



SOMERSET TOWN JOURNAL



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Important Special Meetings on Council Calendar in July

The Town Council has scheduled two special meetings in July to address topics of broad interest in town. Take advantage of this opportunity to participate in your town government!

Monday, July 20

Special Meeting to continue the discussion of the pool facility renovation. The Council will be looking at more specific design elements for the planned pool facility renovation project and updated cost information from the cost estimators as well as additional feedback from the community. Current plans are posted at the pool and further updates will be added to the town's web site as they become available. Plan to check out and contribute your own comments to the special web page that has been set up to facilitate community discussion. The meeting is scheduled to run from 7:30 p.m.–9:30 p.m. at the Town Hall. The Council will likely meet on a subsequent day as an open Council “work session” because additional time may be required for the Council to come to closure on required decisions.

Tuesday, July 21

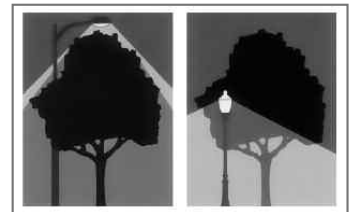
Special Meeting to consider Pepco's proposal to convert our current street lights to sodium vapor lights. The Town's Environment Committee will provide an update on its assessment of the Town's options, and the potential possibility of getting on a track to convert to more energy efficient and environmentally-friendly LED lights instead. The meeting is scheduled to start at 7:30 p.m. at the Town Hall.

More information will be posted on the Town's web site, at www.townofsomerset.com, and since dates and schedules may change, we encourage you to check the web site or call the Town Hall for updates.

Special Council Meetings



Monday, July 20 – Pool Facility Renovation



Tuesday, July 21 – Pepco's Sodium Vapor Lights Proposal

Calendar

Saturday, July 4

Independence Day Celebration

Monday, July 6

Council Meeting

Monday, July 20

Tuesday, July 21

Special Council Meetings

Monday, July 27

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

How We Communicate

For a small town, we have a fairly extensive and somewhat complex communications network. The three main components of this network are the **Town Journal**, **weekly e-broadcast**, and **website** at townofsomerset.com. As Mayor, I am considered to be the publisher and bottom line decision maker for all three, per the Code and enacted policies.

In addition to this official network, the Town has facilitated the creation of and loosely endorses a **community listserv**, but that is produced and edited privately. In this way, residents can do things like advertise commercial activities and debate issues that are not municipal in nature with a certain amount of freedom. While this setup currently works well, the authority lines are blurred and not everyone understands the distinctions of mission.

It is vital for the smooth functioning of the Council and staff to have efficient and effective means of disseminating information.

One of the problems is that often the Council and I hear from residents that they did not know about something, and often that something is rather important. And frequently that something is an ordinance already passed or a service already vetted and a contract signed. This means that a full review of everything in the network is needed.

I think most people at least glance at the Journal. Under the expert editorship of **Maxine Finkelstein**, it is clear, concise and to the point. We get lots of compliments from resident and outsiders alike. But while the general philosophy is to **“keep it short,”** sometimes there is an issue that requires more extensive writings.

The policies for the e-broadcast are vague and not codified. We try to put it out on a regular basis, but there are no set criteria for an emergency blast. Often the staff and I are put in the middle.

Our website is nice but there are hundreds of opinions on how to make it better. I get the feeling that everyone is legitimately an expert because of how much time they spend online. There are also many decisions to be made on how interactive it should be.

As I am often asked to make final decisions, I find myself making up rules as I go along. This is not the best way to make such decisions.

Fortunately Council member **Barbara Zeughauser** has agreed to chair an ad hoc committee that will begin to study all the options and make recommendations. Input from residents on this important subject is key to coming up with a plan for each device in the network. We will also need some folks to volunteer for the committee.

In this way, we can make strides to improve these vital links to the Somerset government.

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Beginning with the July issue, the Journal will be sent by email—please let us know if you prefer to receive it via US Postal Service. Please provide your email address to the Editor at maxinea@comcast.net.

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Maxine Finkelstein, Editor
Deadline for ads and copy is the 15th of the month at 4:30 p.m.



Somerset Quiet Hours

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. Only quiet interior work that cannot be heard by neighbors may be performed on Sundays. On weekdays, it is legal to start at 7:00 a.m.



Pool Guest Passes

Reminder: checks for guest passes purchased at the pool should be made out to **"Town of Somerset,"** not Somerset Pool or Somerset Town Hall.

Vacation Precautions

A few precautions may enhance your vacation this year. Consider these before you leave:

- Cancel your newspapers and get a neighbor to pick up newspapers and flyers that are deposited on your property.
- Arrange to have your lawn cut while you are away.
- Give a key to a neighbor just in case of emergency.
- Arrange to have a neighbor, friend or relative know how to turn off your security system if it is activated.
- Consider putting timers on some of the lights in your home and set them to come on at different times. You might even turn a radio on or put it on a timer.

Lock Doors, Cars, and Garages



It's that time of year when you are out in your back yard and you have left your front door unlocked. This makes it very tempting for unwanted visitors. Please lock your doors.

It would also be a good idea to remember to lock your car and garage doors. Bikes can easily be taken out of unlocked garages. Daylight hours are getting longer and more people are walking around Town. It is better to be safe than sorry.

Town Trees and Grounds

With summer coming, we ask you to please water the Town trees in your yards when no rain has fallen in several days.

Don't forget, the Grounds Ordinance states that it shall be the duty of owners of all dwellings to maintain the land between their property lines and the street curb in "good and orderly condition," to clean the sidewalks in front of their property and keep them free from overhanging shrubbery.

Please do not put grass down the storm drains. Also, do not use the trash containers around Town for your personal household trash. Additionally, there is no dumping at the pool parking lot or at the end of Warwick Place.

Reminders on Recycles Updated



You may recycle plastic lids from plastic bottles and containers, but not lids from glass,

can and foil items. Mixed paper can be placed in blue bins, but they must be in paper bags or tied with string, not loose.

MVA Mobile Office

The MVA's mobile office will be in Friendship Heights on Monday, July 27, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.



By Jeffrey Z. Slavin, Mayor

A recent change in County policies regarding food safety regulations has raised the issue as to the necessity for independence of the **Somerset Swim Team** and to make sure all legal protections are in place. The Council discussed this issue earlier this month and provided me with some guidance in the request for a review by the Town Attorney. The overall feeling, of course, is that the Swim Team functions well and is a vital part of the Town, especially as far as community

building. For years, while the team is apparently a formal Town activity under the Code, for good reason the team has been loosely governed by a group of parents and has its own bank account. But none of this practice is written about in town law. The elected officials want to make sure there is no exposed liability of any parent and that financial controls are in place that would be approved by our auditors. No one wants to change the excellent operation, just make it more legal. As soon as **Attorney Knopf** completes his review, there is to be another agenda item for the Council.

Recently, we received a report of two young Town residents who were observed driving at excessive speeds on the way to the pool. A resident provided us with license plate numbers and the story was corroborated by several others. While the Town cannot ask our police officers to write tickets, because the officers were not present when the speeding was allegedly taking place, I did ask for the identification of the vehicles. When it was verified who the drivers were, I asked one of our officers to visit the house of each driver and talk to them and their parents about the importance of safe driving. This is important for all of us to remember and especially to warn our children and new drivers. A short time after this incident, there was a **serious car accident on Surrey Street near Falstone**. A vehicle was apparently totaled, a Town crash can was destroyed, and a stop sign broken. We are attempting to get compensated for the damage, which unfortunately was caused by a young driver under the influence of alcohol. Fortunately, no one was hurt, but it was another reminder that we must all exercise extreme caution when behind the wheel.

Council Vice President Marnie Shaul and I journeyed to **Annapolis** to watch **Abigail Muro** of **Dorset Avenue** receive her recognition as one of the eleven statewide winners of the MML “**If I Were Mayor, I Would...**” **essay contest**. I hope everyone also saw the outstanding **Gazette** article with color photo of Abigail. In addition, I want to thank **Vicki Frink** and Council members **Barbara Zeughauser** and **Lucy Freeman** for participating on the panel to select the Somerset School winner—both students will be honored on July 4.

I am pleased that the Council voted to increase the number of hours that we are served by our two police officers because we get great positive feedback from residents about their service. In addition, our traffic consultant let us know years ago that the best way to cut down on speeding and stop sign violations is to increase the hours of enforcement. It is also good news that the officers did not ask for a rate increase.

I want everyone to know that the vendor who was soliciting work for house number sign painting was not authorized to do so by the Town, although his advertisement appeared that way. I thank all the people who reported this, because we were able to put an item on the email blast warning residents about it.

Finally, I am glad that so many folks came out to remember our late Council member **Judy Frankel**, and I will make an appropriate dedication to her at our annual celebration on Independence Day.

I will be back in Somerset after my three-week course at the **Kennedy School in Boston** in time for our Independence Day celebration.



Celebrate Independence Day!



Town Trees

By Corrie Morsey, Chair, Parks and Natural Resources Committee

Town Tree Removals

Town arborist, **Barb Neal**, has recommended that seven Town trees be removed.

The trees are:

- #096 – Willow Oak, 4824 Cumberland Avenue (*basically dead*)
- #138 – Pin Oak, rear of Somerset Elementary School on Deal Place (*mostly dead*)
- #239 – White Oak, 4901 Dorset Avenue (*has been dying for several years and is mostly dead*)
- #271 – Sugar Maple, Essex Avenue side of 5702 Warwick Place (*dead*)
- #440 – Red Oak, 4812 Grantham Avenue (*mostly dead and in advanced stages of decline*)
- #695 – Red Maple, 5419 Uppingham Street (*nearly dead*)
- #780 – Yoshino Cherry, 5608 Warwick Place (*mostly dead and rapidly declining*)

In all but one instance she recommends that the Town replant as soon as practical. **Tree #271** has several large canopy trees nearby. Residents whose property abuts these locations have been notified. The proposed removals have been placed on the July Council meeting agenda. If approved, the Town anticipates going out for bids on these removals.

Permits Granted



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

Trees:

Mak and Ursula Dehejia, 5411 Surrey Street, to remove a dead black gum tree in their back yard.

Pirooz and Ladan Zia, 5602 Warwick Place, to remove a damaged red oak in their front yard.

Lee Meddin, 5800 Warwick Place, to remove a fallen oak in his front yard.

Fences:

Ellen Globokar and Robert Chlopak, 4919 Dorset Avenue, to complete fencing in their back yard.

Council Activity

At the June 1 meeting, the Town Council:

1. Approved the minutes of the May 4, 2009, regular meeting as submitted.
2. Approved a building permit for Marty and Bonnie Lewin, 4817 Cumberland Avenue, to add a deck to the rear of their house, subject to receipt of the County permit, Town fees and deposit, compliance to the Town Arborist's tree protection plan and specifications prior to, during and after construction and a preconstruction meeting
3. Approved a building permit for Mitch Narins, 4909 Essex Avenue, for the two-story house addition, excluding the garage, subject to a tree preservation plan to be drawn up by Barb Neal, including the removal of the three dead and two hazardous trees, copy of the County permit, Town fee and deposit. No work is to begin prior to a pre-construction plan/meeting.
4. Discussed the relationship between the Town and the Swim Team.
5. Approved the hiring of off-duty Montgomery County police officers during FY-10, not to exceed \$50,000. (Vote: Shaul, Pickar and Zeughauser for; Farley and Proctor opposed.)
6. Approved the removal of three Town trees: 1) #40, pin oak, Cumberland side of 5812 Warwick Place, 80% dead (hypoxylon canker); 2) #202, Little Leaf Linden, 4718 Dorset Avenue, dead; and 3) #520, Kwansan cherry, 5402 Surrey Street, dead.
7. Approved the authorization of an additional \$3,145 for extra work by the traffic engineer.
8. Heard the Mayor's report of his emergency authorization of \$3,950 to paint the interior of the pool bathhouse prior to opening for the 2009 season.
9. Reappointed Tom Carter as Clerk-Treasurer for FY-10.

At the June 1 closed meeting, the Council discussed personnel matters.

At the June 8 special meeting, the Council was updated by design team on planning for the pool facility renovation project.

Preliminary Agenda

Regular Meeting of Town Council

Monday, July 6, 2009 – 7:30 p.m.



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

1. Announcement by Mayor of closed Town Council meeting after June 1 regular meeting to discuss personnel matters – 7:30 p.m.
2. Approval of minutes of the June 1 regular and closed meetings, and the June 8 special meeting – 7:35 p.m.
3. Discussion of financial report – 7:40 p.m.
4. Action authorizing payment of (1) annual dues of \$5,455.01 to Maryland Municipal League for FY-10 and (2) annual premium of \$4,510.00 to Montgomery County Self-Insurance Program – 7:45 p.m.
5. Suggestions and questions from residents – 7:50 p.m.
6. Continuation of fact finding hearing and action on application by Mitch Narins, 4909 Essex Avenue, to add a two-story addition to the rear of his house, build a detached two-car garage at the rear of the lot, replace the driveway apron and remove 13 trees – 8:00 p.m.
7. Fact finding hearing and action on application by Alan and Anne Proctor, 4900 Cumberland Avenue, to add a screened enclosure to an already existing rear porch – 8:20 p.m.
8. Action on recommendation by 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 – 8:30 p.m.
9. Action to authorize \$3,200 for VIKA Engineering to prepare a topographic survey with 2-foot contour intervals – 8:35 p.m.
10. Mayor's report – 8:40 p.m.
11. Developments/plans in the vicinity of Somerset – 8:45 p.m.
12. Adjournment – 8:50 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.