



SOMERSET TOWN JOURNAL



Volume 56 • No. 8

Date of Publication: February 18, 2009



Town of Somerset 2010 Directory Errata Sheet

By Corrie Morsey

There were some blatant errors in our new **Town Directory**, for which I apologize. I don't know how they occurred; but they nevertheless materialized. Corrections can be found on the **Errata Sheet insert** in this issue of the **Town Journal**. The sheet also contains changes brought to our attention after the Directory was sent to the printer, as well as two new families who have recently moved into Town.



Local Election Lowdown

Voters Will Select Mayor and Two Council Members April 7

Election Day for the Town of Somerset is **Wednesday, April 7**, for **Mayor** and **two Council members**. At the Town Council meeting on **March 1**, nominations for the incumbents and other candidates will be accepted for the two-year terms. Additional nominations may be made by petition of 20 registered voters filed with the **Clerk-Treasurer** no later than **4:00 p.m., Monday, March 15**.

The Town Charter requires its elected officials to be:

- Citizens of the **United States**;
- Residents of Somerset for at least 18 months preceding the election; and
- Qualified voters in the **Town of Somerset** and the **State of Maryland**.

Registration Day is March 1

A member of the **Board of Supervisors of Elections** will be at the **Town Hall** from **7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.** on Monday, March 1, to register new voters. Residents may also register at the Town Hall Monday through Friday from **9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.** or by mail (call **Tom Carter, 301-657-3211**, to mail the registration form to you). The deadline to register for the April 7 election is 4:30 p.m. on March 24. If you are currently registered in Montgomery County, you are eligible to vote in the Town of Somerset.

In order to vote in the Town of Somerset you must be:

- At least 18 years old by April 7, 2010;

- A resident of Somerset for 14 days preceding the election (actual residency is required except for individuals absent from the Town only temporarily and intending to return);
- A citizen of the United States or an alien legally authorized to reside in the country; and
- Registered to vote in the Town of Somerset and/or **Montgomery County**.

If you have any questions about whether you are registered in the Town or know former residents who are still registered in Somerset, call **Bonnie Thomson**, chair of the Board of Supervisors of Elections, at **301-657-2923**.

Calendar

Monday, March 1

Council Meeting

Monday, March 1

Voter Registration Day

Wednesday, March 10

Discussion with Barb Neal,
Town Arborist

Monday, March 15

Deadline for Candidates

Monday, March 24

Election Registration Deadline

Monday, March 29

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 Slavin

Thoughts on the Blizzard

A true measure of a community's character occurs when an emergency takes place, and I am pleased to report that the residents of our Town responded with great compassion and concern during the **Snowstorm of 2010**. I would certainly give us an "A."

The record snowfall was problem enough, but the lack of power for **36 hours** truly put us to the test. Of course the highest importance is always placed on our most vulnerable citizens, but this time everyone was truly at risk. I am thankful that we actually have a naturally well-organized network in each neighborhood in Town, since so many people seemed to take care of not only their own households, but others on their block, too. I became aware of this as I fielded and tried to respond to almost 400 calls and emails during the course of the critical week of the storms.

We learned other lessons, too, the most important of which is our continuing disappointment with **Pepco**. It was not just the **lack of power (again)**, but the inability of the utility to get us vital information. Their website was **useless** and telephone communication **problematic**. Our frustration was magnified because not only could we not function in our homes, we were also unable to plan what to do next.

Fortunately, we have an excellent snow removal contractor and our streets were well taken care of. It was also prescient of the **Council** to approve the policy to include the sidewalks in the plan. The **County** and **State roads** were no comparison, and I am not sure this is not just because of budget problems in both entities.

Once the snow season is over, we will ask for another information session with Pepco to give them constructive criticism and get some assurances that problems we have long identified will not happen again. If it weren't for the heroics of Council member **Cathy Pickar**, who seized an opportunity to be in contact with several contracted employees, who knows how long our power would have been out? But we should not have to rely on such luck.

We must continue to hold our State and County elected officials accountable, and pay close attention to their budgetary processes. We must continue to attend meetings and forums where these officials are present, along with the electric utility, and to raise the important questions.

In the meantime, I do want to thank all those saintly people with big hearts who assisted the Town and their neighbors during the crisis. Our **Helping Hand**

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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

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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.

2010 Pool Season

By Barbara Condos, Chairperson, Pool Committee



The Council voted to award the management contract for the **2010 pool season** to **Georgetown**

Aquatics. Anyone interested in working at the pool this summer can find an application form at www.georgetownaquatics.com.

Heads Up! Book Sale at Somerset ES in April This Year

By Elizabeth Hurwit, Dorset Avenue

Somerset Elementary School's Annual Used Book Sale will be



on Friday, April 16 and Saturday, April 17, with donations accepted from April 12 through 15. This is one of the school's most popular and successful events. So start clearing off those shelves of no longer needed **children's books, adult books (fiction and nonfiction), videos, games, audio tapes, CDs, and DVDs**, and look for more information in next month's Town Journal.

We welcome volunteers to help sort books or work at the sale. For more information, please call **Cathleen Leipold** at 301-657-1946 or **Elizabeth Hurwit** at 301-652-0608.



R E A D B O O K S

On My Mind from page 2

group, those with four wheel drives and generators, and those who performed individual acts of kindness deserve special recognition. Our **list_serv** was invaluable.

While we might not get a snowfall like this for another century, there are other potential disasters that could occur, and I think we are better prepared now that we have this experience under our belts.

Let's Discuss Town Trees

By Corrie Morsey, Chair, Parks and Natural Resources Committee

**A Discussion with Barb Neal, Town Arborist
Wednesday, March 10, 7:30 p.m.–9:30 p.m., Town Hall**

During the past several years, a few Town residents and some **Parks and Natural Resources Committee members** have questioned the Town's monoculture, which the Town Council enacted in **1989**. At that time, the goal of the plan was to reestablish a cohesive streetscape that would ultimately enhance the Town's appearance and provide for the common good of all its residents.

Several of the Town's trees, many which have been around as long as the Town itself (**100 plus years**), have come to or are approaching the end of their natural lives. When a dead, hazardous, or unsalvageable tree is removed, we want to replace it as quickly as possible. Some believe we should replace what they refer to as **statuesque, legacy trees** (notably oaks and maples), with the same. In many cases this is exactly what happens. When thinking about suitable street trees, we need to keep in mind that our utility lines are overhead and that the trees on **Dorset Avenue** are growing into three-stage wires. We want to maintain our tree canopy, but at the same time we don't want to contribute to power outages. Ideally, the trees we plant would be native, disease resistant, low maintenance, and capable of storing carbon efficiently.

Barb Neal, Town Arborist, who after eighteen months has become well acquainted with the Town and our trees, will make a presentation and recommendations as to how we can best preserve our streetscape and tree canopy, and to coexist with the utility lines. Afterwards, she'll be happy to entertain our questions. This is our chance to learn, have questions answered, and express views.

Permits Granted



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

Trees:

William and Loretta Brenner, 5509 Surrey Street, to remove a red maple due to owner hardship.

Nancy Hooff, 5516 Uppingham Street, to remove a fallen Leyland cypress.

Town Hall Tidbits | By Tom Carter, Clerk-Treasurer



Remember Somerset in Your Tax Returns

One of Somerset's two biggest sources of revenue is its share of the **State** income tax paid by Town residents. But Somerset will not get its share of income taxes unless its name appears on the Maryland income tax form in the box marked, "**City, Town or Taxing Area.**" Please remember to complete this section when filing your taxes. A sample of the form appears below.

The image shows a sample of a 2009 Maryland Resident Income Tax Return form. A red circle highlights the 'City, town or taxing area' field, which contains the text 'Town of Somerset'. A handwritten note 'Town of Somerset Here' with an arrow points to this field. The form includes sections for 'SOCIAL SECURITY #', 'YOUR FILING STATUS', and 'EXEMPTIONS'.

Town Election

Election Day for Mayor and two Council members for the Town of Somerset is Wednesday, April 7, from 5:00 p.m.–9:00 p.m. in the Town Hall. Information on absentee ballots will be forthcoming.

Found

Four unique, silver metal disks were found recently on **Surrey Street** between **Essex Avenue** and **Falstone Avenue**. If you think they might belong to you, call **Town Hall** at 301-657-3211.



Sidewalks

Our contractor will clear two inches of snow or more from your sidewalks after a storm, but remember it is your responsibility by **Town Code** to keep it clear thereafter. The maintenance men are responsible for the Town sidewalks where there are no houses.

Reminder to Dog Owners

The **Town Code** requires that you **keep your dog on a leash** whenever the dog is not on your property and that you **pick up the feces** after your dog does its duty. Please keep our parks and your neighbors' yards clean from dog messes.

Fines of up to **\$100** can be imposed! Dog droppings may be disposed of in the Town trash receptacles as long as they are double bagged to protect the collectors. There is a special trash receptacle for pet droppings in front of **5407 Surrey Street**. **DO NOT** drop your dog's feces in your neighbors' trash receptacles.



Street Light Out?

Please call **Pepco** at 1-877-737-2662 or visit their Web site at www.Pepco.com to

report a street light out. You will need to provide the nearest address to the pole. The bulb should be replaced within **72 hours** according to Pepco.



Trash Pickup

It is **Town policy** to put trash at the curb no earlier than the night before pickup. Following this rule is

important in keeping our streetscape clear and clean. It is also a common courtesy to your neighbors.

Garden Refuse Pickup

J&J resumes twice-a-week collection of garden refuse March 2. Pickups will be on **Tuesdays** and **Fridays** as in the past.

Please note that yard waste should either be placed in paper bags or loose in trash cans that are prominently marked as "**Yard Waste**" for easy recognition by the driver. Do not mix with trash or they will leave the entire can! Branches must not be over four feet long or three inches in diameter. Large branches must be trimmed to meet these dimensions. All branches not placed in trash cans must be tied into small bundles.

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Odd Jobs Helpers

Please review the **Odd Jobs** list enclosed with this edition of the **Town Journal** and let **Tom** know if there are any changes, additions or deletions so that this list remains fully accurate. Call **301-657-3211** with changes.

Some Springtime Activities Require Permits

Spring is coming and in the next few months residents will begin to add to their houses, redo their gardens and beautify their yards. Remember, for some things you will need a permit. Below is a list:

- **Building permit**—needed for any construction or demolition which changes the exterior dimensions of a house or accessory structure. This includes building or enlarging a tool shed.
- **Tree permit**—needed to take down trees which are four inches or more in diameter, four and one-half feet above the ground.
- **Fence permit**—needed for any new or replacement fence or wall.
- **Driveways**—repair or repaving of the section of the driveway on public right-of-way as well as a driveway apron may not proceed without a **\$1,000 deposit** to insure restoration of Town sidewalks, curbs and other public property. Replacement aprons must meet County standards.
- **Dumpsters**—may not be parked in the street without permission of the Mayor.

MVA Mobile Office

The MVA's mobile office will be in **Friendship Heights** on **Monday, March 29**, from **10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.**

Looking for Somerset Health Professionals Interested in Sharing Knowledge

By Jeanette Kreiser, Falstone Avenue

A week or two before **Christmas**, a group of Somerset residents got together to discuss ways to make Somerset a **healthier community**. Many interesting ideas were generated, and some have been initiated already.

One thought was to hold an **informal series of health presentations and discussions** in which Somerset residents with expertise in any aspect of the health and wellness field could provide information about their area of expertise to interested Somerset residents as a community service.

A first step toward that end is to identify people in the community who have knowledge of such matters and who would be interested in sharing their knowledge with their neighbors.

If you are someone who would like to be involved in this initiative—as either a presenter or as an organizer or adviser—please contact: **Jeanette Kreiser, 301-907-8805** or **jskreiser@yahoo.com**



Letters to the Editor

From Barbara Marblestone,

January H1N1 Flu Clinic at Town Hall Was Popular

MedStar Visiting Nurse Association returned to Somerset January 8 in order to provide **H1N1 inoculations**. MedStar communicated regularly with the Town on the status of vaccine availability and notified us as soon as the association got word of its allotment for the general public. More than **105 people** received the vaccine January 8 at the Town Hall.

We always appreciate the cooperation of MedStar and its staff at the seasonal flu clinic. We especially want to note its efficient handling of the H1N1 situation as it evolved. **Tom, Corrie, and Nicole** provided excellent assistance in planning this extra clinic. Many thanks to our very helpful volunteer registrants: **Ruth Ephraim, Lucy Freeman, Barbara Hoover, Ruth Koffsky, Joan Krash, and Davi Walders. Good health to everyone!**

From Bill Marmon, Cumberland Avenue

I want to commend the **Mayor, Clerk, and Maintenance staff** for exceptionally able snow removal service this winter. The streets of Somerset have been plowed and sanded with incredible speed and professionalism after each of the snowstorms we have experienced this winter. **Snow removal** this year is better than any year since we moved here in **1980**. I want to add special appreciation for the way the bottom of **Cumberland** has been handled. In the past the plows often left a huge mountain of snow in front of our driveway, which is at the very end of the street. Not this year. **Thank you!**



By Mayor Jeffrey Slavin

Congrats to Council member **Bill Farley** who has been elected **Vice Chair of the Friendship Heights Transportation Management District Advisory Committee**. Bill serves on the Committee in the seat reserved for Somerset by way of an appointment by the **County Executive**. It is wonderful that his colleagues saw fit to select him for this important post, as the Committee advises the County on key policy decisions in our local area involving **transportation, traffic and pedestrian safety, etc.** I am well aware of the influence of this group because I formerly represented the Town in that position. I urge everyone to read and pay attention to Bill's articles on this topic in the **Town Journal**.

Council member **Cathy Pickar** and I met last month with the **Somerset Swim Team leadership group**, captained by **Sarah Morse** (Dorset), to come up with some ideas for re-addressing the written and legal governance of the Swim Team to reflect current practice and to think of some names for recruitment to the various volunteer leadership positions for the upcoming season. It was also noted that last year's **Manager** and **Coach Kirby Weldon** has secured a full-time year round executive job and will not be returning in **2010**. We appreciate Kirby's excellent service last year and wish him well in his new endeavor.

Census Day is just around the corner on **April 1** and this month and next we will start some intense publicity to ensure that all of our residents participate. To make sure that **Montgomery County** and the **State of Maryland** get their fair share in representation in **Congress** and the **General Assembly (for the County)** and an equitable allocation of **federal and state funding**, it is extremely important that every single person gets counted. There are also lots of volunteer opportunities available and since I am serving on the **Complete County Census Staff Working Group**, please get in touch with me if you are interested.

This week I will be attending the annual conference of the **Maryland Mayors Association in Annapolis**. A number of high ranking State officials will be a part of this event and I look forward to learning as much as I can about the state of **Maryland's finances**, among other topics. I will be asking around about the possibility of reimbursement for some of our snow removal bills. **Pepco** has been in Town this month cleaning globes and replacing bulbs and in general improving the quality of our light at dark. This work is the direct result of Town Maintenance Supervisor **Enrique Cabrera's** regular surveys of our streetlights and **Tom Carter** reports the current list of problems is over two pages long. Many thanks to the Council for the idea to have **Enrique** perform this vital task.

The power company has also been in Town doing some tree pruning work that had earlier been coordinated with Arborist **Barb Neal** and other Town officials. We had been told to expect major cuts on some of our trees but the good news is that the extent of the work is not as great as anticipated.

The intersection of **River Road** and **Greystone Street**, where there is **no traffic light**, although many of us would like to have one, is constantly a worry for those who use it. A resident wrote me this month about an experience she had there and I am passing it on so that everyone will be careful when approaching that dangerous intersection. The Somersetter said, "**I was exiting onto River Road from Greystone to turn left. Lots of traffic stopped on River but I could get to the middle 'lane' to wait until traffic going towards DC was stopped, when I saw a truck van speeding towards Little Falls in the 'middle lane' to get into the left-turn lane at the light. The truck was going very fast when he came level with Greystone and, had I ventured out a few seconds before, he would have smashed into me. Please remind residents to make sure the 'middle lane' is clear before entering. It was rather frightening.**"

Finally, I want to again remind all dog owners that the law requires you to **leash your pets**. We continue to get complaints about **dog poop** on people's lawns and sidewalks. I have noticed several of my friends of mine violating the law, for which they could be **ticketed**, and they are folks who have been reminded several times. We have **authorized** our police officers to write tickets and I might also be forced to start describing the dogs in question in a more public way and hope that embarrassment will lead their owners to comply!

Journal Guidelines

- Deadline (designated by editor) is 4:30 p.m. on the 15th of each month. Articles submitted after the deadline might not be included in that month's Journal.
- Maximum length of articles by individual Council members and committee members, 500 words per issue.
- Research and information articles assigned by the Council or the Mayor can moderately exceed the 500 word limit in order to present complete information.
- Maximum length of obituaries and unsolicited articles by residents, 300 words.
- Maximum length of Letters to the Editor, 150 words.
- There is no promotion or advertisement of business or commercial interests within Journal articles, with the exception of Classified ads.
- Classified ads must be placed by a resident and contain resident's phone number.
- The Editor will exercise judgment on article length and appropriateness (Town Code grants authority to Editor for final decisions). The Editor may review changes to articles with author if time permits.
- The Publisher (the Mayor) authorizes final publication of the Journal.

Submission requirements for Journal:

- All items to be included in the Journal must be sent directly to Editor and must conform to the word limits outlined above.
- MSWord or text format by email, or typed and delivered.
- All inserts, artwork, and inclusions come through Editor to go to printer all at the same time.
- Changes to articles submitted after deadline at the discretion of the Editor.
- Documents should be submitted with no formatting, meaning:
 - All single spaced
 - Times New Roman typeface, 12 pt.
 - All paragraphs left block, including headings
 - No arbitrary punctuation
 - Double space (using enter) after paragraphs (not automatic double-spacing)
 - Any special treatment or emphasis within articles should be noted in a side note for the Editor

Editor will be happy to guide contributors in setting up their computer options to conform to formatting guidelines, or to offer guidance in preparing articles for submission.

Legislation

At the February 1 meeting, the Council postponed action on proposed Charter amendments to make changes regarding elections, including revising the dates for elections, revising early voting eligibility and procedures, clarifying the definition of qualified voters, and removing outdated information from the term lengths for the Board of Supervisors of Elections.

Council Activity

At the February 1 meeting, the Town Council:

- Approved the minutes of the January 4, 2010, regular meeting as submitted.
- Discussed ways to reduce expenses for the remainder of this fiscal year due to a 90 percent reduction in Highway User revenues and a 29 percent reduction in Income Tax revenues.
- Approved a contract with Georgetown Aquatics, Inc., to manage the pool for the 2010 season for \$69,200, subject to later amendments regarding early swim, later opening of the pool (May 29), extension of the season through September, additional funding for a more experienced pool manager and reduced hours of operation by opening one hour later.
- Approved a building permit for Gina and Michael Pack, 5508 Surrey Street, to replace their front steps and add a covered porch, subject to receipt of a County permit and Town fees and deposit.
- Discussed the options for replacing the temporary speed humps at Dorset/Warwick Place and Essex/Warwick Place intersections.
- Discussed a proposed storm water project for Devon Lane.
- Discussed proposed storm water rain gardens at the Town Hall and at the bottom of Warwick Place.
- Postponed action on a Montgomery County building permit fee of \$20,000 to renovate the bathhouse until the February 22 special Council meeting.
- Took no action to change the Mayor's salary currently set at \$15,000 annually.



A Few Images From The Blizzard of 2010



Falstone Avenue never looked better.



What! No school today!

Preliminary Agenda

Regular Meeting of Town Council

Monday, March 1, 2010 – 7:30 p.m.

Work Session of Town Council

Review of Council Follow-up List – 7:00 p.m.

Regular Meeting of Town Council

1. Approval of minutes of February 2 regular meeting – 7:30 p.m.
2. Discussion of financial report – 7:35 p.m.
3. Nominations for Mayor and two Council member positions for two-year terms – 7:45 p.m.
4. Suggestions and questions from residents – 7:50 p.m.
5. Five-Year Fiscal Plan hearing and discussion – 8:00 p.m.
6. Fact-finding hearing and action on application by Dan Hirsch and Brenda Gruss, 4901 Dorset Avenue, to add a screened porch on the existing deck at the rear of their house and a detached shed in their back yard – 8:20 p.m.
7. Fact finding hearing and action on application by Michael Lee and Velina Kulmski, 4807 Falstone Avenue, to add an 8' deep, two-story addition to the rear of their house and modify the front – 8:30 p.m.
8. Action on application by Dabney Goold, 5812 Surrey Street, to remove seven trees knocked down by the snow storm – 8:45.
9. Action on amendments to pool management contract with Georgetown Aquatics – 8:55 p.m.**
10. Action on contract for replacement of temporary speed humps at Dorset/Warwick Place and Essex/Warwick Place intersections – 9:05 p.m.
11. Action on proposal by VIKA Engineers to delineate the wetland surrounding the pool, process the wetland permit and prepare final forest conservation plan for an estimated \$10,600 – 9:15 p.m.
12. Action accepting \$7,000 EmPower EECBG sub-grant from State – 9:25 p.m.
13. Action on Arbor Day proclamation – 9:30 p.m.
14. Confirmation of Mayor's nominations to Security Committee – 9:35 p.m.
15. Mayor's report – 9:40 p.m.
16. Update on pool renovation – 9:45 p.m.
17. Adjournment – 9:55 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.



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