



SOMERSET TOWN JOURNAL



Volume 60 • No. 6

January | 2014

Date of Publication: December 30, 2013



From The Mayor's Desk



By
Mayor 
Jeffrey Slavin

Our December brown bag lunch was a rousing success. There were lots of desserts to celebrate the holiday season, many good questions, and everyone was impressed with the newly refurbished room and enhanced acoustics. I hope we have another successful turnout and see many new faces at the next brown bag lunch planned for March.

I want to thank everyone who contributed to the Somerset Holiday Fund. It is because of your generous contributions that we are able to express our appreciation to our loyal and hardworking Town employees for their service in 2013.

Due to the work at the Town Hall, it was decided that our annual Community Service Day, which usually takes place around the holidays, would be postponed until early 2014. I am actively seeking a chair or co-chairs for this event, so if you are interested in taking a leadership role, please call or email me at mayor@townofsomerset.com. In its place, in December, we did have a very successful collection drive for toys, canned food and clothing for three Montgomery County nonprofits assisting needy families.

Several residents have contacted the Town to request improvements in the lighting on the path behind the pool leading from the Town to the Village of Friendship Heights (North Park Avenue). Coincidentally, the Council has been considering hiring a consultant to take a look at this area and make recommendations. I do want to stress that this path is not currently "authorized" by the Town and everyone who uses it, especially at night, is doing so at their own risk. Since we have no control over the lights on the apartment building and the Village does not provide lighting to the park on the other side of the path, our policy is to encourage residents to use the Dorset Avenue route when they are walking to Friendship Heights. That said, we are currently looking at what would be required to change this situation, and may take some initial action in January. In the meantime, the Council and I would also be delighted to receive the opinions of Town residents on this issue. Please email Town Manager **Rich Charnovich** at townofsomerset.com with your thoughts.

It seems that our mail service has improved over the last month, and I know that our **Congressman, Chris Van Hollen**, has made inquiries on our behalf. However, recently I have received more complaints that I will forward to the Congressman. I would like to encourage everyone with a concern about the mail to write to me (even if you already have) because we need to continue to put the pressure on the USPS to ensure that we get the mail service we are entitled to.



Merry Christmas, Happy Kwanzaa, Happy New Year, and Safe Travels to Everyone.



Calendar

Monday, January 27
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**.

The Preliminary Agenda for each month's Town Council meeting is posted on the Town website (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

Montgomery College Rocks

During my high school days in the 70's, people in my circle thought of the University of Maryland as a "safety" school, and considered Montgomery College as advancement to the

13th grade! Oh my, what big changes have occurred in these past four decades.

The University of Maryland is now a world-class institution competing in many categories with top state schools like Michigan, Virginia, and UCLA. It's so competitive regarding admission that many of the brightest students from our County are rejected. And Montgomery College (MC) has grown phenomenally; it now has some 60,000 students (the largest in Maryland), three campuses, and the reputation as one of the best community colleges in the USA. "Yale on the Rail" or "Harvard on the Pike" as they say.

I am so proud to play a small role in this remarkable College's life as one of the newest members of the MC Foundation. For even President Obama has now recognized that it is at this educational level where the greatest impact on the rise of our less fortunate families is now taking place, especially in our County with such a large immigrant population. Under the dynamic leadership of Dr. DeRionne Pollard, the quality of Montgomery College is increasing in numerous ways, including highly rated professors and beautiful new facilities.

I know a number of Somerset residents have already recognized these changes and are taking advantage of the many benefits the College has to offer for persons of all ages. Beyond the degree programs, there are extensive continuing education and professional training. There are many cultural and arts events in Silver Spring, Rockville and Germantown, and volunteer opportunities with collaborating nonprofit groups. It's one of my New Year's resolutions to spread the good word about the College. I invite everyone to check out their website, explore the catalog of course offerings, or get in touch with me for further information. Let's do everything we can to get engaged with one of our County's best assets.



Brynne Duncan (Dorset) takes advantage of the Town Hall's new renovated space and power source to study for exams during the recent power outage in early December!

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



Want to Create a Healthier Yard and A Safer Environment?

SAVE THE DATE!
Sunday, February 23rd from 3:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Please join us at Town Hall on **Sunday, February 23, 2014** to learn about safe yard care and compliance with the State of Maryland’s new laws on fertilizer and pesticide use, and to hear from national leaders in conservation landscaping.

Come meet our Expert Panel!



Paul Tukey, the first Chief Sustainability Officer for Glenstone (www.glenstone.org), a museum with beautiful grounds and gardens in Potomac, which has been maintained without synthetic pesticides or fertilizers since 2010. Tukey recently joined Glenstone with the goal of creating a “living classroom”. The Founder and former Director of the SafeLawns Foundation, Tukey is the HGTV host who authored *The Organic Lawn Care Manual*. In 2009, Tukey produced and starred in the award-winning documentary, “A Chemical Reaction,” about Hudson, Quebec, the first town in North America to ban lawn and garden chemicals.



David Mizejewski, a Naturalist at the National Wildlife Federation (www.nwf.org/David-Mizejewski.aspx), who produces and hosts the Animal Planet show, “Backyard Habitat.” Mizejewski is frequently seen on the Today show (and is known for protecting hosts and guest alike from wildlife) and is a contributor to other national broadcasts and print media. David is the author of the bestseller, *Attracting Birds, Butterflies and Other Backyard Wildlife*. His passions are nature and wildlife and he loves getting people interested and educated in both, wherever they live.



Ann English is the Rainscapes Coordinator with the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection, Watershed Management Division. Ann runs the RainScapes Rewards Rebate Program, which is designed to reduce storm water impact on the County’s streams and waterways. The program rewards eligible residents, businesses, and others for installing rain gardens, conservation landscaping, canopy trees, permeable pavers, green roofs, cisterns, rain barrels or dry wells. This year’s program has new application forms and restructured rebate amounts. Residents receive a maximum rebate of \$1,200 per property.

Seating is limited so please arrive early to reserve your seat!

Please call or email Town Hall ([301-657-3211](tel:301-657-3211)/manager@townofsomerset.com) or **Kristen Khanna** ([301-654-5602](tel:301-654-5602) / kkhanna@animalci.com) with questions.





Christmas Tree Pick Up

Unity Disposal will pick up Christmas trees on Tuesday, January 7, 2014. Please have your tree out before 7:00 a.m. that morning. If you miss this day, Unity will pick up trees after that during normal refuse pick-ups on Tuesday mornings.

Please make sure the trimmings from the tree are removed before placing your trees on the curb.



New Montgomery County Police Information

I wanted to make sure that the community is aware that the **2nd District Police Department has a new phone number: 240-773-6700.** The Montgomery County

non-emergency number is 301-279-8000; dial 911 for emergencies. The Police Department also has a new website with valuable information: www.mymcpnews.com

Town Website Update

Our new Town website will not go live until mid to late January. It has been an immense task, and we want to make sure that we are very comfortable with the final product before launching the site. There will be an adjustment period, so we would greatly appreciate your patience as we transition into the new website and communications system.

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.

- **Odd Jobs Helpers:** Finally, please keep in 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.

Private and Town Tree Removal Reminder

This is a reminder that the Town of Somerset must approve any trees 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 and Generator Permit Reminder



HVAC Unit Permit Required

I don't think many residents realize that a Town permit is required to install or replace any type of HVAC unit or emergency generator 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 or generators.

Council Meeting Actions

The Town Council met in regular session on December 2, 2013. The Council took the following actions:

1. Approval of a HVAC Unit replacement unit for 5534 Warwick Place contingent upon the unit passing the required noise levels.
2. Approval of a site plan amendment for 4710 Falstone Avenue to permit the HVAC unit to be installed at the north side of the house.
3. Approval of a reforestation plan amendment for 4710 Falstone Avenue to permit the 2 canopy trees to be planted on the property to be 2-2.5 inch caliper.
4. Approval of a building permit to construct a deck screen at 4902 Falstone Avenue.
5. Approval of a permit extension for the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC) until December 20, 2013.
6. Approval of major trimming of a Tulip Poplar tree located at the rear of 5613 Warwick Place in Town parkland as recommended by the Town Arborist.
7. Approval of PCO 15R to install a new slate hearth to replace the existing stone hearth in the Mayor's office.
8. Approval of PCO 19 to replace the 4 large supply and return grilles in the meeting room and hallway.
9. Approval of a proposal by SMI Sign Systems, Inc. for signage improvements in the Town Hall building.
10. Adoption of a Resolution adopting the Montgomery County 2013 Hazard Mitigation Plan.
11. During the public comment period, lighting near the pool site and path leading to Friendship Heights was discussed. Two motions were tabled: PCO 14R in relation to the Town Hall renovation project and a Resolution confirming the Town of Somerset's intent to pursue the Sustainable Maryland designation.
12. In addition to the Council actions, Mayor Slavin provided his report to the Council, and Town Manager Charnovich provided the Financial Report to the Council. Town Inspector Larry Plummer provided a status report on the construction project at 5513 Uppingham Street. Town Inspector Plummer also provided a report on the current WSSC and Washington Gas projects that are occurring.

General Permits



Tree Removal Permits

4702 Essex, 1 Southern Red Oak
4518 Dorset, 1 River Birch
5533 Warwick Place, 1 Silver Maple
and 1 Arborvitae

Fence Permit

5401 Uppingham Street, cedar picket fence
in rear yard

Preliminary Agenda

Regular Somerset Town Council Meeting

Somerset Town Hall, January 6, 2014 at 7:30 p.m.

The Somerset Town Council will meet in regular session on Monday, January 6, 2014 at 7:30 p.m. at the 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 p.m.*

Introduction: Matt Vendemio, newly hired part-time Police Officer

Report/Discussion: Ed Mulheron to provide a report on the last snowfall and treatment of Somerset roads



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

CONSENT

1. **Motion:** To consider confirmation re-appointment of Mayor Slavin's nomination of John Stewart to the Board of Supervisors of Elections for a term to expire on December 31, 2016.

Motion: To consider confirmation approval of Mayor Slavin's nomination of Alexis Carmer to serve as Pool Committee Chair for calendar year 2014.

NON-CONSENT

1. **Discussion:** Town Manager's January Financial Report – 7:45 p.m.
2. **Public Hearing/Motion:** To consider approval of an application submitted by Jack Benson and Cecilia Berg, 4511 Dorset Avenue. The applicants are requesting demolition, building, wall, curb cut, dumpster, and tree removal permits – 7:50 p.m.
3. **Public Hearing/Motion:** To consider a 3-week permit extension request submitted by Washington Gas for work currently taking place on Essex Avenue. The permit is set to expire on January 13, 2014 – 8:05 p.m.
4. **Discussion:** To discuss a proposal submitted by Larry Plummer, Town Inspector, for sidewalk, paving and curb work on Town streets and sidewalks – 8:20 p.m.
5. **Public Hearing/Motion:** To consider approval of the Mayor's recommendation for 2014 Election Day in the Town of Somerset for April 1, 2014 and to set the hours for voting as 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at the Somerset Town Hall, as recommended by the Board of Supervisors of Elections – 8:35 p.m.
6. **Public Hearing/Motion:** To consider approval of PCO 14R for the Town Hall interior project. The scope of work includes the following: repair the existing 1st floor windows, replace cords, replace weights as needed to make windows operable, remove existing sashes as necessary to perform work, and add additional trim at ceiling of meeting room per Architect and Owners request – 8:40 p.m.
7. **Discussion:** Mayor's Report – 8:45 p.m.
8. **Adjourn:** – 8:50 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.