



SOMERSET TOWN JOURNAL



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Proposed Changes To The Town Hall and Grounds Usage Rules To Be Introduced at October Town Council Meeting

By Cathy Pickar, Council member

Suggested changes to the usage rules of the Town Hall and grounds were the subject of two open meetings of Town residents at the Town Hall on **March 10** and **July 15, 2008**. The suggestions, along with input from surrounding communities' experience, have been incorporated into a document introduced at the October Town Council meeting and will be discussed and voted on at the November meeting.

The residents' use of the Town Hall, within parameters appropriate to a residential neighborhood, is a benefit of living in our Town and is encouraged. However, recent discussions around Town Hall renovations, combined with the increased activity at the new elementary school,* have prompted the Town Hall neighbors to address the usage rules of our Town Hall.

Although Somerset cannot eliminate all of the problems that neighbors who live near Town Hall and the school experience, new Town Hall usage rules can lessen the disruptions on Cumberland. These changes affect all residents, however. Please review the complete document at the Town Hall or on the Town's website and come to the November Town meeting where the rules will be discussed and voted on by the Council. The salient changes are listed below:

Salient points of change in current use of Town Hall:

- Only social activities hosted and attended by a Somerset resident will be allowed; a resident may not sponsor an event for a non-resident unless the resident is a host.
- Commercial activities such as classes must have at least 50 percent of attendees be Town residents. Current classes will be grandfathered in.
- All classes will be scheduled with a 15-minute break between classes to lessen the traffic congestion.
- For parties, the ratio of adult to children shall be 1 to 6 for children 10 years of age and under, and 1 to 10 for attendees between 11 and 20 years of age.

Calendar

Monday, November 3

Town Council Meeting

Tuesday, November 4

Election Day, Schools Closed

Tuesday, November 11

Veteran's Day, Town Hall Office Closed

Wednesday, November 12

Talk by Diane Cameron, Audubon Naturalist Society

Monday, November 24

MVA Mobile Office

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."

- No more than 96 people for indoor parties (current fire marshal restriction); no more than 100 people for outdoor parties.
- With the exception of Town Council meetings, all activities are to end by 10:00 p.m. Sunday through Thursday, and 11:00 p.m. Friday and Saturday.
- All attendees who drive to the event are to park their vehicles in the Town Hall parking lot. If more than 18 cars are expected for the event, the host rents, at their own

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On My Mind

By Mayor Jeffrey Z. Slavin

Street Light Option\$

As a member of the Town Council several years ago, I voted against a well-researched but controversial proposal to have

Somerset replace our current *mercury vapor street lights* with *brighter high pressure sodium (HPS) bulbs*.

There was a great debate in Town at that time as to the necessity for the *HPS* lights. The discussion centered on the question of whether the resulting increased brightness would be too jarring and could change the character of our neighborhoods, versus the added value to security and safety. The plan also would have had a significant impact on the Town's budget. I voted no because I felt that making a change was too expensive—and premature given emerging new technologies.

In the ensuing years, Federal environmental laws have changed and *Pepco* itself has come up with a plan to replace the *mercury vapor bulbs* with the *HPS* variety—at their cost. However, Somerset does have the choice of opting out of this regional program.

There is other lighting available for installation, and several Council members and residents are greatly interested in what is known as *LED (Light-Emitting Diode) lighting*. We learned of this lighting at the *Maryland Municipal League* conference this summer and have done some of our own investigations. Some consider this technology to be the wave of the future, especially from an environmental perspective, but *Pepco*, along with many municipalities in the country, is not ready to commit.

Last month, several *Pepco* representatives came to the Town Council meeting and we had a productive discussion of Somerset's options. Our *Environmental Committee* will be making a recommendation. The bottom line is that if the Town doesn't accept *Pepco's* plan, we will have to pay for anything else we do to meet Federal mandates. We might have to add something in the range of *\$350,000* to our budget.

In these lean economic times, and given that Somerset has spending priorities for the bathhouse, storm water management, street repaving and traffic calming, I will be urging the Council to "opt in" to the *PEPCO* plan at our next meeting.



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MAYOR
 Jeffrey Z. Slavin, 5706 Warwick Place
 301-654-6767
 Town Hall Telephone: 301-657-2229
Mayor@townofsomerset.com

MEMBERS OF THE TOWN COUNCIL
 Marnie Shaul, Council V.P.
 5509 Uppingham Street
 301-913-5973
Mshaul@townofsomerset.com

Thomas Eldridge, 5605 Warwick Place
 301-656-3354
Teldridge@townofsomerset.com

Richard Kessler, 4914 Cumberland Avenue
 301-654-2699
Rkessler@townofsomerset.com

Cathy Pickar, 4915 Dorset Avenue
 301-907-4881
Cpickar@townofsomerset.com

Alan Proctor, 4900 Cumberland Avenue
 301-652-4717
Aproctor@townofsomerset.com

CLERK-TREASURER
 Thomas Carter
 301-657-3211
Clerk@townofsomerset.com

TOWN HALL
 Open: 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
 Monday thru Friday
 301-657-3211
 Fax: 301-657-2773
 TTY users call Maryland Relay

Maxine Finkelstein, Editor
 Deadline for ads and copy is November 17, 2008, 4:30 p.m.

Legislation

At the October 6 meeting, the Town Council:

1. Approved an amendment to the Town Code that will strengthen neighbor understanding of building permit applications by adding locations of existing buildings on adjoining properties to the applicant's site plan.

Council Activity

At the October 6 meeting, the Town Council:

1. Renewed its membership in Montgomery Municipal Cable by contributing its entire payment from the County, which is based on the number of Somerset cable subscribers.
2. Discussed Pepco's plans for streetlight replacement and other options. Will address this further at the November meeting.
3. Approved a fence permit for Michael and Abby Nolan, 5807 Surrey Street, for their north property line and recommended approval of the fence to the Historic Preservation Commission.
4. Determined to draft a longer-term license for use of the Town driveway for Mark and Julie Oxley, 4515 Dorset Avenue, for vehicle access to their back yard.
5. Postponed action on the establishment of a Mansionization or Building Code Task Force.
6. Confirmed the Mayor's appointment of Chuck Edson to replace Cathy Bernard on the Audit Committee.

Proposed Changes from page 1

expense, will be required to hire a professional valet parking service that will be responsible for parking cars away from residential streets.

- No more than four weekend evening (Friday and Saturday) parties may be scheduled in a month and those parties may not be scheduled on consecutive weekend nights.
- A contact/complaint number that neighbors can call during the event if problems arise will be posted outside the Town Hall on the bulletin board and will also be posted on the website on the day of and during the event.

**See <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cuptmpl.asp?url=/content/cupf/index.asp>. The new elementary school is continually booked during the week and on weekends with activities outside of the school's function, including a Sunday church service. The configuration of the new school has the parking entrance on Deal with overflow parking being pushed onto the Wisconsin side of Cumberland. The residents on Cumberland are experiencing not only the Town Hall function traffic and noise, but also that of the newly reconfigured school's traffic.*



Our Town *IT Coordinator* extraordinaire, **GAYLEY KNIGHT**, and husband **PAUL** have now settled on the sale of their Cumberland Avenue home and moved their legal residency to the District. While Gayley will continue as a consultant to the Town, we will miss her daily presence and the incredible assistance she has provided. We will always appreciate the official roles she has played in the past such as co-chairing the *Long Range Planning Committee* and *Swim Team*, along with the institutional history she has offered by way of record attendance at Town meetings over the course of almost two decades. The staff honored her at a lunch earlier this month.

As a reminder, when having a social event with outside music, as a courtesy to immediate neighbors it would be best to advise them in advance of such activities so they can plan accordingly. Also remember that loud music needs to end according to legal noise restrictions, but certainly by midnight. We received notice of a recent party that went on a little too long and the police had to be called. Unfortunately, there were also complaints of a slow response from the law enforcement officers, so it is recommended that you give your name when you contact the police in order for them to make it a priority (*and this will be kept confidential*).

Glad to report that the arrangement that the Town had this year with the non-profit organization **A Wider Circle** for pick-up of surplus home furniture (in conjunction with our bulk trash service day) was highly successful. As a result, many families in need have been assisted. I am sorry that we arranged for all this to take place a little too close to the **Yom Kippur** holiday so next time we will take this into account when setting the date. If anyone failed to participate this month because of the schedule, please let me know and I will make other arrangements.

As many of you know by now, former Council member **LESLEY SIMMONS** (Cumberland) has written to inform me that she will not be seeking re-appointment as chair of the *History Committee* when her term ends next month. Lesley said she decided it was time to pass the baton on to newer blood and devote herself to her other interests. Of course, we all recognize the enormous contributions Lesley has made in establishing the Committee, heading up the *Centennial celebration* and writing the wonderful book about our Town. We will publicly salute Lesley for these efforts in the near future. In the meantime, I am open to suggestions for the vacancy in the position she is giving up.

The County's Volunteer Center has a new newsletter that I just received by email. It is quite useful in finding ways to give your time meaningfully and productively. To receive the newsletter or have a question about volunteering answered, contact volunteer@montgomerycountymd.gov.

You may have read in *On My Mind* last month about a “green” option that residents could consider when taking down a house. A resident has informed me that there is a company out of Baltimore they used successfully on their project to salvage the house they replaced by removing building materials and donating them. Apparently others in Town have also used this company and I will be happy to provide the name and contact information for all who ask. ***A Safe and Happy Halloween to All.***

Join Town Residents in Cleaning Up Our Parkland

The Town's *Environmental and Parks and Natural Resources Committees* are combining forces to remove invasive species in **Vinton Park** on *Saturday, November 15, from 9:30 a.m. until noon*. We plan to work in the area of the parkland between the bottom of Warwick Place and the 5400 block of Trent Street. We certainly could use help in eradicating invasive species such as English Ivy, which are strangling our trees. Complete details are contained in the inserted flier in this Town Journal.

We hope you can join us in this worthwhile endeavor.

Town Hall Tidbits | By Tom Carter, Clerk-Treasurer



Office Schedule

The office will be closed Tuesday, November 11, in observance of Veterans Day.

Phone Books Recycling

Remember that your old telephone books can be placed in paper bags in your blue bins every Tuesday for recycling.

Leaf Collection

Vacuuming of leaves piled on the grass near the curb will begin in mid-to late-October and continue through December. Due to violations of leaf dumping at the pool upper parking lot by lawn service companies last year, only Town maintenance personnel will use the lot for leaf storage. The front gate to the pool will be locked at all times the men are not there dumping leaves they have removed from Town streets. Residents who use lawn service companies should arrange with them to either move leaves to the curb for Town pickup or remove the leaves for dumping outside of Town. **PLEASE DO NOT PUT LEAVES IN THE STREET. KINDLY INFORM YOUR LAWN SERVICE OF THIS REQUEST.**

We also ask that you ensure the piles consist only of leaves—**NO STICKS, STONES, BRICKS OR OTHER DENSE OR SHARP DEBRIS.** These materials will damage the machinery blades.

We are following the same removal procedure as in the past. Each morning the maintenance men survey the Town streets and start vacuuming where the biggest piles exist. They then move on to the next biggest piles, and so on. Through streets will still be done regularly to keep the traffic moving smoothly.



Residents who prefer to bag their leaves or dispose of them in a mulch pile in their yards are urged to do so. Leaves in **PAPER BAGS** or **REUSABLE CONTAINERS** will be picked up on **TUESDAYS AND FRIDAYS** by our trash company, **J&J Inc.** Please place in front yards near the curb. Plastic bags may **NOT** be used. Leaf burning is **PROHIBITED!**

Town Maintenance Vehicles

Please use caution when driving behind the Town tractors and trucks. They are often moving very slowly as the men work alongside or in front of the vehicles. Kindly resist riding on their bumpers; give them some space and yourself room to see around them so you are sure it is safe to pass. Now, during leaf season, the vehicles will often be stopped while picking up leaves. It is not feasible for them to move out of the way immediately. If they did, they would never finish their work. You might save time by using another street to go around them.

Hazardous Waste Disposal

The next date for collection of hazardous waste will be **Saturday, November 15**, at *Westland Middle School, 5511 Massachusetts Avenue* (west of Little Falls Parkway).

The following materials will be accepted between **10:00 a.m.** and **2:00 p.m.:** *pesticides, oil-based paint, brake fluid, fuels, herbicides, solvents, antifreeze, photographic chemicals, paint thinners, motor oil, auto batteries and household batteries.*

PLEASE NO LATEX PAINT:

Tens-of-thousands of tax-dollars are spent each year disposing of latex paint, which is not hazardous.

In fact, latex paint can be safely dried up and put out for regular refuse collection. Simply remove the lid and place it in a safe, well-ventilated area. Cans that are one-fourth or less full will dry in a few days. For cans with greater volume, add mulch, cat litter, shredded paper, or Waste Paint Hardener available at area hardware stores.

For more information:

call **240-777-6410** or visit

www.montgomerycountymd.gov/hazardouswaste.

Do You Want To Be Listed In The Town Directory Or Does Your Listing In The 2008 Directory Need To Be Updated?

It's time for us to begin working on the **2009 Town Directory**, and we know there are a lot of incorrect e-mail addresses in the current Directory. If you are new to Somerset or if you wish to amend your family's entry, please send us

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Rain Barrels, Rain Gardens, and Storm Water Control

A Talk by Diane Cameron, Audubon Naturalist Society
November 12, 7:30 p.m., Somerset Town Hall



AUDUBON
NATURALIST
SOCIETY

Storm water is the number one water pollution source in Montgomery County, threatening our clean drinking water supplies, our public lands, our yards and our streams with erosion and contamination. After every rain, the storm drains swell with a tsunami of water that floods the creek. **The Somerset Creek** (Little Falls Branch) is nearly dead from the onslaught and the Town and County have spent thousands of dollars shoring up the banks to control erosion.

There are things that residents and the Town can do to stop the water before it hits the creek. Come hear **Ms. Cameron, Director of the Conservation Program at Audubon Naturalist Society**, speak about rain barrels, rain gardens, pavers and other simple, low impact solutions that residents and municipalities can take to stop the water before it hits the stream or floods our yards. Her talk will include a discussion of funding sources for storm water control that are available to both residents and municipalities, as well as the current storm water legislation in Montgomery County.

Ms. Cameron is a lifelong environmental advocate working on storm water regulation and watershed protection and restoration in the Greater Washington, DC region, statewide in Maryland, and on the national level. Her specialties include *environmental network coordination; sustainable urban design, Environmental Site Design, and upgrades to storm water permits.*

The talk is co-sponsored by the **Little Falls Watershed Alliance** and the **Somerset Environmental Committee**. LFWA is a non-profit organization formed by a group of citizens who are dedicated to protecting the Little Falls Watershed through advocacy, education and action. For more information, visit our blog LittleFallsWatershed.blogspot.com or contact us at info@lfwa.org. You can also contact **Sarah Morse** at 301-907-3298 or morsekathan@gmail.com.

Little Falls Watershed Montgomery County Portion



Permits Granted



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

Trees:

Ted and Tracy Truman, 5803 Warwick Place, to remove a dying choke cherry tree in their back yard.

Harry and Lucy Freeman, 4708 Dorset Avenue, to remove a dead apple tree in their back yard.

Gordon Smith, 4911 Dorset Avenue, to remove an uprooted and leaning pine in his back yard.

Judy Brocies, 4820 Cumberland Avenue, to remove a storm-damaged tulip poplar in her back yard.

Fences:

Alice Champlin, 5522 Greystone Street, to erect a wood fence in her back yard.

Curbs:

Eloisa Marques, 5526 Greystone Street, to replace her driveway apron.



Crime and Police Report

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

Town Hall Tidbits from page 5

an email containing the information you wish to be included in your listing. You can use the format in the current directory as your guideline; otherwise, we suggest you consider including the following as applicable:

Name: _____

Children: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Email Address: _____

Please provide the information in an e-mail not later than November 26, 2008, which hopefully will ensure the accuracy of the listing. *Our email address is: clerk@Townofsomerset.com.*



Broadcast E-Mails Bounce Back to Town Office

When sending Town broadcast e-mails we receive several returns, sometimes from full accounts, but more often from bad addresses. In checking these, we have discovered residents who have changed their e-mail addresses and not informed us. Our policy is to delete these bad addresses.

Please remember to notify the Town Hall if you change e-mail addresses so you will continue to receive these informational and emergency e-mails.

MVA Mobile Office

The MVA's mobile office will be in **Friendship Heights** on **Monday, November 24**, from **10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.**

2009 Calendars

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

Preliminary Agenda

Regular Meeting of Town Council

Monday, November 3, 2008 – 7:30 p.m.

1. Approval of minutes of the October 6 regular meeting – 7:30 p.m.
2. Discussion of FY 08 annual audit by Jim Lindsey and Bob Diss of Lindsey & Associates and Town Audit Committee – 7:35 p.m.
3. Discussion of financial report for fiscal year to date – 7:50 p.m.
4. Action on authorization of additional \$5,000 for architect for bathhouse RFP expenses – 7:55 p.m.
5. Suggestions and questions from residents – 8:00 p.m.
6. Discussion on Town Inspector Larry Plummer's report on options for placement of generators – 8:10 p.m.
7. Fact finding hearing and action on application by Steve Friedman, 4908 Essex Avenue, to install a generator in his back yard – 8:30 p.m.
8. Discussion with Town Attorney to provide direction with regard to subdivision at pool site – 8:40 p.m.
9. Action on selection of Lou Balodemas as consultant/ project manager of the pool renovation project – 8:50 p.m.
10. Discussion on proposed changes to the Town Hall rental rules – 8:55 p.m.
11. Discussion and action regarding Pepco's plans for streetlight replacement and other options – 9:10 p.m.
12. Confirmation of Mayor's nomination of Ann Brown to one-year term as chair of Special Events Committee and reappointment of Lyndsey Van Vliet-Gerber to two-year term – 9:30 p.m.
13. Mayor's report – 9:35 p.m.
14. Developments/plans in the vicinity of Somerset – 9:40 p.m.
15. Adjournment – 9:50 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.”