

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



SomerseT TOWN JOURNAL



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The Future of Somerset Elementary School: Two Major Challenges

By **John Barry**, *Cumberland Avenue*

Since its founding in 1928, Somerset Elementary School has been cherished by our community and recognized widely for its quality. Now it faces two unprecedented challenges: a recent drop in enrollment, and a future drop due to redistricting.

Recent Enrollment Decreases

Since the start of the 2019-2020 academic year, the school's enrollment has fallen from 590 to 429. Why? The easy answer is that Maryland **Governor Larry Hogan** responded to the COVID pandemic by closing the state's public schools in March 2020. But he did not command the same of private schools: they stayed open. As a result, Montgomery County Public School's (MCPS) overall enrollment fell from 166,000 pre-COVID to 145,000 this school year, as parents who could afford it moved their children into private schools.

Did that happen in Somerset Elementary School? Certainly, many of its parents can afford private schools. But another issue seems to have been in play. The school's student numbers had begun to drop even *before* Hogan's decree. Its 27% decline during the pandemic is double that of any

of the other five schools in its MCPS cluster. In fact, it is the biggest decline in any MCPS school, and is double the 13% decrease in MCPS's overall enrollment.

During an April 29 meeting with members of the Somerset Elementary School community, **MCPS Associate Superintendent Diane Morris** said she thought the community's wealth was a factor in the decrease in enrollment, but acknowledged, "Do we think there were some families who said: 'We don't like Somerset [School] and we're moving [our children]? Of course.'" With surprising frankness, she added: "One of the things I've been hearing via [your] emails, many many emails, is that 'We don't feel proud of our school anymore'." In Somerset Elementary School, she concluded: "There was a community connectedness lost". She put the challenge in stark terms: "With the pandemic over, how do we re-invent Somerset?" (Note: Neither Diane Morris nor **Principal Kelly Morris** responded to multiple requests to talk to me.)

Redistricting

Having shrunk from an enrollment of 616 in the 2017 school year to 590 pre-pandemic to 429 now, Somerset Elementary School will have only 357 students next year — the lowest enrollment in more than twenty years.

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ON MY MIND

Our Batting Cage

By Mayor Jeffrey Slavin, *Warwick Place*

Since I believe so much in democracy, to me one of the true rewards of my elected service is the engagement of citizens in public decisions, especially when those citizens are passionate. During the recent process the Town government used to re-open our Batting Cage after the pandemic closure, **Rob Satloff** (Essex) provided constructive input. His input ultimately resulted in improving this recreational activity and hopefully will lead to greater usage than we have seen previously.

For those who are unaware, Somerset accepted the batting cage as a gift several decades ago from a family who wanted more space in their backyard. Soon thereafter, I became a Town Council member and one of the facility's biggest advocates. Seeing that the Town pool and tennis courts were highly successful facilities thanks to strong Committees, once I became Mayor I worked diligently to ensure there would be a similar Committee for the batting cage.

Unfortunately, despite these efforts over the decades, the cage was little used and fell into disrepair. A number of citizens complained that it was an eyesore and wanted it removed. The Town Council debated periodically on the cage's future but ultimately voted last year to maintain the structure and purchase a new net.

The reopening process has been slow, and several residents joined Rob in letting the Town know that the delay was unacceptable. Yes, bureaucracy has its pros and cons! However, the end result should be pleasing to all the young ballplayers and I hope there will be many benefits.

Along the way, Rob wrote a lovely poem that I wanted to share, which provided me and the Town Manager the incentive to solve some technical problems. While some of the facts in the stanzas are "debatable," it is quite clever and well worth the read!

IS THERE NO JOY IN SOMERSET?

With apologies to "Casey at the Bat"

The outlook sure looked brilliant for Somerset kids last Monday, a new net adorned the batting cage and it was nearly ready for them to play. An L-screen and a piece of turf were all that needed to be done, a couple of hundred dollars spent and then our kids could all have fun.

After nearly eighteen months of messages and calls, after a year since the Town Council voted in Somerset's sacred halls, after putting in new beams and then installing the gleaming new net, everything seemed ready; everything seemed set.

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SOMERSET TOWN JOURNAL

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The Future of Somerset Elementary School: Two Major Challenges

Why? MCPS has redrawn the boundaries of the school and its two nearest neighbors, Westbrook and Bethesda Elementary Schools.

In 2020, MCPS predicted that by 2026-2027, Bethesda Elementary School would be very overcrowded and Somerset Elementary School somewhat overcrowded, while Westbrook Elementary School would have fewer students than it has capacity to handle. In November 2021, MCPS announced that Somerset Elementary School would transfer many students to Westbrook Elementary School, while accepting some from Bethesda Elementary School. The analysis that underlay this decision relied, of course, on pre-pandemic enrollment figures. Somerset Elementary School's COVID losses mean its enrollment has actually fallen below MCPS's estimate of its capacity. But that has not swayed MCPS from its plan, even though the PTAs in all three schools pleaded that the reshuffle be postponed a year while children and parents recovered from the stresses of the pandemic.

Implications

The overall loss of some 70 Somerset Elementary School students does not tell the whole story of the changes the

school will face. Children with families actually in the Town of Somerset and the streets directly to our north will stay at our school. But the school's catchment area will shrink dramatically. Children who currently come to Somerset Elementary from Kenwood and from the apartment blocks on Willard will be transferred to Westbrook Elementary. Meanwhile, our children will be joined at Somerset Elementary by new faces: some from homes north of Bradley, others from a swath along East-West Highway to Connecticut. (The map is in the Boundary Study Report Supplement: <https://bit.ly/3yRMMNM>)

Somerset Elementary will lose teachers too. Several veteran teachers will likely look for jobs elsewhere in MCPS. For MCPS, smaller schools mean fewer full-time teachers. The school will likely lose its full-time arts, music and PE teachers, plus a full-time reading specialist or perhaps its special education teacher. The school will likely share these positions with another school or schools.

In sum, Somerset Elementary School will be a small "community school" it has not been in decades. It could be a difficult adjustment.



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.

SOMERSET TENNIS ROUND ROBIN

ALL WELCOME!
Saturday, June 4
9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.
Come out and enjoy some tennis with your neighbors!
Please RSVP to
Carrie.Wofford@gmail.com

On My Mind: Our Batting Cage

To buy a screen and piece of turf seemed a simple thing to do;
no fuss, no muss, no tiresome debate was needed to see this task through.
This wasn't complicated, with citizens lined up on different sides;
this isn't pickleball or storm-water or another issue that divides.

In a town of million-dollar homes was \$300 too dear?
One Town citizen had an idea to allay this fiscal fear.
"I will pay for the screen and turf myself," said Rob, in emails to Town Hall.
"I will gladly volunteer to donate them so baseball could be enjoyed by all."

Month after month I sent these notes but no reply came back;
I waited and I waited, hoping to get word the plan was finally on track.
Then suddenly it appeared on the Council's agenda one day.
To me it made little sense but I assumed reason and logic would ultimately have their say.

Letters came a' pouring in from parents everywhere;
"My kids love the cage," they wrote, "please finish the repair."
From tots playing T-ball to teens practicing their curve,
the cage is a terrific Town asset, they wrote, just what our baseball-loving kids deserve.

When they met I'm told the Council voiced support for completing the repair.
Everything seemed in order, the final pieces all seemed there.
Two clicks on Amazon and we could order the final items for arrival,
With a screen in the cage, neither kids nor parents would have to duck and avoid batted balls for survival.

But no, declared the Mayor, this weighty issue needs even more debate,
Like a constitutional amendment or some historic decision tempting fate.
Let's talk and talk and talk some more and encourage more Town discussion;
Let's talk the L-screen need to death, he means, while kids already using the cage risk concussion.

So instead of a screen and some protective turf, which is all the cage needs to be ready to play,
Somerset gets another committee -- we don't have enough already, don't you say?
With this postpone-til-they-forget attitude, there won't be a safe, completed cage, anytime soon;
this process started with my son in 7th grade and he's off to high school after classes end this June.

So, somewhere kids are playing, somewhere children shout,
but there is no joy in Somerset, thanks to a maddeningly non-transparent, overly bureaucratic approach by Town
leadership, one guy's best efforts to do a small
thing to improve town life apparently struck out.

But NO, NO, NO, I've decided not to take this sitting down.
If we send this trifling issue to a newly reconstituted batting cage committee, I'll be in a rocking chair before the Mayor
lets a safe cage be approved by the Town.
In the meantime, I'll just buy the screen and set it where it belongs,
and while the Town deliberates, at least the kids can play along.

So there, I hope, is where the batting cage drama falls mute;
And when everyone sees it's a simple thing we can move on to some other dispute.
For Somerset is lovely, its people grand, and its assets of great renown.
But sometimes we make mountains out of molehills in this idyllic little Town.

JUNE 2022

TOWN CALENDAR

MONDAY, JUNE 6

Town Council meeting*
7:00 p.m.

TUESDAY, JUNE 7

Environment Committee Beekeeping/Apiary Forum*
8:00 p.m.

SATURDAY, JUNE 11

Somerset Dolphins A Time Trials

MONDAY, JUNE 13 – WEDNESDAY, JUNE 15

Somerset staff attending Maryland Municipal League Conference
Town Hall open with limited availability

TUESDAY, JUNE 14

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

TUESDAY, JUNE 14

Parks & Natural Resources Committee Meeting*
8:00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 15

Somerset Dolphins B Meet AWAY at Little Falls

SATURDAY, JUNE 18

Somerset Dolphins A Meet AWAY at Lakelands

MONDAY, JUNE 20

Juneteenth Federal Holiday
Town Hall Closed

TUESDAY, JUNE 21

Town Council Work Session*
5:30 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 22

Somerset Dolphins B Meet HOME vs. Seven Locks

SATURDAY, JUNE 25

Somerset Dolphins A Meet HOME vs. Westleigh

MONDAY, JUNE 27

Town Council Stormwater Code Review Working Session*
5:30 p.m.

TUESDAY, JUNE 28

Parks & Natural Resources Committee Meeting*
8:00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 29

Somerset Dolphins B Meet HOME vs. CCRA

*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.

Swimming and Life

By **Dario Fuentes**, *Cumberland Avenue*

Ever since I was a young child I've had a passion for swimming. I was first enrolled in swimming when my parents could no longer stand my physical energy around the house. I started swimming twice a week and over time, I worked up to nine times a week. When I was in middle school, I was selected to swim in a high-performance swim center that was home to the best swimmers in Spain.

All those hours of swimming paid off when I was offered a swimming scholarship here in the United States. During this time, I had the privilege of going to the Olympic trials, swam nationals for Spain, and won a few medals in the process. One of the best things that came out of my swimming scholarship was meeting my wife Kirsten.

I kept on swimming for a few years after college but work, having a family, and pursuing a doctoral degree halted my involvement in the competitive swimming world. Early in my professional career, I had the privilege of coaching the mighty Somerset Dolphins for three summers! And as fate would have it, 14 years later, my family and I relocated to this area three years ago. We feel extremely blessed to be part of the Somerset community. Last summer I learned about the early bird swim program and started swimming with **Matt Zaft** (Dorset), **Russell Green** (Cumberland),

Michael Roark (Dorset) (and now **Nick Fox** (Cumberland)). We continued to swim through the winter together at the Wilson Aquatic Center.

However, I still missed the competitive edge of my sport, and I decided to train for Masters Nationals in Spain and the U.S.A. where this year I took first and third respectively in the 50-meter butterfly event for my age group. I have been lucky to end up in Somerset, where there is not only a wonderful pool but an amazing community as well.



Somerset Classic Returns

By **Jeff Nussbaum**, *Race Director, Essex Avenue*

The Somerset Race returned in person on Sunday, May 1. Over 700 runners took to the streets to help raise over \$30,000 for the Somerset Elementary School PTA.

Congratulations to the race winners:

- **Men's 8K race:** Westland eighth grader (and Somerset Elementary School graduate) **Francis Astill** (Grantham) won with a time of 32:53.
- **Women's 8K race:** Megan Rose (mother of Somerset Elementary School fifth grader Sam Rose) won the Women's 8k with a time of 37:28.
- **2K race:** A Mascott family (Surrey) sweep! **Everett Mascott** (eighth grade) finished first among the boys, and **Avery Mascott** (sixth grade) finished first among the girls.

The PTA wants to thank all of the race sponsors and volunteers for their help in bringing back the race after it had to be held virtually last year.

Next year, the PTA is hoping to return the 35th annual Somerset Race to its traditional time in October, so stay posted!



Photo Caption: Somerset parent Tom TerBush helps pace the 2k runners.
Photo Credit: Jon Franklin

Pool Update

By Matt Zaft, Chair,
Pool Committee,
Dorset Avenue



Mark Your Calendars!

By the time you read this, the pool will be open! Here is what you need to know:

- Food Trucks, Food Trucks, and more Food Trucks!!!
We will have many food trucks coming to the Pool this summer. Here is the current schedule:
 - Friday, June 17, 5:00 p.m. (last day of school for MCPS): Rockland's BBQ
 - Wednesday, June 22, 5:00 p.m. (Dolphins' Home B Meet): TacoOne
 - Saturday, June 25, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. (Dolphins' Home A Meet): TacoOne
 - Wednesday, June 29, 5:00 p.m. (Dolphins' Home B Meet): Astro Chicken & Donuts
 - Saturday, July 2, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. (Dolphins' Home A Meet): Pepe
 - Wednesday, July 13, 5:00 p.m. (Dolphins' Home B Meet): TacoOne.
 - Saturday, July 16, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. (Dolphins' Home A Meet): Astro Chicken & Donuts*More to come!*
- The (relatively new) water fountain with a water bottle fill station under the covered area by the kitchen is fully functional so please bring your reusable water bottles!
- All residents and guests need to ensure they are informed of and agree to abide by all aspects of the pool rules. They are available on the Town's website (see <https://bit.ly/39LkPg2>). A few to highlight are:
 - No glass, no glass, no glass!!!
 - Food is only allowed in the two designated areas (the patio adjacent to the Pool House and the elevated balcony area). Absolutely no food is allowed on the pool deck.
 - All cell phones, cameras, and other recording devices are banned from use in the locker rooms and bathrooms.
 - Respect the lifeguards and abide by their instructions.

- We have new grills!!! It is the responsibility of residents (and their guests) to clean the grills and grill area after usage.
- Reminder that on the days of home Dolphin swim meets, the Pool either closes early (Wednesday nights) or opens late (Saturdays). Here is the complete schedule:
 - Pool closes at 4:30 p.m.: 6/22, 6/29, 7/13, & 7/23 (Swim Team Banquet)
 - Pool opens at 12:30 p.m.: 6/11, 6/25, 7/2, 7/16
- The Baby Pool has been completely fixed. While it will not be open immediately (the water must filter fully since the bottom was re-plastered), it should be open prior to Memorial Day weekend.
- Lap Lanes — As with the prior two years, we will continue to have residents reserve lap lanes through the MemberSplash system. There is still a maximum of two people per lane. However, those two people can agree, but are not required, to allow additional people in the lane with them. Here is a schedule of the number of lap lanes available for different days/times throughout the entire summer:

PRIOR TO MAY 31

Weekdays:

- 1:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.: 6 lap lanes
- 4:30 p.m. – close: 3 lap lanes

Weekends

- 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.: 6 lap lanes
- 11:30 a.m. – close: 3 lap lanes

MAY 31 – JUNE 17

Monday/Wednesday/Friday

- 1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.: 2 lap lanes (Water Aerobics has the other 4 lanes)
 - 2:30 – 4:30 p.m.: 6 lap lanes
 - 4:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.: no lap lanes (swim team practice)
 - 6:30 p.m. – close: 3 lap lanes
- Tuesday/Thursday
- 1:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.: 6 lap lanes

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Pool Update

— 4:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.: no lap lanes (swim team practice)

— 6:30 p.m. – close: 3 lap lanes

Weekends

— 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.: 6 lap lanes

— 11:30 a.m. – close: 3 lap lanes

JUNE 18 TO JULY 23

Monday/Wednesday/Friday

— 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.: 2 lap lanes (Water Aerobics has the other 4 lanes)

— 11:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.: 3 lap lanes

— 4:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.: no lap lanes (swim team practice)

— 6:30 p.m. – close: 3 lap lanes

Tuesday/Thursday

— 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.: 6 lap lanes

— 11:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.: 3 lap lanes

— 4:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.: no lap lanes (swim team practice)

— 6:30 p.m. – close: 3 lap lanes

Weekends

— 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.: 6 lap lanes

— 11:30 a.m. – close: 3 lap lanes

FROM JULY 24 ON

Monday/Wednesday/Friday

— 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.: 2 lap lanes (Water Aerobics has the other 4 lanes)

— 11:30 a.m. – close: 3 lap lanes

Tuesday/Thursday

— 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.: 6 lap lanes

— 11:30 a.m. – close: 3 lap lanes

Weekends

— 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.: 6 lap lanes

— 11:30 a.m. – close: 3 lap lanes

Finally, for now, did I mention **no glass, no glass, no glass!!!**

Do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Water Aerobics Starting Soon

By Lucy Freeman, *Falstone Avenue*

Water aerobics will begin Wednesday, June 1 at 1:30 p.m. It will meet Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at 1:30; after school closes for the year (June 20), it will meet at 10:30 a.m. The fee will be \$10 per session as set by the Town Council. We will have 4 lanes, and a maximum of 15 attendees.

Please bring a flotation belt and, if you wish, hand water weights. And please add money to your pool account; the cost of each session will be subtracted from it.

I'm looking forward once again to a great water aerobics summer. If you have any questions, please email me at dorset47008@yahoo.com or call at 301-654-8115. Everyone is invited.



History Mystery

In going through materials for the Town of Somerset archives, History and Archive Committee members Donna Harman and Paige Whitley found the lyrics to the song "Ode to Somerset".

Does anyone know WHO wrote it, WHEN it was written (maybe 1996?), and FOR WHAT PURPOSE? We've also come across references to the Somerset Elementary School song titled "Somerset, Oh Somerset." WHO wrote that one, and WHEN? If you can solve the mystery, please contact historyandarchives@townofsomerset.com.

ODE TO SOMERSET

It was in nineteen hundred six
That Somerset began
We're here today to tell you
All the stories that we can.

It started as a trolley town
Just ninety years ago
Today there are no trolley tracks
And we all take Metro.

CHORUS:
Somerset is really great
Somerset is grand
Ninety years we celebrate
The best town in the land.

The roads were dirt, the sidewalks wood
and pigs and goats ran free
Now we need a permit if
We want to prune a tree.

Through the years the town has grown
With controversies many
And with all the legal fees
It's cost a pretty penny.

(CHORUS)

The meetings of the town they are
The forum for solutions
The issues they've been big and small
From fences to pollution.

This town has weathered many storms
That date to its creation
Zoning, speed bumps, in-law suites
And yes -- de-annexation.

(CHORUS)

The town it's had its own fair share
Of government elections
When council members' terms are up
We make a new selection.

But Mayor Behr he's some swell guy
And might just serve forever
Maybe he can make the Guinness
Records if he's clever.

(CHORUS)

Now this town it ranks up high
Of places in the nation
Our parks and pool and school are tops
That's cause for celebration.

But most important are the folks
Who make this place a home
This town's a great community
On this we'll end our poem.

(CHORUS)



Public Safety Committee Update

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

Public Safety Tips

With summer approaching, residents will likely be out and about more often, both traveling within the Town and taking more car trips—to the pool, to run errands, or for vacations. Taking a few easy precautions can help ensure the safety of all Town residents.

Sidewalk Safety

A friendly reminder: the Town Code requires us to maintain the land between our property line and the street curb in “a safe and sanitary condition” and to keep sidewalks and streets free from overhanging shrubbery that interferes with pedestrian or vehicle traffic. Let’s help keep our neighbors safe by ensuring that sidewalks are clear and drivers have clear sight lines.

Preventing Vehicle Thefts and Thefts from Vehicles

The best way to prevent vehicle thefts and thefts from vehicles is to lock your vehicle doors and take your key or key fob with you. Never leave a key or key fob in your vehicle.

One way to remember to secure your vehicle is to set an alert on your phone to remind you every evening to check your vehicle doors.



Sustainability Corner

By Barton Rubenstein, Chair,
Environment Committee,
Dorset Avenue

Announcement: Beekeeping/Apiary Forum Tuesday June 7, 8:00 – 9:00 pm

The Environment Committee has organized a Zoom Forum to discuss the benefits of placing an apiary in our Town parkland. As many of you know, we already have a fenced-in area 50 yards from Wisconsin Avenue that could be used for this purpose. To raise awareness of these amazing pollinators, we have invited various experts from the region. These include Maureen Jais-Mick, who manages the Montgomery County Bee Keeper's Association Bee Yard at Brookside Gardens; Leon Vanderberg, who cares for bees at Leisure World; and Elizabeth Harris, who is a certified beekeeper and neighbor. Zoom information will be provided closer to the Forum date. Please join us!

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



With the Council's vote on the FY23 budget earlier this month, the Town's annual fiscal planning season is now officially over. I want to again particularly thank the members of the Budget Committee — which includes Chair **Phil Young** (Greystone), **Ann Bolten** (Cumberland) and **Jonathan Medalia** (Surrey) — for their expert guidance. It is always challenging to balance all the competing interests, especially given the pandemic and the curious decline in Town revenues. And I want to again express my particular appreciation to Town Manager **Matt Trollinger** for the time and attention he gave to our Town government's most important task.

Kudos to the Board of Supervisors of Elections, led so ably by Chair **Sherry Bindeman Kahn** (Essex), for the expert planning of this year's Council election in our continuing extraordinary circumstances. And while the election was uncontested, I am glad the recommended changes, which

will apply in the future, took into account best practices from other jurisdictions.

It's already commencement time and I know that many households have school graduates at all levels, from elementary school to professional school, and even beyond. Because there is so much interest, I want to encourage both students and parents to let us know so that we can make mention of these accomplishments in this Journal.

As most know, June is LGBTQ Pride Month and once again the Council will be considering a proclamation and the authority to raise the Pride flag for the month.

HAPPY FATHER'S DAY TO ALL THE DADS, GRAND-DADS, AND GREAT GRAND-DADS!

GENERAL PERMITS AND VARIANCES

TREE REMOVAL PERMITS

5608 Warwick Place

- Pin Oak (30")—Tree is in decline with large dead branches. The tree is hazardous.

4902 Dorset Avenue

- Tulip Poplar (24") – The tree is dead and hazardous.

5403 Greystone Street

- Red Maple (20") – The tree is dead and hazardous.

4715 Trent Street

- White Oak (20") – The tree is dead.

DUMPSTER PERMIT

- 5702 Warwick Place

HVAC PERMIT

- 5521 Uppingham Street

BUILDING PERMIT

- 4808 Cumberland Avenue

VARIANCE

- 5613 Warwick Place



Manager's Corner

By Matt Trollinger, Town Manager

As we transition from spring into early summer, please remember the following. First, residents are responsible for mowing grass in front of their property, so reminders to yard crews are appreciated. Second, please be aware of shrubbery growing into/over the sidewalk. Shrubbery should be cut back so it does not interfere with pedestrians, and does not interfere with sightlines. This is especially important for residents who live on corners: help keep the streets safe by ensuring your plantings do not block drivers' sight.

Also in the vein of safety, starting in June, in consultation with the Traffic Committee and Public Safety Committee, I have asked the police officers in Town to tighten enforcement of traffic violations, particularly regarding stop signs and speed limits. According to **Sergeant Sun Cheung**, the vast majority of offenders are likely to be Somerset residents. Please obey traffic laws. If not, you may get dinged!

The adopted FY23 budget is again an insert to this issue. It includes the minor amendment that was made at the last Council meeting (adding funds for the maintenance of the Town batting cage – see *On My Mind* on page 2). The Mayor's Five-Year Plan, which projects Town revenues and expenditures through FY27 (which ends June 30, 2028), is also provided in an insert. Of course, budgets are subject to change — especially long-term budgets. Already, you will see that the Town Council Meeting's June agenda includes a proposal to update the budget to cover upkeep of the Town Pool deck, which needs to be repaired this fall.

Fun news: the Town Pool is open! We are fortunate to once again have Helen Carter, from American Pool, managing the pool and lifeguards. Helen is (literally) our award-winning lifeguard manager. She always stays on top of issues at the pool. If you notice something, please let her know so we can get it taken care of as quickly as possible!

Starting June 18, the pool hours will extend for the summer, opening at 10:00 a.m. (see *Pool Update* on page 7 for more details). We have added new fun elements, including board games and yard games (chess, bocce ball, giant Jenga), and restored and upgraded the grills. As of this writing, grills are open on a first-come, first-serve

basis. If we need to adjust as the summer progresses, we will let you know. Please make sure to clean up after yourself or your group at the grills. These are Town-owned equipment, and we all play a role in maintaining it for each other.

Congratulations to the Stormwater Study Committee for wrapping up their final report, which can be found on the Town website (see *Committee-Provided Resources List* on page 14). The next step is for the Town Council to put that information into action. That will likely involve Code changes and infrastructure improvements and investments. The Council will kick off that process at a special work session on June 27 to begin discussing any Somerset Code changes. The Committee has made one recommendation that would require net-zero stormwater increase for any construction project that adds 150 sq. ft. or more of impervious surface (i.e., driveways, patio, additions to a home, etc.). This may be a starting point for future discussions.

The Town Council will once again this month consider a proposal for a shredding event behind the Town Hall in the parking lot for Saturday, June 18, to begin at 9:30 a.m. The Environment Committee has recommended this event, and is also proposing to wrap some environmental consciousness into the day. Similar to the last event, the Committee is prepared to collect spent rechargeable batteries, and compact fluorescent bulbs, which can only be recycled at the Shed Grove Transfer Station. In addition, the Committee is planning an LED light bulb exchange and electric car "show and tell." As this will be on the agenda for the Council to consider and vote on, residents are welcomed and encouraged to submit comments – either by emailing the Town Hall, or attending the meeting and speaking then.

Last but not least, good luck to our Somerset Dolphins as Summer 2022 season kicks off. Please see the *Town Calendar* (page 5), as well as *Pool Updates* (page 7) for upcoming Swim Meet events. I highly encourage all residents to attend at least one swim meet this summer. They are a ton of fun and are a great community bonding experience. And I'm sure the swimmers would appreciate the support!

Council Meeting Actions

The following actions were taken by the Somerset Town Council at its monthly meeting, held May 2, 2022:

- Approved the installation of a Carbon Garden in the Vinton Park forest abutting Dorset Avenue, as recommended by the Town Environment, and Parks and Natural Resources Committees
- Approved writing a letter on behalf of the Town Council to **County Councilmember Andrew Friedson**, asking for a County-led public forum before any decisions are made regarding Little Falls Parkway closures
- Approved a Resolution declaring June 3 as National Gun Violence Awareness Day
- Approved a slate of nominees to officially serve on the Town Revenue Committee alongside Chair **Nick Fox** (Cumberland Avenue), nominated by Mayor Slavin:
 - **Sloane Hurst** (Dorset Avenue)
 - **John Barry** (Cumberland Avenue)
 - **Kris Garin** (Surrey Street)
 - **Anne Hawkings** (Falstone Avenue)
- Approved Mayor Slavin's nominees to serve on the Public Safety Committee:
 - **Valerie Green** (Trent Street)
 - **George Wyeth** (Falstone Avenue)
- Approved a building permit application submitted by **Alan Kaplan** for the construction of a rear addition and enclosure of rear screened porch at the property located at 4808 Cumberland Avenue
- Approved a variance application submitted by **Daniel Bremer-Wirtig** and **Rebeca Lamadrid** for the construction of a second story addition to the existing house on the property located at 5613 Warwick Place
- Approved the Spring 2022 Tree Planting List, as recommended by the Town Arborist and the Parks and Natural Resources Committee
- Adopted a Resolution to amend the Town's Water Aerobic fees to \$10 per class
- Approved a Resolution establishing a position description for the Town's appointed Bethesda Fire Board member, as recommended by the Public Safety Committee
- Adopted an ordinance adopting the Town of Somerset Fiscal Year 2023 Budget and Tax Rates, with one amendment:
 - To add \$2,000 for the maintenance of the Town's batting cage.

The meeting recording can be found on YouTube at: <https://bit.ly/3sRf2MI> (for recordings of other Town Council meetings, see *Video Recordings of Town Meetings* on page 14).

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.



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)

LINKS TO COMMITTEE-PROVIDED RESOURCES

STORMWATER STUDY COMMITTEE

- Stormwater Study Committee Report: <https://bit.ly/3M7R9b4>
- FAQs for Somerset Residents: <https://bit.ly/3uVIX96>
- Resource Guide to Green Infrastructure: <https://bit.ly/3MhYnsW>
- LIDC Final Report — Stormwater Master Plan 1/20/2022: <https://bit.ly/3uUADp8>

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

- Ban on Certain Pesticides: <https://bit.ly/3MKQpt5>
- Resolution Declaring Climate Emergency: <https://bit.ly/38DGIDz>

- Sierra Club Maryland Mayors for 100% Clean Energy Pledge: <https://bit.ly/3NuCeZ5>
- Fossil Fuel No-Proliferation Treaty: <https://fossilfuel treaty.org>
- Ban on Gas-Powered Blowers: see Chapter 140, section 3 (§140-3) of the Town Code (<https://bit.ly/3LDF1xR>)

EQUITY AND INCLUSION COMMITTEE

- Resolution Condemning Anti-AAPI Hate: <https://bit.ly/38I0t7r>
- Slavery & Segregation History Forum Recording: <https://bit.ly/3MHSV3o>

VIDEO RECORDINGS OF TOWN MEETINGS

- Town of Somerset YouTube channel: <https://bit.ly/3yU2gkG>
- May 2, 2022 Town Council Meeting: <https://bit.ly/3sRf2MI>
- April 18, 2022 Town Council Work Session: <https://bit.ly/3wGV9Jn>
- April 4, 2022 Town Council Meeting: <https://bit.ly/3Ny8iv0>
- March 14, 2022 Town Council Work Session: <https://bit.ly/3IALzTf>
- March 7, 2022 Town Council Meeting: <https://bit.ly/38HRmDC>
- February 14, 2022 Town Council Work Session: <https://bit.ly/389iMC8>
- February 7, 2022 Town Council Meeting: <https://bit.ly/3ab6v0B>
- January 20, 2022 Town Council Work Session: <https://bit.ly/3x3qRB1>
- January 3, 2022 Town Council Meeting: <https://bit.ly/3IG5zDS>

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 June 6, 2022

at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom

The Somerset Town Council will meet via Zoom on Monday, June 6, 2022 at 7:00 p.m.

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

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://bit.ly/3yRLeU4> Meeting ID: 812 5400 1931 Passcode: 916876

Dial by your location: +1 301 715 8592 US (Washington DC)

Somerset Town Council

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

SOMERSET COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS

7:00 p.m. Council President Election: The Council shall elect a President of the Council from among its members.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

7:05 p.m. Opportunity for residents to make public comments.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

7:15 p.m. **Motion:** To consider approval of agenda as presented.

CONSENT AGENDA

7:16 p.m. **Motion:** To consider approval of the following items without discussion:

- A two-month extension through August 31, 2022 for the continued use of Zoom as a virtual Town Meeting setting (currently set to expire June 30, 2021)
- To resume in-person Town Council meetings beginning September, 2022
- To begin hybrid in-person/virtual meetings using equipment purchased by Montgomery Municipal Cable, to allow residents to observe and observe in in-person meetings using the Town Zoom platform beginning September 1, 2022
- A Proclamation declaring June as LGBTQ Pride Month in the Town of Somerset, and hanging the Rainbow Flag at the Town Hall in honor of LGBTQ Pride Month through June 30, 2022
- Re-appoint Ron Bolt (Bolt Legal) as the Town Attorney for Fiscal Year 2022

- Re-Appoint Matthew Trollinger as the Town Manager/Clerk-Treasurer for Fiscal Year 2022

NON-CONSENT AGENDA

7:17 p.m. **Public Hearing/Motion:** To consider approval of a building permit application, submitted by Jeffrey Nussbaum, for rear yard addition to the existing home located on the property at 4716 Essex Avenue

7:35 p.m. **Public Hearing/Motion:** To consider approval of a building permit application, submitted by **Garrett Levin** and **Virginia Frasure**, to enclose the existing carport and existing front porch into a garage and foyer, respectively, at the front of the existing home located on the property at 5510 Greystone Street

8:00 p.m. **Public Hearing/Motion:** To consider approval of a building permit application, submitted by **Seth Cohen**, for an addition to the front of the existing home located on the property at 5502 Greystone Street

8:20 p.m. **Public Hearing/Motion:** To consider approval of a building permit and tree removal application, submitted by **Daniel Bremer-Wirtig** and **Rebecca Lamadrid**, for the construction of a retaining wall and the removal of three (3) trees located on the property at 5613 Warwick Place

8:45 p.m. Building Administrator's Report

Continued on page 16

Preliminary Agenda

8:55 p.m. **Public Hearing/Motion:** To approve of a shredding event for Town residents at the Town Hall parking lot on Saturday, June 18, and the distribution of native plants and information about the upcoming Town-wide gas-powered leaf blower ban, as recommended by the Town Environment Committee

9:10 p.m. **Public Hearing/Motion:** To amend the FY23 budget by adding \$31,000 to Town Pool Renovation, to a total of \$285,000, for pool deck repairs to take place in Fall 2022

9:15 p.m. **Discussion:** Manager Report

9:30 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.