



SOMERSET TOWN JOURNAL



Volume 54 • No. 7

Date of Publication: January 22, 2009



Investing in Somerset

By Marnie Shaul, Council Vice President

The quality of life in **Somerset** is enhanced by physical assets such as our **parks, streets, bathhouse/pool, and Town Hall**. As with our homes, it's important to maintain and

periodically make significant improvements to these assets. Over the past 10 years, Somerset residents have been talking about making improvements at the bathhouse and Town Hall. At the January Council meeting, the Council took a key step toward making improvements to the bathhouse by approving a contract with an architectural firm. Somerset is also facing other pressing infrastructure investments such as road repaving and traffic calming measures. In 2008, at the Council's request, our Town inspector assessed all the Town streets and recommended a paving schedule. About half the Town's streets are included in a contract for repaving in the spring of **2009**, with others to follow in **2011** and **2016**.

Because Somerset is undertaking major projects, the Mayor and the Council have supported the development of a **10-year capital budget**. I have put together our Town's first **long-term capital budget** so the Council and residents can see what expenditures the Town might undertake year by year. This budget is based on best available information, but actual costs could differ significantly from estimates, and in the future the Council might have different priorities. Our best information is in the nearer term, so that's what I will focus on in this article.

Looking at this fiscal year (**FY2009**) through **FY2011** (*which ends June 30, 2011*); the Council anticipates undertaking two major expenses in addition to the usual maintenance. In the table below, I've listed anticipated expenses in these categories: **streets, bathhouse replacement, and all other**.

Estimated Capital Spending FY09-FY11

	FY09	FY10	FY11
Street Paving	\$ 585,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 243,000
Full Curbs			\$ 305,000
Bathhouse Replacement	\$ 175,000	\$ 300,000	\$ 2,676,000
All Other	\$ 257,550	\$ 107,500	\$ 108,500

Calendar

Monday, February 2
Town Council Meeting

Monday, February 23
MVA Mobile Office

**Friday, March 20 and
Saturday, March 21**
Somerset Used Book Sale

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."

The Council can commit funds only on an annual basis when it adopts its annual budget in May. So, Somerset is committed to spending in this FY for contracts for paving in FY09 and for the architect for the bathhouse.

Somerset started this FY with about **\$2.4 million** in the bank held in reserve for capital projects. This will cover some of the road paving and bathhouse expenses, but to undertake all of what is shown in the table, **Somerset will need to borrow about \$2.2 million**. The loan amount is predicated on having our property and income tax revenues remain relatively the same during these three fiscal years, something which is difficult to forecast in these turbulent

continued on page 7



On My Mind

By Mayor Jeffrey Z. Slavin

Kudos for a Major Council Decision

My father always taught us that one of the differences between a successful person and an unsuccessful one is the ability to make decisions quickly, efficiently, and decisively. Furthermore, once the action is taken, he said, “*don't look back, and stand by what you have done.*”

As most know, the Town has been grappling with the future of the **pool bathhouse** for a frustrating number of years. There have been *committees, surveys, a long range plan, and a series of charrettes, cocktail party conversations, blogging, and the like.* Last year there was even a preliminary Council vote, followed by an election in which the status of the structure was a campaign issue.

Fortunately, a significant step has now been taken with the Council’s action in January to hire a dynamic, green-oriented architectural firm. I applaud the Council’s thorough process and ultimate unanimous vote. My father would be proud. The Town is now on its way to a new or vastly improved building.

While I didn’t have a vote, and therefore became a patient observer/motivator/cheerleader, I was pleased that I was able to shepherd and facilitate this process. I think it was a very good one and am happy there were five excellent bids to choose from. Our **Contract Officer, Council member Tom Eldridge**, did yeoman’s work, and I am also grateful for the amount of time the rest of the Council spent.

Now we must begin the somewhat challenging regulatory process with the **County and Planning Board**. I am convinced that with the expertise and experience of our Town Attorney, we will be able to build what we want. Probably more difficult will be the financing piece, and re-convincing our residents how important this bathhouse is to Town life, and that it will be money well spent. While a **small property tax increase** is on the horizon, I feel more strongly than ever that this facility is the single most significant town asset that not only contributes to making our community such a special place, but also to adding value to our individual properties.

As I walk by the site of our current outmoded facility every day, I continue to envision the future where there will be a dramatic-looking building in place that will be a great neighborhood attraction, with green elements that will be reflective of our values and high standards in protecting the environment. Hopefully, the vast majority of you will share this view.

In This Issue

- Absentee Ballots 4
- Bathhouse 6
- Council Activity 3
- Crime and Police Report 5
- Friendship Heights TMD 7
- Investing in Somerset 1
- Legislation 3
- Mayor’s Desk 4
- On My Mind 2
- Permits Granted 4
- Preliminary Agenda 8
- Somerset Book Sale 7
- Swim Team 6
- Town Hall Tidbits 5
- Trees 6
- Tree Removals 7

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 February 16, 2009, 4:30 p.m.

Legislation

At the January 5 meeting, the Town Council:

1. The Council approved a Town Code amendment to change the tree height for measuring diameter requiring application for removal to agree with industry standard of 4½ feet.

Council Activity

At the December 2 closed meeting, the Town Council:

1. Interviewed bidders for pool bathhouse improvements.

At the December 9 closed meeting, the Town Council:

1. Discussed contracting for pool bathhouse improvements.

At the December 22 closed meeting, the Town Council:

1. Continued discussion on selection of an architect for pool bathhouse improvements.

At the January 5 meeting, the Town Council:

1. Approved an application by Brian Pilot, 5518 Greystone Street, to remove an oak tree in his front yard, but did not take action on his request to remove two trees in his back yard.
2. Postponed discussion on placement of generators until an article is written for the Town Journal.
3. Approved a contract for bathhouse design with McInturff Architects at a cost of \$240,000.
4. Postponed action on a civil engineering contract with VIKA for pool bathhouse complex improvements.
5. Did not receive a recommendation from the Swimming Pool Committee for a management company for the 2009 season. Will act on the committee's recommendation at the February meeting.
6. Received the 2008 swimming pool financial report.
7. Approved a storm water assessment contract with Center for Watershed Protection for \$20,299.60.
8. Approved a statement of employer support for National Guard and Reserve.
9. Set the date for the September 2009 meeting on Tuesday, September 8.
10. Authorized payment of \$100 annual dues to the Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights for 2009.



The Council and I hosted a lively forum on the **Purple Line** earlier this month, which featured a *PowerPoint presentation* by **Mike Madden** from the *Maryland Transit Administration*, followed by an informative panel featuring *State Senator Brian Frosh* (Grantham), *Delegate Bill Bronrott*, *Deidre Smith* from the *MTA*, and former *Planning Board Member Pat Baptiste*. I thank Delegate Bronrott for his help in arranging the speakers. Residents received a wealth of information on the different viewpoints on **alignment, mode of transportation, and environmental impact**. We are urging residents to study this issue and make their views known to the **Governor**.

Right before the Christmas holiday, **Council Vice President Marnie Shaul** and I met with **Angela Lagdameo**, *Special Assistant to the Chief of Staff, Governor's Office of Community Initiatives*. Through this staffer, the Governor was completing his outreach to all of *Maryland's 157 municipalities* to discover how his *Administration* can meet individual needs. Marnie and I talked to Angela about the hot topics in Town and its surroundings, bringing her up to date on the **bathroom renewal, traffic calming, and money matters, etc.** We made a special appeal to her about the need for a **traffic light** at **River Road** and **Landy Lane**, per our association with the **Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights**. If this traffic light is not installed, once the **redevelopment** of the nearby **Washington Episcopal School site** takes place there will be a major increase in the number of cars using **Dorset Avenue** during certain key times in the day. **We cannot let this happen.**

I am pleased to note that **Sarah Morse** and **David Kathan** (Dorset) are excited to have recently installed what I believe are the **first solar panels** in Town. The Morse/Kathan family estimates that this will result in a savings of about **20 percent** on their **electric bill**.

The Board of Elections, under the leadership of **Chair Bonnie Thomson**, is currently in the process of reviewing **absentee ballot** procedures to be put in place for the upcoming election. I am sure that the Board would appreciate hearing from any residents who have ever had a particular concern or a suggestion about the procedures currently in place.

As many of you know, Somerset has the distinction of having three trustees on the board of the **Friends of the Library, Montgomery County Maryland, Inc.**, a nonprofit organization that provides wonderful supplemental programs for our vital public library system. The trustees are **Frank Joseph** (Warwick), who also serves as **Vice President**, **Ellen Butts** (Dorset), and **Matt Fink** (Grantham). Given the precarious state of our County's finances, I am encouraging all residents to become **dues-paying members** of this necessary group in support of the volunteer efforts of Frank, Ellen and Matt. The fee for a basic membership is nominal, and you can join online at **www.folmc.org**.

Permits Granted



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

Trees:

Tom Dimond, 4914 Dorset Avenue, to remove a dying maple in his front yard.

Charles Homonnay-Preyer, 4910 Dorset Avenue, to remove a nuisance mulberry from his front yard.



Absentee Ballot Procedures

By Bonnie Thomson
Chair, Board of Elections

Somerset's Board of Supervisors of Elections will hold an open meeting with Nancy Soreng of the League of Women Voters at the Town Hall on Wednesday, January 28th, at 7:30 p.m. The topic of discussion will be our current absentee ballot procedures. Nancy will provide information on alternative procedures used by other towns.

Town Hall Tidbits | By Tom Carter, Clerk-Treasurer



Tax Time Again; Remember: "TOWN OF SOMERSET"

Somerset's largest source of revenue is a portion of the State income tax paid by Town residents. Unfortunately, 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." A sample of the form appears above. Please don't forget to complete this section when filing your taxes.



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 for 2009** are due for continued use of the equipment. Checks should be made out to "Town of Somerset."

MVA Mobile Office

The MVA's mobile office will be in **Friendship Heights on Monday, January 26,** and **Monday, February 23,** from **10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.**



Crime and Police Report



By Birdie Pieczenik, Chairperson, Security Committee

To paraphrase the **Marine Corps** advertising slogan, "we're looking for a few good men," the **Somerset Security Committee** is looking for a few good neighbors. We now have 12 volunteers for a door-to-door survey of Somerset residents that will be the precursor to designing an Emergency Alert system.

Since currently we have only twelve volunteers, and these are largely drawn from our committee members and their spouses, 35 homes are too many to ask one volunteer to visit! So, please call Birdie (301-652-1206), to volunteer. The Security Committee promises you that you won't have to knock on

doors in 20-degree weather, you will have enough time to complete your "mission," and you will be given a "thank you" drink at Birdie's house (if the contractors ever finish the renovation).

Except for one car being illegally "entered" this month (I can't say broken into because the doors were **NOT** locked), we have had the good fortune of being secure in Somerset, but please don't get complacent. Just remember **the three L's: locks, lights, and let's-watch-out-for-our-neighbors.**

A tip for your outdoor lighting needs: consider switching to long-life energy-saving flood lights. They are guaranteed to last five years, and a **75-watt light output uses the equivalent of only 19 watts!**

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

Bathhouse Project Moves Forward!

By Tom Eldridge, Council member and Marnie Shaul, Council Vice President

The Town has selected **McInturff Architects** to do the design work on the *pool house renovation project*. The selection was made after a detailed bidding and evaluation process that began in September and involved two rounds of proposals, interviews, and reference checks. At the January Town Council meeting, the Council unanimously approved the contract (subject to a few final negotiating points), and preliminary work on the project should have begun by the time of this article's publication. The Council was very pleased to take this important step toward renovating the bathhouse.

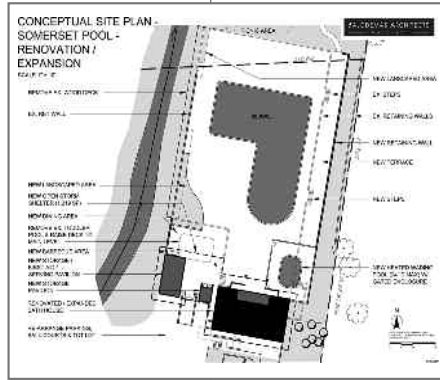
The cost for the services is approximately **\$240,000**, which will cover schematic design, plans used to seek regulatory approval from Montgomery County, development of construction drawings, and oversight of construction through to completion. The program adopted by the Council for this project involves regular presentations to the community as designs are developed.

The schedule for the project calls for *initial plans to be completed this year, construction drawings to be completed in early 2010, construction to begin in September 2010, and construction completion in May 2011.*

To support the design work and **M-NCPPC approval**, the Council

will also need to contract with a civil engineering firm to develop plans to address a variety of issues such as storm water management, sediment control, forest conservation, and site and grading. The Council expects to take action on a contract at its February meeting.

The bathhouse project is the largest infrastructure project Somerset has undertaken in decades. To assist the Town in managing the project, the Council has engaged **Balodemas Architects** to oversee the project. **Tom Carter**, our *Town Clerk*, will maintain a separate budget for the project so that the Council can focus easily on financial management.



this spring (March–April). *Town arborist Barb Neal* has just returned from the *Mid-Atlantic Nurserymen's Trade Show* and found a grower who is very interested in this project and can supply native trees. Most of the *trees cost well under \$20*, so this is your opportunity to take advantage of a good deal. Once the list is prepared, we'll provide you with descriptions and other details. Barb has volunteered to donate her time to give us a planting demonstration on a weekend when you will also be able to pick up the trees you ordered.

Trees not only enhance the value of our homes but they also stem storm water runoff and improve our air quality. They define Somerset!



News from the Swim Team



By Sarah Morse, Dorset Avenue

ISO Head and Assistant Coaches

The **Somerset Swim Team** is looking to hire a head coach and three assistant coaches for our summer program. The ideal candidate for

head coach will have experience managing a large team, developing competitive and new swimmers, managing coaching staff, and with MCSL or other summer swim programs. He/she must be a certified lifeguard. Coaching certification is a plus. The program runs from **May 27 to August 2**. Assistant coaches should have coaching experience as well as competitive swimming experience. Please contact **Sarah Morse, morsekathan@gmail.com** for more information. Salary commensurate with experience.

Friendship Heights Transportation Management District Advisory Committee



By Bill Farley, Grantham Avenue

One of the several Montgomery County Committees advising the County Executive and County Council to make recommendations on matters relating to Friendship Heights is the

Friendship Heights Transportation Management District (TMD) Advisory Committee.

The advisory committee monitors employer plans, proposes guidelines for reducing traffic, reviews traffic patterns, and makes recommendations on commuting, parking and other related matters. Recently, the TMD has been studying area transportation concerns of the **Friendship Heights Metro Station**, and the **buses** and **taxis** that serve Friendship Heights, as well as traffic devices and pedestrian safety.

I sit on this committee for the *Town of Somerset*, along with representatives from *Chevy Chase Village*, *Somerset House*, *Friendship Heights Village*, and *local employers*. Our main focus is to make recommendations to integrate the new traffic that will be generated by the **Wisconsin Place construction** in addition to the existing traffic. For those unfamiliar, *Wisconsin Place* is an **8-acre parcel of land containing 1.1 million square feet of development**. It will be a mixed-use facility consisting of a **40,000 square foot Community Center**, **residential units**, **retail outlets**, **office space**, and a **Whole Foods store**. The Community Center is expected to open between **July and September of 2009**.

The 432 residential units should be opening in April of 2009. The hope is that by the spring of 2009, the entire retail development should be up and running.

When the new **Chevy Chase Land Company building** is completed on **Wisconsin Circle**, a **Metro Transit Store** will be located on the first floor level. The TMD will distribute brochures about its activities from the store.

Please contact me at Farley@justice.com if you have any questions or concerns about the Friendship Heights traffic or Somerset's interests. If you would like to attend a meeting, they are held on the second Tuesday of the month at **8:30 a.m.**, at the **Somerset House Management Association Clubhouse, 5620 Wisconsin Avenue, Chevy Chase**.

Heads Up! Book Sale Coming Soon at Somerset ES

By Elizabeth Hurwit, Dorset Avenue

Somerset Elementary School's Annual Used Book Sale will be on **Friday, March 20**, and **Saturday, March 21**, with **donations accepted** from **March 16–19**. This is one of the school's most popular and successful events. So start clearing off those shelves of no longer needed **children's books**, **adult books** (fiction and nonfiction), **videos**, **games**, **audio tapes**, **CDs**, and **DVDs**, and look for more information in next month's *Town Journal*. We welcome volunteers to help sort books or work at the sale. **For information**, please call **Cathleen Leipold** at **301-657-1946**, or **Elizabeth Hurwit** at **301-652-0608**.



Tree Removals

Weather permitting; the following trees will be removed beginning Monday, January 26:

Oak—near the Dorset/Wisconsin Avenue entrance into Town—south side of Dorset Avenue

Maple—4602 Dorset Avenue

Maple—4728 Dorset Avenue

Maple—Surrey side of 4731 Essex Avenue

Maple—Surrey side of 4801 Essex Avenue

Maple—5712 Surrey Street

Oak—5809 Surrey Street

Cherry—5526 Trent Street

Oak—4815 Cumberland Avenue

Elm—Capello Park

For everyone's safety it may be necessary to close down a portion of the street(s) involved for a short period of time. We appreciate your cooperation and patience.

Investing in Somerset from page 1

economic times. In addition, construction costs could differ from the current estimate once more is known during the project's design phase, and the paving contracts could vary depending on the cost of oil.

Mayor Slavin and I met with a representative of a banking firm who indicated that the longest term the bank would be likely to consider is 15 years, and that the bank would need to see that Town revenues would be sufficient to cover debt service. If Somerset wants to move forward with the pool project, it will need to borrow funds in 2010 and put in place a revenue structure in this next budget (FY2009) to support servicing the debt. Over the next few months, I will continue to write about the financial implications of Somerset's investing in its future.

Preliminary Agenda

Regular Meeting of Town Council

Monday, February 2, 2009 – 7:30 p.m.

1. Approval of minutes of January 5 regular meeting – 7:30 p.m.
2. Discussion of financial report – 7:35 p.m.
3. Suggestions and questions from residents – 7:40 p.m.
4. Discussion of proposals for traffic calming master plan – 7:50 p.m.
5. Action on recommendation by Environmental Committee on street light replacement – 8:20 p.m.
6. Fact finding hearing and action on application by Charlotte and Charles Perret, 4716 Falstone Avenue, to demolish their existing deck and install a pool and patio – 8:50 p.m.
7. Action on civil engineering contract with VIKA for pool bathhouse complex improvements at a basic cost of \$44,000 – 9:00 p.m.**
8. Action on Swimming Pool Committee’s recommendation of a management company for 2009 season – 9:10 p.m.
9. Discussion of Swimming Pool Committee’s proposed budget for 2009 season – 9:25 p.m.**
10. Mayor’s report – 9:35 p.m.
11. Developments/plans in the vicinity of Somerset – 9:40 p.m.**
12. Adjournment – 9:45 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.”