



SomerseT TOWN JOURNAL



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April 2022

TOWN OF SOMERSET ELECTION NEWS

Plan for Town Election Tuesday, May 24, 2022

By Sherry Bindeman Kahn, Chair, Board of Supervisors of Elections, Essex Avenue

At the March 7, 2022 Somerset Town Council meeting, the Council adopted the plan of the Board of Supervisors of Elections for this year's election for Mayor and two Council seats. Election Day will be **Tuesday, May 24, 2022. Voters will have the option to vote in person at Somerset Town Hall on Election Day between the hours of 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. or by mail-in ballot** as required by Maryland law. As in the past two elections, the Town will engage the services of ELECTEC Election Services, Inc. to send mail-in ballots to all registered voters.

Nominating Procedures

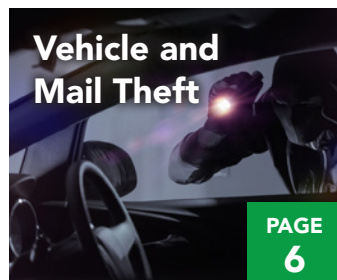
The Town will take nominations at the **April 4** Town Council meeting. Additional candidates may be nominated by written petition signed by at least 20 voters and filed with the Town Manager by **May 3, 2022**. No nominations will be accepted thereafter. In order to give ELECTEC time to prepare the ballots, the names of such candidates must be filed with the Town Manager by **April 11, 2022** to appear on the ballot. **Candidates nominated after April 11, 2022 but before May 3, 2022** may be written in on the ballots by voters.

Voter Registration Procedures

- Every person who (1) is at least 18 years of age, (2) has resided within the Town for at least 14 days immediately preceding the election, and (3) is registered with the Town or the Montgomery County Board of Elections, is a qualified voter of the Town.
 - The term "resided" and "resident" refer to the location deemed one's permanent abode and single domicile for voting purposes, and where one intends to return after a temporary residence elsewhere. Actual physical presence in the Town for 14 days before an election is not required.
 - Registration is permanent as long as the voter is a qualified resident. Voters already registered need not register with the Town again.
 - A Town resident may register to vote by requesting a voter registration card from the Town Manager and delivering a completed card to the Town Office prior to 14 days before an election, i.e., by **May 10, 2022**.
- In order to allow sufficient time for a ballot to be mailed by ELECTEC, the registration with the County or Town must be received by **5:00 p.m. on April 25, 2022**.

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ON MY MIND

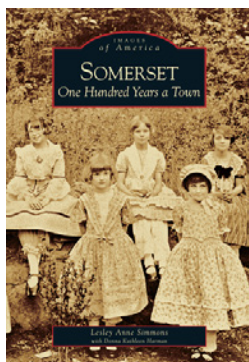
Somerset's Women History Makers

By Mayor Jeffrey Slavin, Warwick Place

As we approach the end of March, Women's History Month, I feel it is my responsibility and duty to honor some Town foremothers for their contributions to Somerset's success. Sadly, like everywhere else, there is a dearth of records and documents in this regard as women are almost always given short shrift. And while most of our leaders throughout Somerset's 116 years have been men, surely there were many women "behind the throne."

The best chronicle of the Town's history, *Somerset: One Hundred Years a Town*, by former Councilmember **Lesley Anne Simmons** and **Donna Harmon** (Dorset), features five girls on the cover! There are also references throughout the book to women. For example, the early pages include the following paragraph:

"In 1902, Somerset's women had joined together in the Wednesday Club to provide a regular social meeting place for tea, friendship, and an exchange of ideas. One of their community efforts was the purchase of a pressure cooker to share among themselves. This was more than a social club. Members soon pressed for civic improvements and inspection of the dairy farm on Dorset Avenue."



The book also includes other historic events involving women. In 1921, women won the right to vote in Town elections. In 1928, Edna Miller Gish became the first woman elected to serve on the Council. In 1940, Lou Prentiss Childs became the second woman elected to the Council.

There was also a civic association in the 1980's that was led by Faye Cohen, who was a leader in the fight for de-annexation of the land where the Somerset House properties sit today. In addition, a number of women have been involved in the PTA over time.

Fast forward to the era I have been in office. We have had Maryland's first all-female Town Council, and the first woman Council President, **Marnie Shaul** (Uppingham). We have also, for the first time, made the Town's first public dedications to women—first, the Judy Frankel conference room, and second, the Zeughauser-Peale Gallery, both in Town Hall.

I hope by next year I will be able to mention a few more legends, especially so that young people will learn that there need be no limitations because of their gender.

[Editor's Note: To learn more about another influential woman from Somerset's history, see "What Our Town Hall Owes to a Mother's Fierce Resolve" on page 7 of this issue.]

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Monday thru Friday
301-657-3211 | Fax: 301-657-2773
TTY users call Maryland Relay

SOMERSET TOWN JOURNAL

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

POST OFFICE ADDRESS:
4510 Cumberland Ave.
Chevy Chase, MD 20815
www.townofsomerset.com

COMING IN APRIL

New Town Handbook and Directory

By Barbara Marenus, Chair, Communications Committee, Surrey Street



A copy of the Town's annual publication, *A Guide to Somerset: Handbook and Directory 2022*, will be mailed to all residences by early April. The Town's Communications Committee is responsible for overseeing the production of this publication. The Committee writes and edits the Handbook section, and the Town staff collects and maintains the resident contact

information. This customer-friendly publication provides information on many aspects of Town life. Specifically:

- For quick reference, the inside front cover displays emergency and other important contact information for government agencies, trash and recycling entities, and utilities.

- The Handbook provides information on Somerset's government, committees, regulations, permits, services (including trash and recycling), community events, the pool, the tennis courts, Town communication, and notaries.
- There is a Town profile and brief history with information on Somerset's beginnings and yearly milestones through 2021.
- The names of State and County Officials and their contact information are included.
- The Directory provides contact information on Town residents, including addresses, telephone numbers and email addresses.

Please be sure to alert the Town staff at **town@townofsomerset.com** to any changes in the contact information provided in the Directory. If you have any suggestions for additional topics that you would like to see included in this publication, please contact me at **bmarenus@gmail.com**.

APRIL 2022 TOWN CALENDAR

MONDAY, APRIL 4

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

TUESDAY, APRIL 5

Equity & Inclusion Committee Meeting,
via Zoom*
8:00 p.m.

TUESDAY, APRIL 12

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

MONDAY, APRIL 18

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

*Login 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.

Plan for Town Election Tuesday, May 24, 2022

- *Qualified voters who register after April 25 at 5:00 p.m. but prior to May 10, 2022 may pick up a ballot at Town Hall after **May 5, 2022.***
- Due to the uncertainty of obtaining current Montgomery County voter rolls, all residents of the Town who have moved into the Town, or come of voting age, since **June 1, 2021**, are encouraged to fill out a Town of Somerset voter registration card so the voter list can be updated for the 2022 election.

Additional Election Information

If the election is contested, it is anticipated that the Town will again this year host a candidates' forum, to be moderated by the Election Board or its designee. An expanded issue of the Town Journal may be published in May to allow for the publication of questions submitted to the candidates and their written responses.

The terms for Mayor and Council members are two years. Per the Town Charter, to be eligible to run for office, a candidate for Mayor or Council must be a (1) citizen of the United States, (2) have resided in the Town for at least eighteen months immediately preceding their election, and (3) be a qualified voter of the Town of Somerset and of the State of Maryland.

The Mayor's and Council's duties are enumerated in Articles II and III of the Town Charter, which is available online at: Town of Somerset, MD Charter (<https://ecode360.com/30397570>). The Council has typically met twice per month—for its monthly Council meetings on the first Monday of the month, and again mid-month for its Work Sessions, to discuss ongoing and upcoming Town issues.

Vote by Mail and In-Person Procedures are set forth in the 2022 Plan for Town Election. Some dates to note are as follows:

- By Tuesday, **May 3, 2022**, the election service provider will mail a ballot and postage-prepaid return envelope to each registered voter who appears on the voter registration list compiled by the Election Board.
- If a voter desires their ballot to be mailed to an address that is different than the address in the Town register, the voter must inform the Town by e-mail **no later than 5:00 p.m. on Monday, April 25, 2022.**
- In the event an issued ballot is lost or missing, a voter may request by e-mail to the Town that a new ballot and return envelope be issued. In order to allow sufficient time for a replacement ballot to be issued and voted, any such request shall be made no later than **5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, May 17, 2022.** Upon receipt of such request, any previously issued ballot and return envelope for that voter will be voided.
- **Voters may vote by mail or in person.**
 - *To vote by mail*, voters shall mail completed ballots to the Town's election service provider in the Town-issued return envelope. They must be post-marked no later than Tuesday, **May 17, 2022**, and/or received by the Town's election service provider by **5:00 p.m. on May 24, 2022** in order to be counted.
 - There will also be *in-person voting at Town Hall* on **Tuesday, May 24, from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.** Voters who wish to vote in person may bring their ballot to the Town Hall and drop it in the ballot box during this time.

If you have questions regarding the Town elections please contact the Board of Supervisors of Elections at **Election@townofsomerset.com**.

Town Council Holds Hearing on Somerset's Fire, Rescue, and Ambulance Service: Ambulance Staffing Remains an Issue

By Kumar Vaswani, Chair, Public Safety Committee,
Trent Street

The Town Council and the Town's Public Safety Committee continue to work to ensure that Somerset residents receive the best possible fire, rescue, and emergency medical services (EMS). On January 20, the Council held a hearing on issues related to the Bethesda Fire Department's (BFD) volunteer staffing, equipment, and ambulance response times. **Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service (MCFRS) Chief Scott Goldstein**, his deputy and assistant chiefs, and **Bethesda Fire Department Chief Victor Esch** attended the hearing and made presentations—although some questions remained unanswered. The Town of Somerset has a representative on the BFD board of directors, so the Town has an oversight role in its operation. The recording of the hearing can be viewed at: <https://bit.ly/3ivAZve>.

The Town applauds BFD's efforts—and those of its firefighters and EMS providers—to keep our community safe. However, one recent concern is BFD's inability to fully staff Somerset's closest ambulance service at BFD's Station 6 (at Wisconsin Avenue and Bradley Boulevard). Since 2017, the ambulance has been staffed by County employees on weekdays from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. In 2018, BFD began an effort to staff this ambulance with volunteers on nights and weekends, but during many overnight hours, BFD lacks the volunteers to staff the ambulance. The resulting delay in ambulance response times can vary from one minute to a few minutes, depending on traffic and other factors.

This is a serious issue. As **County Executive Marc Elrich** has noted, "Delays in getting service in a restaurant because they're short-staffed is not the same as not being able to ensure that ambulances arrive on time – the first is an inconvenience, the latter may have health impacts."



The hearing, as well as information from public records, revealed:

- When BFD ambulance service is unavailable, the County automatically dispatches the next closest ambulance for emergencies in Somerset. Although 911 can dispatch a closer engine company with Emergency Medical Technicians or paramedics to begin patient care, the resident would still have to wait for ambulance transport to a hospital.
- BFD has promised to provide data on hours that BFD's ambulance is unstaffed, so that we can gauge BFD's progress with its volunteer program. We hope to receive those data soon and will share them with you.
- The BFD ambulance lacks a power stretcher and power loader—mechanized equipment that makes it easier for ambulance personnel to transfer a stretcher (with a patient on it) into and out of an ambulance. This equipment might lower the risk of a mishap during the transfer. MCFRS and BFD have expressed their willingness to explore ways to outfit the BFD ambulance with needed power equipment, and the Town plans to follow up with them.

The Town is encouraged by BFD's willingness to engage in a dialogue. We plan to offer our support to—and work with—BFD and MCFRS in any way we can to ensure that the Station 6 ambulance has the proper equipment and staffing.



Public Safety Committee Update

By Steve Friedman, Member,
Public Safety Committee,
Essex Avenue

Thefts of vehicles

Recently, our County appears to have been experiencing an increase in stolen vehicles and car jackings (see this County Council report: <https://bit.ly/3tvoCFV>). These crimes can leave an individual frustrated, scared, anxious, and eager to do something to avoid becoming the victim of a crime. The Town of Somerset's Public Safety Committee (PSC) shares the concerns of all residents looking for ways to keep our Town safe.

Somerset has had one vehicle theft this year. A recent private listserv posting by a well-meaning resident alleging five vehicle thefts in Town was inaccurate, according to police. The vehicle thefts actually occurred over a period of a few days in several neighborhoods, ranging from Somerset to Cabin John.

At the February 22 Western Montgomery County Citizens Advisory Board meeting, **Captain Sean Gagen**, Commander of the Montgomery County Police Second District, presented on vehicle thefts. He stated that "in the large majority of auto thefts, the car is unlocked, and the key is left in the car." His advice for residents was: "Stop leaving the cars unlocked and the keys in the car."

Let's do our part to prevent these unfortunate incidents. We urge residents to take the extra time to take your key or key fob with you and lock your vehicle doors. This is one of the best ways to discourage thieves from returning to our Town.

Thefts of checks from mailboxes

Somerset residents have also been concerned recently about thefts from U.S. Postal Service mailboxes (see <https://bit.ly/3ugGxzg>). Thieves are looking for hand-written checks, which they doctor and then cash or sell on an illicit market. Criminals can also use the checks to steal victims' identities.

The police have recommended that one of the best ways to prevent check theft is to **deposit your envelopes containing checks at a letter drop inside a post office**. Postal authorities discourage the public from leaving envelopes containing checks in a home's exterior mailbox for pickup by the mail carrier. See the USPS site for additional information: <https://www.uspis.gov/tips-prevention/mail-theft>. Consider the use of electronic funds transfer applications such as Venmo or PayPal or check with your bank to see if one is available.

If you believe you have been the victim of fraud, identity theft, or financial crime, please report it to the Montgomery County Police at 301-279-8000, or call the Second District police station at 240-773-6700.



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.



What Our Town Hall Owes to a Mother's Fierce Resolve

Somerset's archives hold a letter addressed to Town residents: "Do you know how the little red house became your Town Hall?" it asks. The letter was written in 1991 by a woman who, decades earlier, had been driving along Little Cumberland Avenue when she noticed a dilapidated old house with shattered windows and broken timbers. She had an ambitious idea: turn it into a learning center for children with autism.

The letter came from Mooza Grant—Russian-born and, as her inspiring story demonstrates, unconquerable. Her letter recounts how in 1953 she and her husband Leslie—a lawyer in the State Department's foreign aid agency, newly arrived back from working with American occupying forces in post-war Berlin—bought "an enchanting house with a beautiful garden" on Dorset Avenue. Then tragedy struck. They discovered that both their infant daughters had autism.

Little was known of autism in the early 1950s; affected children were commonly shut in institutions. But the Grants resolved to keep their girls at home, despite, she wrote, realizing that "all our time must be spent in seeking the cause and solution of their devastating dilemma." They consulted countless doctors and clinics, but their lives became a nightmarish 24/7 challenge: trying to care for children who were unable to communicate, apparently detached from reality, and destructive, with the younger one, Linda, repeatedly banging her head on any hard surface.

Stopping Linda damaging herself was close to impossible. "One had to sit by her side and hold her hands around the clock, day and night," Mooza wrote. But in 1970 she devised a helmet that transmitted a weak electric shock whenever Linda banged it. Mooza donated the patent to Johns Hopkins University, which refined the device and made it widely available. It worked well but caused controversy; critics of aversion therapy considered it unethical.

Over the years, the Grants were pioneers in autism advocacy. In 1965, they helped found the National Society for Autistic Children, with Mooza as its first president. They later set up a foundation to give children with autism



The Grant home on Dorset Avenue. Photo courtesy of Ellen Globokar, Dorset

a place to learn and, when grown, to live. Mooza also served a two-year term on John F. Kennedy's President's Committee on Mental Retardation.* That taught her a lot about autism, she recalled. "I also learned we did practically nothing for autistic children."

When Mooza first saw the little red house, there were no programs that could educate her girls, so she was determined to begin one. Warren Vinton, then Mayor of Somerset, told her that the Town owned the house but it was in such a state of disrepair that it would cost too much either to renovate or knock down. "We don't know what to do with it," he told Mooza, so he agreed to give her a lease at nominal rent. With the aid of a sympathetic builder and donations from local businesses, she made it sufficiently habitable to establish a learning center for her own and other children with autism. When the lease with the Town expired several years later, the Grants opened a larger center near Olney.

Mooza died in 1998 at age 80. Shortly after Leslie died in 2001, their house at 4917 Dorset was pulled down. But thanks to them, perhaps, the Town Hall escaped a similar fate. "Who knows," Mooza wrote, "maybe if it were not for the need to find a place for our mentally handicapped children, the 'Little Red House' would have been demolished and now would be only a memory of the past."

[*Editor's Note: This Committee ultimately became the current President's Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities.]

Back-To-School Classic Returns in Person on May 1



Runners at the start line of the 2019 Somerset Back To School Classic Race

By Jeff Nussbaum, Race Director, Essex Avenue

After “running” virtually last year, the Back-to-School Classic, the Somerset Elementary School PTA’s largest fundraising event, will be run in person this year! With hundreds of runners and spectators and dozens of volunteers, the Somerset Race brings the entire community together for a fun, festive event. Said Race Director **Jeff Nussbaum** (Essex), “We’re so glad that we’re able to safely bring back this wonderful community tradition and support our elementary school in the process.”

Interested? Here are some things you need to know:

- **Date:** Unlike previous years, when the race was held in the fall, the race will be held on **Sunday, May 1**.
- **Registration:** Volunteers and runners can now **sign up at somersettrace.com**
- **Distances:** The race will again offer **8k and 2k distances**, with an 8k course that loops through Somerset and Kenwood, and a 2k course that stays in Somerset. For the 2k, children, walkers, and strollers are welcome and encouraged.
- **SSL:** **SSL hours** will be available for students who volunteer
- **Get the word out!** Because the race wasn’t run in person last year, and is usually held in the fall, race organizers are looking to get the word out to both runners and volunteers.

Pool Update

By Matt Zaft, Chair,
Pool Committee,
Dorset Avenue



First, a big thank you to the Town Council who at their March meeting voted to open the Town Pool on May 13, one week earlier than planned! (If you are interested in the debate and discussion that led to the compromise agreement that was reached, I encourage you to watch the meeting recording.)

Additionally, the Pool Committee met on Monday, March 14 and unanimously voted to make the following recommendations to the Town Council:

- For the protection of both children and other residents, in regards to the walking path from Warwick into the Pool parking lot:
 1. Place stepping stones in the grass adjacent to three parking spaces so there is an easy, designated path for people to walk without getting hit by a car pulling out of/into the parking spaces. This would be a temporary fix for 2022 as the Town explores other, permanent options that would be ADA compliant.
 2. Make said three (and only those three) parking spaces be back-in only.
 3. Make said three (and only those three) parking spaces be for small cars only.
- Set an official, standard opening date of May 15 for all future years. The opening date may be made earlier by the Town Council at its discretion on a year-by-year basis.
- Set an official, standard closing date of September 15 for all future years. The closing date may be made later by the Town Council at its discretion on a year-by-year basis.
- Grant a permit for a food truck at the Pool on Friday, May 13, 2022 to kick off the pool season.
- Grant a permit for a food truck at the Pool on Friday, June 17, 2022 to celebrate the end of the school year.

Other things to note as we get closer to pool season:

- Swim Team registration is open! Practices will begin Tuesday, May 31 and end Sunday, July 24. Meets will be Wednesday evenings and Saturday mornings from June 11 through July 23. Please contact **Jeff Mascott** (Surrey), Chair of the Swim Team Committee, with any questions or to register.

- Water Aerobics will return this summer. Please contact participant **Lucy Freeman** (Falstone) with questions.
- Early Bird Swim will begin Monday, May 16 and continue until the pool closes. As happened last year, there will be two groups, scheduled for Monday/Wednesday/Friday and Tuesday/Thursday/Saturday; both groups will be scheduled for 7:15 a.m.–8:15 a.m. There will be a maximum of two swimmers per lane. The cost will be \$100 for the summer, with no drop-ins allowed. Please contact the Town Manager with any questions and to sign up.
- Please remember: NO GLASS, NO GLASS, NO GLASS!!!

If you have any questions about any of the above please feel free to contact me directly.

2022 TENNIS FEES

Please pay your 2022 Tennis
Fees to Town Hall
\$25 per family

TWO WAYS TO PAY:

- (1) Drop off a check or cash to Town Hall or
- (2) Pay by Venmo: @TownofSomerset-MD. Be sure to write "Tennis Fees" and your name and address in the "notes" section, so the Town knows what the payment is for.

**Interested in joining a
Tennis Tournament or
Round Robin this Spring?**

Contact Tennis Committee Chair
Carrie Wofford at **Carrie.Wofford@gmail.com**



Gas Powered Leaf Blower Flyers Are Arriving at Your Door: Now is the Time to Transition to More Sustainable Gardening

I spent the last weekend walking Surrey Street and portions of other streets knocking on doors and speaking to neighbors about the upcoming September 1 gas-powered blower ban. I met an overwhelming response from appreciative neighbors who have been disturbed by the loud penetrating low-frequency noises of these polluting machines, especially during the pandemic. The front side of these flyers discusses the hazards of these machines. The back side describes and encourages more sustainable garden practices, including encouraging neighbors to no longer blow leaves from lawns and flowerbeds but rather mow them into the grass as mulch. I thought incorrectly for years that my white oak leaves would be bad for my lawn, but after three consecutive seasons of mowing the leaves from our enormous 200-year-old tree, I am surprised and happy to report that not only is my grass healthier than ever but the leaf bits/mulch covering the soil between the grass blades have not allowed any weeds or crab grass to grow! Other suggestions include cutting your grass every two weeks because longer grass is healthier and more durable. Last, electric or battery-powered leaf blowers should primarily be used to clear hard surfaces and drains.

More Environment Committee members will be coming to other homes in Somerset in the coming weekends to distribute flyers. As a reminder, these flyers (both in English and Spanish at <https://bit.ly/3D6yysx>) have been created



for you to read—but most importantly, for you to share with your landscapers (employees and owners), who may otherwise not be aware of the hazards of gas-powered leaf blowers or of the Town's ban of them.

In summary, please tell your landscaper to begin the transition to electric blowers and ask them to stop blowing the leaves from your lawns and flowerbeds. Instead, encourage them to mow your leaves. Mowing leaves replaces the soil deterioration caused by blowers—and produces **free mulch!**

If you have ideas regarding how our Town can become more sustainable and carbon-free, please reach out to the Environment Committee at: tos.environmentcommittee@gmail.com.

From the Mayor's Desk

By Mayor Jeffrey Slavin



The Town's Fiscal Year 2023 budget season has begun and the Council has held two budget Work Sessions with the expert assistance of our Budget Committee, consisting of **Phil Young** (Greystone), **Ann Bolten** (Cumberland) and **Jon Medalia** (Surrey). Thanks to all three of them for their dedication and knowledge. As a result, Somerset's annual fiscal review is now in full force.

While Somerset overall is still relatively prosperous, we have some new major challenges, and public input is vital when we set priorities. There are always a number of capital projects on the table and not enough funds available to do everything at once. The Council and I always look forward to hearing from interested Town residents. I will be introducing the proposed budget at the April Town Council Meeting and the Council will give

final approval in May when there will also be a public hearing. Public comments on the proposed budget can be submitted through the May Council meeting.

Earlier this month, I attended the National League of Cities annual Congressional City Conference in Washington, D.C. on behalf of the Town. There were many outstanding presenters including **President Biden** and **House Speaker Pelosi**. At the Conference, I learned about many things, including some of the latest national trends which could/ can/would affect Somerset. I attend this conference at my own expense because I feel it is so important. I will plan on reporting back when and where appropriate.

Happy Spring to All.

GENERAL PERMITS

BUILDING PERMITS

5506 Uppingham Street

- Fence permit

5405 Surrey Street

- Fence permit

TREE REMOVALS

4918 Cumberland Avenue

- 2 Black Walnuts – Trees are leaning/falling and hazardous

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 (2/23)

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 (2/23)

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** at 301-233-2727 (7/22)

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*

We finally have winter behind us, and spring is a busy time in Somerset!

Fiscal Year 2023 (FY2023) budget

As of this writing, the Town is deep in budget discussion talks. Throughout the month of March, the Town Council will have met with the Budget Committee [Chair **Phil Young** (Greystone), and members **Ann Bolten** (Cumberland) and **Jon Medalia** (Surrey)], along with Town staff and the Mayor on the Town's introductory budget. The budget will be introduced at the April 4 Council meeting, and the Town will accept public comments through the May 2 Council meeting, when there will be a public hearing and, ultimately, adoption of the budget.

Please keep in mind that the budget that is introduced is not adopted without discussion. Resident input is more than welcome, and the Council goes through a very deliberative process to make many difficult decisions.

The Town is lucky to have many active community members and Committees, who see opportunity for improvement in the Town. Town Committees have recommended nearly \$1,000,000 in FY2023 spending for projects, including stormwater mitigation, streetlight replacement, traffic consultants, extended pool seasons, a new playground, and painting of house numbers—just to name a few! These recommended expenditures come on top of rising inflationary costs and regularly-scheduled maintenance costs, such as street and sidewalk repairs and repairs to the Pool deck, for example.

The Council faces a very difficult task in creating a budget that accommodates expenditures. Furthermore, although the Town's current budget is buoyed by American Rescue Plan Act funds, the long-term outlook requires careful consideration. The Town's five-year budget currently shows the Town's unencumbered reserves dropping to hundreds of thousands of dollars in the red (Please note: that does not include the Town's Rainy Day Fund, and the Town's total reserves are still showing as positive, though shrinking).

All that is to say that responsible budgeting requires compromise and some give-and-take. The Town leadership is up to the task, and by going through the budget with a fine-toothed comb, the Town can remain on solid fiscal standing now and into the future.

Streetlight update

I have been in negotiations with Pepco to better understand the lighting options available to us, and which Pepco keeps in stock. We are leaning towards 50-watt "Cobra" style streetlights with the lowest temperature—the lower temperature lights provide a more orange color (as opposed to blue on the higher end of the spectrum), do not impact circadian rhythm as much, and have less glare.

The benefits of selecting from those in stock with Pepco are that we do not have to go through a third-party vendor for sourcing, and in the future, if/when a streetlight goes out, Pepco will be able to easily and quickly make repairs. Residents could still report outages on Pepco's website as they do now.

Our strategy for implementing streetlight upgrades will depend in part on budgeting restraints, as well as crew availability. The Town is still in discussions about whether to perform upgrades all at once throughout Town, or gradually over time.

Town website update

Given the slow progress on the Town's new website under the original contractor, the Town Council decided at its March Work Session to consider a recommendation to move forward with a new company for the redesign of our Town's website. The proposed new company, Revize, is a minority-owned, national award-winning website company that specializes in government websites, and has developed websites for municipal governments throughout the Country. One of my favorite examples that they shared is in St. Petersburg, FL.: www.stpete.org.

In Maryland, they also designed the Martin's Additions and Bladensburg websites several years ago. They have some innovative features that they would make available for us, including a citizen request app, integrated bill paying and reservation systems, an e-notification system, and an easy-to-use calendar, among many others. Some added benefits are that they provide 24/7 staff assistance, and that every four years they would help update the Town's website, at no additional cost.

While I am disappointed in the slow pace of this project thus far, I am excited about this new potential partnership

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Manager's Corner

and am confident that we would be proud of the new website.

A Final Thought

Many of you know that I have a special place in my heart for Vermont, and although it will almost surely be outdated by the time this is published, I would be remiss to not brag about my alma mater, the University of Vermont and their men's basketball team. In a down year for the Terps (on the men's side, at least. The UMD women have a tough

draw, but continue to be one of the best-coached teams in basketball!), I am rooting hard for the Vermont Catamounts as a Cinderella team during this year's NCAA tournament. I get a great kick out of being able to watch them on TV, especially nationally televised TV. No matter what happens, I am very proud of my Catamounts for a very successful season.

[Editor's Note: Unfortunately for Matt and other Catamount fans, Vermont lost in the first round of the men's NCAA tournament.]

Council Meeting Actions

The following actions were taken by the Somerset Town Council at its monthly meeting, held March 7, 2022:

- Approved a Declaration establishing Friday, April 29 as Arbor Day in the Town of Somerset
- Approved a letter of support for the Farm Women's Market Revitalization Project inclusion in the County's 2023 Budget, as tentatively agreed between the Town of Chevy Chase and Montgomery County Executive's office
- Approved joining as a signatory on the River Road Coalition letter, which opposed River Road being labeled a Growth Corridor in the Thrive Montgomery 2050 plan
- Approved an extension of Zoom as a virtual Town Meeting space through June 2022
- Denied building permit application submitted by Chris Conlan of C.M. Conlan Contractors & Builders Inc., for the demolition and construction of a new single-family home at the property located at 5506 Trent Street
- Approved an expenditure not to exceed \$8,000 for the early opening of the Town Pool, with an opening date of Friday, May 13
- Approved the expenditure of \$8,539.60 to Electec to provide election counting and management services, as recommended by the Town's Board of Supervisors of Elections
- Approved the 2022 Election Procedures, as recommended by the Town's Board of Supervisors of Elections
- Adopted Ordinance 12-21-2, an Ordinance to amend Chapter 182 of the Somerset Code of Ordinances, to amend tree removal application requirements, amend the criteria for permit decisions, and add permit conditions
- Approved a Resolution to edit the established Procurement Policy
- The following actions were taken by the Somerset Town Council at its monthly Work Session, held March 14, 2022
- Approved the expenditure of \$44,000 for the installation of two (2) new pumps for the Somerset Town Pool
- Approved a letter of support for funding for a dog park in the existing Willard Avenue Park, to be funded in the Montgomery County Capital Improvements Program budget
- Approved a letter of support for Senate Bill 376, proposed by **Senator Al Carr**, which would allow municipalities to purchase streetlights from public utility companies



For Your Reference

TOWN OF SOMERSET COMMITTEES AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

COMMITTEE	CHAIR	COMMITTEE	CHAIR
Audit Committee	Chuck Edson (Surrey)	Parks and Natural Resources Committee	Kristen Khanna (Uppingham)
Budget Committee	Phil Young (Greystone)	Pool Committee	Matt Zaft (Dorset)
Communications Committee	Barbara Marenus (Surrey)	Public Safety Committee	Kumar Vaswani (Trent)
Environment Committee	Barton Rubenstein (Dorset)	Revenue Committee	Nick Fox (Cumberland)
Equity & Inclusion Committee	Atsuko Horiguchi (Essex)	Stormwater Study Committee	Ellen Globokar (Dorset)
History & Archives Committee	Paige Whitley (Cumberland)	Swim Team Committee	Jeff Mascott (Surrey)
Newcomers Committee	Phyllis Wiesenfelder (Cumberland)	Tennis Committee	Carrie Wofford (Essex)
		Traffic Committee	Elizabeth Hurwit (Dorset)

TOWN COUNCIL CALENDAR 2022

COUNCIL MEETINGS (All times at 7:00 p.m. on a Monday, unless otherwise noted)

- Monday, January 3, 2022
- Monday, February 7, 2022
- Monday, March 7, 2022
- Monday, April 4, 2022
- Monday, May 2, 2022
- Tuesday, June 7, 2022
(Note: Shavuot holiday goes through Monday, June 6)
- Tuesday, July 5, 2022
(Note: Monday, July 4 is a holiday)
- Monday, August 1, 2022
- Tuesday, September 6, 2022
(Note: Monday, September 5 is a holiday)
- Monday, October 3, 2022
- Monday, November 7, 2022
- Monday, December 5, 2022

WORK SESSIONS (All times at 5:30 p.m., unless otherwise noted)

- Thursday, Jan. 20, 2022
- Monday, February 14, 2022
- Monday, March 14, 2022
- Monday, April 18, 2022

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 April 4, 2022 at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom

The Somerset Town Council will meet via Zoom on Monday, April 4, 2022 at 7:00 p.m.

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

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://bit.ly/3wpSBB0> Meeting ID: 816 0601 9309 Passcode: 598125

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:

- Approval of a Shredding Day event for Town residents on Saturday, June 18, hosted by Somerset resident **Phyllis Wiesenfelder** (Cumberland), as recommended by the Town Environment Committee;
- Declaration of a World Environment Day, including distribution of native plants, and information about upcoming Town-wide gas-power leaf blower ban, in concert with above Shredding Day event;
- The Somerset Elementary School PTA Somerset 2K Race fundraising event on Sunday, May 1, with road closures on the race route from 8:30 – 10:00 am, as requested by the Somerset Elementary School PTA;
- Approval of a HVAC replacement permit application submitted by **Robert and Nancy Soreng**, for the installation of a new HVAC unit at the location of the existing failed unit, at the property located at 5506 Uppingham St;
- Approval of a HVAC replacement permit application submitted by **Ruth Albert** for the installation of a new HVAC unit at the location of existing failed unit, at the property located at 4701 Falstone;

- Approval of the 2022 Somerset Dolphins Team Rules, Calendar, and Budget, as recommended by the Town Swim Team Committee;
- The following bulk trash and donation pickup schedule for May 2022:
 - May 14: Donation Nation and A Wider Circle donation pickups
 - May 15: Donation Nation additional pickups
 - May 16: Bulk Trash pickup.

NON-CONSENT AGENDA

- 7:12 p.m. **Public Hearing/Motion:** To consider approval of a building permit application submitted by **Kara and Joseph Wheatley**, for the construction of a backyard shed at the property located at 4507 Dorset Ave.
- 7:20 p.m. **Public Hearing/Motion:** To consider approval of a building permit application submitted Chris Conlan of C. M. Conlan Contractors & Builders Inc., for the demolition and construction of a new single-family home at the property located at 5506 Trent St.
- 8:20 p.m. **Discussion:** Building Administrator Report
- 8:30 p.m. **Motion:** To consider introduction of an ordinance adopting the Town of Somerset Fiscal Year 2022 Budget and Tax Rates
- 8:32 p.m. **Motion:** To consider introduction of a Charter Amendment to lower the eligible voting age from 18 to 16 for municipal elections.
- 8:35 p.m. **Public Hearing/Motion:** To consider approval of renewing the trash, recycling, and yard waste contract with Goode Companies, Inc. for Option Year June 2022-May 2023 at an annual cost of cost \$145,359.

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Preliminary Agenda

8:50 p.m. **Public Hearing/Motion:** To consider approval of contract with Revize for the design and hosting of a new Town website, at a cost not to exceed \$18,000, as recommended by the Town Communications Committee.

9:00 p.m. **Discussion:** Town 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.