



SOMERSET TOWN JOURNAL



Volume 56 • No. 2

Date of Publication: Aug 17, 2009



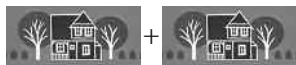
2009 Welcome Party!

Who says there's a housing bust? Not in our Town, where house hunters are still actively buying and renting. Over the past year, twenty new families have moved into our wonderful community.

Now, once again, it's time for the annual welcome party where longer term residents greet new residents. This year, it will take place at the **Somerset Pool on Sunday, September 13th, from 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. in the rear under the tent.** Bring your children and plan to listen to music and relax with a glass of wine or soda and other light refreshments provided by the Town. **Barry the Magician** will return to provide enchanting entertainment for the children, while the adults socialize. Official introduction of new residents by **Mayor Jeffrey Slavin**, and the magic show will start at **5:00 p.m.**, so don't miss it!

Please contact **Welcoming Committee members Bonnie Lewin, 301-332-0171; Lyndsey Gerber, 301-654-2984; or P. Kaye Hanifee, 301-654-2472**, if you would like to volunteer with set up and clean up.

New Town Residents



We've had several families who have chosen Somerset as their home this past year. If you haven't already met them, the **Welcoming Party on September 13 from 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. at the swimming pool** will provide a good opportunity.

Cumberland Avenue

4808–Rick Forrester and children Edwin and Strat

Dorset Avenue

4511–Jack and Cecilia Benson and children Ella and Owen

4820–Matthew Zaft and Erin Chlopak and child Olivia

Essex Avenue

4814–Deyne and Christine Bentt and child Luka

Falstone Avenue

4705–Michael and Courtenay Labson and children Claudia, Lewis, and Evelyn

4807–Michael Lee and Velina Kulmski and child Simone

4907–Miguel Lopez Forastier and Peta-Sue Hellmann and children Andres, Matias, and Lucas

4923–Eric Glantz and Jessica Nassau and child Zoe

Greystone Street

5520–James and Diana Corless and children Viva, Harry and Wade

5525–Matthew Guyer and Caroline Chang and children Nadya and Sofia

Trent Street

5513–Kip and Wendy Louttit and children Benjamin and Caroline

Uppingham Street

5517–Sameh and Dalia Mobarek and children Noor and Farrah

5528–Tara Newmyer and children Rangley and Lucy

Warwick Place

5526–Michael Brissenden and Tracy Sutherland and children Ella and Neve

5607–Jay and Lisa Shambaugh and children Jack and Katie

5613–Tom Burton and Anne Davies and children Lola and Ben

5701–David Kass and Iris Amdur and children Rebecca and Aaron

Calendar

Monday, September 8

Council Meeting

Saturday, September 12

Taste of Friendship Heights

Sunday, September 13

Welcome Party

Monday, September 28

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

Most of you probably read with shock and sadness last month the story of the devastating fire that destroyed the home and priceless art collection of local philanthropist **Peggy Cooper Cafritz**, a former president of the **D.C.**

Board of Education, and dear friend of mine. There are lessons to be learned from this tragedy that I want to share with all of you.

According to early reports, the fire started small as a result of some type of explosion. The firefighters arrived quickly, but soon discovered a water pressure problem in the hydrants. They were unable to do much to put out the blaze for almost two hours, and it grew so large that the home basically burned to the ground. Fortunately, no one was home, and some neighbors rescued two wonderful dogs.

Peggy tells me she had been aware of the water problem for some months as a result of noticing low pressure in her showers and sinks. She had reported this to the water authority but nothing had been corrected. There had been a lot of public discussion about similar problems in other parts of the City after highly publicized fires at the **Georgetown Library** and a condo building in **Adams Morgan**.

Peggy lost everything, including important records, family mementos, and pictures. Her computers were destroyed. Luckily she had a printed photo catalogue of her art stored offsite.

I am particularly glad that the pets were saved—just because the neighbors knew about them. I hope all Somerseters have a disaster plan for their animals, and that neighbors are familiar with their occupancy,

While I hope there is better communication in **Montgomery County** between firefighters and **WSSC** so Peggy’s disaster won’t be repeated here, nevertheless I urge all of you with life and death type complaints to report them to me and or the Council in a timely manner. If action is not taken quickly, call again—if necessary, be a pest about it. That is what we are here for.

It is also important to keep vital records in fireproof containers, back up your computers, and inventory your art. Make use of safe deposit boxes at banks.

It is a shame that Dr. Cafritz now has to spend an incredible amount of time, literally putting her life back together, because of a fire that should have been extinguished in a timely manner. She has my blessings. I hope that I will never have to have this conversation with anyone here in Town. Let’s all take precautions.

And a safe end of summer to all with an easy re-entry to **“back to school”** schedules in September.

In This Issue

- Council Activity 6
- Debt Policy 4
- Letter to the Editor 6
- Mayor’s Desk 4
- New Residents 1
- On My Mind 2
- Permits Granted 3
- Preliminary Agenda 7
- Thinking about Street Lighting 5
- Town Hall Tidbits 3
- Welcome Party! 1

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

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 grey "Porsche" cap was left in the Town Hall in July. If it belongs to you, please call Tom at 301-657-3211.

Back to School Classic 8-KM Race

Don't forget the 8-kilometer race through the streets of Somerset sponsored by the **Somerset Elementary School PTA on Saturday, October 31**. The intersections of **Dorset and Cumberland Avenues** with **Wisconsin Avenue** and **Greystone Street** with **River Road** will be closed from **8:45 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.** Runners can register on line at www.runwashington.com.

Odd Jobs List

Please take a moment to review the **Odd Jobs list** enclosed with this edition of the **Town Journal**. We have received several calls saying that listed personnel no longer are interested in doing the tasks they originally signed up to do. Some on the list are away at college and not available. Please let Tom know if there are any changes, additions or deletions so that this list is fully accurate. Call 301-657-3211 with changes.



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. We have lost a lot of trees this year from lack of water during the previous years of drought.

Recycle Bins

Please be sure you wash out your blue recycle bins occasionally. If they are not relatively clean, our trash haulers can refuse to pick them up.

Yard Refuse

Remember that your yard refuse containers must be marked to indicate they contain yard refuse. Tom has a few of these stickers at **Town Hall** or you may call 240-777-6400 and request some from the County.

MVA Mobile Office

The MVA's mobile office will be in **Friendship Heights** on **Monday, September 28**, from **10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.**

Hazardous Waste Disposal

Hazardous waste may be dropped off at **Silver Spring International Middle School**, 313 Wayne Avenue (at Dale Drive), in **Silver Spring** on **Saturday, October 3**.

The following materials will be accepted between **10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.**: pesticides, oil-based paint, brake fluid, fuels, herbicides, solvents, antifreeze, photographic chemicals, paint



thinners, motor oil, auto batteries and household batteries.



PLEASE NO LATEX PAINT:

Tens-of-thousands of tax-dollars are spent each year disposing of latex paint, which is not hazardous. In fact, latex paint can be safely dried up and put out for regular refuse collection. Simply remove the lid and place it in a safe, well-ventilated area. Cans that are one-fourth or less full will dry in a few days. For cans with greater volume, add mulch, cat litter, shredded paper, or waste paint hardener available at area hardware stores.

For more information, call 240-777-6410 or visit www.montgomerycountymd.gov/swstmpl.asp?url=/Content/DPWT/solidwaste/collection_services/hw/hhw/index.asp#dates.

Permits Granted



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

Trees:

Kimberly Crocker, 4507 Dorset Avenue, to remove a dead tree of unknown variety in her back yard.

Eric Glantz, 4903 Falstone Avenue, to remove a leaning black cherry in his back yard, provided he plants either two native understory trees or one native shade tree.

Alice Grochal, 4909 Falstone Avenue, to remove a volunteer ash tree growing out of the base of an oak tree.

Lucretia Marmon, 4921 Cumberland Avenue, to remove a dead crabapple.



By Jeffrey Z. Slavin, Mayor

Town staff and I were pleased with the speedy clean-up action by our primary tree maintenance contractor, **Davey Tree Company**, after a recent brief, torrential thunderstorm caused several large limbs to fall and create problems on several of our streets. It was a reminder of how fortunate we are to live in a municipality where situations like this can be resolved very quickly. Not sure the County is capable of a similar response.

I would like to see everyone at the **Welcome Party at the pool on Sunday, September 13 from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.** Many thanks to **Bonnie Lewin** (Cumberland) for putting this together year after year.

I am still looking for volunteers for a new ad hoc communications committee that will look at policies and procedures for this Journal, our website, and the weekly email blast. **Council member Barbara Zeughauser** will be chairing. **Trent Street** resident **Bob Bookman**, who has been a mainstay of the children's activities in Town for our annual July 4 celebration, has indicated to me that this year was his last. All of us appreciate Bob's incredible dedication to this task. I am sorry I failed to mention this in last month's report.

As members of the **Maryland Municipal League Montgomery Chapter**, we were invited to the **July Capital for a Day** event that **Governor O'Malley** hosted in Rockville with his entire cabinet, emceed by **Mayor Susan Hoffmann**. **Council Vice President Marnie Shaul** and I were in attendance, and it was beneficial to get an update from each of the State's departments. A few days later, I was invited to sit in the **Governor's sky suite at the Oriole's game**, hosted by **Lt. Governor Anthony Brown**, in connection with the **National Lieutenant Governors' Conference** being held in **Baltimore**. A number of the Lt. Governor's staff were present and several are interested in meeting to talk about what they can do to help us. A few days after that I was lunching with Mr. Brown in **Takoma Park** with a number of **Montgomery's mayors** where I asked him about the **Purple Line and BRAC**. I invited him to speak at an upcoming **Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights meeting** and he has agreed.

The Bethesda-Chevy Chase Rescue Squad is in the midst of its **69th annual door-to-door fundraising campaign**. This drive is critical to the existence of the squad, because unlike most other fire/rescue departments, they do not receive an appropriated budget from any government. You can go to the website, www.bccrs.org, or call **301-652-0077** for more information.

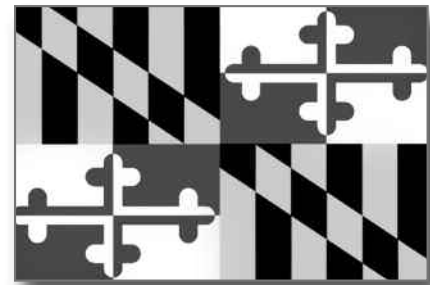
Our good neighbors in the **Village of Friendship Heights** have written to remind us that the **Taste of Friendship Heights** is right around the corner, scheduled for **Saturday, September 12 from noon to 5:00 p.m.** at the **Village Center**. Don't miss this opportunity to sample the delicious food served at the restaurants in closest proximity to the Town. They are also looking for volunteers, and if you are interested contact **Lisa** at lnasberg@lycos.com.

State Requires a Municipal Debt Policy

By Marnie Shaul, Council Vice-President

In July, Somerset was notified by the **Treasurer's Office** that the **State of Maryland** has passed legislation requiring that each municipality adopt a **debt policy** and submit it to the Treasurer's Office by **October 1, 2009**. Currently, Somerset's **Town Charter** authorizes borrowing for a variety of purposes. This is the authority that has allowed Somerset to borrow funds in the past, as we did in **1987** to pay for capital improvements to our storm drain system.

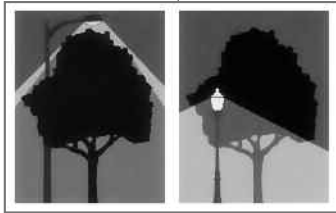
A debt policy can be more specific than what is in our Town Charter and provides guidance about eligible purposes, financial limits, and the length of time funds can be borrowed. The Town Council will consider a resolution about debt policy at the Council Meeting on September 8. The major focus of the policy is to limit debt to capital improvements and to projects authorized by the Town Council.



Thinking about Street Lighting

By Marnie Shaul, Council Vice-President

The Mayor, Council members, Somerset's Environment Committee, and residents have been talking about our street lights for the past year. Street lighting has historically been a topic because of its importance in pedestrian and traffic safety. I thought I'd continue the dialogue in this month's Journal because the Council may be making some decisions about street lights at its October meeting.



As a community, we want adequate lighting on our streets, and to provide this light in an energy-efficient way. In **July 2008**, **Pepco** came to Somerset to explain its program to replace our **174 mercury vapor (MV)** street lights with **high pressure sodium (HPS)** lights at no cost to Somerset. This is part of Pepco's broader program to replace all the MV street lights in **Montgomery and Prince Georges County** with HPS **over the next five years**. Pepco is undertaking this program because under federal law, the ballast for MV lights can no longer be produced in the US or imported, so they are becoming obsolete. In addition, HPS is about **35 percent more energy efficient**. Somerset spends about **\$22,000 a year on lighting**, so we could expect a small savings from replacing MV with HPS.

With the deal Pepco is offering, some may wonder why Council members are hesitating about whether to accept it—especially since our capital budget doesn't include spending anything on street light improvements for some years. One reason is that Council

members have received a variety of responses from residents about Pepco's offer. These were explored at a public meeting in July 2009. Some of the issues residents raised include:

- The color of HPS lights. Several years ago, after a study led by **Howard Byron**, the Council authorized a pilot of 4 HPS lights on **Trent Street**. After they had been in use for awhile, the Council decided not to move forward based on comments from some Somerset residents that they didn't like the **"yellowish"** light color. However, some residents on Trent have said they like their HPS lights. (If you haven't seen the HPS lights, you might want to walk on Trent Street some evening and check them out.)

- The evolving nature of lighting technology with **light emitting diode (LED)** streets lights being piloted in some jurisdictions such as **Oakland, California**. The pilots show that some of the LED lights tested are more efficient than HPS, with the promise of greater efficiency and lower costs as the technology evolves.

- The potential desirability of induction lights, which have been installed by two nearby jurisdictions.

Pepco is currently testing a few LED lights on its own property, but says it doesn't yet have sufficient data to do any wide-scale deployment. It plans to do several pilot programs with a limited number of LED lights in residential areas to gather such data. Somerset has asked to be considered for the pilot.

I think that with expected capital spending on the **bathroom renovation project** and **street paving** in the next few years, Council members are not advocating spending funds on street lighting now. However, in the future, the Council may wish to install lighting different from either MV or HPS. We've asked the Environment Committee to look into issues such as how we might work with Pepco to obtain a financially viable option for installing lighting such as LEDs in the future. The committee, under the leadership of **Mike Hill**, has been working with Pepco to obtain this information, but some key questions remain unanswered.

I hope to learn more about the issues over the next few weeks by:

- Taking a field trip with Council member **Barbara Zeughauser** to see the LED lights Pepco has installed at its facility and the induction lights being used by **Garrett Park** and **Chevy Chase View**.
- Continuing to monitor what **Chevy Chase Sect. 3** is doing. Sect. 3 wants to purchase its lights from Pepco (which is possible under legislation recently passed by the state) and is considering installing induction lights, which its leadership likes better than other types of lighting.
- Reviewing cost information.
- Reviewing whatever correspondence Somerset receives from Pepco, and discussing these issues with the Environment Committee.
- Continuing to listen to insights from Somerset residents.

Council Activity

At the August 4 meeting, the Town Council:

1. Approved the minutes of the July 6 regular meeting and the July 20, 21 and 23 special meetings.
2. Approved a portable toilet for the tennis courts from August through November at a cost of \$160 for every four weeks.
3. Approved the application of Bahram Soroush, 4519 Dorset Avenue, to add a basement exterior stair, subject to receipt of a County permit and Town fees and deposit.
4. Renewed Town membership in Montgomery Municipal Cable by contributing Town's entire payment from the County.
5. Authorized the following fund transfers:

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

6. Heard the Mayor's announcement of his emergency authorization to remove Town tree #283, 4715 Essex Avenue, based on the Town Arborist's recommendation that it had become hazardous.
7. Approved the recommendation of the 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. Approved a contract with Kuhn's Tree Service to remove seven trees previously approved for takedown and one the Mayor approved for emergency removal for \$4,295.



Letter to the Editor

From Nat Finkelstein, Surrey Street

It is time for the citizens of Somerset to rise up and demand that Council approve the free updated lighting that **Pepco** is offering. It may not be the best solution to the poor street lighting in our Town, but it is free and far better than what we have now.

The Council can approve this plan and spend the next several years studying the better mousetraps and new technology that are being developed.

The future looks bright. Let Somerset be lit in the meantime.

Please write the Council at Council@Townofsomerset.com and advise them to “**let there be light.**”

Preliminary Agenda

Regular Meeting of Town Council

Tuesday, September 8, 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 August 3 regular meeting – 7:30 p.m.
2. Suggestions and questions from residents – 7:35 p.m.
3. Action on proposed Town debt policy as mandated by enactment of a new Maryland law – 7:45 p.m.**
4. Fact finding hearing and action on application by Peter Cappelletti, 5613 Warwick Place, to add a second story to the front and a first floor addition and deck to the rear of his house – 7:55 p.m.
5. Fact-finding hearing and action on application by David and Cathy Pickar, 4915 Dorset Avenue, to add a one-story addition to the rear of their house – 8:05 p.m.
6. Action authorizing special trash pickup Friday, October 9 – 8:15 p.m.
7. Action on the following transfers for FY-09: – 8:10 p.m.

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

8. Action on increase in hourly budget line item of VIKA, Inc. to \$6,500 – 8:20 p.m.
9. Action on contract with Hughes Landscaping for leaf removal from pool upper parking lot for this year at cost of \$24,800 – 8:25 p.m.
10. Action on street sweeping contract with Reilly Sweeping for three visits during fiscal year at a total cost of \$4,500 – 8:30 p.m.
11. Authorization to close River Road and Wisconsin Avenue entrances on Saturday, October 31, from 8:45 a.m. to 10:30 a.m., for the 8-kilometer road race sponsored by the Somerset Elementary School PTA – 8:35 p.m.
12. Mayor’s report – 8:40 p.m.
13. Adjournment – 8:45 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.