



SOMERSET TOWN JOURNAL



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Calendar

Saturday, October 4

Rescue Squad Open House

Monday, October 6

Town Council Meeting

Friday, October 10

Special Trash Collection

Monday, October 13

Columbus Day, Town Hall Office Closed

Friday, October 24

Flu Clinic

Saturday, October 25

Montgomery County Community Service Day

Monday, October 27

MVA Mobile Office

Tuesday, October 28

Brown Bag Lunch

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."



Sign Up for Flu and Pneumonia Shots; Volunteers Also Needed

Flu and pneumonia shots will be available at the Town Hall on **Friday, October 24, 2008, from 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.** Please call the Town Hall at **301-657-3211** to sign up for a shot during a specific quarter-hour time slot and to specify whether you want a flu shot only, a pneumonia shot, or both. **PLEASE WEAR LOOSE-FITTING SLEEVES IN PREPARATION FOR YOUR SHOT.**

For *non-Medicare B participants* MedStar charges \$35 for a flu shot and \$55 or a pneumonia shot. Payment by check, made out to *MedStar Health VNA*, is preferred. No credit cards can be accepted. The exact cash amount will be accepted if necessary.

If you are a *Medicare B participant*, **BRING YOUR MEDICARE CARD WITH YOU—ITS DISPLAY IS REQUIRED.** MedStar does not charge Medicare B participants for either shot, provided you are not a member of an HMO.

MedStar Health Visiting Nurse Association, our past provider, will again be administering the inoculations. The association recommends flu shots for those:

- 50 and older;
- Women who will be pregnant during the influenza season, which usually peaks by March;
- Caregivers (household or out-of-home) for pre-kindergarteners or for those 50 and older;
- Personnel who have contact with patients in hospital or outpatient settings, including medical emergency response workers.

(MedStar Health VNA may provide flu shots to children ages 9 through 17 who are accompanied by a parent/guardian.)

Who gets a pneumonia shot? Please check with your physician before signing up for a pneumonia vaccination. MedStar VNA recommends getting one pneumonia shot, lasting most people a lifetime, for anyone who wants to reduce the risk of contracting pneumonia. They especially recommend the shot for those 65 and over or those with a chronic illness. If you receive pneumonia and flu shots at one sitting, one is given in each arm. For up-to-date immunization information, please check with the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** at www.cdc.gov/vaccines or at **1-800-232-4636**.

FLU CLINIC VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED for two-hour shifts on **October 24 between 3:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.** to register those getting shots.

Please contact **Barbara Marblestone** at dbmarblestone@att.net or **301-652-2485** if you would like to volunteer.

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On My Mind

Municipal Power

By Mayor Jeffrey Z. Slavin

Greening the Construction Process

As a member of the board of directors of the **Maryland Municipal League** (MML), I have the privilege of attending an annual two-day retreat, which is always exceedingly informative. This year, per the request of our *new MML President*, **Gaithersburg Mayor Sidney Katz**, there was a “green” theme to it.

The first day of the meetings we were in the **Port Towns of Prince Georges County** (*I will buy lunch for the first Town resident who writes me with the correct answer as to which towns they are*). The second day the confab took place at the incredible headquarters of the **Chesapeake Bay Foundation**, right on the water and in a building that was the first to be platinum **LEED** (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified in the nation. Being in this structure inspired me further in my commitment to ensure that our new bathhouse has similar pro-environment qualities. While we will probably have to spend a large amount on our own new structure, let's pay for it wisely and create a new building that not only reflects our Town's green values, but sets an example for our children and our neighbors. You can learn more about this gem at www.cbf.org.

In the Port Towns I was introduced to a wonderful non-profit organization called **Community Forklift** (www.CommunityForklift.com) which is housed in a warehouse larger than our entire swimming pool site. At this location, which has been in operation almost three years, “green collar” employees accept donations of and sell surplus and salvaged building materials. The organization makes it possible for middle and low income folks to make more affordable

home repairs while reducing construction industry waste. In their own way, they are keeping lots and lots of reusable building materials out of local landfills.

Community Forklift also works with companies that take buildings apart rather than bulldozing them. I learned that in most houses that are torn down, up to 80 percent of the structure can be recycled. And if such materials are donated to a non-profit, the owner can take a large tax deduction. Dumping fees can also be avoided. This is quite a **win-win** situation.

Hopefully, in the future our Town will organize a day when unwanted building materials can be part of a large pickup. And wouldn't it be great if the next homeowner who wants to replace an entire house will take it apart piece by piece and allow someone less fortunate to benefit?

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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 October 17, 2008, 4:30 p.m.

Legislation

At the September 2 meeting, the Town Council:

1. Approved a Town Code amendment to Section 9-202 (No Parking Zones) to add under Uppingham Street 17-foot section on the northwest side of the street between 5514 and 5516 Uppingham Street.
2. Introduced a Town Code amendment to strengthen neighbor understanding of building permit applications by adding locations of existing improvements on adjoining properties on applicant's site plan

Council Activity

At the September 2 meeting, the Town Council:

1. Approved a proposal by VIKA for up to \$16,000 for survey and other work relating to obtaining a subdivision from Maryland-National Capital Park & Planning Commission to permit the Town's bathhouse project.
2. Approved the bathhouse RFP (cover letter and FDC) as amended after a meeting with the Maryland-National Capital Park & Planning Commission and with amendments proposed during the meeting to add incorporation of evaluation criteria and consideration of sliding glass doors for the storm shelter. A motion to modify the shelter by making it a large, seasonal room failed. (Vote: Proctor for; Eldridge, Kessler, Pickar and Shaul opposed.)
3. Discussed the traffic consultant's first phase draft of proposals for traffic calming devices.
4. Approved an RFP for pool management in CY2009 and 2010.
5. Approved option 3 of the noise abatement plan by Michael and Abby Nolan, 5807 Surrey Street, which relocates their air conditioning units to the front yard, subject to their demonstrating to the Mayor's satisfaction that their plan will result in a noise level at or below the Montgomery County Noise Ordinance at the property line, including in a line of sight to the neighbor's porch.
6. Approved a permit for Gopi Vaswani, 5501 Trent Street, to add an addition to the rear of her house and a concrete ramp to the front, subject to receipt of a County permit and Town fees.
7. Authorized the Mayor to sign a letter supporting Chevy Chase Club's proposal (in conjunction with the State Highway Administration) to correct the storm water problem on Wisconsin Avenue by opening the two storm water drains at Hunt and Drummond Avenues and using the water to fill their collection pond for use in irrigating the golf course, but stating Somerset's concern for maintaining the quantity and quality of Little Falls Branch.
8. Took no action on an application by Michael Angell, 4520 Dorset Avenue, to adjust the location of installation of a generator under his rear deck and suggested he obtain professional recommendations that would meet County requirements on noise abatement.
9. Approved a building permit for John Stewart and Sharon Stoliaroff, 4823 Dorset Avenue, to add a second story to a previous addition on the west side of their house, subject to receipt of a County permit and Town fees, a late fee and deposit.
10. Approved the \$8,851.50 bid of American Tennis Courts to pressure wash, color coat and reline the tennis courts.
11. Confirmed the Mayor's reappointment of Joan Rabinor and appointment of Ralph Werner and Barbara Condos to the Swimming Pool Committee for three-year terms and reappointment of Michelle Edson as chair for a one-year term.
12. Approved a special trash pickup at Town expense on Friday, October 10, for residents who have large items that cannot go in the regular trash.
13. Approved a contract with Wray Brothers Landscapes for leaf removal from the pool upper parking lot for this year at cost of up to \$23,640.
14. Approved an application by Marian Scheiner, 4913 Falstone Avenue, to remove three dead or dying multi-trunked ornamental trees in her front yard.



Many thanks to **BONNIE LEWIN** (Cumberland), **LYNDESEY GERBER** (Cumberland), **LAURA LONG** (Essex), and **ANN BROWN** (Trent) for their part in making the Newcomers' Party a tremendous success again this year. Also to **DAVID BATSON** (Uppingham), for setting up the all-important PA system. We have a lot of fascinating new people in Town and I hope that they will all eventually get involved in committees and events, and even run for the Council!

Somerset hosted the August **Maryland Municipal League Montgomery Chapter** monthly meeting and we had a standing-room-only crowd. The guest speaker was *Maryland Deputy Transportation Secretary* **Beverley Swaim-Staley**, a former director of *Montgomery County's Office of Management and Budget*. Among other topics, Ms. Swaim-Staley spoke about upcoming budget problems that will affect already scheduled State highway projects and provided an update on the problem with the eastbound span of the Bay Bridge. Since we previously met the Deputy Secretary at the MML Convention, we have a good relationship with her and can get in contact if any resident has a particular concern to raise in the future. I am pleased to announce that Somerset has earned another **Banner City award** from the MML, the League's highest member-achievement recognition. Sixteen cities and towns were so honored in 2008. Our Town is among the ten that have earned the recognition for a second year, which is the life of the program. This honor acknowledges a high level of participation in all of the League's programs and activities. I am glad that we take advantage of our MML membership to such an extent, since our annual dues are not insignificant.

A Surrey Street resident called recently to tell me how excited he was to receive his **Somerset centennial license plates** and to urge me to publicize their availability. For those needing an application to obtain the tags, email me at mayor@townofsomerset.com. Kudos to *Principal Laurie Gross* and the students and teachers (and parents!) at **Somerset Elementary School**. As noted in *The Washington Post* recently, our school ranked **16th** out of the *top 100 elementary schools in the seven-county Metro DC Maryland suburbs* (427 in all) for students' performance on a standardized test. Since we **advanced from 20th last year**, I also wanted to congratulate all on the improvement. For those interested, I have a copy of the article.

There is a lot of good programming on the **Montgomery Municipal Channel—Channel 16**—and the program schedule is available at www.mmctv.sailorsite.net. Our Town pays dues to the Channel and we have a designated member of the Board of Directors, **LILA SNOW** (Essex) and an alternate, Council member **ALAN PROCTOR** (Cumberland), so if you have any comments or concerns about the station be sure to contact them.

The Montgomery County Historical Society is planning an exhibit on Montgomery County pets, past and present, for the summer of 2009 and they are looking for photos and artifacts. Pets and companion animals have long held a place in our hearts, but the type of pets we choose and our interactions with them have changed over the course of American history. The upcoming exhibit will examine these changes as experienced by County residents and their furry, scaly, or feathered friends. To participate, contact **Joanna Church** of the **Historical Society** at **301-340-2825** or jchurch@montgomeryhistory.org.

The Bethesda-Chevy Chase Rescue Squad will hold its free annual Open House, "**Rescue Day 2008**" on Saturday, October 4 from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., rain or shine, at 5020 Battery Lane, Bethesda, in conjunction with Taste of Bethesda, the outdoor food festival held just two blocks away. For more information, call **301-652-0077**.

Saturday, October 25, is **Montgomery County's 22nd Annual Community Service Day**, and while Somerset will have its own such day later in the Fall, anyone interested in getting a group together to work on a project should call me.

Obituaries

Mary Allen Scammon died on **August 15, 2008**, at Asbury Methodist Village in Gaithersburg. Mary formerly lived on Greystone Street with her spouse of 49 years, **Richard**, and their **daughter Anne**, who now lives in Alexandria, Virginia. Remembrances may be made to the **Mary Scammon Memorial Music Fund**, *c/o River Road Unitarian Church, 6301 River Road, Bethesda, MD 20817* or to the **Alzheimer's Association**.

Gretchen Anthony, a long-time Somerset resident on Trent Street, died on **September 1**. She had recently been living in nearby Bethesda with her son and his wife. Gretchen gave **piano lessons** for many years and will be fondly remembered by numerous Somerset children and their parents. Her **brownies** were always a hit at the yearly recitals!

Town Hall Tidbits | By Tom Carter, Clerk-Treasurer



Office Schedule

The office will be closed Monday, October 13, in observance of **Columbus Day**.

Noise Ordinance

If you have a contractor working at your home, please remind him that Monday, October 13, is a *Federal holiday* observed by the Town and our noise restrictions are observed. Work may not start before **9:00 a.m.**

Special Trash Pickup

The Town Council has authorized a special trash collection **Friday, October 10, at Town expense**. Those wishing to participate need only notify Tom at Town Hall no later than October 8. This will be your reservation for the *special collection service* by our contractor, **J&J Inc.**



This time we are coordinating with the non-profit organization, **A Wider Circle**, to allow them to come through Town the night before to *pick up any usable home items, such as dressers, tables and chairs, and mattresses that have no rips or stains* – which they will distribute to local families in need. If you intend on putting anything of this nature out, please do so early on **Thursday, October 9**, as the truck for A Wider Circle will be going through Town between 5:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. that evening. These items should also be separated from the *regular pickup items* for J&J. Collection by J&J will start at 7:00 a.m. on Friday, so be sure to have your items out early that morning or the night before.

Special trash is defined as *refrigerators, washing machines, dryers, freezers, stoves, hot water heaters, other major appliances; furniture or parts thereof; large toys, bicycles, swing sets (broken down into smaller parts); bathtubs, sinks, and toilets; and iron pipe, gutters/down spouts or fence pieces under six feet long*. Refrigerators, freezers and air conditioners must be emptied of Freon in order to be picked up. If items are in bundles, they must be light enough for two men to carry.

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

Donations to A Wider Circle are **tax deductible**. More information, including a complete wish list of items their families request, may be found at their Web site <http://www.awidercircle.org/index-1.html> or call 301-657-1010.



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!**

Reminder to Dog Owners



The Town Code requires that you keep your dog on a leash whenever the dog is not on your property and that you pick up the feces after your dog does its duty. Please keep our sidewalks, parks and your neighbors' yards clean from dog

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Permits Granted



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

Trees:

Douglas Paul and Stacy Merenstein, 5510 Surrey Street, to remove two hollies close to front foundation of their house.



Crime and Police Report

Summer Crime is Down, But Remaining Alert for Fall is Imperative!

By Birdie Pieczenik, Chairperson,
Security Committee

Congratulations! For the first time in years, no crimes were reported to the Somerset Town Hall (and Bethesda police) in **July** and **August**. No one called about a bicycle taken from a driveway, a back door jimmied open, or a car (locked or unlocked) broken into.

The Security Committee is assuming that these statistics are **NOT** the product of a lack of reporting but just might be the result of (1) *changes in behavior (i.e.. locking cars, storing bikes)*, (2) *attention to property security (i.e.. better locks on windows and doors)*, (3) *being alert to suspicious activity and reporting it quickly (i.e., solicitors)*, and/or (4) *a real decline in the number of potential perpetrators filtering through town, usually on the lookout for crimes of opportunity.*

Is this decrease in reported crime a trend or an aberration? We're not sure. Several serious crimes have occurred in nearby areas (*for example, the rape of a jogger in Rock Creek Park, and a series of identical burglaries of homes of elderly occupants who were tied up while the home was burglarized*), reminding us that as idyllic as Somerset is, we are part of a medium-sized city with a high crime rate.

Two incidents that occurred in Somerset in September are **VERY** disturbing and should put all of us on alert for suspicious activities or individuals in town. In one incident, an elderly homeowner spotted a man walking in her backyard who fled when called to. In a second incident, a man rang the doorbell of an older resident, told her he "**represented the police,**" and asked her a series of questions regarding her home security situation, from security alarms to back gate locks. The man was not a police officer, and coming on the heels of burglaries in nearby areas it could have been someone trying to target a home for a burglary.

While it is unclear whether these two incidents involved the same man, it is very clear that the town needs an **ALERT SYSTEM** that can be used for multiple purposes. Email alerts, a telephone tree, and a block buddy system have been suggested over the past few weeks to the Mayor, Town Council, and security committee by concerned residents. We encourage **YOUR** comments and suggestions to any of these groups, since we are all sharing information. Your input will be considered and something productive will come from our discussions.

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

A stranger in our midst does not make a crime wave. It has happened before and will happen again. But it is a reminder that there are simple and creative things we can do to make you and the town more secure. Please be part of the solution. **We'd like to hear your suggestions.**



Firehouse Open House

Whether you are 2 or 92, there will be lots of fun, food, and treats at the *Bethesda Fire Department's Open House* on **Saturday, September 27** from **1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.**

The child in all of us will be delighted by the *Balloon Inflatable Castle*, *Squirt the Fire Hose*, *having our picture taken in the Antique Fire Engine*, and *seeing all the fire engines, fire trucks, and water rescue equipment up close*. Adventure seekers will witness automobile extrications and browse search and rescue displays. There is much to be learned from the **Fire Safety House, Child Safety Seat Demonstration, and other exhibits.**

At 2:30 p.m. **Ronald McDonald** will add a special treat to the celebration of our brave Firefighters. Most of all, here's a chance for you to stop by and thank the Firefighters for all they do to protect our homes and community.

The open house is located at **Bethesda Fire Station 6**, 6600 Wisconsin Avenue in Bethesda. For more info call **301-652-5602**.



Town Hires Arborist to Give Advice On Trees

By Corrie Morsey, Town Administrative Assistant and Marnie Shaul, Council member

Recently, Somerset hired **Barb Neal** as a consultant to provide independent advice about our trees. Somerset has had an arborist in the past, and some residents have suggested that it is a good practice to separate advice about tree health from the company hired to take care of or take down our trees.

The Town will continue to rely on **The Davey Tree Expert Company** to do the actual tree work. Ms. Neal will attend the October 6th Council meeting, and residents are encouraged to come to meet her.

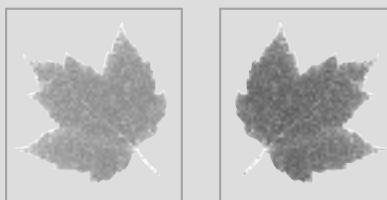
We already have received Barb's input on tree protection in connection with building permit applications, guidance on requests to remove residential trees, and diagnosis of Town tree issues such as maintenance and pruning. She has some ideas on how we can protect trees better during construction and on protecting our tree canopy in general. She looks forward to helping us make **Vinton Park**, our urban forest, more viable and sustainable.

Ms. Neal's credentials are impressive. She's the principal of **Green Legacy Tree Consultants, Inc.** in Glen Echo, and she's also been an instructor for **GW University** since 1998, teaching landscape design. Her certifications include: *Board Certified Master Arborist, International Society of Arboriculture, MA; Registered Consulting Arborist, American Society of Consulting Arborists; Maryland Licensed Tree Expert, and Certified Professional Horticulturist, with an additional certification in Integrated Pest Management.* She holds a **BA** from **Colby College** and a **Masters of Professional Studies with a concentration in Urban Horticulture** from **Cornell University**.

Zelkova Branch/Leaf Drop

By Corrie Morsey, Town Administrative Assistant (with information provided by Arborist Barb Neal)

Several residents have contacted us expressing concern over leaf and branch droppings of the Town's **Zelkova trees**. According to the **University of Maryland Cooperative Extension Service**, what we see happening in our Town is occurring throughout the state. In early September they reported differing opinions as to the cause. Not every tree in a given area is affected, and it is thought to be abiotic—outside factors affecting the tree—not pathogenic. The timing for the leaf drop coincides with development of a drupe, a small fruit produced by the tree, which the squirrels could be eating in a messy fashion. We'll keep you posted on the mystery.



messes. Fines of up to \$100 can be imposed! Dog droppings may be disposed of in the Town trash receptacles as long as they are double bagged to protect the collectors. Additionally, there is a special receptacle for dog droppings near 5407 Surrey Street.

Hazardous Waste Disposal

Hazardous waste may be dropped off at **Silver Spring International Middle School**, 313 Wayne Avenue (at Dale Drive), in Silver Spring on Saturday, October 18, or at Westland Middle School, 5511 Massachusetts Avenue (west of Little Falls Parkway), on November 15.

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 he 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 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 11/26/08, 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, October 27, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

2009 Calendars

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

The Next Brown Bag Lunch for Tuesday, October 28



All in Town are welcome to join the Mayor and Council for the next **quarterly Brown Bag Lunch** on Tuesday, October 28 from noon to 1:00 p.m. at the Town Hall.

Come meet a neighbor, raise an issue, or share some news. Don't forget to bring a sandwich or entree to share. Soft drinks, ice, plates and plasticware are provided. For further information, call **Mayor Slavin** at 301-654-6767 or e-mail him at mayor@townofsomerset.com.



Neighbor Notices and Streetlights By Alan Proctor, Council member

I'd like to highlight two of the items that I understand will be on the agenda for the Council's meeting in October.

The first is action on a change to the **Town's Code** that I proposed at the *September Council meeting*, a copy of which is posted on the Town's website. This legislation would clarify and strengthen the notice given to neighbors when owners of adjoining properties seek Town approval of a building permit. Current code includes a notice provision, but I am concerned that the information given to provide notice of planned construction is not specific enough. I think this creates a serious risk that neighbors will be surprised by what ends up being constructed next to them. To avoid such surprises without increasing the burden on applicants, the proposed legislation provides that neighbors who sign off on receiving notice under the current provisions would also be given a Town-approved form that would summarize the building to be undertaken; provide the date and time at which the hearing will be conducted; advise that the town requests their view on whether the requested permit should be approved (which would be reported to members of the Council at least one week before the permit is considered); and that the form have a plat drawing attached that shows the location of existing improvements on the subject lot and those on directly-adjoining lots, together with the location of the proposed new construction or improvements.

The second item is **Pepco's plan** to convert, in early October or sooner, all of the street lights in Somerset from the current **mercury vapor lights** (*which have a somewhat bluish tinge*) to **high pressure sodium vapor lights** (*which have an orange/pinkish tinge*). Pepco presents this plan as a response to Federal legislation passed around the beginning of this year that mandates the **phase-out by 2012** of the ballast (basically a transformer) required to run mercury vapor lights; lights and parts will be available for many years, but the government's goal is to phase out this technology in order to avoid lights that contain mercury. What Pepco has announced is an aggressive program to convert all mercury vapor streetlights in the county to sodium vapor over a **five-year period** beginning in October 2008, starting closest to DC and moving outward, which means starting in Somerset.

As many of you may recall, a number of other residents and I successfully opposed this switch a couple of years ago, based largely on the feeling that the color cast by these lights is ugly. I still think this, but at this point, I think there's yet another, even more compelling reason for considering our options – **LED**.

LED stands for "**light emitting diode**" and as I understand it, experts agree it's the preferred lighting technology for the future. LEDs are already showing up in many low power applications, and they are rapidly penetrating applications like streetlights. We saw many examples of LED street lights at the **MML Convention** that several Council members attended in Ocean City earlier this summer, and all the vendors I spoke with indicated that they not only have early implementations now, but that they're expecting that commercial street lights will be in production within the next couple of years that are both more efficient than sodium vapor and cost effective.

Based on this, I think the Town should ask Pepco to hold up on converting us to **sodium vapor**. Why not work with Pepco to make us one of their trial implementations of LED streetlights when they're ready. This would be a nice, manageable test application and we could be very supportive of them doing the right thing. Alternately, if they aren't interested in working with us on a trial, then they should at least defer converting out current streetlights for a couple of years until LED lights can be installed as part of their program.

For my part, I think we should carefully consider our options before permitting Pepco to change our lights, and not get rushed into a situation that will affect us for many years to come. The proposed review should take account of the advantages of LED lights of the future, our Town's interest in being a leader on the environmental front, and other factors such as whether we should take this opportunity to convert to lights that are installed lower, on poles along our sidewalks, as a way of getting the lights out of the tree canopy. This would get the light down where we need it and maybe even improve the beauty of our Town.

Pepco says they aren't going to charge us to upgrade our lights now, although they will be charging us relatively higher monthly charges for each streetlight. But they would charge us heavily if we were we to seek replacement of these new sodium vapor lights with LED lights in the future. These charges would include the full cost of installing new LED lights, Pepco's full cost of installing and removing the sodium vapor lights they're planning to install now, and if we purchased our own LED lights, they will also charge what they estimate would be the future profit they would lose on our business.

You can get more information on these thoughts and comment on them and other topics on my blog, <http://alan.proctors.us>.

Preliminary Agenda

Regular Meeting of Town Council

Monday, October 6, 2008 – 7:30 p.m.

1. Approval of minutes of the August 4 regular meeting – 7:30 p.m.
1. Approval of minutes of the September 2 regular meeting – 7:30 p.m.
2. Suggestions and questions from residents – 7:35 p.m.
3. Introduction of Town Arborist Barb Neal – 7:45 p.m.**
4. Action on renewal of Town membership in Montgomery Municipal Cable (MMC) by contributing entire payment from County, which is based on number of Somerset cable subscribers. MMC director Lila Snow will make a report – 7:55 p.m.**
5. Recommendation as Local Advisory Panel to Historic Preservation Commission and action on revised noise abatement plan for air conditioning units by Michael and Abby Nolan, 5807 Surrey Street – 8:10 p.m.
6. Action on request by Mark and Julie Oxley, 4515 Dorset Avenue, for Town to provide long term license for ehicle access to their back yard via Town driveway – 8:30 p.m.
7. Mayor’s report – 8:40 p.m.
8. Developments/plans in the vicinity of Somerset – 8:45 p.m.
9. Action on establishment of Mansionization Task Force – 8:55 p.m.
10. Confirmation of Mayor’s appointment of Chuck Edson to replace Cathy Bernard on the Audit Committee – 9:10 p.m.
11. Action on amendment to the Building Code to strengthen neighbor understanding of building permit applications by adding locations of existing improvements on adjoining properties on applicant’s site plan – 9:15 p.m.**
12. Discussion regarding Pepco’s plans for streetlight replacement and other options (a Pepco representative has been invited to attend) – 9:20 p.m.**
13. New business – 9:40 p.m.
14. Adjournment – 9:45 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.”

Safety *for* Seniors

When: Monday, October 6, 2008

**Where: Davis Library
6400 Democracy Blvd., Bethesda
(Community Room – Downstairs)**

Time: 3:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Topic: *Residential Security*

- Locks
- Windows
- Doors
- Alarms
- Landscaping
- Reporting Suspicious Activity
- When to Call the Police

Table displays by Oasis, Windows Plus, Bethesda Chevy Chase Chamber of Commerce and much more!

*Presented by Montgomery County Police – 2nd District
Officer Dana Matthis – Community Services Officer
For more info call: 301-657-0119*

