



SOMERSET TOWN JOURNAL

*“Where People Have Deep Roots
and Grow Strong”*

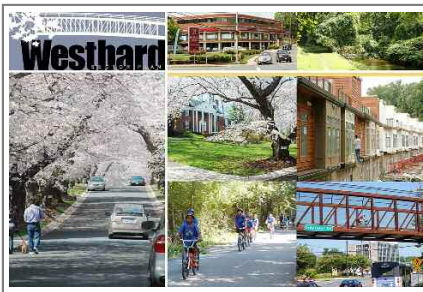


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River Road-Westbard Plan Under Intense Discussion



By Marnie Shaul, Council Vice President, Uppingham Street

In November the Montgomery County Planning Department staff hosted a week of daytime meetings at the Westwood II shopping center and four evening meetings at area schools to solicit ideas from citizens and property owners about what they would like to see in the River Road-Westbard area in the next 20 years. Various neighborhood associations (and Somerset) scheduled daytime appointments to present their vision and concerns. Somerset Town Council Members, Mayor Slavin, as well as some Town residents talked about what we would like to see as a consequence of the redevelopment, e.g., low

density, neighborhood oriented retail at the current Giant site, relatively low multi-family housing, improvements in tree canopy, and less paved surface. We expressed concerns about the potential for increased cut-through traffic, especially on Dorset Avenue, and asked for safety improvements, including a traffic light at Landy Lane on River Road and more pedestrian and bike-friendly sidewalks and paths. We also expressed concern about the effect of increased development on school crowding. We questioned a proposal to have a formal pedestrian path connecting lower Essex with Little Falls Parkway and explained that it was unnecessary and would not be welcomed by residents.

Area business owners also scheduled daytime appointments to discuss their ideas for redeveloping their properties or to ask questions about the sector plan process should they want to improve their properties in the future. These owners included Equity One and Park Bethesda on Westbard Avenue and several businesses on or near River Road.

Other organizations also scheduled meetings, including the Little Falls Watershed Alliance, Montgomery County Public Libraries, Montgomery County Public Schools, and the Housing Opportunities Commission.

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Lighting Improvements on the Path to Friendship Heights



By Barbara Condos, Council Member, Falstone Avenue

At the December meeting, the Council will be considering a proposal to update lighting on the path from the pool parking area to the Village of Friendship Heights. Among the changes under consideration are the installation of

more energy efficient longer lasting bulbs along the path and within the pool enclosure, replacement of the older fixtures, and installation of an additional light near the red jeep. These changes should enhance the current path lighting and result in savings for the Town.

Calendar

Monday, December 22

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

Active Citizens + Strong Leadership = Desired Results

Over the last half-century, thanks to the strong efforts of local citizens, we have fortunately been able to prevent the prime acreage in the vicinity of the Friendship Heights Metro station from looking like Manhattan's Upper West Side. But to get there took lots and lots of community education, thousands of hours of organizing and attending meetings, and strategic use of the political and legal process.

Now our area and, in particular, our municipality are facing new threats to our quality of life with the highly publicized proposed changes to the zoning code and the impending re-development applications for the parcels of land on the site of the Washington Episcopal School and the large shopping center and abutting properties in the area known as Westbard. The looming changes could severely impact traffic, noise, air quality, greenspace, streetscape, trees, pedestrian safety, and much more.

Folks, it is now time for action! While the initial decisions by the Planning Board and County Council are not slated to take place until the spring of 2015 and actual construction could be years away, we must now take the time to study the proposals, understand the complicated process, lobby the decisionmakers and most importantly, spread the word.

There have already been dozens of meetings by the developers and planning board staff and we are beginning to learn what their agendas are. I am so proud that every member of our Town Council has been involved and a consensus is beginning to form on what we want to accomplish.

In the coming months, we will be helping our residents prepare for the battle ahead. I want to encourage everyone in Somerset to follow the news and participate as appropriate. While in the end we will not be able to prevent redevelopment, and obviously some aspects will be beneficial to us, we want to make sure that the final results on both projects meet our needs and do not destroy the oasis that we have created over the past 108 years.



Pool Management Contract

By Barbara Condos, Council Member, Falstone Avenue



The Town's current pool management contract with Georgetown Aquatics expires at the end of the year. Five companies have expressed an interest in managing the pool for the 2015 season. These companies have been interviewed, and the Pool Committee has narrowed the choice down to two companies. This issue is on the agenda at the upcoming Council meeting in December.

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If you prefer to receive the Journal via email, please provide your request to manager@townofsomerset.com or call the Town Hall at **301-657-3211**.

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

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TTY users call Maryland Relay



Employee Holiday Fund

This year, the Town will again sponsor a Town employee holiday fund. For further details, please read Mayor Slavin's message in this edition of the Journal. Thank you in advance for your generosity this holiday season.

New Town Website . . . Coming Soon!

Our new and long awaited Town website is scheduled to go live on Monday, December 8th. Please follow future email notices for details. The Town will provide a flier to each household to describe the features of the new website.

No Parking Close to Driveways

Recently, homeowners have contacted me about parking regulations near private driveways. This is particularly an issue on streets closer to the Somerset Elementary School. Please keep in mind that Montgomery County Parking Law 31-18 stipulates that a person **cannot park within 5 feet of a driveway. Violations should be reported to the Bethesda 2nd District Police Department's Non-Emergency number at 240-773-6700.**



Pepco Tree Removals on December Council Agenda

Pepco and its consultants have been working closely with Somerset staff members on the issue of removing trees that Pepco believes are affecting overhead power lines. One of the agenda items for the December 1, 2014 Council meeting is the consideration of 15 trees proposed for removal. Our Town Arborist is in agreement that these 15 trees should be removed. These trees are among 93 trees discussed with Pepco and its consultants. Pepco has also been approaching private property owners about individual trees; these applications have not been submitted to the Town yet for consideration.

Town Code Update Project

On December 1, the Town Council will consider proposals received from four codification service firms. Over the course of the next 12 to 18 months, the Town staff, Council, Mayor and consultants will be working closely with the chosen firm and the Town Attorney on updating the Town Code of Ordinances and the Charter.

WSSC Meeting Summary

On October 20, the Town Council, Mayor and Town Manager hosted an informational session on a WSSC project that is required to take place in Town Parkland. Please continue to follow the Town Journal, email announcements, and public meeting notices for further updates. At the meeting, WSSC informed Somerset that it would get back to us in two months with the answers to our requests for additional information. If you are interested in reading a copy of the minutes from this meeting, please contact me at the Town Hall.

Toys for Tots



We again will be collecting donations for Toys for Tots this holiday season. A donation box is located on the porch at the Town Hall, and we intend to collect items until the middle of December. Thank you for any support you can provide to this activity during the upcoming holiday season. More information on Toys for Tots can be viewed at [http://www.toysfortots.org/frequently asked questions/default.aspx](http://www.toysfortots.org/frequently_asked_questions/default.aspx)

Winter Season 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 a property, it is the responsibility of the homeowner to keep these 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 and not on the streets. This enables the plows to do a better job.

Odd Jobs Helpers

Please keep in the mind the "odd jobs" list that is available to Town residents upon request. 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.

Batting Cage

The batting cage located at the Town Hall is going to be closed from December through February. The cage will open again in early March.

Council Meeting Actions

The Town Council met in regular session on November 3, 2014. The Council took the following actions:

1. Approval of the October 6, 2014 Council minutes.
2. Approval of the FY14 Audit as recommended by the Audit Committee.
3. Approval of an emergency generator to be installed at 4704 Falstone Avenue, contingent upon it passing the required noise level requirements.
4. Approval of an Ordinance amendment of the Town Code, Chapter 6, Article III, Building Permits Section 6-312(e), clarifying the setback waiver for new construction.
5. Approval to submit a Transportation Fuel Reduction and Energy Action Plan to the Maryland Energy Administration in relation to Town facilities and property.
6. Approval of Frank Joseph to serve as Chairman of the Tennis Committee.
7. In addition to the Council meeting actions, Town Manager Charnovich and Mayor Slavin presented their reports. Matt Meikljohn, from Outdoor Illumination, was in attendance at the meeting to discuss possible lighting options in the parkland near the Town Pool. Town Manager Charnovich provided a report on the Town Code rewrite proposals received, and recommended action at the December 1 Council Meeting.

River Road-Westbard Plan from page 1

Several interesting ideas emerged during the week. One idea is to make a change to Ridgefield Road to enable cars coming off River Road to drive directly onto Westbard Avenue. That would be possible because Equity One owns the property on both sides of Ridgefield Road. Another idea is to move the Little Falls Library and relocate it to become a part of the public amenities in the Equity One development. The current library location could then be used for either a new public school (one of several possible locations if a new elementary school is projected to be needed) or mixed income housing.

After the November meetings, the Planning Department staff will consider in more detail the many suggestions generated during these discussions, test for feasibility, and determine how various proposals might affect important neighborhood concerns such as traffic and school crowding. The staff plans to have a draft ready for the Planning Board's review by April of 2015. So, there are still opportunities to shape the sector plan. Somerset will likely sponsor a public meeting in January, and ask that Planning Department staff discuss what they are considering proposing for the area. Residents would be able to ask questions and provide feedback. In the interim, residents can follow the planning process and provide comments directly by going to the department's web site: <http://montgomeryplanning.org/community/westbard/>.

❖ Somerset's Art Scene ❖



Left to Right: Artists Pat Silbert, Dick Lazner, and Neighbor Lucky Marmon



By Mayor Jeffrey Slavin

It is very disappointing that in spite of the valiant efforts of many, only 36% of registered voters in our precinct at Somerset Elementary School turned out for the recent gubernatorial election. It is especially sad because the turnout County-wide was 44%. I had thought that more of our neighbors would realize how important it is to exercise the basic democratic duty. In the future, I will strive to work with local party leaders and advocacy groups like the League of Women

Voters to change these numbers in the elections in the years to come.

I do want to thank all the residents who quickly removed the multitude of signs after election day and helped return our streetscape to its usual glory.

There was better news on election night, however, as history was made when our own State Senator (and Town resident) **Brian Frosh** (Grantham) was successful in his bid for statewide office and is now our Attorney General-elect. Congratulations to Brian for this remarkable achievement. We look forward to working with him to make our State safer, cleaner and healthier through his many responsibilities as Maryland's top lawyer. Look for an announcement soon as to how the Town will appropriately honor Brian for this achievement and thank him for his years of service to us as a state delegate and senator.

Our Halloween celebration was a big success once again this year, and, thankfully, uneventful. I am pleased to report that I welcomed approximately 337 trick-or-treaters to my house on Warwick Place between the hours of 6:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. and the costumes were attractive and creative. Many of you attended the lively parade of Somerset Elementary school

Somerset Team Accepts HEAL Cities Award (Annual Maryland Municipal League Convention, Summer 2014)



Left to Right: Marissa Jones (HEAL), Council Member Barbara Zeughauser, Council Member Marnie Shaul, Town Manager Rich Charnovich, Mayor Slavin, Kimberly Fox (Kaiser Permanente)

children that took place on the streets surrounding the school. Prior to trick-or-treat night there were a number of requests to close Cumberland Avenue (where there is always a large crowd), and even Dorset, so next year this might be something for the Council to consider. All thoughts on this topic will be welcomed.

I am continuing my campaign to get everyone who works in or visits Town Hall to use the designated parking lot rather than leaving cars on Cumberland, where our neighbors are already overburdened with traffic and noise coming from our primary government building. So let's take the extra time and the beneficial extra steps so we can be considerate to our neighbors. And, of course, since we are a HEAL municipality, my first priority is to encourage those able to walk to Town Hall to do so whenever possible. And realizing that at night the lighting is inadequate, we are looking into improvements so that the Town light will be safer for pedestrians and drivers at night.

Somerset Employee Holiday Fund

Message from the Mayor



Dear Residents,

Our annual holiday fund to thank Somerset employees has been extremely successful, and I am asking that the Town recognize our hard working staff again this year. I began this activity in 2012 in response to the many resident calls and emails I had received in previous years asking how to thank our dedicated staff.

I hope that all Town residents will show their gratitude by contributing generously. The pooled monies will be distributed based on length of service and responsibility. Other municipalities in the area make the distributions in this manner, which seems fair and equitable. The nine employees who will share in the fund 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 the Town of Somerset, with "Holiday Fund" placed on the note line. Checks can be mailed or delivered to the Town Hall, 4510 Cumberland Avenue, 20815 or left at my residence at 5706 Warwick Place. Enclosed in this month's Journal is an envelope for your use. Please send in your contributions before 4:30 p.m. on Wednesday, December 10th. There will be a second distribution after the holidays to take into account any additional contributions received after this date.

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

Best wishes for you and your families this holiday season.

Jeffrey Slavin, Mayor

Preliminary Agenda

Regular Somerset Town Council Meeting

Somerset Town Hall, December 1, 2014 at 7:30 p.m.

The Somerset Town Council will meet in regular session on Monday, December 1, 2014 at 7:30 p.m. at the Somerset Town Hall. Agenda updates are posted on the Town website: www.townofsomerset.com.

Council Work Session: – 7:00 p.m.

Council Meeting Convenes: – 7:30 p.m.

Comments: Public Comment Period: – 7:30*



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

CONSENT

1. **Motion:** To consider approval of the November 3, 2014 Council Meeting Minutes
2. **Motion:** To consider approval of the November 3, 2014 Closed Meeting Minutes

NON-CONSENT

1. **Discussion:** Pre-winter season report from our snow removal contractor: Ed Mulheron of Mulheron Tree Experts – 7:40 p.m.
2. **Discussion:** Town Manager's November Financial Report – 7:45 p.m.
3. **Public Hearing/Motion:** To consider an application submitted by Washington Gas to replace 8 services in Somerset via Keyhole and Insertion on Cumberland Avenue, Dorset Avenue and Warwick Place (previously on February, 2014 Council Agenda) – 7:50 p.m.
4. **Public Hearing/Motion:** To consider approval of the removal of the following trees at 5528 Trent Street as recommended by the Town Arborist – 8:00 p.m.
8" Leyland Cypress | 9" Leyland Cypress | 11" Leyland Cypress
5. **Public Hearing/Motion:** To consider approval of the removal of the following Town trees as recommended by PEPCO and the Town Arborist. The trees would be removed at PEPCO's expense – 8:05 p.m.

4900 Cumberland Avenue 17" dbh Pin Oak # 98
4507 Dorset Avenue 17" dbh Pin Oak #144
4909 Falstone Avenue 14" dbh Ash #415
4816 Grantham Avenue 25" Red Maple #489
on Greystone St.
5526 Greystone Street 21" dbh Red Maple #506
5410 Surrey Street 21" dbh Pin Oak #534
5501 Surrey Street 21" dbh Pin Oak #535
5712 Surrey Street 52" dbh Silver Maple #582

5510 Trent Street 29" dbh Bradford Pear #652
5503 Uppingham Street 23" Red Maple #699
5509 Uppingham Street 19" dbh Red Maple #703
5601 Warwick Place 25" dbh White Pine #999
5702 Warwick Place 14" dbh Red Maple #790
5800 Warwick Place 13" dbh Mulberry no tag
on Dorset Ave.
5812 Warwick Place 22" dbh Pin Oak #816
dbh – diameter at 4.5' above ground level

6. **Public Hearing/Motion:** To consider proposal received from Outdoor Illumination for lighting services near the Town Pool Parkland – 8:20 p.m.
7. **Public Hearing/Motion:** To consider approval of a bid for Town Code rewriting services as recommended by the Town Manager – 8:40 p.m.
8. **Discussion/Motion:** To consider proposals received for Pool management services – 8:55 p.m.
9. **Public Hearing/Motion:** To consider a proposal received from Criterion, Inc. Outdoor Furniture Repair in the amount of \$3,433.20 to refinish and re-strap 48 pool chairs – 9:05 p.m.
10. **Discussion:** Mayor's Report – 9:10 p.m.
11. **Adjourn:** – 9:15 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.

* 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.

This is a preliminary Agenda prepared to meet the Journal press deadline, which typically is two to three 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/email blasts for the most up-to-date Agenda.