



# SOMERSET TOWN JOURNAL



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## ❄️❄️ Annual Community Service Day



Please save **Sunday, December 9, 2012**, from **3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.** for Somerset's **Annual Community Service Day**. Plan on having a fun-filled afternoon of community building to benefit organizations serving our neighbors in need. Details on the event will follow from the Town.

Anyone interested in helping plan the event should contact **P. Kaye Hanifee** (Falstone Avenue) at [pkaye.hanifee@gmail.com](mailto:pkaye.hanifee@gmail.com).

As seen in the accompanying photo, representatives of the Town and the project were on hand for the presentation of the award. Joining **Peter Noonan** from McInturff Architects (far right in the photo) were **Lou Balodemas**, project coordinator for the Town; **Chris Cobb**, structural engineer for the project; Somerset Council Vice President **Marnie Shaul** (Uppingham Street); Council Member **Cathy Pickar** (Dorset Avenue); and **Jerry Therrien**, Principal, Therrien Waddell Construction, the project's general contractor.

## Pool House Wins Second Award

By Marnie Shaul, Council Member



left to right: Lou Balodemas, Chris Cobb, Marnie Shaul, Cathy Pickar, Jerry Therrien, and Peter Noonan

On October 20, **McInturff Architects** received a **2012 Honor Award** for design excellence from the **American Institute of Architects, Potomac Valley Chapter**, for the Somerset pool house. This is the **second award** the firm has received for its design of the pool house (see September Journal article).

The award was made at a gala event at the end of Architecture Week and was based on a decision made by jurors based in North Carolina. Among the jurors' comments: "Proportionally this is very elegant . . . It has wonderful interiors . . . This was a significant transformation of the original facility . . . A very smart project . . . This is an example of how it requires more skill to do small projects."



### Calendar

#### **Monday, December 3**

Somerset Town Council Meeting

#### **Sunday, December 9**

Annual Community Service Day

#### **Monday, December 17**

MVA Mobile Office

#### **Tuesday, December 25**

Town Hall Closed

#### **Tuesday, January 1**

Town Hall Closed

Don't forget to check the Town website throughout the month for an up-to-date calendar. Go to [www.townofsomerset.com](http://www.townofsomerset.com) and click on **Town Calendar**.

The Preliminary Agenda for each month's Town Council meeting is posted on the Town website ([www.townofsomerset.com](http://www.townofsomerset.com)) seven days prior to the meeting. A copy is also posted on the bulletin board on the Town Hall porch.



## On My Mind

By Mayor Jeffrey Slavin

### Streamlining Our Building Application Hearings

When I began my service on the Town Council over a decade ago, I dreaded nights when we had building applications on the agenda. Back then, we had no official hearing process or rules of procedure, and no professional advice from a building inspector or arborist. Often the meetings went on and on, and too many times ended up in a free-for-all.

Since becoming Mayor, I have worked closely with the Council to set up a streamlined process that, I believe, has resulted in maximum participation, less repetition, and better information for Council Members. I am thankful that the Council has been so supportive of these changes. Let me describe what happens now, especially for the benefit of those who do not regularly attend.

Once an agenda item is called on a building application, we receive a staff report from the building inspector. After that, the Council gets the opportunity to ask him questions, and I take the questions in an orderly manner to ensure that every Member has an opportunity to speak. As a result, all the major issues are put on the table.

Next, the applicant has an opportunity to question the report and/or make a brief presentation. We hope that major problems are worked out before the night of the hearing, but sometimes outstanding issues cannot be resolved until there is a discussion between Council Members and the applicant.

Once that discussion is completed, Town residents then have as much time as necessary to make comments or ask questions. In this way, the Council and I can learn, right before making the decision, how the proposed project might impact the quality of life on a particular street. The Council always listens to what our residents have to say about applications and gives their comments every consideration. Further, Council Members are made aware of any concerns by emails, calls, and summary packets they receive before each meeting.

I think that the decisions the Council makes these days are stronger than ever, especially on such issues as managing storm water, saving trees, and preventing unnecessary noise. But our hearings are a work in progress and we are always open to suggestions.



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

# Somerset Audit Shows Good Financial Management

By  
Marnie  
Shaul,  
Council  
Member



Financial Statements

Each year, the Town is required to have its finances audited by an accounting firm to ensure that they are in order and to comply with Maryland laws. The audit is reviewed by the **Town's Audit Committee**, which makes a recommendation to the Town Council about whether to approve the audit. Somerset is fortunate to have three dedicated and financially savvy residents who serve on the Audit Committee: Chair, **Chuck Edson** (Surrey Street), **Hali Edison** (Essex Avenue), and **Vicki Frink** (Cumberland Avenue). Two Council Members work with the committee: **Cathy Pickar** (Dorset Avenue) and **Marnie Shaul** (Uppingham Street).

After a presentation of the audit by the accounting firm, the Committee was satisfied with the answers to its questions. The Committee commended the Town for sound management of its budget, noting that Somerset's expenses were less than its revenues, so the Town has done a good job of controlling expenditures during the year. The Committee recommended that the Town Council approve the audit. The Council did so at its meeting on **November 5**.

Special thanks to Town Manager **Rich Charnovich** for an excellent job in managing the Town's finances, and for his work with the accounting firm on the audit. Thanks also to Administrative Assistant **Nicole Ventura** who does much of the financial accounting throughout the year.



## Letter To The Editor

**Halloween** was not a happy experience for me as I was greatly inconvenienced and suffered damage by the actions of some teenagers who at **10:30 p.m.** bombarded my front glass door and my car with eggs.

I had arrived home **after 6:00 p.m.** and spent the next three hours "**treating**" children and having fun with them. At 10:30 p.m., I heard a loud noise at the front door and once open saw the terrible mess that awaited me. I spent an hour cleaning that night and used so much cleaning fluid that it leaked into my basement and damaged a ceiling. I cancelled an appointment and spent another hour cleaning the car in the morning.

I have lived in Somerset for **30 years** and never experienced vandalism before. As a child in WW2, a ration of dried egg was the norm. **What a waste!**

Sincerely,

**Julie Burfield, Essex Avenue**

## Somerset Employee Holiday Fund

### Message From The Mayor ❄️ ❄️

*Dear Residents,*

This year I am establishing a Town of Somerset **Employees' Holiday Fund** to recognize our hard working staff at this special time of year. I am doing this in response to the many calls and emails I have received during holidays past from residents asking how they can thank these dedicated folks.

I hope that all Town residents will show their appreciation by contributing to this special fund. The pooled contributions will be distributed after Council review based on the various lengths of service and responsibility. Other municipalities in the area do it in this manner, which seems fair and equitable. The **nine employees** who will share in the distribution are: one administrative staff member, three police personnel, three maintenance employees, one arborist and one code enforcement officer. Town Manager **Rich Charnovich** has chosen to not participate in the program.

All contributions should be by check made payable to Town of Somerset with "**Holiday Fund**" placed on the note line and sent or delivered to the Town Hall, 4510 Cumberland Avenue, 20815 or left at my residence at 5706 Warwick Place. Enclosed in this Journal is an envelope for your use. I would like to collect these funds before **December 15**, but there will be a second distribution after the holidays to take into account those contributions received after this date.

Your generosity will be greatly appreciated by those who do so much for us.

**With gratitude and best wishes for you and your families this holiday season.**

**Jeffrey Slavin, Mayor**

# Notes From The Manager's Desk

By Rich Charnovich, Town Manager



## Town Hall Top 10 List

Each month, I will identify key issues and activities planned or underway in the Town of Somerset. As always, if anyone has any questions regarding Town operations, please contact me at [manager@townofsomerset.com](mailto:manager@townofsomerset.com) or 301-657-3211.

## Falstone Avenue Drainage Improvement Project



Storm Water Drainage

The jointly funded drainage improvement project is expected to be completed by the end of **November**. The project has been underway on **Falstone Avenue** and a portion of **Surrey Street**. This project is designed to improve storm water drainage and prevent icing and flooding problems in that area. Thanks to everyone for their patience during the project. There have been questions regarding whether

Falstone Avenue will be paved over following completion of the project. For now, the contractor will only patch the paving. However, in the Town's next budget season, Town officials will consider a complete repaving of Falstone Avenue so it will look neater and be smoother.

## Employee Holiday Gift Policy ❄️❄️

The Town is going to try something new this holiday season by establishing an **employee holiday fund** to recognize Town employees during the holiday season. We hope that Somerset residents will show their appreciation by contributing to this special fund. Residents may use their own judgment in handling gratuities for non-employee service providers. Please review Mayor Slavin's message in this month's Journal and the weekly email blasts for further details.

## Toys for Tots Program



The Town is partnering with **Toys for Tots** this holiday season. Donations can be placed on the Town Hall porch. Toys for Tots does not publish a list of appropriate toys to donate. Please

consider what might be an appropriate gift for your own child, purchase the item, and donate it. Ideas for pre-teens and teens include: sporting equipment, bags, balls, books, backpacks, cosmetics, purses, watches, wallets, bath gift sets, board games, radio-controlled cars and trucks, hand-held electronics, skateboards and helmets, cutting irons, hair straighteners, and hair dryers.

Please do not donate any realistic-looking weapons or food items since Toys for Tots will not distribute them. **Toy collection will end on December 18.** Please contact the Town Hall if you have any questions.



## Community Service Day

Please mark your calendars that **December 9, 2012 from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.** is community service day at the Town Hall. If you cannot join the festivities, there will be a drop off box for donations outside the

Town Hall starting **December 1**. This is a great opportunity for everyone and could not be more convenient.



## Winter Reminders

Now that we are approaching winter, here are a few reminders:

- **Snow Removal** – Mulheron Tree Experts will again be the Town's contractor for snow removal. Regarding sidewalk cleaning, please be advised that the Town Code states that when less than two inches of snow accumulate in the front or on the side of your property, it is the responsibility of the homeowner to keep those areas clear. The Town contractor is responsible for removing snow in excess of two inches.
- **Snow Plows** – Please be mindful of the plows that clear our roads by doing your best to keep cars parked in driveways as opposed to on the streets. This enables the plows to do a better job.
- **Batting cage** – The batting cage located at the Town Hall is going to be closed from December through February. In the past, snow caused some damage to the cage. The cage will open again in early March.
- **Odd Jobs Helpers** – Finally, please keep in the mind the "**odd jobs**" list that has been distributed to Town residents as an insert in the Town Journal. If you are interested in hiring someone for snow shoveling or maintenance around your property during the winter months, take a look at this list. Contact the Town Hall if you need a new copy.

*continued on page 7*

# Council Meeting Actions

*The Town Council met in regular session on November 5, 2102. The Council took the following actions:*

1. Approval of the October 1, 2012, Regular Council Minutes, October 1, 2012, Closed Meeting Minutes, and October 10, 2012, Special Council Meeting Minutes.
2. Approval of the Fiscal Year 2012 Audit as recommended by the Audit Committee.
3. Approval of Demolition, Building, Curb Cut, Dumpster, Tree Removal/Reforestation and Generator Permits at 5513 Uppingham Street.
4. Approval of the removal of 2 Town Trees located at 4802 Falstone Avenue, Flowering Cherry, and 5400 Greystone Street, Norway Maple.
5. Approval of the removal and reforestation of the following Town Trees that Pepco has requested to be removed and as reviewed by the Town Arborist:

5800 Deal Place, Linden, Tree 175  
5800 Deal Place, Red Maple, Tree 173  
4807 Dorset Avenue, Hemlock, not tagged  
4525 Dorset Avenue, Red Maple, not tagged  
4817 Dorset Avenue, Sugar Maple, Tree 221  
4823 Dorset Avenue, White Oak, Tree 237  
4910 Dorset Avenue, Norway Maple, Tree 256  
4915 Dorset Avenue, Norway Maple, Tree 255

4731 Essex Avenue, Pin Oak, Tree 303  
4807 Essex Avenue, Sugar Maple, Tree 309  
4906 Falstone Street on Greystone Street, Red Maple, Tree 499  
5403 Greystone Street, Red Maple, Tree 463  
5413 Surrey Street, Willow Oak, Tree 529  
5712 Surrey Street (across from), Pin Oak, Tree 581  
5510 Uppingham Street, Red Maple, not tagged  
5702 Warwick Place, Sugar Maple, Tree 788

6. Approval of the removal of 4 private trees at property located at 5800 Deal Place as recommended by the Town Arborist:

39" Black Cherry 4.5'  
14" Tree of Heaven twin trunks 4.5'  
5" Black Walnut 4.5 '  
11" Hemlock 4.5'

7. Approval of a proposal submitted by Capitol Greenroofs for materials and labor for the removal and replacement of soil and plantings in the planters adjacent to the baby pool at the Town Pool House.
8. Approval of a proposal submitted by Evergro for soil and erosion work to be completed at the Town Pool site on the hillside near the pool house main entrance and walking path.
9. Approval of a proposal submitted by Bethesda Lawn and Power Equipment to purchase a 48-inch horsepower lawn mower.
10. Approval of the Mayor's re-nomination of Ellie Fink (Dorset Avenue) to the Board of Supervisors of Elections for a term to expire December 31, 2015.

In addition to these approvals, the Council also heard the Town Manager's Financial Report. Mayor **Jeffrey Slavin** stated that his report was available for anyone to review. Town of Somerset Part Time Police Officer, **Sheri Rule**, was also at the meeting for a Public Safety Forum. Town Inspector, **Larry Plummer**, provided an update on the status of the Falstone Avenue Drainage Improvement Project, as well as construction projects currently underway at 5529 Uppingham Street and 5510 Trent Street.

Town residents attending the meeting spoke on various matters including beautification in front of the Town Pool House, Public Safety and Pepco's Reliability Project.



By Mayor Jeffrey Slavin

**Election Day** has come and gone and I would like to congratulate all the winners. We look forward to working with **President Obama, Senator Cardin,** and **Congressman Van Hollen,** along with the members of the Board of Education. In the same vein, I want to send props to **Morris Panner** (Essex Avenue) for his willingness to run for the Board and raise important issues because this is part of being a good citizen. While talking with Somerset residents in the weeks

preceding the vote and while working at the poll on Election Day, I was pleased by how much our voters knew about the candidates, especially those **“down ballot,”** because in some instances those elected officials are just as important in our daily lives as the highest federal positions. Also, this year saw a record number of referendums, which required extra study. Year after year, I am so thankful for the level of political participation in Somerset because such an engaged community makes Somerset a better place.

We are fortunate that the weather got better just in time for trick or treating this year and there was a high turnout, at least on my street, **Warwick Place.** I had **238** costumed youth, an increase from last year and continuing in an upward trend. As usual, **Cumberland Avenue** attracted the most children, with some hosts telling me they had nearly **500** kids. And it was nice to know that some of that candy was donated to our troops abroad. While we had our police on the streets until late at night, there were a few reports of egging and smashed pumpkins, which is not good news. I think we need to find a way in the future to let everyone know that this will not be tolerated.

I was glad to learn recently that Somerset has been granted an exemption from a new **State ethics law** that would have required all of our elected officials to fill out very burdensome disclosure reports that would even involve our spouses. As a result of the new law, two members of the nearby **Chevy Chase Village Board of Managers** (their version of our Town Council) resigned rather than submitting such reports. I feel that since all of our elected officials are already required to sign conflict of interest letters, we are fairly well covered in this department. However, I will ask the Council to take a look at the State ethics law to see if there are aspects of it we could adopt ourselves that would be more appropriate for a municipality like ours. In addition, I think that we should consider having a campaign finance law and provide for disclosure of contributions. Sometime next year, I will appoint a task force on this topic and would welcome any resident’s participation, whether you have expertise in this area or not. Get in touch with me by email.



Proctor Bench Dedication – Alan Proctor, seated on bench, L to R: Barbara Zeughauser, Mayor Jeffrey Slavin, Cathy Pickar, Barbara Condos, and Marnie Shaul

On **Halloween Day,** the Council and I had the pleasure of dedicating the newish bench at the entrance to our Pool site to former Council member **Alan Proctor** (Cumberland Avenue), who served as the **Contract Officer** for the pool house renovation project during his last term on the Council. Alan and his wife, former Council member **Anne Proctor,** have been spending a lot of time recently in **California** and we were so pleased that they returned so we could make the presentation. I urge everyone to stop by the bench to see the beautiful plaque that was placed on the bench. It was also wonderful that we had a record turnout at the **Brown Bag lunch** that preceded the dedication that day, especially because this event was founded over a decade ago by Anne!

**HAPPY HOLIDAYS TO ALL, SAFE TRAVELS DURING THE SEASON, AND LET'S BE MINDFUL OF OUR HEALTH AT OUR HOLIDAY DINNERS!**





Fall Street Sweeping

## Street Sweeping

This winter, we plan to sweep the Town's streets. We will make every effort to let all residents know the schedule well ahead of time because street parking will be limited on the days the street sweeping occurs. This is the only way to ensure that the work is done properly. Thank you for your cooperation. A date will be chosen and publicized soon.

## Private and Town Tree Removal Process

This is a reminder that the Town of Somerset **must approve** any trees to be removed within the Town, whether they are **Town trees** or **privately owned**. Please make sure that you contact the Town Hall to obtain a permit in advance of removing any trees from your property. **Violators** of this Ordinance are subject to fines in accordance with the Town Code.



HVAC Unit Permit Required

## HVAC Unit Permitting

I don't think many residents realize that a Town permit is **required** to install or replace any type of **HVAC unit** for your home. **Noise level** requirements must also be met for these units to protect your neighbors. Please contact the Town Hall or visit the Town website for specific requirements for the installation of HVAC units. The Town Council has recently adopted an Ordinance that permits emergency installation of these units. Please contact the Town Hall for further details.

## Construction Noise Amendments Passed

The Town has recently adopted amendments on construction noise restrictions. A copy of the Ordinance can be obtained by contacting Town Hall. Here is a summary of the Ordinance:

- **Non-holiday weekdays:** No construction activities shall commence prior to **7:00 a.m.** and all construction activities shall end no later than **7:00 p.m.**
- **Saturdays:** No construction activities shall commence prior to **9:00 a.m.** and all construction activities shall end no later than **7:00 p.m.**
- **Sundays:** Construction activities are prohibited except for interior work that cannot be heard by neighbors.
- **Holidays:** Construction activities on a holiday weekday or a holiday Saturday are limited to the hours of **9:00 a.m.** to **7:00 p.m.**
- **Lawn maintenance** activities that involve the use of power equipment are permitted on non-holiday weekdays between **8:00 a.m.** and **7:00 p.m.** However, lawn maintenance work that involves the use of power equipment is permitted on non-holiday weekdays between **7:00 a.m.** and **8:00 p.m.** if only one piece of power equipment is used.
- **Lawn Maintenance** activities that involve the use of power equipment are permitted on weekends and holidays between **9:00 a.m.** and **7:00 p.m.**

## E-Journal Sign-Up

We would like to urge as many residents as possible to receive their Town Journal electronically. As a **Tree City USA** and a **PLANT Maryland Community**, Somerset wants to reduce its impact on the environment by encouraging residents to receive their copy of the Town Journal by email. If you are not currently on the Town Journal email distribution list and would like to receive an electronic copy, please contact the Town Hall at [manager@townofsomerset.com](mailto:manager@townofsomerset.com) or at **301-657-3211**.

# A Public Safety And Emergency Preparedness Update

By Bruce Tully, Warwick Place



Emergency Preparedness Kit

Just after the **September 11th** attacks, then Mayor **Walter Behr** asked me to write a piece for the *Town Journal* on **Emergency**

**Preparedness.** At that time, I was the Special Agent-In-Charge of the **Washington Field Division** and the Mid-Atlantic Region for the **Diplomatic Security Service.** I was in the Secret Service and am a designated federal government **Subject Matter Expert in Public Safety and Law Enforcement.**

In light of our two most recent catastrophic weather events, I thought it a good time to revisit this topic. As I write this, my sister on Long Island enters her twelfth day without power, and this morning there was four inches of snow! A national security or weather event could strike at any time that would cause gridlock in the entire region; at that point, it would be too late to prepare.

Here are some things to do now:

- **Keep your car** at least half-filled with **fuel.** This is a cardinal rule of emergency responders. If power goes out, gas pumps won't work. You have seen the chaos in NJ and NY with Hurricane Sandy.
- **Maintain a 10-day supply** of dry and canned goods that can be eaten without an electric stove. A hand-held can opener is essential.

Have a Sterno stove, cans of fuel, and stick matches. You can use your gas grill, but only outdoors. Stock up for pets, too!

- **Keep bottled water, juice, etc.,** on hand. Fill enough containers to have drinking water for 10 days. Fill your bathtub with water.
- **Have a 10-day supply** of all necessary medications. Pharmacies could be closed and the post office may be unable to deliver prescriptions.
- **Cash is necessary** in any emergency. When the power is out, credit cards won't work! Have enough small bills to last several days.
- **Have your fireplace inspected** and order enough wood for warmth and possibly cooking. Keep a fully charged ABC fire extinguisher anywhere there could be open flames.
- **Do not count on cell phone** or laptop use. Designate a place for family members to meet if separated by an emergency. Do not count on public transportation. On 9/11, Metro closed for awhile for fear of attacks. Drivers abandoned cars. Traffic was gridlocked. My wife Barbara walked home 6 miles.
- **Stock up** on batteries.
- **Offer aid** and comfort to the elderly, ill and families with small children as needed. Check on your neighbors.
- **Develop a plan** to help yourself and your family. Emergency services may be minutes or more away when seconds count. Any area emergency will cause multiple 911 calls. The system may crash and police/fire call requests will stack up.

## Permits Granted



### Fence Permit:

5405 Greystone Street, 6' Western Red Cedar

### Dumpster Permit:

5400 Trent Street, to be placed in the driveway

5509 Trent Street, to be placed in the driveway

### Tree Removal Permit:

5415 Uppingham Street, 1 Leland Cypress and 1 Hemlock. Both trees were damaged in the Hurricane Sandy storm and were recommended for removal.



# Preliminary Agenda

## Regular Somerset Town Council Meeting

Somerset Town Hall – Monday, December 3, 2012 – 7:30 p.m.

The Somerset Town Council will meet in regular session on Monday, December 3, 2012, at 7:30 p.m. at the Somerset Town Hall. Agenda updates are posted on the Town website: [www.townofsomerset.com](http://www.townofsomerset.com).

### Regular Meeting of the Town Council

**Council Work Session – 7:00 p.m.**

**Council Meeting Convenes – 7:30 p.m.**

1. **Comments:** Public Comment Period – 7:30 p.m.\*
2. **Motion:** To approve the November 5, 2012, Regular Council Meeting Minutes and November 5, 2012, Closed Meeting Minutes – 7:50 p.m.
3. **Discussion:** Town Manager's December Financial Report – 7:55 p.m.
4. **Public Hearing/Motion:** To consider approval of a building permit application submitted by Leslie Stone and Felipe Zanna, 5615 Warwick Place. The permit application is to construct a new deck in the rear yard – 8:00 p.m.
5. **Discussion:** Status update on construction projects at 5529 Uppingham Street, 5510 Trent Street, and 5513 Uppingham Street – 8:10 p.m.
6. **Public Hearing/Motion:** To consider approval of the Mayor's recommendation for 2013 Election Day in the Town of Somerset for March 20, 2013, and to set the hours for voting as 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at the Somerset Town Hall – 8:20 p.m.
7. **Discussion/Motion:** To consider confirmation of the Mayor's nomination of a candidate to serve as Chair of the Town Environmental Committee – 8:25 p.m.
8. **Discussion:** Mayor's Report – 8:30 p.m.
9. **Adjourn** – 8:35 p.m.

### Key

**Public Hearing Item:** Agenda item where public comment is permitted.

**Discussion Item:** Agenda item limited to discussion among the Council, Mayor and Town Staff.

**Motion Item:** Agenda item requesting action, limited to Council discussion.

**Comments:** Opinions and Questions from Town residents.

**Please note the Public Comment Period at 7:30 p.m. may run less than 20 minutes. Residents who wish to be present for a particular Agenda item are advised to arrive 20 minutes ahead of the item's scheduled discussion time since discussions sometimes run ahead of schedule.**

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

*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 contact Rich Charnovich at Town Hall if you are interested in what has been added, or consult the bulletin board on the Town Hall porch or the Town website for the most up-to-date Agenda.*



**Council Members:** Barbara Zeughauser, Cathy Pickar, Marnie Shaul, Franny Peale, Barbara Condos