



SOMERSET TOWN JOURNAL



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Community Service Day

By Mayor Jeffrey Slavin

Everyone is invited to participate in our annual **Community Service Day**, on **Saturday, December 11** from **3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.** in the Town Hall. This annual event gives us a chance to help those in need at a critical time of the year.

Projects planned include food baskets for **A Wider Circle**, sandwiches for the **Gude Drive Men's Shelter**, stuffing envelopes and making gift bags for the **Community Council for the Homeless** at **Friendship Place**, and making sock toys for the **Humane Society**.

We are also collecting toiletries, toothbrushes, and small individually packaged snack foods and gum to make gift kits. There will be a barrel for collection of canned and packaged food.

This year we are also asking for contributions to pay for the ingredients of some of our donations. If you want to volunteer to help with setup or cleanup or to help with deliveries, contact me at mayor@townofsomerset.com or call 301-657-2229.

It would be helpful to **RSVP**, especially if you are bringing a group.

See you there!



Mock-up of Stone Samples for Facing the New Retaining Wall Along the Expanded East Terrace.

the new block retaining walls (which the Town has also approved); and started excavation for the addition.

In the next month, TW will be focused on: continuation of excavation for building addition; installation of new footings for the building addition; installation of the site deck drains and utility piping; installation of the new

continued on page 4

Pool Project Update:



Pool Facility Renovation Continues

By Alan Proctor, Contract Officer and Council member

The pool facility renovation continues according to plan as to both budget and timeline.

Over the past month, contractor **Therrien Waddell** has: completed site demolition; completed storm drain piping for the East Terrace complete; completed foundation, block wall and waterproofing for East terrace and started backfilling behind the new wall; installed a field stone wall mock up showing stone proposed to cover

Calendar

Monday, December 6

Council Meeting

Saturday, December 11

Community Service Day

Monday, December 20

MVA Mobile Office

Friday, December 24

Town Hall Office Closed,
Christmas Holiday

December 31

Town Hall Office Closed,
New Year Holiday

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 Slavin

Greening Our Leaf Disposal

Earlier this month I attended a ceremony in **Edmonston**, a small town near **Hyattsville** in **Prince George's County** similar in size to ours. Under the leadership of Mayor

Adam Ortiz, they have created what they call the **"greenest street in America."** Edmonston does not have the resources **Somerset** has and, they were able to obtain close to **\$1 million** in government and non-profit grants to improve **stormwater management, plant trees, install LED lights and rain gardens, and create bike lanes** and the like on their main street.

Fortunately, those improvements address some recent major problems in their Town such as flooding, in which many houses were severely damaged. Ironically, even though they are steps from the **Anacostia River**, the water runoff came not from the river, but due to overdevelopment in the area.

Here in Somerset we have an excellent volunteer **Environmental Committee** that has worked hard for several years to make recommendations to the **Mayor and Council** to raise our **"green"** level. The **LED pilot program** and the **new trash removal contract** are two examples of ways the committee has been successful. Since we are not necessarily eligible for much **State and County funds**, and the non-profits are geared to assist low income folks, we are constantly looking for ways to **"go green"** by working within our recently more limited budgets and fostering individual self-help ideas.

Each year the Town spends a great deal of money **gathering leaves and carting them away** from individual properties. The conventional wisdom is that this is one of the most basic of government services, yet this could be considered wasteful, because the leaves actually have value. Furthermore, many of us bring in **mulch** for our gardens when we could create our own by using these leaves.

Following this thought, I analyzed my gardener's practices on my own property. In the same way, we are urged to **retain stormwater** with its many green benefits. As part of this green philosophy, we gather the leaves and retain them for **compost** so there is no energy used carting them away. There are added benefits to the compost, since it attracts worms, which loosen the soil, and the leaf mulch controls invasive weeds and aids in moisture retention.

Therefore, I am doing my small part and I urge others to follow my lead. I realize that this might not work for everyone, and it might depend on the size of the property. Nevertheless, this is one way that if even a third or half of the residents do it, it would have a big impact on both our pocketbooks and our quality of life.

Anyone who has another **low cost** green idea to share can get in touch with me and I will be happy to publicize.

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

Garbage Pickup: Residents' Response

By Marnie Shaul, Council Vice President



Since my article in the *October Journal* asking for residents' views, I have received fewer than **ten responses** on this topic; it appears Somerset residents have adapted to **once a week** garbage collection. Although several residents have said they prefer **twice a week** collection, others have said they are fine with once a week.

Reasons given for preferring twice a week collection include some bigger households having a **large volume**

of garbage, perceived **health issues** related to **more mice** and **flies**, and observations that the Town curbside trash containers are often **overflowing**, even though trash from these containers continues to be picked up twice a week.

There were also positive comments for once a week pickup, especially because of **less visual clutter** when containers are on the street only one day. Suggestions and concerns include considering twice a week collection during **holiday** weeks when more garbage is generated, and a concern that garbage cans **without lids** attract **birds** and **rodents**, and neighbors whose storage containers are visible all week.

The Council has discussed whether a substantial number of residents might be interested in participating in a **bulk purchase** of garbage cans with attached lids similar to the blue recycling containers. Presumably, there would be cost savings with a bulk purchase. Substituting containers with attached lids could eliminate some of the concerns residents mentioned.

When the Council adopted the new trash contract, it said it would reconsider once a week garbage pickup in six months after residents had an opportunity to see how well the new system worked. For that reason, at its **December** meeting the Council will be considering whether to reinstate twice a week garbage collection. To contact Council members, write us at Council@townofsomerset.com.



Somerset Swim Team — Parent Leader Opportunities!

By Sarah Kingdom, Grantham Avenue

Believe it or not, planning is already underway for next summer's swim season—the first one in our brand new

pool facility! The swim team is one of the greatest aspects of living in Somerset. Each summer we work side by side with our neighbors, forge life-long friendships, watch as our kids learn what it means to be part of a team, and most importantly, have tons of fun! For this, we count on the involvement of all swim team families. Starting with the 2011 season, the need for increased parental involvement is especially critical, since our Swim Team leader **Sarah Morse** and Team Treasurer **Pamela Cox** have both stepped down after many years of dedication to the team.

We are looking to fill the following jobs:

Dolphin Team Representative: This job oversees all facets of the regular and Mini swim teams and the various activities and duties, including meets, coaches, social activities, and more. This Representative coordinates the team and handles communications with parents, coaches, and swimmers, and chairs the **Swim Team Executive Committee**, as well as representing the team on the **Town's Pool Committee**. The ideal person should be an effective motivator.

MCSL (Montgomery County Swim League) "A" Team Representative: The A Rep coordinates the team's A meets (**A Relays and Divisionals**). He/she is the liaison with MCSL and the five teams in our Division.

Team Treasurer: This job can be done at your convenience. The Team Treasurer prepares the annual budget, handles the bank account, and keeps the financial records. Pamela has offered to train her successor.

Interested in one of these posts?

Please contact **Sarah Kingdom** at twotownfield@msn.com, **301-907-3226** if you would like to explore any of these roles further.

The Somerset **Dolphins Swim team** is open to all Town residents aged **18** and **younger**.

Permits Granted



The Mayor issued the following permits during the past month. (The Town Council approves Building permits.)

Tree Permits

Roman Halla requested the removal of a dead 20" maple tree, located at 4721 Falstone Avenue. Town Arborist recommended tree for removal. Applicant will plant a replacement tree.

M.V. Dehejia requested the removal of a 12.5" Canadian hemlock, located at 5411 Surrey Street. Town Arborist recommended tree for removal. Tree was too close to the foundation. Applicant will plant a replacement tree.

Charles Casazza and Phyllis O'Callaghan requested the removal of a 32" Norway maple, located at 5505 Uppingham Street. Town Arborist recommended tree for removal. Tree was declining and was hazardous. The applicants will plant a replacement tree.

Pool Renovation from page 1



Baby Pool? What Baby Pool. Excavation on the New One Starts Soon.

wading pool structure and piping; installation of stone facing on new retaining

walls along east terrace and new baby pool; and replacement of the existing floor slab from the old women's locker room.

We continue to work with residents to provide an appropriate walkway around the project area to the path up the hill to **Friendship Heights** and **Metro**. The project team has also completed an assessment of the main pipes that carry water to and from the filter and pump room in the basement of the pool house and has concluded it is not a wise use of Town funds to



Removal of the Old Wood Extension from the Deck Will Make Room for Planting More Indigenous Trees and Shrubs to Help Retain the Stream Bank.

replace those pipes as part of this project.

The Mayor and Town Council remain focused on assuring that the

project continues according to plan. The Council reviews the project as an agenda item at its regular monthly meetings and at a special meeting held mid-month principally focused on the pool facility project. We have been discussing the status of the project, adherence to plan, the change orders occasionally proposed by the contractor to address unexpected issues, and any other feedback and questions from residents. The whole project team also holds regular **bi-monthly** meetings to review the overall plan and to discuss details and other issues.

As always, the contractor is working hard to assure that they and all of their employees and subcontractors abide by all of our construction **guidelines** and **minimize noise** and **disturbance** for the community. If you have feedback or questions on this or any other aspect of the project, please call the Town Hall. If you would like to track the project more closely, you may also want to check the project website where I post occasional updates on the project, pictures of the progress, details on the limited contract adjustments we have made, and answers to questions we have heard. I am also available if you have questions or other feedback, as we make every effort to make this a well-run project that produces a great, on-time result for the Town.



Somerset Elementary School — Recess Rovers Requested!

By Franny Peale, Uppingham Street

Two of our Town residents, **Jill Herscot** (Cumberland) and **Elizabeth Harris** (Surrey), have started an exciting new program at our local elementary school

to encourage more physical activity during recess. Thanks to the support of the school administration, this initiative kicked off in **mid-October** with about **25 parent** volunteers. **The kids love it!** With the **Recess Rovers** adding supervisory support, the school now has the flexibility to use the grassy area and playground at the south of the school for organized games and relay races. The Recess Rovers hope to start a walking program around the school using **pedometers** and **personal goal charts**.

Somerset residents can support this program in several ways:

Volunteer to be a Recess Rover. Send an email to Elizabeth Harris at ekmharris@gmail.com. She will lead you through the easy registration process on the **Volunteer Spot website** where you can sign up for hour-long blocks of time and email reminders. You do not need to be the parent of a current student—enthusiasm for exercise and a warm jacket are the only requirements! Please give Elizabeth a brief description of your connection to the school when you get in touch.

Donate exercise equipment. Equipment should be new or in good condition and easy to carry, set up and store (such as stretch bands and jump ropes). There are school system rules prohibiting throwing games, such as baseball, softball and football. Please contact Jill Herscot at jiherscot@aol.com if you are interested in donating.

Send in your ideas. If you know a great game, jump rope rhyme, or silly song that gets kids moving, send in a description, or better yet, demonstrate it yourself at recess! Remember, you need to sign in at the school office first.



Latest News From Town Hall

By Josh Russin, Clerk-Treasure



Pool Invoices

Many residents received the **second round** of pool invoices. These invoices included any **unpaid** pool expenses from the first billing cycle. If you receive more than one invoice per household, please send your **check and invoice to Town Hall** so we credit your account correctly.

Leaf Collection



Vacuumping of leaves piled on the grass near the curb will continue until the third week in December. The Town maintenance personnel will continue to pick up the leaves. Please remember **not to park** in front of the leaf piles during the day so that the Town staff can pick them up. Please do not put leaves in the street. If residents hire a lawn service company, please remind them of this request.

We also ask that you ensure the piles consist only of leaves. Please do not include **sticks, stones, bricks, or other sharp debris** because these items will damage the blades of the machinery. Residents who prefer to **bag** their leaves or dispose of them in a **mulch pile** in their yards can continue to do this. We also encourage residents to compost or mulch leaves.

Town Directory

The Town is currently working on the **2011 Town Directory** and we know there are many **incorrect** e-mail addresses in the current Directory. If you are new to Somerset or if you wish to amend your family's entry, please send an email to clerk@townofsomerset.com containing the information you wish to be included in your listing. You can use the format in the current directory as your guideline; otherwise, we suggest you consider including the following as applicable:

Name: _____

Name: _____

Children: _____

Address: _____

Tel #: _____

Fax #: _____

Email Address: _____

Please provide the information in an email no later than **November 24**, which will ensure the accuracy of the listing.



Yard Refuse

Remember that your yard refuse containers must be marked to

indicate they contain yard refuse. Josh has these **stickers** at Town Hall.

We would like to ask residents and their contractors to refrain from disposing of **personal** yard waste on **Town property**, including in the Town parking lot, the parks, dumpster, and on Town equipment.

Calendars

2011 League of Women Voter calendars are available at the Town Hall.

MVA Mobile Office

The MVA's mobile office will be in **Friendship Heights on Monday, December 20** from **10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.**



Letter to the Editor

From Richard Kessler,

4914 Cumberland Avenue

I attended the regular Town Council meeting on **November 1** to request that the Mayor and the Council keep the Town better informed on decisions made. The latest minutes from the Regular Town Meetings posted on the Town Web site are from **last July**, and Minutes from **Special Town Meetings** have not been posted. The Mayor assured me that the Town would do a better job of keeping residents informed. To date, the web site still has not been updated. I understand that the Mayor's role has become largely honorific and the bulk of work is being done by Council Members, an over-burdened office staff, and resident volunteers, but I hope the Mayor will fulfill his commitment to keep residents better informed of decisions and progress in the Town operations. **Thank you.**



By Mayor Jeffrey Slavin

It seemed to me there was an abundance of celebrants in Town for **Halloween** last month. I have been tracking the numbers of trick or treaters at my house on **Warwick Place** for several years. While I had approximately **200** kids between the hours of **6:00 p.m.** and **9:30 p.m.** in **2008** and **2009**, this year I was at about **206** at **8:30 p.m.** when I ran out of my large **Hershey bars**. I was probably at about **250** when I closed up shop at **9:00 p.m.**, leaving excess candy on my stoop.

I asked many of the children where they went to school, and as the night progressed there appeared to be very few from Somerset. We might want to consider urging Somerset families to send children out during preset hours so residents can make their own decisions on candy limits. Additionally, I got a late report of some bullying and egg throwing by a group older of kids and I urged the resident to call police. A few minutes later I saw two **Montgomery County** police cruisers pass by my house. Next year we will try to schedule our own officers to work in Town on that important night.

As almost everyone knows, there will be a passage of leadership for our **Swim Team** in **2011**. We are all so appreciative for the hard work **Sarah Morse** (Dorset) and **Pamela Cox** (Cumberland) have done for more than a decade to make the team so wildly successful. Council member **Cathy Pickar** (who is also the liaison to the pool committee) and I recently met with a group of parents to get information on operations and personnel so we can help these volunteers as they start planning for the next season. The **Town Attorney** will review the program to make sure we have adequate insurance coverage. As the Council begins work on the next Town budget, we must all consider the appropriate level of financial support for this vital activity in Somerset.

When the ad hoc personnel committee (Council members **Marnie Shaul**, **Barbara Zeughauer**, and **myself**) was completing its task of interviewing candidates and making a recommendation for our new clerk-treasurer/administrator, we realized that our Town's **personnel manual** was not as functional as we would like it to be. Therefore, working with the staff, the committee is now meeting to create an improved document that will better serve our Town and its employees. A draft will be ready to go on the agenda for Council consideration in the near future.

I attended the **Maryland Municipal League Fall Conference** in **Annapolis** late last month, including the **Maryland Mayors Association meeting**, where we discussed a new website, and a luncheon that featured the major candidates for **Lt. Governor**. There was also a timely work session on writing a personnel manual. The legislative agenda that was voted on and approved was not controversial, probably because it had universal appeal. League membership voted unanimously on the legislative initiatives for next year, which are (1) to convince the **Administration** and the **General Assembly** to **restore full funding** of shared highway user revenues and police aid to municipalities as soon as possible, and (2) to work with leadership in the General Assembly to identify and support **alternative revenue raising** mechanisms for municipal governments in order to reduce the overreliance of cities and towns on the **property tax** as their primary general fund revenue source. Both of these initiatives are important to Somerset, and we will begin talking to our **District 16** representatives about them at the annual MML Montgomery Chapter legislative dinner next month.

As we are always looking for ways to go green at Town Hall, I am pleased to report that our payroll is now completely **paperless**. I did my part last week by opening up a personal account at the nearby **SunTrust** branch in **Friendship Heights** (where I can visit by foot or bike!). Because that bank is one of our partners in the **pool house project** they are providing exceptional service to Somerset residents, so I am glad to do business there.

In response to a request from the **Office of First Lady Michelle Obama**, I signed us up to be a **Let's Move Town**. As most know, the First Lady is concerned about the problem of childhood obesity, the rates of which have tripled in our country in the past three decades. We will soon be getting a toolkit from the **White House** that will give us some ideas for steps we can take to make the community healthier. There is already a group in Town has formed to work on the same problem for adults. Anyone interested in helping on this important issue is welcome.



Council Activity

At the October 18 special meeting, the Town Council acted on the following:

1. Updated Town leaf removal contract and operation. The Council allowed Town employees and Town leaf contractor to use the Town Hall parking lot as the leaf storage site for the 2010 leaf season in lieu of the pool parking lot, based on the possibility of delays because of the number of vehicles entering and exiting the construction site. The Council requested the Town notify Town residents about the closure.
2. Pool house renovation project update. Pool renovation contractor Therrien Waddell gave an update on the project schedule. TW informed the Town the project was 2-½ weeks behind schedule due to delays in obtaining permits, added measures requested by the County inspector, and weather conditions. TW indicated these delays could be made up. The project change order (PCO) review process was clarified requiring the contractor submit PCOs to the Pool Architect (Peter Noonan), Town Consultant (Lou Balodemas) and Town Contract Officer (Council member Alan Proctor). After review, the Town Consultant will send the PCO to the Council for input that will determine whether the contractor can proceed.
3. Adjournment – 9:24 p.m.

At the November 1 regular Council meeting, the Town Council:

1. Approved the minutes of the October 4, 2010 regular meeting.
2. Approved the minutes of the October 18, 2010 special Council meeting.
3. Discussion of FY10 annual audit by Bob Diss of Lindsey & Associates and Town Audit Committee.
4. Discussion of financial report for fiscal year to date.
5. Update on pool house renovation project.
6. Approval of pool house renovation parking plan. No action taken. Contractor and the Town will refine plan before seeking input from residents who reside on Falstone Avenue, Uppingham Street, and Warwick Place.
7. Suggestions and questions from residents. Town resident Richard Kessler asked the Council to give residents more timely updates on the pool renovation project. Mr. Kessler thought the Town website needs to have the most current information available on the project.
8. Fact-finding hearing and action on application by James and Dabney Goold, 5812 Surrey Street, to install new air conditioning and heating unit to replace existing broken unit. Vote: Unanimous. Motion passed 5-0.
9. Fact-finding hearing and action on building permit application by Paul Chou, 5523 Uppingham Street, to remove existing deck and replace deck in kind. Vote: Unanimous. Motion passed 5-0.**
10. Fact-finding hearing and action on building permit by Miriam Soroush, 4519 Dorset Avenue, to extend building permit application. Vote: Unanimous. Motion passed 5-0.**
11. Action on recommendation by Acting Town Arborist at the request of Pepco to remove an unnumbered black gum tree and an unnumbered black locust tree located in Capello Park. Vote: Unanimous. Motion passed 5-0.***

continued on page 8

12. Fact-finding hearing and action on building permit by Mitch Narins, 4909 Essex Avenue, to extend building permit application. Vote: Unanimous. Motion passed 5-0.**
13. Mayor's Report.
14. Adjournment – 9:23 p.m.

** Indicates item was added to the agenda

***Indicates item was added to the agenda at the Council meeting at the Mayor's request.

November 22, 2010 – Special Town Council Meeting:

1. Agenda
2. Pool house renovation project – 6:45 p.m.
3. Subjects to be covered could include:
 - Comparison of project progress to project plan
 - Change order approvals
 - Recording costs and effect of change orders on timeline
 - Status of stage 2 permits
 - Keeping track of the project's budget
 - Pool Committee meeting items that relate to the pool renovation project
4. Adjournment – 7:45 p.m.



Preliminary Agenda

Regular Meeting of Town Council

Monday, December 6, 2010 – 7:30 p.m.

Regular Meeting of Town Council

1. Approve the minutes of the November 1, 2010 regular meeting – 7:30 p.m.
2. Approve the minutes of the November 22, 2010 special meeting – 7:35 p.m.
3. Discussion of financial report – 7:40 p.m.
4. Update on pool house renovation project – 7:50 p.m.*
5. Suggestions and questions from residents – 8 :00 p.m.
6. Fact-finding hearing and action on previously approved tree removal permit application that was part of a building permit application by Dina Levine, 4807 Falstone Avenue, to replace a 40” oak tree with three canopy-sized trees – 8:05 p.m.
7. Fact-finding hearing and action on application by Bruce and Barbara Tully, 5703 Warwick Place, to install an emergency generator at the residence – 8:15 p.m.
8. Fact-finding hearing and action on application by Harold and Louise Koffsky, 4900 Falstone Avenue, to install an emergency generator at the northwest corner of the house – 8:25 p.m.
9. Fact-finding hearing and action on application by Catherine Pickar, 4915 Dorset Avenue, to install an emergency generator at the residence – 8:35 p.m.
10. Fact-finding hearing and action on application by Jodi and Rodd Macklin, 4817 Dorset Drive, to enclose a back terrace – 8:45 p.m.
11. Discussion of Swimming Pool Committee’s proposed budget for 2011 season – 8:55 p.m.
12. Discussion and potential action on once- versus twice-a-week garbage collection – 9:10 p.m.*
13. Action on new pool management contract for Calendar Year (CY 2011) – 9:25 p.m.
14. Approval of Town Directory printing bid for CY 2011 – 9:40 p.m.
15. Introduction and adoption of ordinance to amend Town of Somerset Code Chapter 8, Protection of Trees, Section 8-204(a)(5) the diameter of trees that are measured for protection to make it consistent with existing language found in the Code – 9:50 p.m.
16. Introduction and adoption of code amendment to Town of Somerset Code Chapter 5, Parks and Natural Resources Committee, Section 5-901 (a), (b), (c), (d) – 9:55 p.m.
17. Amend Town personnel manual – 10:00 p.m.*
18. Mayor’s report – 10:05 p.m.
19. Adjournment – 10:10 p.m.



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

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 website 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 discussions sometimes run ahead of schedule

Items marked * have related articles inside this issue of the Town Journal.