



SOMERSET TOWN JOURNAL



Volume 54 • No. 9

Date of publication: March 20, 2009



Street Paving to Begin Soon

By Marnie Shaul, Council Vice-President

Sometime after April 7, Somerset expects the contractor selected last fall to begin repaving some of our streets. Streets slated to be repaved this year are **Cumberland,**

Dorset, Falstone, Little Surrey, Trent Court, Trent Street, Uppingham, and Warwick. Several of these streets had some parts repaved in 2007 and those portions are not included. The contractor will mill the streets down about 2 inches, and then will lay on a fabric before putting down new asphalt. The Somerset weekly email will have more precise information about the schedule.

Our inspector, **Larry Plummer**, assessed all of Somerset's streets last year and determined which streets needed immediate attention and which could wait a few years. Our plan is to repave **Deal Place, Devon Lane, Grantham, Greystone, and Big Surrey** in about two years.

B-CC High School Mentoring Program

By Sherry Bindeman, Essex Avenue

B-CC is offering a great opportunity to truly make a difference in a student's life in its well-organized mentoring program for 9th grade students at risk of not graduating from high school. At the present time, 20 mentors are needed to meet with students approximately once a week for the remainder of the school year.

The program includes training and resource materials, including optional workshops and discussion groups. Topics are suggested for the meetings, with guidance on ways to get to know one another and to help with improving time management, setting short-term goals, developing healthy communication techniques, and making major life choices.

To find out more about this program or to volunteer, please contact **Debbie Newman**, B-CC's Mentoring Program Coordinator, at 240-497-6300, or at Deborah_Newman@mcpsmd.org.



Calendar

Saturday, March 28

Removal of Invasives

Wednesday, April 1

Election Day

Monday, April 6

Town Council Meeting

Tuesday, April 14

Bath House Meeting

Friday, April 24

Brown Bag Lunch

Monday, April 27

MVA Mobile Office

Sunday, May 3

Community Sing-along

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."

Congratulations Somerset!

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



On My Mind

By Mayor Jeffrey Z. Slavin

Transitions

It is hard to believe that a year has passed since the Mayoral election. I am pleased at the progress that has been made on the three issues that were of primary importance to me as a candidate.

- **First**, this month the Council will be taking action on the initial part of a new traffic calming plan based on a comprehensive consultant's report.
- **Second**, the bathhouse project has been advanced to the final design phase and putting it out to bid is finally in sight.
- **Third**, we are on the verge of producing a Ten-Year long-range fiscal plan to guide us into the future and ensuring a high quality of life for another generation.

This has all been accomplished thanks to the hard work of the Town Council, and it has been a delight to work with all of them.

Alas, early next month we will witness the retirement of two Council members, both of whom have been extremely dedicated and generous with their time, and who have made major contributions to the Town. Council member **Rick Kessler** has served with distinction for seven terms, and has been a strong voice for limiting development in Somerset and the surrounding area, has been the conscience of the Council on tree protection, and has helped provide outstanding oversight over operation of the pool. I will particularly miss his institutional history and Capitol Hill perspective. Council member **Tom Eldridge** has served admirably for four terms, obviously playing a major role in planning for the future of our public buildings, providing great expertise on public safety, and keeping us mindful of the importance of the environment. I will particularly miss his sharp legal mind and prosecutor's sensibility.

We will be announcing plans to appropriately honor these public servants in the near future.

Because the election this year is uncontested—although I urge everyone to vote on April 1—I want to be the first to welcome our anticipated new Council members **Barbara Zeughauser** and **Bill Farley**. They have been following Somerset issues for a number of years and both have held official positions in the recent past, Barbara as a member of the Board of Supervisors of Elections, and Bill as a member of the Friendship Heights Transportation Management District Advisory Committee. I will be spending time orienting them to their new roles and I hope that all residents will take a moment or two to get to know them better. I am confident that Barbara and Bill will do their best to follow the legacies left by Rick and Tom.

In This Issue

- Bath House Update9
- Budget Process6
- Congratulations Somerset1
- Council Activity3
- Council Vote on Traffic Calming7
- Crime and Police Report10
- Keeping Somerset Beautiful12
- Letters to the Editor11
- Mayor's Desk4
- On My Mind2
- Permits Granted12
- Preliminary Agenda13
- Street Paving1
- Town Hall Tidbits5
- Traffic Calming Proposal8

The **Town Journal** is the official publication of
 The Town of Somerset, Montgomery County, MD.
 Post Office address: 4510 Cumberland Avenue, Chevy Chase, MD 20815
www.townofsomerset.com
 Electronic copies are also e-mailed in pdf format to residents who request
 this service from the Town Hall.

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 Vice President
 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 the 15th of the month at 4:30 p.m.

Legislation

Council Activity

At the March 3 meeting, the Town Council:

1. Received nominations from the floor for Marnie Shaul, Barbara Zeughauser and Bill Farley for Council members.
2. Heard the Mayor's proposed 5-Year Plan.
3. Heard a summary of the traffic engineer's traffic calming recommendations.
4. Approved the location of the pool pumps, filters and heater for Charlotte and Charles Perret, 4716 Falstone Avenue, in conjunction with demolishing their existing deck and installing a pool and patio.
5. Approved a waiver for building permit waiver application by Frank Loversky and Cathi Davis, 5415 Surrey Street, for a 19-inch high stone bench back constituting a wall.
6. Approved a building permit for Nicolas Lloreda, 4813 Falstone Avenue, to erect a shed in his back yard, subject to receipt of the Town permit fees and deposit.
7. Approved the Mayor obtaining bids to remove a badly damaged sycamore tree (#914) in Capello Park at the northwest corner of the Dorset Avenue/Wisconsin Avenue intersection at a cost not to exceed \$5,000.
(Vote: Kessler, Pickar and Shaul in favor; Eldridge opposed. Motion passed 3-1.)
8. Proclaimed April 1 as 2009 Arbor Day for the Town.
9. Confirmed the Mayor's nomination of Bill Marmon to the Board of Supervisors of Elections to complete the term of Barbara Zeughauser, who has resigned.



It was wonderful to attend this year's **Somerset Elementary School** production of "**The Jungle Book**" and I applaud to the efforts of producers **CHRISTINE FARLEY** (Grantham) and **DANA MACHER** (Cumberland) to make the show of near-Broadway quality.

Although this problem has since been resolved, there had been several complaints made about the use of a particular dumpster in conjunction with a construction project in Town. The dumpster was legally in place because I signed the permit after an appropriate application was made. The primary issue here is that under the Code, the Town does not have enough authority to adequately limit dumpster use, and the Council does not have the power to make restrictions when a building application is approved. The same is true of those moving containers that are increasingly popular. Several Council members have expressed concern about this to me and I believe will be coming up with Code amendments in the near future.

Recently, **TOM CARTER** and I went to a joint meeting organized by Manager **JEAN SPERLING** of the Village of Martin's Additions, where a lighting expert discussed and evaluated a selection of street light options that are being considered by a number of municipalities in the Chevy Chase region. This expert was not specifically aware of the lighting debate in Somerset, but he did point out that the technology for **LED** lighting is constantly changing, and the glare created by these bulbs is not universally liked. When questioned, he said did not recommend installation of these lights at this time. It was clear at this meeting that there is no consensus among the Towns in our area about what to do with their lights and most are in the initial stages of making decisions. There was some discussion of a group of Towns getting together with the advice of an attorney, but this plan is only "proposed" as of now.

I recently had a tour of **Glen Echo Park**, minutes away from Somerset, owned by the **National Park Service** and managed by **Montgomery County**. A number of our residents use this unique resource and several have held leadership positions in the non-profit group that operates the park on a daily basis. Glen Echo Park has a variety of artistic, cultural, and educational programs, and more information is available at www.glenechopark.org. In May, they are having their annual gala, and one of the honorees is our own Congressman **CHRIS VAN HOLLEN**. As there may be opportunities for our Town to participate in Glen Echo's regular programming, I will be working with Special Events Committee Chair **ANN BROWN** to come up with a proposal.

My thanks to **BILL MARMON** (Cumberland) who agreed by way of an out-of-Town email to him to be considered for an unanticipated vacancy on the **Board of Elections**. I appreciate his willingness to help at such a crucial time of year for the Board.

I enjoyed attending a recent wine, chocolate and cheese event for the **B-CC High School Educational Foundation**, an organization in support of the school's core academic support programs, and dedicated to ensuring that all the school's students reach their highest academic potential. Among those present were foundation board member **ELLIE FINK** (Dorset), an alumni parent, as well as several Somerset-based current parents. I will be looking for ways for residents to privately assist the foundation in future fundraising efforts.

Town Hall Tidbits | By Tom Carter, Clerk-Treasurer



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 2008 Maryland Resident Income Tax Return form. A handwritten note "Town of Somerset Here" with an arrow points to the "City, Town or Taxing Area" box, which contains the handwritten text "Montgomery Town of Somerset". Other fields on the form include Social Security numbers, marital status, and exemptions.

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.
- **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 **April 27** from **10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.** There will be no service in May.

Landscaper Flyer

Many residents may have found a flyer for Terra Landscaping at their door recently. The man's name on this flyer is Thomas Carter. Please be aware that this has nothing to do with your Clerk-Treasurer, Tom Carter.



2009 Tennis ID Cards

Tennis ID cards for 2009 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.

Budget Process Advances

Jeffrey Z. Slavin, Mayor

Our Town's **annual budget process** is in high gear. This month I took the first step by submitting a **Five-Year Fiscal Plan**, required by the Town Charter, which offers my vision of what the Town's revenues and expenses will be over the next half decade. The Council does not vote to approve or disapprove this document, but is required to give it "due and proper consideration" in its final decision on the budget and property tax amount. We held a hearing on this Plan at our last meeting, and now with Council recommendations included, it is published in this **Journal**.



At this time I am also introducing the actual proposed budget for **Fiscal Year 2010**, which incorporates the first year of the Five-Year Plan and any new information we have received in the last month, such as figures from the State and County, committee recommendations, and citizen input. This budget will be subject to a public hearing at our April meeting, scheduled for approximately 8:30 p.m. on the agenda. I urge everyone to study the numbers, ask questions, and make their views known to their elected officials.

On the revenue side, the key category for us all to consider is income tax receipts, our major revenue source. These are the funds we receive as **reimbursements** from the State of a portion of Maryland income taxes paid by Somerset residents. (**This is why it is so important for Somerset taxpayers to identify themselves on their returns.**) In the recent past we have been "extremely fortunate," to quote **Mayor Emeritus Behr**, that these collections have been high and end up making up two-thirds to

three-quarters of our revenues. However, last fiscal year we received fewer income tax revenues than anticipated. It is difficult for us to predict this revenue source because we must rely on the staff of the **State Comptroller's Office** for the estimates. Accordingly, we have been cautious in our income tax projections for FY10 and have reduced our expected income tax revenue by 10 percent, reflecting the country's fiscal crisis and how it may affect our residents.

In addition, the Town receives monies from Montgomery County, designated in the document as **County Revenue Sharing**. These are funds sent to us by the County to compensate for property taxes paid by our residents to the County for services actually provided by Somerset. This translates to line items such as street maintenance (including paving), repairs to curbs and sidewalks, street lights, snow plowing, leaf removal, trash receptacles, and street signs. In spite of the County's own perilous financial condition, the **County Executive** has kept the revenue sharing levels at the same level in his own proposed budget for the upcoming year—and we are thankful for that, since he could have cut it.

In continuing along the revenue side, to make up for the income tax decrease and to accommodate street paving, traffic calming, and bathhouse renovation, along with the need to maintain existing services, I find it necessary to put in a four cent increase in the Town's property tax rate. All of you will recall an article in this Journal last month, signed by all Council members, and outlining the reasoning behind this and why it is probably our best means of making up the difference. Even at a property tax rate of eight cents, we are lower than other similar municipalities in the County, and **our Town property tax is still a very small percentage of residents' total property tax payment**.

During the course of the next month and until the final vote on the budget in May, the Council will review each line item and consider ways to economize. It may be possible to ask for a smaller property tax rate increase. I am impressed at the way our Council has embraced this task and know that every effort will be made to spend wisely, while at the same time providing value for our investment. Let's remember that for now this is a work in progress.

On the expense side, our major expenditures will be to re-pave some of the streets, install added traffic calming devices, start to finance the bathhouse project, maintain the pool, and advance our storm water management. All of these expenditures will be made with a great deal of advice from our residents, particularly through our strong committee structure. I have also added money for additional hours for police enforcement of speeding and stop sign violations and to pay for a structural analysis of the swimming pool. The costs for our Code enforcement officer and arborist will increase, but I will be proposing changes in our building application fees to account for some of this. Those fees are on the low side compared to other municipalities in our region. I am not adding any funds for new street lights because I will continue to advocate for acceptance of **PEPCO's** offer to install new high pressure sodium bulbs at no charge.

In conclusion, I want to emphasize how important it is for residents to review these documents and numbers and make their views known. I want to publicly thank our Clerk-Treasurer, **Tom Carter**, for the major role he plays in gathering all this information, and for the tremendous assistance he provides with expert advice and guidance. Kudos also to Council Vice President **Marnie Shaul** for her dedication over countless hours to help put this all together.

Council to Vote on Traffic Calming Implementation

By Cathy Pickar, Council member



The Council will vote on traffic calming recommendations at the meeting, **Monday, April 6**. It is important that the recommendations, if implemented, coincide with the repaving of selected streets that may begin as early on April 7.

In 2004, and again in 2007, the Town hired an engineering firm to measure

the volume of traffic based on manual counts. The report showed cut-through traffic through Somerset approaching 50 percent, and not just on Dorset. Little Cumberland and Greystone also registered cut-through traffic. The less reliable data collected by the Town using its **Speed Sentry machine** in 2008 and early 2009 does not show excessive speeding.

The empirical evidence of speeding is most likely based on the 5 or 10 percent who do speed. But the empirical evidence is not something a Town Council can ignore, not with the large amount of feedback that the Council receives reporting there is an increasingly dangerous traffic problem. The feedback is not being generated from a hysterical few, although there are those on both sides of the issue; it is coming from a broad range of residents, younger and older, who live throughout the Town. Some argue that **25 mph** on our more narrow residential streets where there are so many children is not a safe speed and that **30 mph** is reckless. **Speed humps** are some of the only devices available to us that are proven to deter cut-through traffic while self-enforcing speed. Yet, the more sparsely placed the speed humps, the less they deter speed. Data indicate that speeds increase approximately 0.5 to 1 mph for every 100 feet of separation of humps up to 1,000 feet. **Montgomery County** has shown significant reduction in volume on roads with speed humps, although minimal reduction on streets where roundabouts have been installed. As for stop signs, full compliance at stop signs is rare, but so is complete disregard. Evaluations show that a majority of drivers roll slowly through unwarranted stop signs.

Last fall, in a Town Journal article, residents were asked for their input regarding traffic calming. Residents were invited to submit their comments to me or other members of the Council to pass on to **Ralph Schofer** (the traffic engineer hired through an RFP process in which residents were invited to participate) or they were invited to contact Ralph directly. Many in Town did so. There was an interim draft report that was submitted to the Council and made available at Town Hall in July. The report was discussed at a Town Council meeting attended by several residents after seeing the discussion on the agenda for the meeting. There were formal meetings at the Town Hall in February, and again at the Council meeting in March.

Many of the measures the Town will vote on are an attempt to: standardize the intersections with regard to stop signs; use speed humps to deter cut-through on all streets (not solely on entry streets) while self-enforcing speeding; respond to repeated reports of inappropriate driving on residential streets where large numbers of children walk to school, the pool, or summer camp; and deter

excessive running of stop signs and road rage incidents at two busy intersections, in particular with regard to children walking at Dorset and Warwick, and Dorset and Essex.

This is an unpleasant process with possible unpleasant outcomes for some, and relief for others. Hopefully, we can keep a bridge over the divide that this issue always creates in our community. On a final note, to that person who, I assume in annoyance, continues to honk their horn every time they travel over the speed hump in front of my home, keep it up. After all these years, you have been woven into the folklore of our family; you've endeared yourself to us.

References: Institute of Transportation Engineers. Traffic Calming: State of the Practice. Washington: ITE, 1999. pp. 105, 213, 120.

Spring Brown Bag Lunch Planned For Friday, April 24

By Jeffrey Z. Slavin, Mayor

With the arrival of the Spring season, we hope that there will be a nice turnout for our next quarterly Brown Bag Lunch, set for Friday, April 24, from noon to 1:00 p.m. at the Town Hall. As always, it is suggested that you bring a sandwich or main dish to share. Soft drinks, utensils, ice, and napkins are provided. Council members able to attend and I will look forward to chatting with any Town resident about a variety of topics, particularly the Earth Day celebrations that will take place the following day. If you have questions, call me at **301-657-2229** or email me at **mayor@Townofsomerset.com**.



Traffic Calming Proposal

By Cathy Pickar, Council member

The following are the five sections of street calming measures to be voted on individually by the Town Council at the Monday, April 6 meeting.

1. Parking Restrictions and Sidewalks:

Based on feedback from residents, I recommend that consideration of further parking restrictions and additional sidewalks be removed from traffic calming measures being considered on April 6, 2009.

2. Speed Limit: Lower the speed limit to 15 mph. **Cost estimate: Changing of all speed limit signs at approximately \$80 per sign x 20 = \$1600.**

3. Monitoring: As part of our ongoing process of traffic calming, establish a program of continued monitoring of traffic on all streets so we have an annual collection of comparable data.



4. Re-mark all speed humps, crosswalks, stop bars, parking strips, and school pavement markers with highly contrasting thermo-plastic tape that lasts longer and remains brighter than paint. **(Cost estimate: \$9,800)**

5. Installation of speed humps and bumps, change of turn radius at Falstone and Warwick, closure of Drummond/Cumberland Alley to through traffic, rumble strips, a trial of the yellow center-intersection pedestrian signs (such as the one currently at Dorset and Warwick) and additional stop signs on Greystone: **(Cost estimate: \$18,450)**

Descriptions below:

- Closure of Warwick/Drummond alley in a manner that allows the bordering houses on Cumberland and Drummond access to their driveways **pending approval, if necessary** from the requisite governing officials and safety personnel. **Cost estimate: \$2200**
- Shortening of the radius of the turn at Falstone and Warwick as described in the traffic calming report. **Cost estimate: Already part of the current price quote. Working with the county to pay for this project since a rain garden may be part of the reconfiguration.**
- Speed bumps, design to be determined in consultation with Ralph Schofer and Larry Plummer, to be placed in a four-way pattern at Dorset and Warwick and in a three-way pattern at Warwick and Essex. **Cost estimate for 7 bumps and 7 signs: \$1,400 for bumps (200 each) plus \$1,050 for signs. Total cost estimate: \$2,450**
- **Rumble Strips:** Add rumble strips to Dorset at the approach in both directions to the intersection at Deal. **Estimated cost: \$1800**
- **A trial of yellow standing pedestrian signs at intersections:** Place three signs, similar to the one currently in the intersection of Dorset and Warwick, on Dorset at the intersection of Dorset and Devon, on Dorset at the intersection of Dorset and Deal (where the rumble strips will be placed), on Dorset at the intersection of Dorset and Big Surrey. *** Estimated cost: \$300.**
 - **Stop Signs:** Two on Greystone at Surrey, two on Greystone and Grantham, two at Greystone and Falstone. **\$150 each. Total cost estimate \$900.**
 - **Speed humps:** Total of 13 Humps. Five are replacements of humps already in the areas to be paved. Eight additional humps throughout the Town. The paving contract includes nine. **Estimated cost for the four additional humps not included in contract: \$9600 for humps: Eight signs at \$150 each, \$1200. Total cost estimate: \$10,800. All humps to be placed according to the traffic engineer's specification.**
 - **2–(1 existing plus 1 additional) Dorset between Deal and Wisconsin** (remove the one that is currently there and replace with two that are better spaced to deter speed of cars as they travel toward Wisconsin to catch the light before it turns red.
 - **1–Dorset between Little Surrey and Warwick.** Currently the stretch between the hump at 4708 Dorset and the stop sign at Big Surrey and Dorset is not optimal to discourage speeding. The additional hump would be spaced to deter acceleration between the humps.
 - **2 (1 existing plus 1 additional)–Little Cumberland.** Place one additional hump on Little Cumberland to deter speeding. * Whatever is added to Dorset between Deal and Wisconsin should also be added

continued on page 9

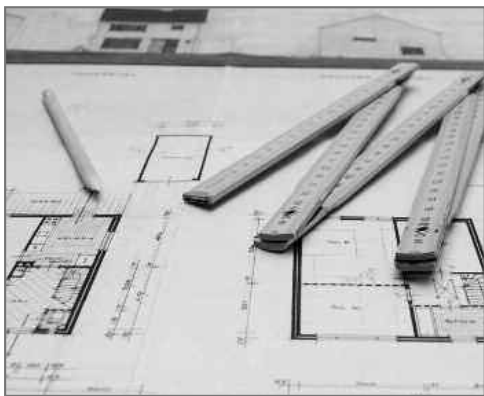
to Little Cumberland to deter Little Cumberland from becoming an alternate route for Dorset.

- **1–Warwick.** Place one hump between Essex and Falstone to slow speed on the downhill approach to Falstone. This is a busy street with children commuting between summer camp and the pool during summer months.*
- **1–Falstone.** Place one hump on Falstone between Trent and Uppingham.
- **3–(1 existing plus 1 additional) Big Cumberland.** Remove the current humps and re-space them, adding one new hump.*
- **2–Greystone lower and upper.** Lower Greystone speed hump is to conform with speed humps located at or near all entrances to Somerset. Upper Greystone speed hump is for deterring speed.
- **1–Devon Lane.** Devon Lane has no sidewalks. There have been consistent reports of cars speeding in the straight lane. At least five young children live in homes on the alley.*

* *Not included in Ralph Schofer's original proposal.*

Bathhouse Renovation Update

By Tom Eldridge, Council member



Since January, the Town has been working closely with **McInturff Architects** as part of a contract we have with them to design a renovated bathhouse. There will be a meeting on April 14, at 7:30 p.m. at the Town Hall to review cost estimates for this work. Residents are encouraged to attend. The purpose of this article is to discuss the scope and process associated with this effort.

After approximately ten years of discussion and debate, the Town Council last March (2008) unanimously adopted design criteria for a bathhouse renovation. Among the key changes contemplated by these criteria are:

- **Adding a shelter space for people to take refuge in during thunderstorms.**
- **Replacing the floor in the women's bathroom which has failed structurally and is currently shored up.**
- **Replacing the wall adjacent to the ramp down to the pump room which also is being shored up and is in danger of failure.**

- **Altering some of the damaging environmental practices associated with the current pool complex such as the dumping of pool water and storm water from the parking lot into the creek.**
- **Making the bathhouse and toddler pool fully accessible to people with disabilities.**
- **Adding a serving kitchen and food and equipment storage space for swim team activities.**

At the time the Town adopted these criteria, the initial **cost estimate for the construction work on the bathhouse and pool area was \$1.8 million (not including work in the parking lot)**. Since they began work, McInturff has been diligently working to balance the Town's proposed program with regulatory requirements such current building and fire safety codes, and County concerns associated with the fact that the pool sits in an environmentally sensitive and protected stream valley buffer zone.

The Town held public meetings with the architects at the Town Hall on March 3 and 16 to discuss their work on schematic designs for the renovation. Based on feedback at those meetings, the architects are obtaining preliminary cost estimates for the schematic designs in preparation for the meeting on April 14. The schematic design phase is about what (roughly) the building will look like, and where it will be located on the site. The current schedule calls for the completion of the schematic design phase at the end of April. A more detailed cost estimating phase will occur in the second level of design in June prior to submission to the County (in July) for their preliminary review and approval. Construction is planned to begin in September 2010, and be completed in May of 2011.

continued on page 10

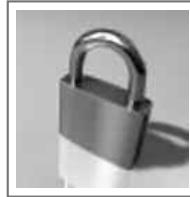
The following themes have emerged during these discussions:

- Cost will be a major factor in Town decision making. Residents want to be sure any expenditure of Town funds and any possible tax increases to pay for capital improvements, such as pool renovation, are carefully and thoroughly considered and minimized.
- If we were to seek to tear down the existing building and build a new bathhouse, this would force us to rebuild it with substantially more fixtures (toilets, sinks, and showers) than exist in the current bathhouse. Because the current number of fixtures is more than adequate for residents' needs, it makes little sense to force such a costly outcome on the Town. Rather, the best course is to renovate the existing structure and add on a shelter space somewhere on the site.
- Out of four possible locations for the shelter space, the one that makes most sense is to extend the current building in the direction of the creek.
- The County will encourage us to reduce the overall amount of impervious surface at the site, so design elements such as additional green space, pervious parking areas, rain gardens, and/or a green roof will likely be seen favorably by the County.
- The toddler pool could fit in a variety of locations and configurations to be made fully accessible for persons with disabilities, but would fit most easily near the bathhouse toward the hillside.
- The Town may be able to use a geothermal energy source to heat

pool water along with solar panels on the roof for electricity and to generate hot water.

- For the Town to preserve the ability to later convert the shelter space into a four-season room, the Town would need to add two unisex bathrooms adjacent to the shelter space.

Residents are encouraged to come to the **April 14 Meeting at 7:30 p.m.** in the Town Hall and participate in the bathhouse and pool renovation project.



Crime and Police Report

A Neighbor Will Knock On Your Door

By Birdie Pieczenik, Chairperson, Security Committee

Over the next few weeks, a neighbor will knock on your door to ask for your help. **The Somerset Security**

Committee, with the help of a cadre of volunteers, has put together a brief set of questions whose answers will allow us to design an emergency alert system that will fit **YOUR** needs.

It will take less than five minutes of your time to complete the survey. Please give us your time. We have 28 volunteers going house-to-house who are donating their time, and you just might meet a new neighbor or two in the process!

This is also the time of year when licensed and unlicensed solicitors, scam artists, and would-be burglars come around trying to engage you in conversation while they assess the "landscape." We generally encourage you not to talk to strangers at your door, so if you have any question whether the person knocking on your door is a neighbor with a survey, just ask "Who is the Mayor of Somerset?" If they don't answer "**Jeffrey Slavin**," (OK, now everyone knows), don't open the door.



Community Sing-Along

By Cathy Pickar, Council member

If issues like traffic calming and pool site renovations don't bring us together, how about a Sing-Along? **Please put Sunday, May 3rd at 5:30 p.m. on your calendar**, and come with your family to the Town Hall for a 45-minute sing-along led by **Cathy Pickar**, followed by some social time (snack donations welcome!).

Early ideas are to focus the sing-along on the narrow topic of the American Song. Broadway? Folk? You request the tunes and we will provide the lyrics. Please send your suggestions to either **Cathy Pickar (301-907-4881, cpickar@Townofsomerset.com)**; or **Jeanette Kreiser (301-907-4881, jskreiser@yahoo.com)**.

All ages are welcome. Ideas are welcome. More in next month's Journal.



Letters to the Editor

From Tom Ainora, Warwick Place

I am impressed by the issues raised by **Gabriel Roth** in his letter to the editor in the February 20 Somerset Town Journal.

The Town has an available surplus of about \$2.4 million, yet Town officials propose to raise property taxes, mostly for a \$3.151 million bathhouse replacement for a Town of a little over 400 houses. Some questions need to be answered in the months leading up to adoption of the Town Budget and vote on a tax increase:

1. Is over \$3 million to replace a pool bathhouse actually a responsible expenditure of money from a fiduciary standpoint?
2. Is it reasonable for such a small municipality of about 400 homes to spend and borrow such a large sum of money?
3. Is this the right economic environment to raise taxes?

I agree with Gabriel Roth. This proposal is “astonishing.”

From Herb Beller, Dorset Avenue

The proposed Traffic Calming Plan contains some constructive measures for slowing down speeders and otherwise making Somerset streets safer. I think it very unlikely, however, that the addition of more speed bumps/humps and rumble strips will reduce cut-through traffic on Dorset Avenue and other Town streets.

In 1983 the Town Council unanimously approved, on a 90 day trial basis, a plan to partially restrict Town access and egress during weekday rush-hours. That plan was carefully designed to minimize inconvenience to Town residents; but a voter referendum prevented it from being implemented. More than a quarter century and many speed humps later, the Traffic Calming Plan acknowledges that the volume of cut-through traffic continues to be “very high” and that “entrance restrictions” might ultimately be the only feasible solution. Before rushing to further chop up our streets with 12 new bumps and humps, the Council should revisit the 1983 plan and give it a try.

From Harry Rand, Greystone Street

Dear Mayor Slavin,

Could you please state for the record if there is any parliamentary method (at all) that you and the Council would find acceptable and compelling by which the residents of the Town can direct the Council to halt further non-emergency work on the pool and surrounding buildings, and to cause the Council to cease discussing this un-killable project that—zombie like, lacking popular sustenance or aid but yet threatening—staggers forward without regard to support from the residents of Somerset.

A brief answer would be best, addressing only the parliamentary question of how it is possible to halt this runaway fiasco.

From Lucy Freeman, Dorset Avenue

I wish to commend and thank the Mayor, the Town Clerk, and our excellent staff of snow plowers and shovelers. We have had two storms this winter: the first turned to nasty ice, the second was beautiful light snow. Our streets were plowed and cleared and our sidewalks were in the best shape I have ever seen. As someone who walks in the day and night, I truly appreciate this.

I understand Robert SanGeorge is frustrated his street is not plowed until the second day, but I found it a wonderful picture to see many of our Town children enjoying the sledding. The day after the snow, Cumberland was totally cleared.

From Rebecca Arbogast, Cumberland; Sue Besharov, Little Cumberland; Rohit Khanna, Falstone; Abby Nolan, Surrey; Brian Pilot, Greystone; Sally Shea, Essex; Deborah Shulman, Falstone; Joe Turi, Trent

We are writing to urge the council to approve the traffic calming measures proposal. From 2004 to 2008, according to objective traffic counts, traffic has dramatically increased on several streets in town and in some cases nearly doubled.

We are especially gratified to see that the proposed changes are comprehensive and Town wide. These changes will slow cars, remind drivers that this is a residential neighborhood packed with kids, and reduce cut-through traffic. Many of us have witnessed cars careening down Warwick or flying around Greystone; we have feared for our kids walking down Cumberland’s hill. And while we understand that some of these measures may be inconvenient to residents as well as non-residents, we are willing to sacrifice a few seconds a day of our time for increased safety and serenity.

The report's proposals are modest and sensible. We urge the Council to follow them.

Residents are invited to submit Letters to the Editor on any subject pertaining to the Town. Letters are subject to editing by the Editor. There is a limit of 150 words per letter. Any submissions are due by the Journal deadline of the 15th of the month at 4:30 p.m.

Permits Granted



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

Trees:

Philip and Sylvia Young, 5504 Greystone Street, to remove a storm-damaged and decaying tulip poplar in their front yard.

Betty Lou Hummel, 4923 Essex Avenue, to remove a dead Virginia pine in her back yard.

Curbs:

Nancy Hooff and Jim Campbell, 5516 Uppingham Street, to replace their driveway apron.

Fences:

Nicolas Lloreda and Alessandra Tassara, 4813 Falstone Avenue, to erect a 3½ -foot high cedar fence to enclose their back yard.



Keeping Somerset Beautiful

By Corrie Morsey, Chair, Parks and Natural Resources Committee

English Ivy—Romantic—Invasive—Often Fatal

Concerned residents have recently brought to our attention the abundance of English ivy growing in Town. It is one of the most invasive plants in our region, covering trees, shrubs and landscapes in deep evergreen foliage. Despite the rather romantic look of an ivy-covered tree, we should all be aware that the vine often harbors debilitating plant diseases and pests. It also adds weight to tree limbs, making them more prone to wind and snow damage. Eventually, English ivy vines can cause the death of a tree, even large sturdy ones, as evidenced in many areas of Town parkland. While the Town's **Environmental and Parks and Natural Resources Committee** have held, and will continue to hold, invasive removal sessions in Vinton Park, homeowners can eliminate the problem in their yards. Clippings need to be placed into household trash to be destroyed rather than recycled.

Join Your Neighbors in Celebrating Arbor and Earth Days

On Saturday, March 28th, 9:00 a.m., at the Town Swimming Pool, come and join us for a demonstration by **Barb Neal**, Town arborist, on the proper way to plant bare root trees. The tree(s) you ordered will be delivered to the pool so you can take them home with you that morning.

The same morning we will also be removing garlic mustard, an invasive plant, which we have discovered growing near the creek. We need to revisit the two areas where we pulled this invasive last year in an effort to keep it out of our parkland so desirable vegetation can grow. The plant's seeds remain viable for five years.

Sponsored by the Environmental and Parks and Natural Resources Committees.

Preliminary Agenda

Regular Meeting of Town Council

Monday, April 6, 2009 – 7:30 p.m.

1. Administration of oaths of office to new 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 2 regular meeting – 7:40 p.m.
4. Discussion of financial report – 7:45 p.m.**
5. Suggestions and questions from residents – 7:50 p.m.
6. Action on proposals for traffic calming including approval of contract for extra measures – 8:00 p.m.**
7. Public hearing on Mayor Slavin's proposed budget and property tax rates for FY-10 – 8:30 p.m.**
8. Action to extend building permit issued to Matthew Zaft and Erin Chlopak for new house and garage at 4820 Dorset Avenue for six months – 9:00 p.m.
9. Fact finding hearing and action on application by Marc Reshefsky, 4705 Falstone Avenue, to add an inside room on the lower level – 9:05 p.m.
10. Action on extension of contract with Gayley Knight of Mother Geek Productions for managing Town Web site for monthly fee of \$375, to include monthly update and thorough review annually – 9:15 p.m.
11. Action on Swimming Pool Committee's recommendations for changes to the Pool Rules – 9:20 p.m.
12. Action on revised cost of white coating main pool by High Sierra for \$33,660 – 9:25 p.m.
13. Action on High Sierra bid to install dual drain system in baby pool for \$3,200 – 9:30 p.m.
14. Confirmation of Mayor's reappointment of Derek Coen and Brian Graham to the Batting Cage Committee for two-year terms and reappointment of David Sapin as chair for one year – 9:35 p.m.
15. Mayor's report – 9:40 p.m.
16. Developments/plans in the vicinity of Somerset – 9:45 p.m.
17. Adjournment – 9:55 p.m.



left to right: Council members Alan Proctor, Richard Kessler, Cathy Pickar, Mayor Jeffrey Slavin, Council member Tom Eldridge, Council Vice President Marnie Shaul

"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."