



SOMERSET TOWN JOURNAL



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Somerset History

By Lesley Simmons, Cumberland Avenue

We know that the parcel that the original Town of Somerset founders purchased in the late 19th century was named *Somerset Heights*, but we don't know why it was so named. Based on our recent weather patterns, I'm wondering if it was named for the same reason as our namesake, the County of Somerset, in England. Many centuries ago, that

area in England was marshland and under water much of the year. The first West Saxon colonists established themselves on the uplands, and each year waited to move their flocks and herds until those rich pastures had been dried out by the summer sun. Hence the name Somerset, originally Sumorsaeter (the summer dwellers). From H.P.R. Finberg, *"The Formation of England, 550-1042."*

News from the Swim Team

By Sarah Morse, Dorset Avenue

It's a season of records for the Somerset Dolphins—both in and out of the water!

We have a record number of swimmers! **132** on the team, **40** on the developmental team; **172 in total**, **24** more than last year.

We have set a record number of team records! Two new relay records and 6 individual records have been made to date. The Boys 14 and under graduated relay team bested the 2007 record and the Boys Open Relay team bested a record set in 2006. **Isaac Sorenson** set two new records in 15-18 Backstroke and Breast stroke; **Mark Berry** broke the 15-18 Freestyle record and **Gavin Springer** now holds three new records in 11-12 Boys Individual Medley, Backstroke, and Butterfly.

We have a record number of wins! As of July 15, the team is 3 and 1 for Saturday meets and 3 and 0 for Wednesday night. A third place win at Relay Carnival makes this our best season in several years. We are currently in second place in the **K division**.

We made a record number of t-shirts! One hundred and one "Focus, Believe, Achieve" t-shirts were screened and decorated by team members in preparation for the meet against **Clopper Mill**. Other weekly team activities continue to be



the highlight of the summer! We have a dessert contest, laser tag, sign making, breakfast with the coaches and new for this year, Midnight Madness!

We have a record number of teams going to All Star Relays! Eight relays teams finished in first place and are invited to compete in the **MCSL All Star Relays**. The boys finished first in six of the eight boys-only relays! And finally, **Gavin Springer** competed in two events, IM and Fly, at the exclusive **Coaches Invitational Long Course**—a new team record for Long Course events.

The season ends on **July 25** with the Divisional championship meet followed by the team Banquet that evening.

Thank you to everyone for all the support the town and the parents give us.

Calendar

Monday, August 3
Council Meeting

Monday, August 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**.



On My Mind

By Mayor Jeffrey Z. Slavin

Marilyn Adland | Judy Frankel | Virginia Mitz

Three women of accomplishment. Three formidable and influential civic activists. Coincidentally, all of them lived on **Uppingham Street** in Somerset, for a total among them of about a century and a half.

Sadly, all three have passed away this year even as they were continuing to contribute their time and passion while in their ninth decade of life. Thankfully, we will always benefit from the legacy of their leadership.

Their passing is significant to me because I feel that so much of what Somerset is today is because of them and others of their kind. They fought unnecessary development in **Friendship Heights**, sent their children to our public schools, and played leadership roles in **PTA**. Two of them served on the Council, and the other chaired the powerful **Pool Committee**. They attended meeting after meeting after meeting. They got people involved.

These women did this work because it was right, and not because they wanted or needed any recognition; but they deserve it now.

Like many women of their era in **Montgomery County**, their husbands went to government jobs and they were the family members who did the community and political work. In those days, we had more women elected and in non-profit leadership roles than we do now, and **Virginia, Judy and Marilyn** were truly representative of that.

My generation is a little different and, unfortunately, in the County we do not have as many folks like these women to help us today, even here in Somerset. Our committees are not as vibrant and we just can't find enough folks to serve the community and attend meetings.

For many reasons there is lots of valid competition for people's time. I have just come back from studying local government at Harvard, where one of the many things I learned is that the decline in civic volunteerism is a national trend.

While I don't necessarily have an answer at this time, it is my hope that here in Somerset we can buck this trend, at least a little. So, in memory of these outstanding women, I hope everyone will consider stepping up their volunteer work and maybe join a committee or attend an extra meeting or two. Pay attention to civic matters, and read the Journal more carefully. I know it's hard to find the time, but it's important and I guarantee it will be rewarding.

And Judy, Marilyn, and Virginia would smile.

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www.townofsomerset.com

Please let us know if you prefer to receive the Journal via email.
Please provide your email address to the Editor at maxinea@comcast.net.

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
Bill Farley, 4814 Grantham Avenue
301-961-5987
bfarley@townofsomerset.com
Cathy Pickar, 4915 Dorset Avenue
301-907-4881
cpickar@townofsomerset.com

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

Barbara Zeughauser, 5412 Trent Street
301-951-8560
bzeughauser@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.

Town Hall Tidbits | By Tom Carter, Clerk-Treasurer



Found

A pair of rimless glasses was found in the vicinity of 4711 Cumberland around June 21. A pair of sunglasses and a Vanguard case (possibly for camera or cell phone) were left at the Town Hall after the July 4 picnic. Call Tom at 301-657-3211 if you think any of these might belong to you.

Town Trees and Grounds

Don't forget to help us by watering the Town trees in your yards when no rain has fallen in several days.



Sidewalk Cleaning

Residents are reminded that they are responsible for keeping their sidewalks clear of debris, hedges and other plantings.

Section 4-103 of the Town Code says that owners and occupants of houses shall:

“(a) maintain the land between their property and the street curb in good and orderly condition; and,

“(b) clean the Town sidewalk in front, and on the side, of their property and keep the sidewalk free from overhanging shrubbery.”

MVA Mobile Office

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



Examiner Delivery

If you would like to have delivery of the Examiner stopped for any reason, call their circulation desk at 800-531-1223 or email them at circulation@washingtonexaminer.com.

Permits Granted



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

Trees:

Alan Proctor, 4900 Cumberland Avenue, to remove a tulip poplar that was severely damaged by a falling tree.

Dan Hirsch, 4901 Dorset Avenue, to remove a tulip poplar that was severely damaged by a falling tree.

Fences:

Charles and Charlotte Perret, 4716 Falstone Avenue, to erect a black aluminum fence to enclose their pool.



Sing Along, Town Potluck (and maybe s'mores!)

By Cathy Pickar, Council member
Save the date! Saturday, September 12, at the Somerset pool, **Cathy Pickar** will lead the **2nd Somerset Sing Along** while the Town hosts its **pool-side potluck dinner**. The Potluck is at 6:00 p.m. and the Sing-Along at 7:30 p.m. (Who knows, maybe we can have a bonfire and s'mores. See details in August newsletter.) Send your song requests to Cathy at cpickar@townofsomerset.com and plan your potluck dish for an evening of community food and music. (And, if you have one and can strum some chords, bring your string instrument. We'll have a group tuning prior to the sing along.)

More details coming in the August Journal!



By Jeffrey Z. Slavin, Mayor

Kudos for July 4 Celebration

Our largest annual Town event was extremely successful again this year and thanks are in order for all who helped in the endeavor. We were blessed with the attendance of our **Congressman Chris Van Hollen, County Executive Ike Leggett** and **First Lady Catherine Leggett**, Somerset's own **Senator Brian Frosh, Delegates Susan Lee and Bill Frick** and **County Council members Roger Berliner, Nancy Floreen and Marc Elrich**. It always amazes me how many of our elected officials show up year after year for a Town of our size. I honestly believe it can be attributed to the activism and influence of our residents. And we could not do it without the leadership of **Clerk-Treasurer Tom Carter**, who unselfishly gives up his own wedding anniversary celebration every year for us. I also appreciate the assistance of the Town maintenance employees, and I was happy that our two police officers were able to be present and distribute information.

Kudos also go to **Special Events Chair Ann Brown** and those helping her, **Kemy Monahan** with refreshments, and **Christine Farley** on decorations. We enjoyed the **Boy Scout Color Guard** consisting of residents **Mark Berry, Danny Scheiner** and **Brendan McMahon** and the beautiful voice of **David Batson** leading us in the singing of the national anthem. **Gina Pack** organized a wonderful group of young people to again read the **Declaration of Independence**, including **Liam Farley, Alex Pack, Zahra Thabat, Zeki Thabat, Joey Turi, Nicole Vanderzon, Hannah Holzer, Leah Holzer, Julia Losey, Olivia Muro, Talia Bartley, Elena Burger, Thomas Pack** and **Maeve White**. I was pleased to see **Mayor Emeritus Walter Behr** with **Barbara**, and former 52-year residents **Maury** and **Flora Atkin**.

Report from **Maryland Municipal League Convention**. A number of us are back from the MML Convention in Ocean City, including **Council Members Cathy Pickar, Bill Farley, and Alan Proctor** along with **Tom Carter**. We attended a variety of work sessions on topics like municipal officials' liability, traffic calming, speed cameras, going green and effective meetings. We networked with other elected officers in the state, and met the **Governor, Lt. Governor, Comptroller** and **Attorney General**. I was re-elected to the **League's Board of Directors** and named to chair an ad hoc committee on by-laws review. Most of us attended the **Montgomery Chapter dinner** where we had the chance to interact with various County officials. There are so many ways we benefit from the League membership.



Security Report

By Birdie Pieczenik,
Chairperson, Security
Committee

Crime Prevention—Garages and Sheds

The Security Committee has offered Somerset resident many crime prevention tips over the last few years. None are foolproof (**crime-proof?**), but each tip minimizes the chance that you or your property will become a crime target. We hope you have acted on some of them.

The following suggestions about preventing break-ins of sheds and garages come directly from the Montgomery County Police, following a spate of recent break-ins in areas

in or near Somerset. Please take them seriously.

- **Fit a good quality padlock to all shed and detached garage doors; make sure that the lock attaches to a strong shackle.**
- **Lock and cover windows so expensive equipment is not viewable.**
- **Mark valuable property inside sheds and garages (such as lawnmowers, power tools and bicycles) with your initials.**
- **Register all bicycles with the Montgomery County Police.**
- **Secure all backyard fences and gates.**
- **Keep any doors that lead to the house closed and locked whether someone is at home or not.**
- **Install exterior lights on all sides of your house, and put them on motion detectors, light sensors, or timers.**
- **Do not leave your garage remote sitting in a vehicle parked outside your garage.**
- **Do not hide any keys on the ledge above your garage, or under the planter next to the garage. They are the first places thieves look!**

Report suspicious activity to the **Montgomery County Police** by dialing **911** if a crime is in progress, or the police non-emergency number; **301-279-8000**.

And have a crime-free summer.



Town Trees

By Corrie Morsey, Chair, Parks and Natural Resources Committee

Tree Removals

The Town will be asking the Council at the August meeting for permission to remove three trees. Two are dead, unnumbered and are located at **5804 Surrey Street**. The third tree is a **lopsided sugar maple, #241, 4901 Dorset Avenue**. The tree was pruned away from the overhead wires by the utility company's tree service. The Town's arborist feels it has been pruned beyond redemption and it makes more sense to remove the tree and replant with two willow oaks. (The Council previously approved removal of a dying white oak at this address.)

\$25 Coupon Available to Plant Shade Trees in Your Yard

Montgomery County has begun a tree planting program—**Leaves for Neighborhoods**—aimed at increasing the tree canopy on residential properties in the county. Go to www.montgomeryplanning.org/leaves to download your **\$25 coupon**, which is good when purchasing a tree costing \$75 or more. A list of participating nurseries, qualifying trees, and more can be found at the web site.



Letters to the Editor

From Don Buchanan, Warwick Place

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the members of the **Town Council** who voted to keep our property taxes at the present rate, and for declining to adopt the tax increase proposed in the Mayor's Budget Submission. Nothing hurts property values more than a tax increase.

I swim every day at the Somerset Pool and I love it. Make only necessary repairs and avoid anything expensive. The pool house is all we need, so make the repairs.

Enforce county health codes, pool guest rules and safety rules, and you will be fine.

From Tom Ainora, Warwick Place

In considering options for pool renovations, I would ask that the following principles be followed:

1. **Cost:** Ensure that options chosen require no tax increases now or in the future.
2. **Maintenance:** Approve a plan that produces a pool house and deck that are easy to maintain.
3. **Environment of the Flood Plain:**
 - a. Ensure that the footprint of the pool house or the pool deck is not increased. To increase these footprints in a flood plain is environmentally irresponsible.
 - b. Ensure that the asphalt parking lot is removed, made smaller, and made permeable so water can be absorbed into it.
 - c. Increase plantings in the bowl in front of the pool.

Thanks for all the work that has gone into planning for the pool's renovations and for taking these suggestions into account.

From Joyce Reed, Dorset Avenue

How else besides in the Journal can I express my thanks to the Somerset community, and especially **Helping Hands**, for all the assistance (laced with compassion) that was extended to me these last several months. Having been recently widowed and seeing so many of you sympathetic and supportive for the loss of Somerset's long-term "**tennis czar**" (**Len Reed**), I was again fortunate to find the generosity of the community continued in the aftermath of my own surgery just months later: gifts of soups, door-to-door car rides to doctors offices, casseroles, marketing chores, flowers, and computer repair, as well as tea and sympathy, were in abundance from among my Somerset friends, neighbors, and Helping Hands. I am so lucky to live here among you.

Council Activity

At the July 6 meeting, the Town Council:

1. Heard the Mayor's announcement of a closed Town Council meeting after the June 1 regular meeting to discuss personnel matters.
2. Approved the minutes of the June 1 regular and closed meetings, and the June 8 special meeting.
3. Authorized the payment of (1) annual dues of \$5,455.01 to the Maryland Municipal League for FY-10 and (2) annual premium of \$4,510.00 to the Montgomery County Self-Insurance Program.
4. Denied the application by Mitch Narins, 4909 Essex Avenue, to build a detached two-car garage at the rear of the lot, replace the driveway apron and remove 7 trees because of the trees requiring removal to accommodate the driveway and garage.
5. Approved the building permit application by Alan and Anne Proctor, 4900 Cumberland Avenue, to add a screened enclosure to an already existing rear porch, subject to receipt of a County permit and Town fees and deposit.
6. Approved the recommendation by the Town Arborist to remove seven Town trees: 1) #271, a dead sugar maple on the Essex side of 5702 Warwick, 2) #780, a mostly dead and declining Yoshino cherry at 5608 Warwick Place, 3) #96, a basically dead willow oak at 4824 Cumberland Avenue, 4) #138, a mostly dead pin oak on Deal Place behind the school, 5) #440, a mostly dead red oak at 4812 Grantham Avenue, 6) #239, a mostly dead white oak at 4901 Dorset Avenue, and 7) #695, a nearly dead red maple at 5419 Uppingham Street.
7. Authorized \$3,200 for VIKA Engineering to prepare a topographic survey with 2-foot contour intervals, to include the horseshoe area south of the pool that could be changed into a rain garden during pool renovations.
8. Heard the Mayor's announcement of his emergency authorization of \$5,000 for ECS Mid-Atlantic to perform subsurface soil samples in the vicinity of the pool to verify that the soil could absorb storm water.
9. Approved the purchase of membership management and check-in software for use at the pool at a cost not to exceed \$3,000.

Preliminary Agenda

Regular Meeting of Town Council

Monday, August 3, 2009 – 7:30 p.m.



left to right: Council members Bill Farley, Barbara Zeughouser, Cathy Pickar, Vice President Marnie Shaul, Alan Proctor

1. Approval of minutes of the July 6 regular meeting, the July 20 and 21 special meetings and the July 23 work session – 7:30 p.m.
2. Suggestions and questions from residents – 7:35 p.m.
3. Fact finding hearing and action on application by Bahram and Miriam Soroush, 4519 Dorset Avenue, to add a basement exterior stair – 7:55 p.m.
4. Action on renewal of Town membership in Montgomery Municipal Cable by contributing entire payment from County, which is based on number of Somerset cable subscribers – 8:05 p.m.
5. Action on the following transfers for FY-09: – 8:05 p.m.

Amount	From	To
\$ 6,000	GF Contingency	GF Leaves
\$ 4,000	GF Contingency	GF Recycling
\$65,000	CPF Streets	CPF Pool

6. Mayor’s announcement of his emergency authorization to remove Town tree #283, 4715 Essex Avenue, based on Town Arborist’s recommendation because it had become hazardous – 8:10 p.m.
7. Action on recommendation by Town Arborist to remove three Town trees: two unnumbered, dead maple trees at 5804 Surrey Street and #241, a lopsided sugar maple at 4901 Dorset Avenue that has been pruned beyond redemption by Pepco – 8:15 p.m.**
8. Mayor’s report – 8:20 p.m.
9. Developments/plans in the vicinity of Somerset – 8:25 p.m.
10. Adjournment – 8:30 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.