

"Where People and Trees Have Deep Roots and Grow Strong"



SomerseT TOWN JOURNAL



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December 2021

Town Council To Consider Black Lives Matter Resolution

By Robin Barr, Council Member, Essex Avenue

The Town Council will be considering a resolution prepared by the Equity and Inclusion Committee at its meeting on December 6. **Kumar Vaswani** (Trent) substantially and ably assisted the Committee in developing this language. The resolution affirms that Black

Lives Matter to the Town. It is a flag planted to remind us of inequities in our broader society and closer to home. It calls on us to do more in Somerset to work to reduce these inequities.

The draft resolution is printed in full below:

A RESOLUTION REGARDING "BLACK LIVES MATTER" IN THE TOWN OF SOMERSET

WHEREAS, The Town of Somerset is collectively saddened and angered by the disproportionate killing of Black people by police in our country, including, in 2020, the killings of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd, a trend which unfortunately continues; and

WHEREAS, in our own Montgomery County, County police stop Black drivers at disproportionate rates, and disproportionately arrest, and use force against Black people; and

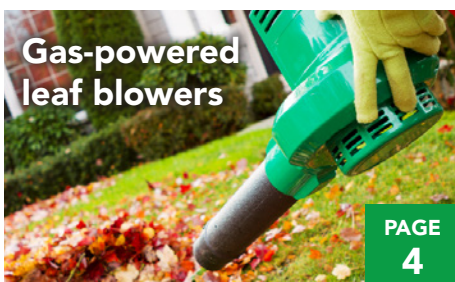
WHEREAS, the 400-year history of racism in North America includes the Town of Somerset, where residents' homes sit on land where African Americans were enslaved and forced to work; and

WHEREAS, the unfortunate effects of racism continue to pervade our society's institutions and generate harmful disparities in criminal justice, employment, housing, education, health, and mental health; and

WHEREAS, in 2020, after the killing of George Floyd, scores of Somerset residents, along with millions of Americans, expressed shock and dismay on listservs, attended protests, posted "Black Lives Matter" signs in their yards, read and discussed books on racism, and expressed support for teenagers who posted signs urging

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ON MY MIND

Getting Hipper on Gender

By Mayor Jeffrey Slavin, *Warwick Place*

As a veteran of the LGBTQ+ movement and longtime human rights activist, I get very frustrated with the many conversations I have or observe—whether in person or online—when the issue of gender identity arises and unnecessary debate ensues. People often dismiss the topic summarily in a negative way as “political correctness” or part of the “woke culture.”

Well, actually it’s not.

My parents raised me to treat everyone fairly and with respect, regardless of race, religion, education or financial resources. They taught me that every human being has value. I would like to think that this is the way most of us were brought up.

So being dismissive about the way someone wants to identify or what pronouns they want to use, thereby marginalizing them, is not right for anyone—especially those of us who want to close the divisions in our society. Disparaging those who tell us what pronouns they prefer, especially if those pronouns are “they/them,” is hurtful and rude.

I realize this can be frustrating and time-consuming to learn, but it’s important that we try. And there are many resources available.

I recently watched an excellent documentary that was very helpful. I urge you to put it in your toolbox: journalist Katie Couric’s “Gender Revolution.” It is available on the National Geographic channel for those who have participating TV provider accounts (<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/tv/>) and on Amazon Prime.

Another easy way to learn is to actually listen to the Millennials or Gen-Z’s in your household!

GENERAL PERMITS

BUILDING PERMITS/VARIANCES

4524 Dorset Avenue

- Demolition Permit
- Building Permit
- Apron Permit
- Dumpster Permit
- Wall Permit

- Heat Pump Permit

4721 Cumberland Avenue

- Fence Permit

5524 Trent Street

- Fence Permit

4806 Grantham Avenue

- Fence Permit

TREE REMOVALS

- 4708 Essex Avenue—Hybrid Holly (12”) Tree is too close to house and causing damage.

- 5502 Trent Street—White Oak (30”) Tree is growing into the house outer wall.

- 5523 Trent Street—Silver Maple (20”) Tree is 50% dead and hazardous.

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Monday thru Friday
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TTY users call Maryland Relay

SOMERSET TOWN JOURNAL

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Chevy Chase, MD 20815
www.townofsomerset.com

DECEMBER CALENDAR

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 1

Town Council American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Briefing, via Zoom*
5:30 p.m.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 6

Town Council Meeting, via Zoom*
7:00 p.m.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 14

Parks and Natural Resources Committee Meeting, via Zoom*
8:00 p.m.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 16

Town Council Work Session, via Zoom*
5:30 p.m.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 24

Town Hall closed in observance of Christmas holiday

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 31

Town Hall closed in observance of New Year's holiday

*Log-in information for Zoom meetings will be sent via email the week prior to the meeting. Residents may also email town@townofsomerset.com for log-in and dial-in information.



Somerset's Helping Hand Is Just an Email or Phone Call Away

If you need a ride, someone to pick up some groceries or a prescription, a ride to the Metro, or even if you just want to get to a friend's house, please contact **Somerset Helping Hand**. We have a list of 30 Somerset volunteers who can help.

Send an email to HHSomerset@gmail.com or call **Barbara Zeughauser** at 301-951-8560, **Kathleen Kenyon** at 301-656-8581 or **Jim Berry** at 301-656-6089.

If you would like to add your name to the volunteer list, please send an email to HHSomerset@gmail.com.

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Town Council To Consider Black Lives Matter Resolution

residents to think about George Floyd's death, racism, and white privilege; and Mayor Slavin declared that it was incumbent upon elected officials to find ways to respond to this crying need for social change; and

WHEREAS, in the wake of these events, in 2021 the Town of Somerset established a Committee on Equity and Inclusion to promote awareness and action in Somerset on concerns relevant to ethnic, racial, and cultural differences, including consideration of more inclusive policies in the County and State on policing, zoning, housing, public health, education, or other local government issues as part of its role; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT:

RESOLVED that the Somerset Town Council declares unequivocally that Black Lives Matter; denounces all manifestations of racism and discrimination, particularly against Black people; encourages continued efforts to foster understanding and harmonious relationships across differences, including racial differences, within our Town; resolves to continue to examine equity and inclusion in the Town's own business processes including policing; and affirms our continuing commitment to be vigilant, participate, and lend support to anti-racist and anti-discriminatory initiatives at the County and national levels; and

RESOLVED, that this Resolution shall be effective immediately upon adoption and shall be filed by the Clerk-Treasurer and kept available for public inspection, including posting on the home page of the Town's website.

Gas-Powered Leaf Blower Ban Now Begins on September 1, 2022

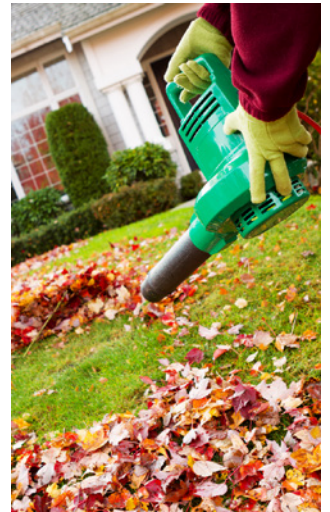
By Robin Barr, Council Member, Essex Avenue

At its November meeting, the Town Council voted to advance the ban on use of gas-powered leaf blowers in Somerset to start on September 1, 2022, rather than January 1, 2023, as an earlier Council had established. This action follows a recommendation from the Environment Committee to accelerate the ban. The primary reason Council members voted to advance the start date was the now all-too-apparent effects of the noise of these blowers on our ability to work at home. The pandemic has turned many of us from office workers to home workers and many more of us now experience first-hand the racket from these machines. The ban is also consistent with the Council's earlier declaration of a climate emergency, with carbon dioxide emissions (as from gas-powered lawn equipment) being a primary contributor to climate change through the action of global warming.

In implementing the ban, Somerset may want to take a leaf from California's new law that bans all gas-powered lawn equipment in that State beginning in 2024. California's law recognizes the substantial contribution to total carbon emissions in the state from the landscaping industry. Rather than stop with the ban, the law goes on

to offer \$30 million in incentive payments to landscapers in the State to help them make the transition from gas to electrical equipment. Somerset could not offer \$30 million in incentive payments! But thinking in terms of incentives generally may well be the best way to facilitate the transition. These can be from the very simple (e.g., if you have an outdoor outlet on your property why not offer it to a landscaper to allow the company to charge batteries while working at your property?) to the more ambitious (e.g., would it be a good use of our ARPA funds to purchase battery-powered leaf blowers for landscapers to use while working in Somerset?).

Experience from other jurisdictions that have banned gas-powered leaf blowers is that incentives do matter. Without them landscapers often ignore the ban and continue using this noisy, smelly, noxious equipment.



Services for Alice Champlin

The September 2021 issue of the Town Journal published an "In Memoriam" article about **Alice Champlin**, a former Somerset resident and Council Member who died on July 22, 2021. Funeral arrangements have now been finalized. For those who would like to attend, details are as follows:

- The funeral service is scheduled for **11 a.m., Friday, December 10th** at All Saints Church, 3 Chevy Chase Circle, Chevy Chase, MD 20815. The service will be followed by a luncheon in the Church's Great Hall. All are invited.
- The interment is scheduled for **1:00 p.m., Saturday, December 11th** at Arlington National Cemetery. Time at the graveside will be brief. Information about security measures at Arlington National Ceremony can be found at <https://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/Visit/Security>.

For a full obituary, please see: <https://lewisfuneralhomeinc.com/alice-champlin/>.



Somerset Back in the Day...

By L. Paige Whitley, Chair,
History and Archives Committee,
Cumberland Avenue

House History: 4922 Cumberland Avenue

The small Dutch colonial home situated at the bottom of Cumberland Avenue was built by Washington, DC, builder Anton Koerber, an interesting man who was not only a builder and businessman but who was also a leader for Jehovah's Witnesses and a representative of its Watchtower organization throughout his life.

Robert Grossell, a bachelor who worked at the Government Accounting Office and who lived with his sisters up the road at what is now 4911 Cumberland Avenue, sold the land to Koerber in 1939. Koerber promptly built a home whose plans he copied at other locations in the area. One such "copycat" home can be found just a few blocks away at 4832 Chevy Chase Boulevard.

Selling for about \$10,950 the home was marketed as

A home that is really different, charming in every respect. Imagine a step down living rm ... with wood-burning fireplace, plus a beautiful picture window, large dining rm, with balcony effect, modern all-electric kitchen, a cosy den all on 1st fl. Upstairs master bedroom with private bath and 2 other bedrooms and bath. In the basement you'll find a knotty pine paneled recreation, laundry, lavatory, air-conditioned system. Attached garage... (Ad for Chevy Chase Blvd. "copycat" house, Washington Post, October 7, 1939)



During the 1940s, the house was bought and sold every two or three years. In the 1950s, residents included Philip Elman, a U.S. Department of Justice lawyer who wrote the government's brief in the landmark Brown vs. Board of Education case, and Congressman Frank Ikard, Democrat from Texas. Leslie Brady, a U.S. Foreign Service officer with postings both in Moscow and Paris, and his wife Mary bought the home in 1961 and owned it for more than three decades before selling it to current owners in 1998.

Ever wonder about your property? When and how your home was built, who lived there before you? The History and Archives Committee seeks interested volunteers to research house histories in Somerset. While much has been compiled for the historic district properties, we wish to add to Somerset's knowledge base, including information about other houses in the Town. Much of this work can be done from your own home! If you have internet and a library card, you can do this. We'll provide a short training this winter for those interested. Contact historyandarchives@townofsomerset.com.

Results of the Second Annual Town of Somerset Halloween House Decorating Competition

By **Maya Weil**, *Dorset Avenue*

Five judges, who ranged from age 4 ½ to adult (20 year+ residents of Somerset), came together to decide which three Somerset houses had the most “Spooktacular” Halloween decorations in the Second Annual Town of Somerset Halloween House Decorating Competition. This event started last year as a fun alternative activity to trick or treating, which was considered too risky during the pandemic. Because it was so successful, there was a request to make it a new Town tradition. Many Town residents put up wonderful house decorations, bringing a lot of joy to fellow residents. It was tough to decide but the judges gathered on the patio of my house and discussed the details of each of the homes.

The judges:

- **Mira Orhon**, age 8 (Falstone)
- **Joy Turner**, Surrey, age 10 (Surrey)
- **Abner Gottlieb**, age 4 ½ (Dorset)
- **Birdie Pieczenik**, Adult (Essex, Somerset resident for more than 20 years)
- **Lauren Rubenstein**, Adult (Surrey, Somerset resident for more than 20 years)

The winning houses:

- **4922 Dorset Avenue** was a clear winner for the second year in a row. The creativity of its decorations, including a custom sign and pumpkins painted in glorious “Dia de Los Muertos” colors, won over all the judges. Abner Gottlieb, the youngest judge, nicknamed it the “Coco House”.
- **4709 Cumberland Avenue** had a wonderful mix of skeletons climbing into the windows and ghouls climbing out of the ground.
- **4823 Cumberland Avenue** was appealing to the judges because of the scary joker on the steps and composition of the life-size elements that complemented the design of their house.

We placed yard signs to honor the winners and to celebrate the decisions. Thank you to the excellent panel of judges whose enthusiasm for the task was inspiring!

P.S. By the way, trick or treating was a great success and using 2 click counters, I counted 443 trick or treaters at my home!



4922 Dorset Avenue



4709 Cumberland Avenue



4823 Cumberland Avenue

Fall in Somerset

It has been a colorful fall, and the Town of Somerset has worn its fall colors beautifully!



Pool Update

By **Matthew Zaft, Chair, Pool Committee, Dorset Avenue**

It may be November or December (depending on when you get this), but things are still happening with the Pool! At our meeting on Wednesday, November 3, the Pool Committee voted on several motions that were unanimously approved. These will hopefully be added to future Town Council work sessions/meetings. Here are the recommendations:

- Request that the Town Council instruct the Pool Management Team (made up of the Mayor, Town Manager, Town Council President, and Pool Committee Chair) to annually provide a specific plan and timeline to smoothly open the pool on time that will be presented to the Council to be considered by the March Town Council meeting each year.
- Request that the Town Manager present to the Town Council the upgrades/repairs needed as identified by American Pools as well as new grills and water fountain repairs, and that the Town Council address these at their next work session.

- Request that the Town Council allocate at least an additional \$25,000 to the **current** fiscal year budget to open the pool on April 1, 2022.
- Additionally request that the Town Council allocate at least \$25,000 to **next** fiscal year's budget to keep the pool open until November 27, 2022.
- Request that the Town Council add a budget addition for the next fiscal year to hire a firm to analyze converting the pool into an all season, year round pool and community center.
- Request that the Town Council instruct the Town Manager to provide a proposal including budget and timeline to convert the pool to the nonresidential electric grid and bring in three-phase service to the pump room to be budgeted for next fiscal year.

Please contact me directly with any questions and please contact the Mayor, Town Manager, and/or Town Council to express your opinions on any of the above.

Thanks!



Dog Swim!

On October 31, Somerset's canine residents had the opportunity to enjoy the Somerset Pool on the last day of its 2021 season. The event was a splashing success!





Somerset Employee Holiday Fund

MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR

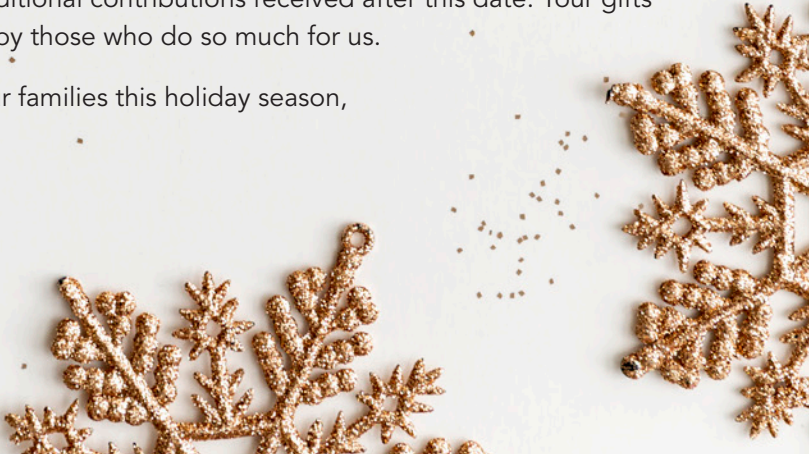
Dear Residents,

Our annual holiday fund for thanking Somerset employees has been extremely successful in recent years, and I am asking that the Town recognize our hard-working staff again this year. I began this project in 2012 in response to the many resident calls and emails I had received from residents asking how to properly thank our dedicated staff. I hope that everyone will show their gratitude this year by contributing generously. The pooled monies will be distributed to employees on the basis of length of service and responsibility. Other municipalities in the area make the distributions in this manner, which seems fair and equitable. The employees who will share in the funds are: the three maintenance employees, police personnel, Town Arborist, Code Enforcement Officer, and Administrative Assistant.

All contributions can be made by check or via Venmo. To contribute using Venmo, residents can send payments to @TownofSomerset-MD with the description "Holiday Fund 2021." To contribute by check, please make the check payable to the Town of Somerset (or cash), with "Holiday Fund" placed on the note line. Checks can be mailed or delivered to the Town Hall at 4510 Cumberland Avenue, Chevy Chase, MD 20815, or left at my residence at 5706 Warwick Place. An envelope for your use is enclosed in the print version of this issue of the Town Journal. Please send your contributions before 4:30 p.m. on Friday, December 17th so the funds can be distributed before the holidays. 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





Reflections on COP26 – Hope and Futility

The Conference of Parties (COP) is a 26-year effort, on the part of the United Nations, to solve the problems of global climate change (<https://ukcop26.org>). COP26, met in Glasgow, Scotland in November. I have just returned from my trip to COP26, having been invited to give a presentation on behalf of the Mother Earth Project (see article link in French, <https://bit.ly/30LcLbc>). My journey into the Climate Emergency world, surrounded by politicians, scientists and activists, has been beset with many highs and lows, hope and futility, sometimes squashed together, changing from minute to minute, depending on the news I was hearing and the conversations in which I participated.

I spent a week and a half mainly with Mother Earth Project volunteers from Zambia, Nigeria, Rwanda, and Burundi, all activists from the Global South (previously called the third world). (Information about the Mother Earth Project can be found at <https://motherearthproject.org>.) Presently, 92% of greenhouse gases are produced by the Global North and nearly the same disproportional percentage of climate catastrophes are happening in the Global South. Madagascar is literally starving as a country. My friends tell me that despite the Parachutes For The Planet and other climate-related events they organize in both urban and rural areas in Africa, only 10-30% of the population knows that the climate emergency is caused by humans. The rest think that the lack of rain and extreme heat is a “curse” or an “act of God.” In contrast, the Global North is aware that humans have caused the warming of the planet

and all of the catastrophic damage that has resulted, e.g. extreme flooding and droughts, frequent hundred-year sized hurricanes, and devastating fires in every corner of the earth.

My last evening, I walked in the dark streets of Glasgow with hundreds of people and Amal, a 12’ high puppet (see a video here: <https://youtu.be/YUfazZlcFhY>). Amal represents a nine-year-old Syrian girl’s plight and journey as a climate refugee – a plight shared by climate refugees who can no longer subsist on their drought- or flood-destroyed lands. Amal was followed by a local band playing a harrowing and mournful improvisation about her difficult migration journey. As it played, Amal stopped to rest and then reached down for a hug with the people surrounding her. Amal has literally walked from Syria to Glasgow ahead of COP26, choreographed by a puppet company wishing to bring more awareness to the plight of so many from the Global South (see <https://nyti.ms/30PE3Ns>). Walking with Amal wrenches the heart and you can literally feel her angst and determination to find a better life.

COP26 has produced new climate legislation that according to scientists will only limit global warming to 2.4 degree Celsius, which is still an unacceptable temperature that will put over a billion people at risk of death and displacement from rising sea levels. Many attendees at COP26 feel that signing on to the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty, as the Town of Somerset has recently done, is a binding and definitive way of keeping fossil fuels in the ground (a similar approach was taken for nuclear bombs). Recent global commitments to stop deforestation by 2030, phase-down burning coal (not phase-out, thanks to China and India’s pushback), end foreign coal investments, and reduce methane leaks by 30% by 2030, all appear to be a large step for our government representatives worldwide, but frankly only a small step for mankind (<https://bit.ly/3FCBsWd>).



From the Mayor's Desk

By Mayor Jeffrey Slavin



It was disappointing but understandable that I had a huge drop in the number of trick-or-treaters this year. Two years ago I had 318 young people at the door and this year about a third of that. It is assumed that the pandemic had a continuing impact but I am still hopeful for way more kids in 2022.

I saw a suggestion the other day from a resident urging all night bike riders to equip their vehicles with lights and wear bright clothing. It would be terrible if there were ever an accident that could have been avoided.

Kudos to the Council for moving forward on creating a formal policy for the Town's police service, which has been lacking since the program was originally created decades ago. While the Public Safety and Traffic Committees will be involved in this effort, any ideas that residents have should be forwarded to the Town Manager, who will write the initial draft.

Progress is being made on the production of Somerset's new website and I am anticipating a launch by early next year.

In this issue of the Journal, we announce our annual holiday fund, which we use to thank our tremendous Town employees who work so hard for us throughout the year. I mention this now as I know that our well-prepared residents are already writing out their giving lists because Thanksgiving is just around the corner.

Wonderful Thanksgiving wishes to all and safe "travels" throughout the holiday season. The Town Council, staff, and I want to express our gratitude for all who help us run an efficient government, especially those who serve on Committees.

CLASSIFIED ADS

BOZEMAN, MONTANA: Awesome Every Season! Ski Big Sky & the Bridgers! Fly fishing. Trail rides. White-water rafting. Hiking/ biking everywhere. Enjoy our 4-bedroom home on 20 acres with spectacular 360-degree vistas. Four-night minimum stay. Just four miles to downtown Bozeman. Contact **Birdie Pieczenik** at SRPVacationHomes@gmail.com or 301-717-8083.

PARIS, FRANCE: Picturesque Day and Nite! And more affordable than ever! Enjoy our one-bedroom apartment in the 2nd arrondissement — the heart of historic Paris. Walk to the Louvre, the Pompidou Center, the Seine and two Metro stops. Four-night minimum stay. Contact **Birdie Pieczenik** at SRPVacationHomes@gmail.com or 301-717-8083.

LIFESTYLE AND WELLNESS COACHING: Would you like to get unstuck and upgrade your lifestyle and wellness habits? Small changes can make a lasting difference. If you are curious to see if coaching is right for you contact Certified Wellness Coach **Diane Horn** RDH CHHC at 301-654-0310 or diane.b.horn@gmail.com.

MASSANUTTEN, VIRGINIA. Own a well-appointed timeshare at this all-season family resort in the Shenandoah Valley. Two connected units (each sleeping 6) can be separated for personal use, for rental, or for exchange through RCI, the world's largest timeshare exchange network. Any offer considered. Call 301-907-8805. **Jeanette Kreiser**

HOME HEALTH AIDE. Available for new clients in Somerset and nearby. Whether for one or several days per week, she can provide services including hygiene/personal care, homemaking (cooking, shopping, household chores) and transportation to medical appointments and activities. Contact **James Wachob** at 301-656-5251 or Jwsomerset@msn.com

SEA COLONY - BETHANY BEACH - OCEAN FRONT APARTMENT - EDGEWATER BUILDING: 2 bedrooms plus 1 tiny one with bunk bed and 2 full baths. Immaculate and all updated. Has a few summer weeks available. **Contact Luba Marx: 301-233-2727**

Ads are printed as a courtesy to Town residents. The Town makes no representations as to quality, safety or otherwise regarding the goods and services advertised. Readers should make their own inquiries. To place an ad, submit typed or neatly printed copy to the Clerk-Treasurer. Ads must include a Somerset phone number. Price: \$5 per advertisement per issue. Check or exact change. Fifty word limit per advertisement.



Manager's Corner

By Matt Trollinger, *Town Manager*

Here we are in the heart of fall—my favorite season of the year! Soon enough it will be winter, with all the challenges that snow brings.

It has been a busy month. At the November meeting, the Town Council approved the Town's historic first-ever **stormwater management ordinance**, amending the Code of Ordinances to better protect residents from water runoff resulting from new construction. The Town Council relied on the expertise of some Town contractors, including our engineering consultant Doug Lohmeyer, and the Low Impact Development Center (LIDC), an engineering firm that specializes in stormwater maintenance and drainage issues. The Town also relied on the contributions of the hard-working Stormwater Study Committee, led by Chair **Ellen Globokar** (Dorset). This committee has been meeting monthly for over a year to review all kinds of documents, data, and examples throughout the county, state, and country. Over the coming months, the Council will consider additional proposals and legislation relating to this important issue.

The Council also approved an ordinance to allow and set clear guidelines for **food trucks** to operate in Town, a response to the popularity of this summer and fall's food truck events at the Somerset Pool, including the International Food Truck events hosted by the Equity and Inclusion Committee in September. This ordinance should provide clarity for those who are interested in events like this in the future, while protecting and affirming the Town's ability to regulate commercial activities on Town property.

The Council has also been responsive to several **safety-related issues** in Town:

- **Pedestrian safety at the pool:** The Town approved hiring a consultant to evaluate and provide recommendations to improve pedestrian safety at the Town Pool, with the goal of implementing those changes for next pool season. Stay tuned in the next couple of months for a report on that issue.
- **Streetlights:**
 - Reporting outages. Town staff have begun a regular rotation to observe and report streetlight outages. Pepco maintains the streetlights in Town, so the Town does not directly control the lights. However, we are working to be proactive in reporting outages

so that Pepco can make the necessary repairs as quickly as possible. Town residents are an important factor in this, and we will rely on you as well. Please let the Town know via email if you notice a streetlight outage in Town—as residents, you have the opportunity to note outages after dark. In addition, you can “cut out the middle man,” and report to Pepco directly by visiting: <https://bit.ly/3HMy38T>.

- **Streetlight obstructions.** As part of our regular rotation, Town staff will make note of streetlight obstructions, and trim as necessary as part of our regular tree maintenance schedule. Pepco shares this responsibility with the Town by keeping trees pruned and at a safe distance from power lines and other equipment, to prevent trees from falling on power lines. Pepco's Vegetation Management team will come through Somerset around the start of the New Year.
- **Conversion to LED streetlight bulbs.** This is a long-standing issue. We had hoped that Pepco's long-term plan would be approved, which would have required Pepco to invest money from rate increases into systematic LED conversion of streetlights County-wide; unfortunately, the Maryland Public Service Commission rejected this plan this past summer. The benefit of this development is that our electricity rates will not face a large increase; the downside is that the Town may have to bear the upfront cost to do this major infrastructure work. If the Town is to do so, it will need an accurate price tag for the conversion. Longer term, we are in discussions with Pepco about how best to restart negotiations on conversion to energy-efficient LED streetlight bulbs

- **Sledding hill on Cumberland Avenue.** The Council introduced legislation that would eliminate the designation of Cumberland Avenue as a sledding hill. Although a tradition, the inclusion of this designation in the Code ties our hands—as well as those of the plowing contractor—and means that Cumberland Avenue cannot legally be plowed for 24 hours after a snowstorm. Other safety issues, including cars parked on the street while kids are sledding down, the fact that the street is not closed to traffic, and the difficulty of emergency vehicles in navigating the poorly

Continued on page 14

Manger's Corner

maintained, snowy, and icy street, led both the Public Safety Committee and Council to recommend removing this provision from the Town Code. Feedback from emergency services also played a role in this decision. The last thing anyone would want is for someone to get injured, or for emergency services to be unable to respond to a resident in need of help.

In November, the Town also re-affirmed its commitment to the **environment**. The fall **tree-planting** list was approved and the Town amended its ordinance banning **gas-powered leaf blowers** to take effect September 2022. As residents look to hire their lawn maintenance contractors,

please let them know of this regulation and its new start date.

Furthermore, important issues are coming down the pike in Somerset. It is likely that the County Council will be considering its update to its general plan (THRIVE 2050) sometime in the next couple of months, and the Town will need to make decisions on how best to use the roughly \$1.2 million that it will receive as part of the American Rescue Plan Act. In addition, the Town Council will be tackling issues like voter age eligibility, building regulations, pool season extensions, street and sidewalk repairs, and many more.

Personal Notes

Thank you for all the well wishes for my wedding in October. My wife Alexandria (I'm still getting used to that!) and I had a lovely celebration, with fully cooperative weather and foliage. It was great to see our families and friends—some of whom we had not seen for years. I've included some photos from our big day. I hope you enjoy!

While wedding festivities and the honeymoon are now behind us, November and December are special times for me. Thanksgiving has always been my favorite holiday. My step-dad is a chef, so food and sharing meals together were an important part of our family. Alexandria's family, too, has its own family reunion and tamale celebration outside of Thanksgiving—which we have missed since 2019. This year will be quite the change, but we must all keep in mind all that we have to be grateful for—not least of which is being a part of this wonderful community.

As we enter December, I wish you all a happy holiday season, and encourage you to take part in the various donation opportunities in Town and nearby. In addition, the Town holiday fund will be ongoing in December (see the Mayor's message, "Somerset Employee Holiday Fund," in this issue of the Journal). Please consider contributing for Administrative Assistant Linda Williams, who does so much for the Town; the Town Arborist, who helps us maintain our Tree City status; our police officers, who help to keep us safe; and for our hard-working maintenance staff.

To all Somersetters, happy Thanksgiving, happy December, and happy holidays.



Council Meeting Actions

The following actions were taken by the Somerset Town Council at its monthly meeting, held November 1, 2021.

- Approved the extension, through December 2021, of the continued use of Zoom as a virtual Town Meeting setting;
- Approved Mayor Slavin's nomination of **Paige Whitley** (Cumberland) as Chair of the History & Archives Committee;
- Approved a building permit application submitted by Beth Davis of BD Contractor Services, LLC, on behalf of **Charles and Rebecca Borden**, to replace the existing rear-yard porch with a new covered rear porch at the property located at 5605 Warwick Place;
- Denied an amendment to the existing building permit for the property located at 5522 Greystone Street, to add an 8.8 ft. overhang structure with glass railing;
- Approved a building permit application submitted by **Jeffrey Lape** and **Jill Caporale** for the construction of an addition, porch, side yard entryway to the first floor, and driveway replacement for the property located at 4524 Dorset Avenue. The application included a variance of 6.3 feet to the front yard setback, for the porch and its roofing;
- Approved the Fall tree planting list, as recommended by the Town Arborist and Parks & Natural Resources Committee:
 - Capello Park—Sycamore
 - Capello Park—Red Oak
 - Capello Park—American Beech
 - Capello Park—Cherokee Princess Dogwood
 - Vinton Park—Redbud
 - 4510 Cumberland Avenue—Commemoration Sugar Maple
 - 4910 Cumberland Avenue—Redbud
 - 4516 Dorset Avenue—Swamp White Oak
 - 4704 Essex Avenue—Commemoration Sugar Maple
 - 4710 Essex Avenue—Red Oak
 - 4716 Essex Avenue—Willow Oak
 - 4815 Falstone Avenue—October Glory Red Maple
 - 5401 Greystone Street—White Fringe Tree
 - 5813 Surrey Street—Yellowwood
 - 5404 Trent Street—October Glory Red Maple
- Approved a contract with Fehr & Peers to conduct a safety study at the Somerset Pool parking lot, in an amount not to exceed \$4,000;
- Approved the formation and Charter of a Revenue Committee, and Mayor Slavin's nomination of **Nick Fox** (Cumberland) as Committee Chair;
- Adopted Ordinance No. 6-21-1, an ordinance to amend the Code of Ordinances to require stormwater drainage plans for new construction projects; to add stormwater drainage plan requirements; to add to the statement of intents and purposes; to add definitions; to require a pre-permit informational meeting; and to apply the existing variance procedures to the new stormwater drainage plan requirements;
- Adopted Ordinance No. 10-21-4, an ordinance to amend the Code of Ordinances to prohibit the use of gas-powered leaf blowers on or after September 1, 2022, as recommended by the Town Environment Committee;
- Adopted Ordinance 9-21-1, an ordinance to amend the Code of Ordinances to require a permit for a food truck operating within a Town park;
- Approved a Resolution endorsing the Somerset PTA position on the Board of Education Boundary Survey and Plan for Somerset Elementary School;
- Introduced Ordinance 10-21-1, an ordinance to amend the Code of Ordinances to remove the sledding hill designation on Cumberland Avenue, as recommended by the Town Public Safety Committee;
- Introduced Ordinance 11-21-2, an ordinance to amend the Code of Ordinances to amend and clarify the exemptions from setbacks for projections;
- Approved a joint statement from the Somerset Town Council to the Montgomery County Council regarding Thrive Montgomery 2050, and to approve of a Town-wide petition on behalf of the Council.

Preliminary Agenda

(The final agenda is available and emailed to Town residents on the Friday before the monthly Council meeting.)

Regular Somerset Town Council Meeting December 6, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom

The Somerset Town Council will meet via Zoom on Monday, December 7, 2021 at 7:00 p.m.

Agenda and updates are posted on the Town website: www.townofsomerset.com

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://bit.ly/30FZIN6> Meeting ID: 883 7796 9429 Passcode: 369732

Somerset Town Council

- Steve Surko,
Council President
- Robin Barr
- Debbie Heller
- Kabir Kumar
- Shannon Rovak

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

7:00 p.m. Opportunity for residents to make public comments.*

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

7:10 p.m. **Motion:** To consider approval of agenda as presented.

CONSENT AGENDA

- 7:11 p.m. **Motion:** To consider approval of the following items without discussion:
- A one-month extension through January 2022 for the continued use of Zoom as a virtual Town Meeting setting (currently set to expire December 31, 2021); and
 - Mayor Slavin's nomination of Leslie Caplan (Essex) to the Communication Committee.

NON-CONSENT AGENDA

- 7:12 p.m. **Public Hearing/Motion:** To consider a building permit application submitted by John Nunez of Colonial Home Improvements, LLC, for the demolition and construction of a new single-family home at the property located at 4501 Cumberland Avenue.
- 7:41 p.m. **Public Hearing/Motion:** To consider a building permit application submitted by John Nunez of Colonial Home Improvements, LLC, for the construction of a new single-family home at the property located at 4503 Cumberland Avenue.
- 8:05 p.m. Building Administrator's Report

8:10 p.m. **Public Hearing/Motion:** To approve the removal of the following Town Trees at the recommendation of the Town Arborist:

- 4824 Dorset Avenue—Pin Oak 28" dia—Tree is in decline and shedding large branches; and
- 4807 Dorset Avenue—Pin Oak 32" dia.—Tree is in decline with decay at base, and hazardous.

8:15 p.m. **Public Hearing:** Ordinance 11-21-2, an ordinance to amend the Code of Ordinances to amend and clarify the exemptions from setbacks for projections.

8:25 p.m. **Public Hearing/Motion:** To Adopt Ordinance 10-21-1, an ordinance to amend the Code of Ordinances to remove the sledding hill designation on Cumberland Avenue, as recommended by the Town Public Safety Committee.

8:35 p.m. **Discussion/Motion:** To confirm and approve of all Town Committee terms and assignments.

8:40 p.m. **Public Hearing/Motion:** To approve of edits to the Parks and Natural Committee Charter, as recommended by the Town's Parks and Natural Resources Committee.

8:45 p.m. **Public Hearing/Motion:** To approve of Resolution 11-21-3, a Resolution regarding "Black Lives Matter" in the Town of Somerset.

9:00 p.m. **Discussion:** Manager Report

9:10 p.m. **Motion:** Adjourn

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.

*Questions should be submitted via email ahead of the meeting to manager@townofsomerset.com or town@townofsomerset.com.

*Residents who wish to present for a particular Agenda item are advised to arrive 20 minutes ahead of the item's scheduled discussion time, as discussions can run ahead of schedule.

The Mayor and Town Council may entertain a motion during the open meeting to close a portion of the meeting, in accordance with Section 3-305(b)(1)(7) of the Open Meetings Act (Maryland Code, General Provisions Article), to consult with counsel to obtain legal advice.

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.