



SOMERSET TOWN JOURNAL



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Community Service Day

By Sarah Morse, Special Events Committee

The annual **Community Service Day**, December 13, was a big success. This is always a wonderful intergenerational event, with everyone from seniors to kindergartners working side by side. It was especially gratifying to see so many teenagers helping this year and we really appreciate their presence. They are very capable and always cheerful, and add a special quality.

We got a lot done, including:

- Stuffing over **1,800 envelopes** for *Community Council for Homeless at Friendship Place* (CCHFP)
- Making some **500 sandwiches** (thank you to **David Kathan** for going out to get more bread! Somehow, we were 300 pieces short!) The sandwiches were delivered to the *Emergency Men's Shelter* at Gude Drive
- Sewing **20 or so mailbox surprises** for the *Children's Inn at NIH*
- Wrapping **29 presents** for *CCHFP – Housing First Program*
- Making **12 housewarming “Dinner’s on Us” baskets** for *A Wider Circle*
- Putting together **50 toiletry/snack gift bags** for *homeless clients of CCHFP*
- Sorting **canned food** for *Manna*



Thank you everyone who came out to help, especially to **Vanessa Piala** for delivering the sandwiches and food for Manna, to sixth grader **Matthew Menzi** for organizing the canned food drive, and to **P. Kaye Haniffee** for delivering the baskets. The Community Service Day coordinators are always looking for new ideas for projects, so please contact **Mary Geffroy** or **Sarah Morse** with suggestions for next year.

Photos by Dave and Abby Kathan

Calendar

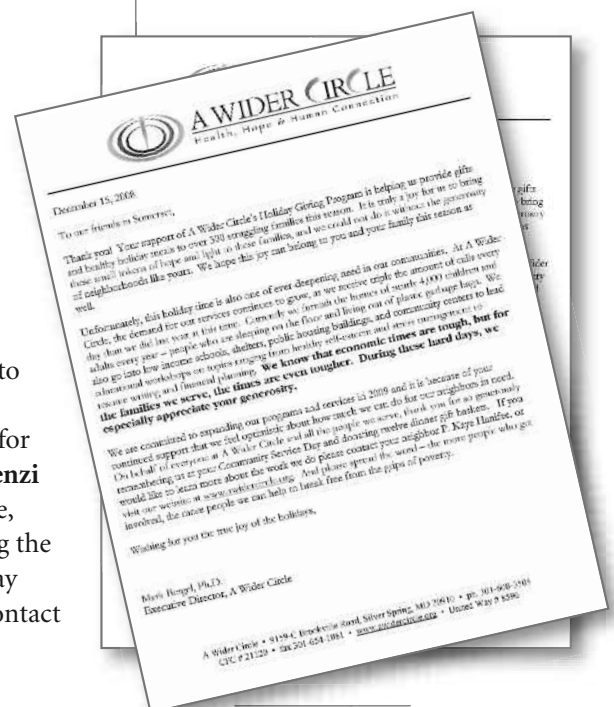
Thursday, January 1
Town Hall Closed, New Year's Day

Monday, January 5
Town Council Meeting

Monday, January 26
MVA Mobile Office

Thursday, January 29
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.”



Thank You letter from A Wider Circle

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On My Mind

By Mayor Jeffrey Z. Slavin

Our Town has a well known reputation in Metro DC as one of the most desirable places to live, based on its physical beauty, great location, and access to excellent schools. But we all know that these are not the only factors that make our community so attractive. What is not as well advertised is the value of living in a place with such an incredible collection of accomplished, friendly and giving neighbors. To me, this is our greatest asset. I have been thinking about this lately because of the recent passing of one of Somerset's leading citizens, our own "*grande dame*" **Alice Rowen**, who lived across the street from me on Warwick Place.

Alice and her late husband Bart, who was a distinguished columnist for the Washington Post and a former member of our Council, moved into Town about fifty seven years ago, having built an architecturally significant home on the border of one of our parks. Over the years, Alice played a key role in the Town's history and had innumerable friends spanning all generations. Alice was involved in Somerset's official activities and took a leadership role in many. Of late, she was dedicated to the Centennial celebration and in promoting the arts, particularly our important group of working artists. She also closely followed the local political scene, made public endorsements, and was a willing worker in campaigns (particularly my own). She followed national politics and was a feminist, civil rights advocate, and promoter of peace. Alice was one of the original environmentalists, and truly loved all things green. She led by example.

More than that, Alice was the ultimate caregiver, yes, for her own family and neighbors, but she was especially concerned for the similarly situated widows in Town. These ladies provide an emotional backbone for us, and Alice was someone who helped each and every one of them maintain an independent lifestyle that not only benefited them, but all of us as well.

Alice Rowen oozed "class" had impeccable taste, always knew what to say, and was a true lady. It is my hope that the wisdom that she was always willing to share will never be forgotten by the residents who had the privilege of receiving it. I will miss her greatly and I thank her for all, as she did during her life on behalf of Somerset and its citizens. There is a void that needs to be filled, but because of the kind of person she was, we are better prepared to do so. It will be hard to replace her in our collection.



We will miss her!

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Monday thru Friday

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TTY users call Maryland Relay

Maxine Finkelstein, Editor

Deadline for ads and copy is January 15, 2009, 4:30 p.m.

Legislation

At the December 1 meeting, the Town Council:

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

Council Activity

At the December 1 meeting, the Town Council:

1. Approved the minutes of the November 3 regular meeting.
2. Postponed discussion on the placement of generators until the January meeting.
3. Approved a contract with Balodemas Architects for bathhouse project oversight.
4. Postponed discussion of the Swimming Pool Committee's proposed budget for the 2009 season until the January meeting.
5. Heard a report by the Environmental Committee on the status of their review of the street light replacement issue and expectation of their recommendation at the February 2009 Council meeting.
6. Heard a report by the Environmental Committee on the status of their review of three bidders for a storm water assessment of the Town, and the need to get more information from two of the bidders.
7. Approved changes to the Town Hall rental rules.
8. Approved the Town Arborist's recommendation to remove ten trees, subject to verification that one at 4731 Essex Avenue is not the one the resident wants to try to save.
9. Set dates for nomination and election of three Council members for two-year terms on Monday, March 2, for nominations, and Wednesday, April 1, for elections, with polling hours from 5-9:00 p.m. on election day.
10. Confirmed the Mayor's reappointment of Tracy Truman and Barbara Zeughauser for three-year terms on the Board of Supervisors of Elections, terms to expire December 31, 2011.
11. Confirmed the Mayor's nomination of Donna Harman as replacement for Lesley Simmons as chair of the History Committee.
12. Set the annual household tennis fee for 2009 at \$5.

First Brown Bag Lunch of 2009 Set for Thursday, January 29



By Jeffrey Slavin, Mayor

Warm up and walk over to our first **Brown Bag Lunch** of the year on **Thursday, January 29** from Noon to 1:00 p.m. at the Town Hall. There should be lots to talk about with a new President and First Lady moving to Washington.

As always, please bring a sandwich or covered dish to share. Ice, beverages and paper products will be provided. **For more information**, call me at 301-657-2229 or email me at mayor@townofsomerset.com



Town Inspector Larry Plummer and I attended a **WSSC Municipalities Briefing** recently where we had an opportunity to have a dialogue with the water authority's staff on issues such as *repaving* and *restoration projects* and *billing questions*. We are now better prepared for future work the Town might be doing, and will also be able to address individual problems residents might be having.

I continue to be in contact with **Pepco** about *burned out street lamps* and the *rash of power failures* this Fall. Although I have yet to receive all the necessary answers, I am confident that they will be forthcoming. I am also exploring some long-term solutions with the intergovernmental staff.

I know that a number of residents are involved with **Bethesda Green** and I was pleased to learn that the organization has opened an office at **4825 Cordell Avenue, Bethesda**. There will be a formal ceremony sometime next year, and I will keep people posted. In the meantime, check their website for updates on the group's work toward making Metro Bethesda a greener place to live and work, <http://www.bethesdagreen.org/>.

Our efforts towards the installation of a traffic light at **Landy Lane** and **River Road** are moving forward. **Council Vice President Marnie Shaul** and I attended a large meeting with **State Highway Administration** officials and our **District 16 delegation** to **Annapolis**, which was convened by **Montgomery County Council** member **Roger Berliner**. It is vital that this new light be installed if we want to prevent increased traffic on **Dorset Avenue** once the **Washington Episcopal School** site is redeveloped and the school enlarged.

I recently met one of the County's newest non-profit leaders **Sheila Crye** who runs cooking classes for teen and pre-teen youth at **Sligo Middle School**. She is searching for another location in our area. Her program fills in a home economics gap currently missing in **MCPS curriculum**. I am hoping one of our residents with a large kitchen might consider volunteering their home as a site.

Somerset is participating in the **Maryland Municipal League's Geocaching initiative**, and there will be a box placed in Town. I am hoping this will encourage some of our residents to take up this highly educational hobby.

Those interested might want to mark calendars now for the **Third Annual Montgomery County History Volunteers Conference** set for **Saturday, January 24** from **8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.** at **Montgomery College in Germantown**. The purpose of the conference is to provide training and in-service opportunities for volunteers and staff of heritage and historical organizations. Get in touch with me for further information.

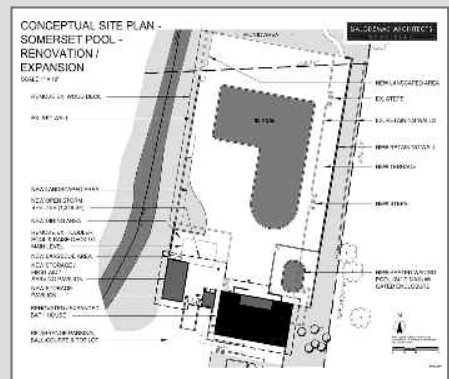
Finally, as a reminder to everyone, the **new deadline** for articles and letters to the editor of this **Journal** is the 15th of every month at 4:30 p.m. And while there may be postal delays for home delivery, the Journal will almost always be available online at townofsomerset.com on the 22nd of every month.

A happy, healthy, and safe New Year to all. I am excited about all the changes and improvements we will be making in Somerset in 2009.

Bathhouse Update

Tom Eldridge and Marnie Shaul, Council members

By our January Council meeting, the Council may have selected an architect for the bathhouse project. Our Town was fortunate to get a number of promising responses to our bid document just before Thanksgiving. All of the firms commented on how beautiful the pool setting is and had suggestions for how we could make the bathhouse sit more attractively in such a special place. During December in closed meetings, the Council winnowed the list of architectural firms, interviewed the top candidate firms, sought additional information, and talked with former clients. The Council looks forward to taking this important next step in renovating/replacing the bathhouse and renewing the site in an environmentally sensitive way. The current schedule calls for construction to begin in September 2010 and be completed in May 2011.



Town Hall Tidbits | By Tom Carter, Clerk-Treasurer



HOLIDAY GREETINGS *from the staff at Town Hall—Tom Carter, Corrie Morsey, Enrique Cabrera, Jose Castillo, and Tomas Villanueva.*

Christmas Tree Disposal

Christmas trees will be picked up by J&J on Wednesday, January 7. This is the only day for pickup this year. J&J will make only one pass through Town that day, so be sure to have your tree at the curb no later than 7:00 a.m. Trees must be free of tinsel, lights and ornaments, removed from any bases or stands, and not in plastic bags.



Sidewalk Clearing

Residents are reminded that our contractor will only clear Town sidewalks after a 2-inch accumulation of snow occurs. Residents are still responsible for clearing accumulations of less than two inches and sanding for ice.



Leaf Season Ends

If the weather cooperates, we expect to end leaf collection season on December 28. We will, however, pick up any leaves that are raked to the curb by this date, even if we don't get to them until after January 1.

In the spring, we will reseed any areas of grass that may have died from the piles of leaves before they were picked up.

The way to get rid of any remaining leaves is to put them in your mulch pile or at the curb on Tuesdays in paper bags or reusable containers.

Odd Jobs List

Please make a note that the first name on the Odd Jobs list provided to you in the November Town Journal should be **Emily Aron**, not **Emil Aron**.

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."

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.



Last Chance for 2009 Calendars

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

MVA Mobile Office

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



HOLIDAY GREETINGS

Crime and Police Report

By Birdie Pieczenik, Chairperson, Security Committee

The Security

Committee hopes everyone has had a good holiday season and that you followed the Committee's tips for securing your home if you went on vacation.



We would be remiss not to remind you that every economic downturn generally brings with it an increase in crime. Please refer to the "tips" the Committee has published on several occasions this year, and take the suggestions seriously. A good offense is your best line of defense. If you've misplaced the "tips," please call the town hall for another set.

We are still looking for more volunteers to conduct a door-to-door survey of Somerset residents as a precursor to designing an Emergency Alert System that will work well for all residents. Please call **Birdie Pieczenik** at **301-652-1207** for more information. This is a fun way to chat with friends and meet new neighbors

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

Wisconsin Place Recreation Center Seeks Advisory Board Members

By Marnie Shaul, Council member

A new Montgomery County Recreation Center will be opening next door to

Bloomingdale's about May 1, 2009, and the County is seeking candidates for a nine-member Advisory Board. The Center will have activity and workout rooms and a full-size basketball court. The Center plans to provide activities for all age groups and is looking for board members who are interested in programs and activities for a wide range of ages. The Center was developed with strong community support during the planning process for the former Hecht's site and is an important addition to recreation in this part of the County. It would be good to have someone from Somerset participate on the board so Town residents are well-represented. A number of nearby communities are engaged in a similar effort. If you are interested, please email **Joy Peters, Down-County Recreation Service manager**, at joy.peters@montgomerycountymd.gov who can send you an application. Joy plans to begin interviewing candidates in February.

Purple Line Forum Announced

By Jeffrey Slavin, Mayor



While there has been a deluge of information about the **Purple Line** by way of the *Washington Post*, *Bethesda-Chevy Chase Gazette*, and the *internet*, there are those who want more information and questions answered. To address this need, we have scheduled a **forum** in the **Town Hall** on Monday, January 12 at 7:30 p.m. featuring a panel of experts on this hot topic.

Former **Planning Board Member**

Pat Baptiste (a Chevy Chase Village resident) and a representative from the **Maryland Transportation Administration** will be participating, among others. There will be short presentations followed by dialogue with the audience.

As a reminder, the public comment period for this project ends on January 14. This will be one of your last opportunities to learn more about the proposed Purple Line before the deadline.

Please help us publicize this important event.



Purple Line Forum Announced

Where Does the Rain Go and What Can You Do About It?

By Sarah Morse and George Wyeth, Environment Committee

The **National Academy of Science** has identified storm water run-off as the major cause of the decline of our urban streams. This hits home since the **Little Falls Branch** has been declining steadily in the past 14 years.

NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES
THE NATIONAL ACADEMIES

The problem starts at our houses. Just one inch of rainfall on a 1,200 square foot roof yields more than 700 gallons of water. If your drain spouts are directed to a driveway or straight to the street, the storm

water runs directly into the creek, carrying with it all the pollutants from the roads. Even water that is directed onto a lawn may end up in the street. This is because the grass, with its shallow mat-like root system, does not absorb the water very well. After every storm, there's a tsunami of water, filling the creek from the storm drains, eroding the banks, and washing out the habitat of the macro-invertebrates that are essential to the stream's health.

On the recommendation of the Environment committee, the Town is currently studying the storm water run-off problem. The solution will ultimately depend on a partnership between the Town and individual homeowners to manage storm water differently. There are several simple things that we can do that can make a difference. The County will even pay you to install some of these ideas. A flyer about the County Rainscapes rebate program is enclosed.

Redirect your drain spouts – Use black 4 inch flexible hoses (available at hardware stores) to direct your roof run-off away from the street and your basement to a shade tree or other thirsty part of your garden. You can even use a perforated hose and just bury it in your lawn. The water will be released into the ground.

Install a Rain Barrel – Rain barrels capture water from your rooftop and store it to be released at a time when it is not raining. While they typically only hold 55 gallons, they do reduce the impact, and you can use the water for watering your plants and direct the overflow into your garden through a soaker hose.

Replace Impervious Surfaces with Pervious Ones – By replacing traditional asphalt and concrete with permeable or porous pavers you help allow water to infiltrate naturally into the soil.

Construct Rain Gardens – A rain garden is a low point in your yard where you deliberately direct storm water. The soils in the garden are amended to allow water to rapidly infiltrate and special plants are installed that can tolerate getting their “feet” wet.

Bayscape Your Yard – Plant gardens beds with plants that are native to the Chesapeake Bay region. Native plants have deeper roots and more complex above ground structures than grass and therefore they capture more rainwater than turf.

Somerset's Environment Committee will be providing more information in upcoming months about the storm water program and more steps we can take to reduce our impact on the Creek, the Potomac, and the Bay. **Stay tuned!**



**Little Falls Watershed
Montgomery County Portion**

Preliminary Agenda

Regular Meeting of Town Council

Monday, January 5, 2009 – 7:30 p.m.

1. Report of closed sessions of Town Council on Tuesday, December 2, in the Town Hall to interview bidders for pool bathhouse improvements and Tuesday, December 9, to discuss contracting – 7:30 p.m.
2. Approval of minutes of December 1, regular, and December 2 and December 9, closed meetings – 7:35 p.m.
3. Discussion of financial report – 7:40 p.m.
4. Suggestions and questions from residents – 7:45 p.m.
5. Action on application by Brian Pilot, 5518 Greystone Street, to remove three trees: a dying oak in the front yard, and a locust and black walnut in the back – 7:55 p.m.
6. Discussion on placement of generators – 8:00 p.m.
7. Action on contract to develop plans for improvements to pool bathhouse – 8:15 p.m.**
8. Action on civil engineering contract with VIKA for pool bathhouse complex improvements at a basic cost of \$44,000 – 8:25 p.m.**
9. Action on Swimming Pool Committee's recommendation of a management company for 2009 season – 8:35 p.m.
10. Discussion of 2008 swimming pool financial report – 8:45 p.m.
11. Discussion of Swimming Pool Committee's proposed budget for 2009 season – 8:55 p.m.
12. Action on storm water management contract as recommended by the Environmental Committee – 9:00 p.m.
13. Action on statement of support for employer support of National Guard and Reserve – 9:10 p.m.
14. Action on Town Code amendment to change the tree height for measuring diameter requiring application for removal to agree with industry standard of 4½ feet – 9:15 p.m.**
15. Action setting date for September 2009 meeting on Tuesday, September 8 – 9:20 p.m.
16. Action authorizing payment of \$100 annual dues to Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights for 2009 – 9:25 p.m.
17. Mayor's report – 9:30 p.m.
18. Developments/plans in the vicinity of Somerset – 9:35 p.m.**
19. 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.”