sale at the school.

Hours are Saturday 12:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. and Sunday 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. Given the popularity

of this event, this year for the first time it will encompass two full days of sales and special events for the entire family. The popular Book Sale Café will be open as well.

More than 40,000 gently used hardcover and paperback books are sorted into 40 categories and displayed throughout the school's cafeteria and adjacent hallways. Prices range from \$1 to \$3 for best sellers, award winning fiction, nonfiction, and an extensive array of children's books.

B-CC student art and literary works will be on display and there will be performances by the school's various music ensembles. Published works by B-CC community authors and musicians also will be featured.

All monies raised support the broad range of programs at the school provided by the PTSA. Extracurricular clubs, after-school tutoring, student publications, the school directory, and the quarterly newsletter are only a few of the many ways the B-CC PTSA supports the school community.

Bethesda Chevy Chase High School is located at 4301 East West Highway in Bethesda. Free parking is available at the school; it is also accessible by Metro Red line, Bethesda stop. Co-Chairs for this year's event are parent volunteers Amanda Phillips Manheim, Peggy Hsieh McIntosh, Stephanie Rigaux, and Linda Wolpert. Questions? Contact Peggy McIntosh,

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State and County News

Meeting on New Rec Center

The Montgomery County Department of Recreation will conduct a meeting for the public to discuss plans for the long-awaited recreation center on Friendship Boulevard next to Bloomingdale's on Monday, April 21, at 7:00 p.m. The meeting will take place in the Friendship Heights Village Center.

Construction of the community center is scheduled to be completed by the end of this year, with the opening about a year from now. The center will be the same size as the Leland Center in the Town of Chevy Chase.



Now Open—DNR Summer Camp Registration

Registration is now open for the Department of Natural Resources' Outdoor

Discovery Camps co-ed residential camping experience at Maryland State parks for youth ages 8 – 17. Camp locations include Tuckahoe State Park, Pocomoke River State Park, Rocky Gap State Park, Susquehanna State Park, New Germany State Park, Assateague State Park, Swallow Falls State Park, Greenbrier State Park and Cedarville State Forest. Camp activities include kayaking, canoeing, fishing, rock climbing/rappelling, caving, horseback riding, white water rafting, initiative ropes course, arts and crafts, campfire programs, archery and environmental games.

DNR provides free transportation to camp locations from pick-up points at Sandy Point State Park, Greenbelt National Park or Patapsco Valley State Park. The one-week camp sessions run from June 23 to August 8. More information from Cindy Hawkins at 410-260-8154, chawkins@dnr.state.md.us or Shea Niemann at 410-260-9175, sniemann@dnr.state.md.us or visit www.dnr.state.md.us/publiclands/outdoordisc.html

Parks Department Auditions Teen Talent

One lucky teen will be a ParkStar on The Parks Show, an award-winning 15-minute monthly television program on County Cable Montgomery.

The Department of Parks is hosting two open auditions this spring to review teen talent, ages 14 through 17, for their chance to work on and host The Parks Show this summer, June through August 2008. The winner will spend 12 days working with the Department of Parks and the County Cable Montgomery office writing, interviewing and hosting The Parks Show. The winner can earn up to 100 Student Service Learning (SSL) hours.

To learn more including audition guidelines and dates, visit <http://www.mc-mncppc.org/Parks/events/starsearch/>

Register for the Department of Parks Summer Camps

More than 50 different options are being offered in Department of Parks camps for 2008, including nature facilities, ice skating rinks, tennis, public gardens and more. Weeklong options include the department's signature

B-CC HS Used Book Sale from page 5

peggy_hsieh@yahoo.com or visit www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/schools/bcchs/ptsa/usedbooksale.html

Somerset Elementary School Foundation Invites Somerset Residents To Spring Party

The Somerset Elementary School Foundation invites all Somerset residents to join us for a Spring Cocktail Reception at the Chevy Chase Village Hall on Saturday, May 3 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Many Somerset residents have generously supported the Foundation's efforts over the years to enhance the learning experience for our community's students.

This informal gathering of parents, school staff and neighbors offers an opportunity to learn about the foundation's current programs as well as projects under consideration. This is also a wonderful opportunity for parents of prospective Somerset ES students to meet other parents and learn about the school.

Tickets are \$15 at the door, and parking will be available. The Chevy Chase Village Hall is located at 5906 Connecticut, at West Kirke Street. RSVP to Ann Brown, abrown@annbrowncommunications.com or to the Foundation's president, Maura Mahoney, maurakmahoney@gmail.com, Town of Chevy Chase.

Week in the Park summer day camp and archaeology camps for both children and adults. Register online at www.ParkPASS.org.

Register for Westland Fun Run

The second annual Westland Wild Dash 5K fun run/walk will take place on April 12. It'll be a perfect day for 5th graders and their families to check out Westland (and maybe take home a prize as the top male or female runner in the elementary school category).

The Wild Dash 5K is sponsored by the Westland PTA to raise much-needed funds for cultural arts programs, buildings and grounds enhancements, improvements to athletic facilities, and instructional support for the teaching staff. The race will be held on Saturday, April 12, at 8:00 a.m. It starts and ends at Westland Middle School, and the USATF-certified course winds through the lovely neighborhood just behind the school.

Go to <http://www.westlandpta-windwebworks.com> and click on Wild Dash. You can register online or download a mail-in registration form. Cost is \$15 for adults through April 4; \$20 from April 5 through Race Day. \$10 for kids ages 18 & under. You get a great race t-shirt with your registration. Registration forms are also available in the front office. You will need to fill out a separate registration form for each runner/walker.

For more information or if you have any questions, contact Race Director Alysa Emden at alysa@comcast.net.

From the Swim Team

Annual Spring Parents Meeting

Date: April 26

Time: 9:00 a.m.

Place: Town Hall

Donuts and coffee for everyone!

This is the informational meeting for the swim team. Learn about the new season. Help finalize the calendar. Help plan and volunteer to work at the opening day "Team Sign-up" party in May. Meet and greet and eat donuts.

Questions – call or email Sarah Morse, morsekathan@earthlink.net, 301-907-3298



Children and Smoke Detectors

by Mari-K Apply (*President, Home Safety Council, Washington, DC*)

This piece was developed for the Today Show by the National Safety Council and illustrates the need for specific types of smoke detectors, particularly when young children are in the house. Since kids tend to sleep more soundly than adults, it is important that alarms are placed strategically.

I worked on showing kids sleeping through smoke alarms (bumped from schedule on the day Castro announced his departure from the scene) and aired a few weeks ago. For those of you with kids in your

life, please share this with their parents. It's an important message and the producer did a great job with it.

<http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/21134540/vp/23348652#23348652>



Somerset Helping Hand



NEED a ride to the doctor? **WANT** some milk or eggs from the market and can't get there?

COULD DO with a ride to Metro or a friend's house? **GIVE** us a holler.

Call Zola Schneider 301-654-7481 or Barbara Zueghauser 301-951-8560 and we will get a **SOMERSET HELPING HAND** from our list of neighborly volunteers.

Parks and Natural Resources Committee Meets to Discuss Storm water

By Jeff Lapel

Members of the Town's PNRC (Peter Goober, Donna Harman, Jeff Lapel, Corrie Morrissey, and George Wyeth) and two Council Members (Marnie Shaul and Lesley Simmons) met on Saturday, March 8 to discuss storm water management issues in the Town of Somerset. Very appropriately, it was raining on Saturday so we were able to witness the sources and transport of storm water first hand.

Storm water is the runoff resulting from precipitation. It is also commonly referred to as "*polluted runoff*" because of the pollutants that are picked up from our streets, driveways, lawns, and other "*impervious*" surfaces. The pollutants in storm water include for example:

- combustion byproducts and other chemicals from cars,
- fertilizers and pesticides from our lawns,
- salt and sand from the wintertime.
- pathogens (e.g. bacteria) from pet waste



In addition to these pollutants causing water quality issues in our stream (Little Falls Branch and ultimately the Potomac River), the volume and intense flow of the storm water causes serious erosion problems in the stream and "**scours away**" the critters in the stream.

The volume and intensity of the storm water flow is exacerbated by all the "*hard*" or "*impervious*" surfaces throughout our Town. These surfaces include rooftops, patios, driveways and lawns that do not allow the rainwater to "*infiltrate*" back into the ground, as it once did. The extensive development in and around Somerset is exacerbating the impacts of storm water on our stream, the Potomac River and the Chesapeake Bay.

Rapid development, both commercial and residential, has greatly increased the amount of storm water and the volume of pollutants, with severe environmental effects. One small but tangible indicator is that Somerset School's stream team, which used to find many signs of life in Little Falls Branch in Town, has found little or nothing in recent years. The storm water not only adversely impacts the creek but also the Potomac River and ultimately, the Chesapeake Bay.

The members of the Parks and Natural Resources Committee, along with the newly formed Environment Committee will be taking steps to better understand how Somerset, as a Town and as individual residents, can take steps to reduce the impacts of storm water.

Look to future articles in the Somerset Journal for more information.

Questions and Answers on the Town Facilities Improvement Process

By Tom Eldridge, Council Member and Contract Officer

Q: *What did the Council recently decide about the Town Hall and Pool?*

A: *The Council voted at two public meetings (March 4 and March 11) to approve draft facilities design criteria for the Town Hall and Pool. Developing these criteria was the goal of this second phase of the facilities improvement process. These criteria will be turned into documents the Town can use to solicit bids for the next phase of work on these facilities. The next and third of three planned phases will involve hiring architect(s) to develop detailed building plans and more refined cost estimates, securing building permits, and overseeing construction at both sites.*

Q: *How are the criteria organized?*

A: *The criteria contain a series of general requirements for both facilities including developing them in environmentally friendly ways, designing them for a fifty-year life span, and making them ADA compliant. There also is a specific set of criteria for each facility.*

Q: *What are the criteria and how were they developed?*

A: *The criteria are those things that residents and the Council believe*

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must be included in future development at both facilities. They were developed through meetings with individual residents, Town committees, experts, Town officials, the pool management company, and the seven public meetings that were part of this phase of the process from September 2007 through March 2008.

Q: Why did the Council act now on the criteria?

A: The Council has a fiduciary obligation to plan for the long-term interest of the Town and its facilities with appropriate care and consideration of all interests and views. When this phase began in September 2007, the Council indicated its intention to take action on these design criteria after a series of five public meetings and related information gathering involving Town committees, residents, and other stakeholders. The Council published and discussed at several Town meetings their plan to vote in February or March. The Council also has stated that there is urgency created by the fact that both the Town Hall and pool facilities are deteriorating, and are in serious need of renovation or replacement.

Q: Did the council approve a budget for these projects?

A: Not yet. The Council had the architect we hired to facilitate the process, Lou Balodemas, develop initial cost estimates to help guide its decision making on the draft criteria. In general,

these estimates were sobering and drove the Council to cut back on some options at both facilities. In the course of developing the criteria, the Council pared items to reduce costs based on community input. The Council recognizes that whatever improvements are contemplated for the Town Hall and Pool will have to compete for Town resources with several other major capital projects, including repaving many of our streets. The Council plans to further refine the overall capital projects budget in coming months, and is committed to careful stewardship of Town resources in the current uncertain economic environment.

Q: Why didn't the Council decide on a budget first?

A: The Council decided it was important for the Town first to develop in significant detail what we believed we needed to do at each facility, and then address the difficult issues of how much those improvements would cost and how (and whether) we can afford to pay for them. To that end, in this process, we reached out to all residents, and all the Committees with jurisdiction or interest in the use of the Town Hall and Pool, as well as reviewed the work of prior committees, architects, and experts. We fully anticipate that, like residents indicated they have done themselves in planning for a home renovation, this list of criteria may well have to be trimmed further to come in line with established budget limits.



Q: What are the implications for Somerset property taxes?

A: The Council has done some initial financial analysis on how it could finance the renovations contemplated in the draft criteria. The current Somerset property tax rate is four cents on a hundred dollars of assessed value which results in a Somerset property tax bill for the average Somerset household of \$400 per year. This rate has dropped significantly since 2001, as the Town has put on hold major improvements to its facilities and infrastructure. The Council may at some future point decide to borrow and/or raise taxes to pay for capital improvements as it has done in the past. The Mayor has proposed that we do that this year because of significant planned expenditures for road repaving.

Q: Did the Council look seriously at renovating and modestly upgrading the existing two-story Town Hall for as little as \$500,000?

A: Yes. The Council evaluated numerous options for the Town Hall. But based on several factors discussed below, and the cost estimates we received from Lou Balodemas, it does not appear possible, in renovating the Town Hall, to provide for the Town's administrative needs – both work and storage space for government and the meeting room, develop the site in an environmentally friendly manner, and make the facility fully accessible for that amount of money.

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Q: Why did the estimates for work at the Town Hall indicate that it could cost \$2 million or more to renovate the Town Hall?

A: There are several factors influencing the cost of a Town Hall renovation related to the age, size, and configuration of the existing facility. These are not immediately obvious to a visitor to the Town Hall, but they drive the cost of its renovation higher than might initially appear reasonable.

The existing Town Hall has two parts, and old “red house” built in 1906 that faces Cumberland, and a new meeting room added to the back of that house in

the late 1970s when it was turned into a Town Hall. The old part that houses the Town administrative staff is in poor

shape. It has not been updated to current electrical or fire codes. There is not sufficient space for either the staff to work or for them to store Town records, including building plans the Town is required to keep to regulate construction. The Mayor’s office doubles as a conference room, and is very cramped and inaccessible. The upstairs is not configured to be useful space. Repairing this older portion, upstairs and down, updating it to code, and adding an additional small but important amount of extra administrative space will cost an estimated \$600,000. It might cost less to tear it down and start new, but the Town has taken steps over the

past several years to preserve this old house as a contributing historic resource, meaning we instead renovate and preserve it. Accordingly, the Town recently spent approximately \$140,000 to replace the foundation of this older portion of the building.

The next major factor is the meeting room. It has poor acoustics, heating and air conditioning. It was added to the old building in the late 1970s at a different height from the front and is, therefore, inaccessible within the building for persons with disabilities. To partially remedy this, in the 1990s the Town added 380 square feet of ramps and decks to the side of the Town Hall facing the park to

allow persons with disabilities access to the meeting room. However, persons with dis-

abilities still have to leave the meeting room via the ramps, go outside, and reenter the building to access the Town offices, or to use the only bathroom on the first floor. This configuration is contrary to the spirit of the Americans with Disabilities Act. In addition, as part of any significant renovation, the Town would be required by code to add two handicapped-accessible bathrooms to the meeting room facility instead of the one bathroom we have now.

Thus, in order to provide for the Town’s administrative needs, and allow persons with disabilities to move between the front portion of

the building and the rear meeting room portion without having to go outside, the most logical solution is to remove the existing meeting room, and build a new meeting room on the same level as the front part of the building removed from the front portion enough to allow for the additional space for Town offices at the back of the old “red house.” The estimated cost of tearing down and rebuilding the meeting room with roughly the same capacity (for individuals seated at a meeting) as the existing room is approximately \$450,000.

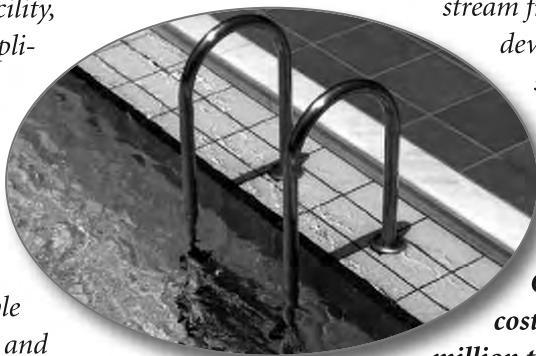
Q: These costs total just over \$1 million. Why are the estimates \$2 million or higher to renovate the Town Hall?

A: There will be additional costs in renovating the Town Hall and pool related to site work such as costs associated with environmental and storm water management issues, utility work, lighting and landscaping, soft costs such as design, engineering, and legal fees, and providing handicapped accessible parking close to the buildings. In the case of the Town Hall, we will have to pay for temporary space for the government while we do this work. And, in response to requests from residents who play tennis, the Council also decided to add a bathroom at the maintenance facility accessible to residents who are playing tennis. The total of these costs may not exceed \$2 million ultimately. It is important to consider that Lou Balodemas’ cost estimates did build in a 40% contingency for the unexpected that may not be realized. However, it is not un-

continued on page 11

Q & A Town Facilities

reasonable to expect that these renovations will be expensive despite aggressive efforts to reduce costs. We are discussing completely rebuilding the Town Hall to serve our 413 households, upgrading it to a commercial-grade facility, fully compliant with all codes, using environmentally sustainable practices, and building it to last fifty years.



the approved design criteria. In addition, the pool site is in a stream valley buffer, an area where development ordinarily is highly restricted because of concern about damage to the stream ecosystem. County and Town officials are concerned about the environmental impact on the stream from any proposed development at the site and want to minimize damage there from Town activities.

Q: Why would it cost as much as \$3 million to renovate the pool without making it a year-round facility?

Q: Why didn't the council decide to build a large community room at the pool?

A: The Council voted to keep the pool as a seasonal use facility, but have the architect we hire to design the facility develop an option that would allow the pool to be converted to year round-use in the future. The Council may vote to approve such an option (building in possible future conversion) depending on a variety of factors including, of course, cost. The Council did not hear widespread support to make the pool a year-round facility, or to put a large community room at the pool or at the Town Hall. Although this view was expressed by a small number of residents, the Council did not believe this provided a sufficient justification for including such a community room in

A: The pool house has deteriorated. It is approximately forty years old, the floor of the women's bathroom has failed structurally, and been shored up temporarily. Many people have complained about the general state of the pool house and the need to upgrade it. Lou Balodemas has estimated that it will cost as much as \$1million to renovate the pool house completely to create modern, code-compliant bathrooms and office and storage space for the pool management and swim team. The criteria also include a requirement for a shelter to house up to 200 people in the event of a rain storm, a pavilion or room attached to either the existing pool house or a new pool house in the event building new proves more cost-effective. There will be additional costs to create required

spaces such as a first aid room, and spaces requested by residents such as a serving kitchen for swim team and other events, and a widened upper terrace area. In addition, there will be significant costs associated with mitigating damage to the stream from storm water run-off (run-off from elsewhere in the Town that arrives at the stream at the pool site), changing how the pool itself discharges excess pool water (currently we discharge chlorinated pool water into the stream), and improving the parking facilities at the pool in an environmentally friendly manner. Again, Lou Balodemas' cost estimates include a 40% contingency, not all of which may be realized. However, the scope of these renovations, like those at the Town Hall, is significant, and despite aggressive efforts to cut costs, the costs likely will be commensurate with the scope of those renovations.

Q: What's next?

A: Lou Balodemas will take the approved criteria and turn them into a document the Council could use to bid out architectural work for the Town Hall and pool sites. This is part of our existing contract with him. And the Council will continue to address the question of how much to budget for these possible improvements. If things go smoothly, we could have an architect hired for one or both sites by the end of the summer. Construction at either site likely would not begin for at least 18 months, at the earliest.

Legislation

At the March 3 meeting, the Council:

The Town Council introduced an amendment to the Town Code to reduce the hours Warwick Lane (alley) is closed to 8:15 a.m.–9:30 a.m. and 2:30 a.m.–3:30 p.m. on school days.



Council Activity

At the March 3 meeting, the Town Council:

1. Received nominations from the floor for Jeffrey Slavin and Lesley Simmons for Mayor and Cathy Pickar, Bill Brenner, Alan Proctor, and Bill Farley for Council members.
2. Confirmed the Mayor's reappointment of Jeffrey Slavin to a two-year term on the Special Events Committee.
3. Confirmed the Mayor's reappointment of Rodd Macklin, David Sacks and David Sapin to two-year terms on the Batting Cage Committee and reappointment of David Sapin as chair for one year.
4. Confirmed the Mayor's appointment of Michael Hill and George Wyeth as co-chairs of the Environmental Committee.
5. Postponed discussion of proposals for a traffic calming master plan until the April meeting.
6. Approved a building permit for Paulo-Sotero and Eloisa Marques, 5526 Greystone Street, to add a front foyer, subject to submitting the name and license number of a contractor and receipt of Town fees and deposit.
7. Approved a building permit for Greg and P. Kaye Hanifee, 4800 Falstone Avenue, to add a second story over part of their house, enclose the carport and add a screened porch to the rear, subject to receipt of a contractor's name and license number, a County permit and Town fees and deposit.
8. Proclaimed April 1 as 2008 Arbor Day for the Town.
9. Approved the purchase of a new pickup truck from Criswell Chevrolet for up to \$20,000.
10. Amended the Purpose section of the Draft Facility Design Criteria to add consideration of the impact on the creek. (*Vote: Eldridge, Kessler, Shaul and Simmons for; Slavin opposed. Motion passed 4-1.*) Approved the Purpose section. (*Vote: Eldridge, Kessler, Shaul and Simmons for; Slavin opposed. Motion passed 4-1.*) Voted to amend the Requirements - General section by deleting item 6, capturing economical space beneath any planned facilities. (*Vote: Shaul and Slavin for; Eldridge, Kessler and Simmons opposed. Motion failed 2-3.*) Approved the Requirements - General section as written. (*Vote: Eldridge, Kessler, Shaul and Simmons for; Slavin opposed. Motion passed 4-1.*)
11. Approved a building permit for Gordon Smith, 4911 Dorset Avenue, to add a second story addition over a rear portion of the existing house, subject to receipt of a County permit and Town fees and deposit.

Travel the World from page 3

David, a graduate of B/CC and Wesleyan, served with the **Peace Corps** in **Azerbaijan**. **Roseanne**, a graduate of B/CC and the University of Maryland taught in **Seoul** and has also worked with a nonprofit in **Ghana**. David and Roseanne have graciously agreed to share their experiences through photos and stories at an informal reception on **Sunday, April 27** from **3:00 p.m.–4:30 p.m.** at Town Hall.

The event promises to be enlightening for all and particularly inspiring for students who are thinking about what they might gain from living, working and doing public service abroad. Refreshments will be served.

This event is sponsored by the *Special Events Committee*, and was conceived of and organized by **Dolores Bartning**. We hope this will be one of several events this year that allow Somerset residents to share their interesting experiences, skills and talents with our community. If there is someone you'd like to learn more about or an experience you'd like to share (or if you have questions about this event) please contact **Ann Brown**: 301-986-8811 or abrown@annbrowncommunications.com.

Chevy Chase Library

8005 Connecticut Avenue
Chevy Chase, Maryland 20815
240-773-9590 (TTY) 301-657-0830

Calendar of Events – April 2008

www.montgomerycountymd.gov/library

Title: Toddler Time!

Date: Tuesday, April 01, 2008

Time: 10:15 a.m.

Event Type: Storytime

Age Group: Toddler

Description: Free Tickets Required!

Stories, songs and rhymes for 18-36 months old. Free tickets distributed on the day of the program.

Title: Toddler Time!

Date: Tuesday, April 01, 2008

Time: 11:00 a.m.

Event Type: Storytime

Age Group: Toddler

Description: Free Tickets Required!

Repeat of 10:15 a.m. program. Stories, songs and rhymes for 18-36 months old. Free tickets distributed on the day of the program.

Title: Toddler Time!

Date: Thursday, April 03, 2008

Time: 10:15 a.m.

Event Type: Storytime

Age Group: Toddler

Description: Free Tickets Required!

Repeat of Tuesday's program. Stories, songs and rhymes for 18-36 months old. Free tickets distributed on the day of the program.

Title: Toddler Time!

Date: Thursday, April 03, 2008

Time: 11:00 a.m.

Event Type: Storytime

Age Group: Toddler

Description: Free Tickets Required!

Repeat of 10:15 a.m. program. Stories, songs and rhymes for 18-36 months old. Free tickets distributed on the day of the program.

Title: Toddler Time!

Date: Tuesday, April 08, 2008

Time: 10:15 a.m.

Event Type: Storytime

Age Group: Toddler

Description: Free Tickets Required!

Stories, songs and rhymes for 18-36 months old. Free tickets distributed on the day of the program.

Title: Toddler Time!

Date: Tuesday, April 08, 2008

Time: 11:00 a.m.

Event Type: Storytime

Age Group: Toddler

Description: Free Tickets Required!

Repeat of 10:15 a.m. program. Stories, songs and rhymes for 18-36 months old. Free tickets distributed on the day of the program.

Title: Meet The Editor

Date: Wednesday, April 09, 2008

Time: 7:00 p.m.

Event Type: Special Event

Age Group: Adult

Description: Adam Bradley will discuss his experiences co-editing the forthcoming scholarly edition of Ralph Ellison's long awaited second novel. For more information call 240-773-9590.

Title: Great Books Discussion Group

Date: Wednesday, April 09, 2008

Time: 7:30 p.m.

Event Type: Book Discussion

Age Group: Adult

Description: The group will discuss THE 12 CAESARS (Julius Caesar – Nero) by Suetonius. Copies of the book will be available

at the Library. For more information, call 240-773-9590.

Title: Toddler Time!

Date: Thursday, April 10, 2008

Time: 10:15 a.m.

Event Type: Storytime

Age Group: Toddler

Description: Free Tickets Required!

Repeat of Tuesday's program. Stories, songs and rhymes for 18-36 months old. Free tickets distributed on the day of the program.

Title: Toddler Time!

Date: Thursday, April 10, 2008

Time: 11:00 a.m.

Event Type: Storytime

Age Group: Toddler

Description: Free Tickets Required!

Repeat of 10:15 a.m. program. Stories, songs and rhymes for 18-36 months old. Free tickets distributed on the day of the program.

Title: Toddler Time!

Date: Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Time: 10:15 a.m.

Event Type: Storytime

Age Group: Toddler

Description: Free Tickets Required!

Stories, songs and rhymes for 18-36 months old. Free tickets distributed on the day of the program.

Title: Toddler Time!

Date: Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Time: 10:15 a.m.

Event Type: Storytime

Age Group: Toddler

Description: Free Tickets Required!

Repeat of 10:15 a.m. program. Stories, songs and rhymes for 18-36 months old. Free tickets distributed on the day of the program.

Title: Toddler Time!

Date: Thursday, April 17, 2008

Time: 10:15 a.m.

Event Type: Storytime

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Age Group: Toddler

Description: *Free Tickets Required! Repeat of Tuesday's program. Stories, songs and rhymes for 18-36 months old. Free tickets distributed on the day of the program.*

Title: *Toddler Time!*

Date: Thursday, April 17, 2008

Time: 11:00 a.m.

Event Type: Storytime

Age Group: Toddler

Description: *Free Tickets Required! Repeat of 10:15 a.m. program. Stories, songs and rhymes for 18-36 months old. Free tickets distributed on the day of the program.*

Title: *Born to Read*

Date: Saturday, April 19, 2008

Time: 9:30 a.m.

Event Type: Storytime

Age Group: Baby

Description: *Introduce your child (newborn to 18 months) to the joy of language and books with this program featuring rhymes, songs, bounces, movement, and short stories.*

Title: *Washington National Opera Family Workshop*

Date: Saturday, April 19, 2008

Time: 11:00 a.m.

Event Type: Special Event

Age Group: Elementary School Age

Description: *Registration Required. The Washington National Opera will present a free opera workshop for children and their families. Led by WNO Teaching Artists and Docents, families are introduced to the story and music of Hansel and Gretel. Participants will explore how music communicates plot, character, and emotion through engaging musical activities and creative hands-on crafts. This program is ideal for children ages 4-10 and their families. Please call 240-773-9590 to register.*

Title: *Toddler Time!*

Date: Tuesday, April 22, 2008

Time: 10:15 a.m.

Event Type: Storytime

Age Group: Toddler

Description: *Free Tickets Required! Stories, songs and rhymes for 18-36 months old. Free tickets distributed on the day of the program.*

Title: *Toddler Time!*

Date: Tuesday, April 22, 2008

Time: 11:00 a.m.

Event Type: Storytime

Age Group: Toddler

Description: *Free Tickets Required! Repeat of 10:15 a.m. program. Stories, songs and rhymes for 18-36 months old. Free tickets distributed on the day of the program.*

Title: *Mid-Week Book Discussion*

Date: Wednesday, April 23, 2008

Time: 2:00 p.m.

Event Type: Book Discussion

Age Group: Adult

Description: *Registration Required. Please join us for a lively book discussion. Title to be announced. Call 240-773-9590 for more information.*

Title: *TODDLER TIME!*

Date: Thursday, April 24, 2008

Time: 10:15 a.m.

Event Type: Storytime

Age Group: Toddler

Description: *Free Tickets Required! Repeat of Tuesday's program. Stories, songs and rhymes for 18-36 months old. Free tickets distributed on the day of the program.*

Title: *TODDLER TIME!*

Date: Thursday, April 24, 2008

Time: 11:00 a.m.

Event Type: Storytime

Age Group: Toddler

Description: *Free Tickets Required! Repeat of 10:15 a.m. program. Stories, songs and rhymes for 18-36*

months old. Free tickets distributed on the day of the program.

Title: *Jefferson Cafe Discussion*

Date: Friday, April 25, 2008

Time: 10:30 a.m.

Event Type: Special Event

Age Group: Adult

Description: *Join us for a discussion of a short reading about some aspect of the United States. The title of the reading is to be announced and will be available at the library. No other reading is required. For more information call 240-773-9590.*

Title: *PreSchool Storytime*

Date: Monday, April 28, 2008

Time: 7:00 p.m.

Event Type: Storytime

Age Group: PreSchool

Description: *Stories, music, finger-plays and activities for children ages three to six. No registration needed.*

Title: *TODDLER TIME!*

Date: Tuesday, April 29, 2008

Time: 10:15 a.m.

Event Type: Storytime

Age Group: Toddler

Description: *Free Tickets Required! Stories, songs and rhymes for 18-36 months old. Free tickets distributed on the day of the program.*

Title: *TODDLER TIME!*

Date: Tuesday, April 29, 2008

Time: 11:00 a.m.

Event Type: Storytime

Age Group: Toddler

Description: *Free Tickets Required! Repeat of 10:15 a.m. program. Stories, songs and rhymes for 18-36 months old. Free tickets distributed on the day of the program.*

Preliminary Agenda

Regular Meeting of Town Council at Somerset Elementary School

Monday, April 7, 2008 – 7:30 p.m.

1. Administration of oaths of office to new Mayor and Council members – 7:30 p.m.
2. Election of Vice President of Council for one-year term – 7:35 p.m.
3. Approval of minutes of the March 3 regular meeting and March 11 special meeting – 7:40 p.m.
4. Discussion of financial report – 7:45 p.m.
5. Action on following issues for new house of Matthew Zaft and Erin Chlopak, 4820 Dorset Avenue: new location of generator, noise abatement plan for generator and air conditioner, and driveway surface – 7:50 p.m.
6. Fact finding hearing and action on application by Valerie Green and Matthew Lieppe, 5519 Trent Street, to add a two-story addition to the rear of their house – 8:00 p.m.
7. Presentation by Gregory Mitchell, Bethesda Fire & Rescue Squad, on proposed ambulance fees – 8:10 p.m.
8. Mayor's report – 8:25 p.m.
9. Developments/plans in the vicinity of Somerset – 8:35 p.m.
10. Suggestions and questions from residents – 8:45 p.m.
11. Public hearing on Mayor Behr's proposed budget and property tax rates for FY-09 – 8:55 p.m.**
12. Discussion of proposals for traffic calming master plan – 9:15 p.m.
13. Action on extension of contract with Connecting Links for managing Town Web site for monthly fee of \$375, to include monthly update and thorough review annually – 9:30 p.m.
14. Action on Town Code amendment to reduce hours Warwick Lane (alley) is closed to 8:15 a.m.–9:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m.–3:30 p.m. on school days – 9:35 p.m.
15. Introduction of Town Code amendment to add requirement for County Consumer Protection license number for contractors when building a new home – 9:45 p.m.
16. Action to renew agreement for Montgomery County to receive CDBG and HOME funds allocated to Somerset for low-and moderate-income residents – 9:50 p.m.
17. Action authorizing payment of \$7,903 to C.R.H. Concrete Service for replacement of curbs, sidewalks and handicap ramps that failed after the inventory for which the Council authorized \$125,000 for replacement last August – 9:55 pm.
18. New business – 10:05 p.m.
19. Adjournment – 10:10 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.

March 2008



The **Town Journal** is the official publication of
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