



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

# SomerseT TOWN JOURNAL



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October 2022

## Results of the Traffic Committee Summer Survey on Little Falls Parkway

**By Elizabeth Hurwit, Chair, Traffic Committee, Dorset Avenue**

Thank you to everyone who participated in the Traffic Committee's survey on the proposed Little Falls Parkway (LFP) road diet/linear park installation. As residents may know, Montgomery Parks is considering permanently reducing LFP from four lanes to two, in order to repurpose one of the existing halves of the Parkway for use as a linear park, and then turning the other half into a two-way road.

The survey ran from 7/22/22 to 8/22/22 and garnered 246 unique responses, constituting a response rate of roughly 33% (based on calculations of eligible respondents using 2020 U.S. Census figures).

Among respondents:

- 108 favored the road diet/linear park
- 107 favored maintaining four lanes
- 29 were unsure
- 2 had comments only

Of the 110 additional comments:

- 23 said the current test configuration doesn't make sense

- 15 said they need more information to decide or confirm their current vote—specifically citing the need for more details about what the linear park would look like and/or the results of current and future traffic studies
- 12 said they would prefer to keep at least two lanes open during the week and close two or four lanes on the weekends
- 8 questioned the need for more greenspace in our area and/or questioned spending county resources on this project, when other areas need additional greenspace more than we do
- 7 expressed concerns about speeding on LFP
- 7 expressed concerns about changing the Parkway configuration before the effects of the Westbard development are known
- 1 noted that the proposed road diet would contradict the 2016 Westbard Sector Plan

The completed Westbard development will create 410 apartments and 106 townhomes and, per the County-approved site plan, generate 1,387 new peak-hour trips per day. The intersection of LFP and River Road is

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# ON MY MIND

## Our Entrances

By Mayor Jeffrey Slavin, *Warwick Place*

There is no doubt that, from a visual perspective, we live in an extremely appealing town with beautiful mature trees and landscaping, lovely and distinctive architecture, and well-maintained streets and infrastructure. However, it is my view that our four entrances neither complement this remarkable setting nor properly provide public notice of our existence. Town government needs to address this now, at all four of our entrances:

- What I would call the main entrance to Somerset — at the intersection of Wisconsin and Dorset Avenues — with the historic stone gateway, nice flowers, and a clean look is probably in the best shape. My primary concern for this location is the dirt (often muddy) path that has been used by pedestrians for years. Not only is it unsightly, but its continued use is causing damage to the grounds and foliage and creates an opportunity for litter.
- Just north of the main entrance, at the intersection of Wisconsin and Cumberland Avenues, the entry is not welcoming to residents and guests. Furthermore, there is no signage to indicate that one is entering the Town.
- The “mid-century” entrance at River Road reflects the 1950’s and 1960’s character of the homes in that part of Town. The brick design and lighting are therefore appropriate. Perhaps a review of the landscaping plan is needed, including the installation of more style-consistent lighting.
- Finally, it appears that the entrance at Little Falls Parkway needs the most attention. Although it is probably the most used, it seems to have been forgotten. The signage is outdated, ugly traffic signal boxes need to be re-located or covered, and a new design for the plants and flowers is called for.

Accordingly, I want to encourage all those interested in helping to take a moment to study each location and share your views with me, the Town Manager, and the Council. I would be very appreciative.

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## 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](mailto: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](mailto:HHSomerset@gmail.com).

## Results of the Traffic Committee Summer Survey on Little Falls Parkway

projected to reach near-capacity levels (-3%) by 2040, according to the Transportation Policy Area Review test of critical lane volumes. All projections seem to assume that LFP will remain four lanes. Whether backups on River Road would ensue from a Parkway road diet is unknown.

Although the survey showed no consensus among Town residents, many want to know how the proposed configuration (not the road diet currently being tested) would function and what traffic tests may reveal. Montgomery Parks has posted no new information since this explanation, <https://bit.ly/3BxcZRB>, which suggests the test period will proceed through the fall.

Our interest is shared by many neighboring communities—not only Kenwood but also the greater Citizens

Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights, comprising Brookdale, Kenwood Forest II, Kenwood House Cooperative, Chevy Chase West, and Springfield, among its 21 neighborhood associations. Many of those groups are concerned about traffic flow into their neighborhoods, as well as environmental, safety, and cost questions.

The Traffic Committee's priority remains public input on any permanent changes to Little Falls Parkway, including analysis of traffic studies. We will continue to push Montgomery Parks and County Council Member Andrew Friedson to hold public forums and keep us informed. And we will continue to share whatever information we receive with Town residents.

## OCTOBER 2022 TOWN CALENDAR

### MONDAY, OCTOBER 3

#### Town Council Meeting

7:00 p.m., Town Hall (in-person) and via Zoom<sup>o\*</sup>

### MONDAY, OCTOBER 10

#### Pool Committee Meeting

7:30 p.m., via Zoom<sup>\*</sup>

### TUESDAY, OCTOBER 11

#### Public Safety Committee Meeting

7:00 p.m., via Zoom<sup>\*</sup>

#### Equity & Inclusion Committee Meeting

8:00 p.m., via Zoom<sup>\*</sup>

The Town is also planning a flu clinic in October, but as of publication, the date has not been finalized. Please check Town Hall announcements for further information.

<sup>o</sup>The Town Council has instituted "hybrid" meetings starting in September, to allow residents to attend both in-person at the Town Hall, or to continue to participate via Zoom.

<sup>\*</sup>Login information for Zoom meetings will be sent via email the week prior to the meeting. Residents may also email [town@townofsomerset](mailto:town@townofsomerset) for login and dial-in information.

### MONDAY, OCTOBER 17

#### Town Council Work Session

5:30 p.m., Town Hall (in-person) and via Zoom<sup>o\*</sup>

### TUESDAY, OCTOBER 25

#### Parks and Natural Resources Committee Meeting

8:00 p.m., via Zoom<sup>\*</sup>

### MONDAY, OCTOBER 31

#### Halloween Trick or Treating Begins!

6:00 p.m.

## GENERAL PERMITS

VARIANCE PERMIT: 5522 Uppingham

# Forum on Lowering the Voting Age in Somerset

By **Amalia Levitin**, *Trent Street*

On August 22, Town resident Amalia Levitin organized a Town Zoom forum on lowering the voting age for Town elections to 16 from 18. Presenting at the forum were Professor Michael Hanmer, a political scientist at University of Maryland who studies lowering the voting age; Patrick Paschall, former Hyattsville MD Council Member; Talisha Searcy, Takoma Park MD Council Member; Andreas Geffert, a teenager who recently successfully lobbied for a lowered voting age in the Town of Chevy Chase MD; and Julia Maynard, a Youth Council member from Takoma Park MD. After hearing from the panel, Somerset residents were able to ask questions to hear how a lowered voting

age had impacted these other Maryland municipalities and their citizens. Residents shared their own views on whether a lowered voting age would be beneficial for Somerset. The forum was a success; residents learned a lot and were able to share their views with neighbors. If you were unable to join live, the forum was recorded and can be watched at your convenience at this link: <https://bit.ly/3BYDyAK>. The Town Council will be addressing the subject of lowering the voting age soon, so please share your view on changing the voting age in Somerset elections to 16 from 18 with Council members so that they are able to consider you and your views.

## Somerset Artists Showing at American University

By **Carol A. Jason**, *Warwick Place*

Somerset residents **Carol A. Jason** (Warwick) and **Virginia Mahoney** (Cumberland) are among the 16 artists featured at the current Group 93 exhibit at American University's Katzen Rotunda Gallery. The exhibit opened on September 14th and will run through October 24th. A reception was held on Saturday, September 24. The artists in Group 93 have diverse professional backgrounds and individual approaches to visual language. What they share is an affiliation to American University and a dedication to the rigor of a critique method that holds each work of art to the test of speaking for itself.

Carol A. Jason received an MFA from the American University and is an award-winning figurative sculptor (for more information about her work, see: [www.caroljason.com](http://www.caroljason.com)).

She is showing both figurative and abstract sculptures and abstract paintings. Virginia Mahoney taught classes in exhibit design at American University. She is showing intricate abstracted drawings in pencil and charcoal (for more information about her work, see: [www.virginiamahoneyart.com](http://www.virginiamahoneyart.com)).



Two pieces from the exhibit. From left to right: *Gussied Up* by Carol A. Jason, and *The Connection* by Virginia Mahoney

## CLASSIFIED ADS

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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.*



# Share the Road! Look out for Pedestrians and Bicyclists

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

The August 25 death of area resident Sarah Langenkamp while riding her bike just blocks from Somerset illustrates the ongoing need to evaluate streets, sidewalks, and bike paths in light of the needs of the Town (and wider) community.

Ms. Langenkamp, a U.S. diplomat who had returned home from Ukraine, was fatally injured after a flatbed truck struck her while she was riding home from an event at her sons' school in Bethesda. Ms. Langenkamp was riding in a bike lane on River Road near Somerset-- a commercial area with a high volume of car traffic and significant movement between gas stations, shopping, etc. The bike lane is not protected. Rather, a single stripe of paint separates bikes from cars.

As the *Washington Post* noted, "The region's roads are deadly. The roads have claimed bicyclists and pedestrians time and again ..." (<https://wapo.st/3LtjWHX>).

How do we learn from this avoidable and preventable tragedy and improve this road for ALL road users?

Ideally, a bike lane on this section of River Road should be protected, with flex posts at a minimum with breaks for driveways and intersections, better reflective and colored paint, and better signage. An even better protection would be concrete curbs to prevent cars from crossing into the bike lane.

More broadly, how can we address our community's changing transportation needs? Many of us moved to Somerset because of its proximity to Friendship Heights and Bethesda and so we can leave our cars parked. Most car trips are done within 5 miles of home (not coincidentally, most wrecks occur within that same radius).

During the pandemic, car and public transit use declined, while bike use and pedestrian activity increased significantly. But another phenomenon was observed during this lockdown period: pedestrian and bicyclist deaths continued to increase (<https://bit.ly/3SjLpOp>).

To address these changes, Montgomery County has taken several steps:

- In 2016, Montgomery County began implementing "Vision Zero," a plan to eliminate serious and fatal collisions for vehicle occupants, pedestrians, and bicyclists (<https://bit.ly/2HT4mHn>).
- In response to residents' efforts to reimagine their lives and seek new avenues for recreation amidst remote working and learning, Montgomery County created shared spaces on Little Falls Parkway (and other roads) and created "streeteries." These spaces provide space for recreation and allow residents to continue to support local restaurants. In turn, residents discovered the health-related, economic, psychological, and family-oriented benefits of having car-free spaces.
- The county has released a draft Pedestrian Master Plan (<https://bit.ly/3SiLRMX>), which complements the 2018 Bicycle Master Plan (<https://bit.ly/3UsdepS>). The master plans seek to enhance the safety of cyclists and pedestrians and to change the perception that ours is a car-centric community. They also call for building new sidewalks and doing so faster, having walk signals turn green with each cycle without the pedestrian having to push a button, and better regulation of shared spaces.

**Somerset staff are working on a proposal for a Town Roadway Master Plan. The Public Safety Committee and other committees are looking forward to participating in this process in order to ensure adequate public input into the plan.**

Just as the arrival of Metrorail changed Bethesda almost forty years ago, excessive car traffic now has changed our community and the perception of how to access our community. These master plans seek to keep pace with and attempt to achieve positive change for the community.

Even if you don't ride a bike or walk to work or shopping, check out the links above, monitor the County's and Town's master plan processes (and attend a virtual meeting if possible), and see the improvements planned for the near future.

"Shared streets" doesn't mean outlawing cars; rather, it means enhancing safety and convenience for *all* road users. Improving the River Road and Little Falls Parkway corridors would be a good way to start.

# Public Safety Roundup

*Two of the Public Safety Committee's (PSC) goals this year are to: (1) take a holistic approach to public safety; and (2) instill a public safety ethos in our Town government. This is a roundup of a few public safety issues facing the Town.*

## COUNCIL ACTS TO IMPROVE TOWN POLICE PROGRAM

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

The Town police program's history, organization, and interconnection with the Montgomery County Police Department make it one of the Town's more complex efforts. This article touches on just a few issues related to the program, particularly the interim recommendations that the Public Safety Committee (PSC) made, and that the Council approved in August. These recommendations are designed to introduce some transparency, accountability, and good governance to the police program and to enable the Town to gather data to inform further PSC recommendations.

### Background

Many Town residents value the Town's hiring of Montgomery County police officers to provide supplemental police service in the Town. The Town currently has two excellent and dedicated police officers as part-time employees — Sgt. Steve Cheoung and Officer John Olcott — and the Town appreciates their hard work. Historically, the primary purpose of the program has been to address traffic violations.

The Town has budgeted \$53,000 for this program this fiscal year, allowing for 17.5 hours of service per week. This works out to an average of 2.5 hours a day (**in other words, about 10% of the time**), although there is no guarantee that an officer will be in Town every day. During the remaining time (and even while our Town officers are on duty), the Town is served by our regular Second District police officers, who patrol throughout our police district and regularly respond to our town.

The Montgomery County Police are very well trained and well screened. But even well-run police programs need monitoring and supervision.

### PSC recommendations

At its August 1 meeting, the Town Council approved all of the PSC's recommendations. In summary, the PSC recommended that the Town:

- Resume use of a police activity log for each shift to document police activities, incidents responded to, observations, traffic stops, tickets issued, etc.
- Ensure the data security of the police activity log and avoid entering any residents' personal or sensitive information into the log
- Begin tracking the times of day that our officers work. (In response to the Council's action, the Town began including the officers in the Town's time keeping system on August 8—kudos to the Town Manager)
- Assess the Town's financial exposure for the program, in the wake of multi-million-dollar settlements and recent state legislation that increased the cap on damages in certain police-related lawsuits
- Continue crafting a policing policy to guide the Town's use of its hired police officers

### Restriction on patrol activities

During the August Council meeting, the Town Attorney made an interesting disclosure: under the County's collective bargaining agreement with its officers, police vehicles can be used in secondary employment only as surveillance/observation posts, unless the Town reimburses the County for vehicle expenses. **In other words, our officers cannot generally drive around and patrol the Town, unless the Town pays the County for vehicle expenses.** The Town Manager and Town Attorney are investigating this issue further, and the PSC plans to explore options that would allow for patrol activity.

### Conclusion

Policing in America is a controversial issue, and our Town residents undoubtedly have a variety of opinions on the subject. But I think we can all agree that the Town should

*Continued on page 7*

## Public Safety Roundup

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manage our police program as effectively and responsibly as possible, so we can get the maximum public safety benefit from it.

The Council, Mayor Slavin, and Town Manager Trollinger should be commended for devoting time to this important issue and for working to improve the police program.

The PSC will continue to review the Town's police program and hopes to make further recommendations once it receives more information.

The recording of the Council meeting is at <https://bit.ly/3DILvLG>

The PSC's recommendations start on page 55 of the Council packet: <https://bit.ly/3SnZxGj>

**Feel free to email me ([kumarvas655@gmail.com](mailto:kumarvas655@gmail.com)), if you have any questions about the PSC's recommendations or if you have comments about the Town's police program in general.**

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## CRIME UPDATE

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

Somerset's crime rate remains comparable to neighboring areas. These days, crimes in town can generally be broken down into two types: 1) low-level property crimes and 2) financial-related crimes. The police tell us that many of these crimes are preventable.

Violent crimes are fortunately rare for our neighborhood. Any crime—no matter how minor—is traumatic. But we can manage our fear of crime by taking reasonable precautions, many of which have been outlined in previous *Journal* articles or in Town meetings with the County police. The police allocate patrol resources based on crime reports, so I encourage anyone who experiences a crime to report it to the police. See page 11 of the May *Journal* for additional information and crime prevention tips: <https://bit.ly/3BWXHHD>.

From June 15 through September 14, the police department received 12 reports of crimes in Somerset: 3 larcenies from autos, 1 additional larceny, 1 damage to property (which was related to one of the larcenies from an auto), 1 instance of lost property (it's not clear if this was actually a crime), and 6 financial-related crimes. **Our crime rate this year is on a par with last year, with the exception that we have experienced more financial-related crimes (more about those below).**

Officials have advised us repeatedly that simply locking one's vehicle doors and hiding all valuables in vehicles is very effective in discouraging vehicle thefts and thefts from vehicles. When thieves encounter locked car doors,

they tend to move on to other areas. The same applies to houses. Please keep your house doors locked, even when you are at home. Even Chevy Chase Village, which has a full-time police force, experiences thefts from vehicles, and the village police constantly remind residents to lock their vehicle doors.

Even if a Town police officer is on duty, he or she can't be everywhere at once, so we should not depend on an officer's presence to deter a potential criminal.

Financial-related crimes reported in Somerset include check forgery, postal theft, identity theft, illegal use of credit cards, and other financial fraud. Some of these crimes are perpetrated from out of state or online. According to the Police Department's website, these crimes constituted 14 of the 27 reported crimes in Somerset for the year to date—or 52%. For 2021, that figure was 43% (13 of 30 reported crimes).

Four men were indicted in July for stealing master keys from postal carriers and stealing checks in Maryland (including in Montgomery County; <https://wapo.st/3S4HVzQ>).

However, this is no time to let our guard down. One of the best ways to prevent check theft is to deposit your envelopes containing checks at a letter drop **inside** a post office. USPS has additional advice on how to reduce mail theft at <https://bit.ly/3BBsxE5>. For information on preventing identity theft, visit <https://bit.ly/3f3QWKI>.

You can view the County's crime map at <https://bit.ly/3BRF1rl>.



## Coming Soon: A New Survey on the Town Journal

The Communications Committee recently recommended that the Town conduct a new survey to assess how well our monthly Town Journal is meeting the information needs of residents. The last time the Town asked residents for their opinions about the Journal was in 2015.

The **new survey** will appear in the upcoming **November Journal**. Residents who receive only the print edition of the Journal may mail in their completed survey or drop it off at the Town Hall; they may also respond online, using the link that will appear in the article. Those residents who receive the online Journal will be able to reply directly via the link. In addition, the Town will send out the survey link to all residents who receive email from the Town.

The Communications Committee has designed the survey to examine topics such as: 1) the preferences of residents for how the Journal is received in households, i.e., printed/mailed copies versus online; 2) the willingness of residents to pick up printed copies from a location in Town on their own and thereby reduce mailing costs; 3) general satisfaction with the Journal's contents; and 4) suggestions for improvement. We are hoping for a robust survey response rate. The committee will analyze the survey responses and provide a report on the findings. **Your participation is important!**

### A Bit of History

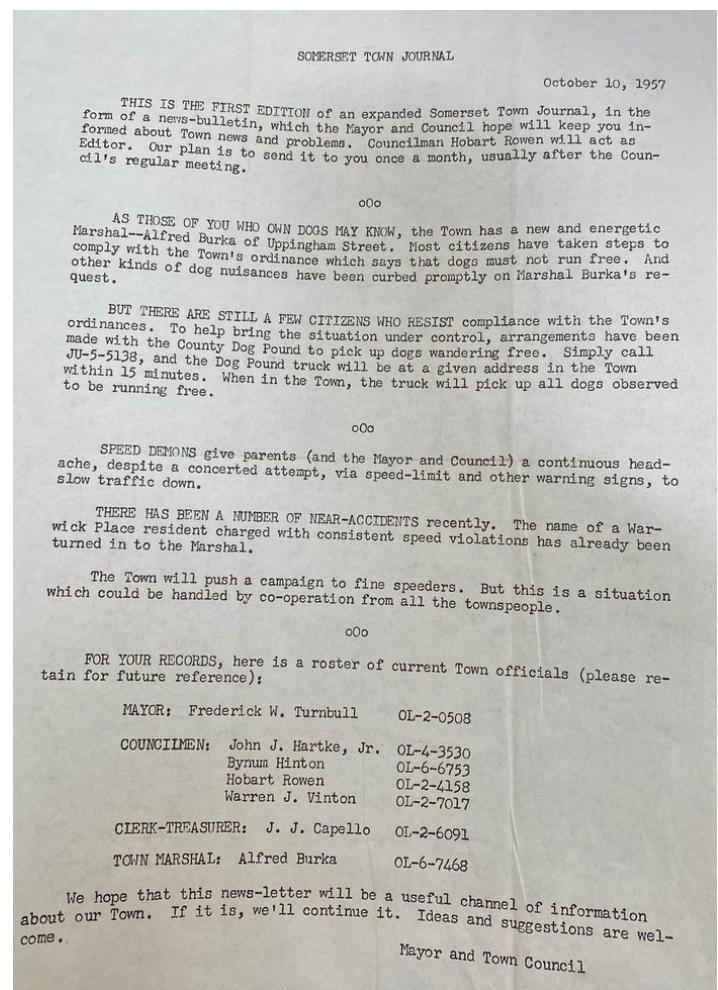
The Somerset Town Journal has been going strong for many years. It has developed into a lively and informative monthly publication that presents a broad variety of news including Town Council activities, Committee updates, issues facing the Town, news from the Mayor and the Town Manager, and information on community events.

It is interesting to note that our Town has routinely had formal written communication with residents since perhaps the 1930s. The Town has maintained extensive records of Town operations, and one of these records, dated October 10, 1957, is a one-page typed document titled Somerset Town Journal. The first line states: *"THIS IS THE FIRST EDITION of an expanded Somerset Town Journal in the form of a news bulletin, which the Mayor and Council hope*

*will keep you informed about Town news and problems."* That first expanded edition was edited by Town Council Member Hobart Rowen, a celebrated economics journalist at the *Washington Post*. Town issues discussed in that edition included:

- *"SPEED DEMONS give parents (and the Mayor and Council) a continuous headache... The Town will push a campaign to fine speeders..."*
- *"Most citizens have taken steps to comply with the Town's ordinance which says that dogs must not run free... BUT THERE ARE STILL A FEW CITIZENS WHO RESIST..."*

Sound familiar?





# Return of the Nonagenarian Ice Cream Social

By **Barbara Zeughauser**, *Trent Street*

Many years ago, **Delores Bartning** (formerly Surrey) started the lovely tradition of celebrating and honoring Somerset's nonagenarians with an Ice Cream Social. The gathering allows our nonagenarians to enjoy the day at the pool patio, have some ice cream, and visit with other long-time residents. With COVID, the tradition was put on hold, but this year, **Lucy Freeman** (Falstone), **Phyllis Wiesenfelder** (Cumberland), and **Barbara Zeughauser** (Trent) thought we could safely gather and celebrate Somerset's nonagenarians once again.

On Thursday, September 1, the weather was spectacular, and the company was wonderful. Fourteen of our approximate twenty nonagenarians attended, including: **Abe and Joan Krash** (Essex), **James Wachob** (Essex), **Earl Colson** (together with his wife **Helen Colson**; Dorset), **Birte Smith** (Dorset), **Stan Baldinger** (together with his wife **Judy Baldinger**; Warwick); **Louise Bredhoff** (Trent), **Gabriel and Ellen Roth** (Falstone), **Devbrat Dutt** (together with his wife **Supriya Dutt**; Trent), **Len Harris** and **Roz**

**Harris** (Trent), **Lois Levitan** (Falstone), and **Kacem Abdeslem** (Greystone).

The conversation was delightful, and everyone was happy to be there and share stories with one another. In addition, this year, some of our "Juniors in Training" attended and they too were pleased to enjoy conversations with neighbors. Juniors in Training included: **Georgette Dorn** (Essex), **Mak** and **Ursula Dehejia** (Surrey), **Sue Edson** (Surrey), **Lorrie Barse** (Cumberland), **Ginny Mahoney** (Cumberland), **Nan Galler** (Surrey), **Gail Schwartz** (Dorset), **Marshall** and **Mary Lasky** (Warwick), **Barbara Marblestone** (Trent), **Helene Safire** (Falstone), and **Davi Walders** (Essex).

**Mayor Jeffrey Slavin**, Town Manager Matt Trollinger, Administrative Assistant Linda Williams, **Council President Steve Surko**, and **Councilmember Kabir Kumar** attended as well, and mingled with the honored guests.



*James Wachob and Council Member Kabir Kumar*



*Mary and Marshall Lasky*



*Judy and Stan Baldinger*



*Nan Galler and Georgette Dorn*



*Louise Bredhoff and Kacem Abdeslem*



*Gabriel and Ellen Roth*



*Supriya Dutt, Devbrat Dutt, Roz Harris, and Len Harris*



*Earl and Helen Colson*



*Barbara Marbleston and Lois Levitan*

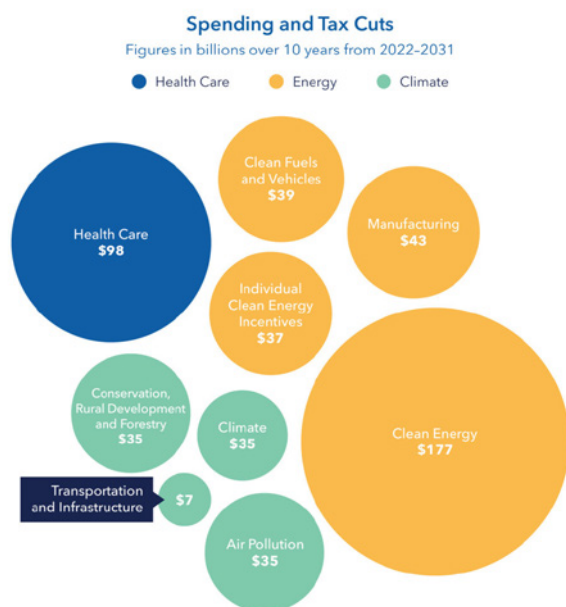


*Birte Smith, Joan Krash, and Abe Krash*



## Inflation Reduction Act Passes and with it the Largest Climate Bill in History

With the passage by Congress of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) bill, there will be lower prescription costs for medications such as insulin, lower health insurance costs, lower energy costs for families, a 15% tax on corporations, *and 369 billion for the most aggressive action ever to confront the climate crisis.* This includes tax credits for the purchase of new and used electric vehicles, heat pumps and solar panels for your home, wind power, and more. As well, there will now be tax incentives for companies to reduce methane emissions (20x more damaging than carbon dioxide) and billions of dollars for environmental justice, addressing the fact that typically underserved communities have borne the brunt of environmental pollution. President Biden states that with this bill, the U.S. can reduce its emissions by 40% by the end of the decade, aligning with the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement. This very large step forward will hopefully assist Secretary of State John Kerry in encouraging other countries to pass similar climate laws, especially India and China, who, like the U.S., are the biggest polluters.



## Heat Pumps and Electric Stoves in Your Homes

In order to reduce the use of natural gas, which is a fossil fuel contributing to global warming, now is the time to talk to your service professionals about installing a heat pump or electric stove. For those like me with an old gas-fired furnace and radiators, I recommend considering changing

your AC unit to a heat pump (up to \$8000 government credit) and using it as much as possible to both heat and cool your home. Then, when the weather becomes very cold, you can set your system so that the gas furnace will help out. This technique can reduce your use of natural gas by 90%. Changing a gas stove to electric is much more straight forward, but in the meantime, it is important to always use a vent when using your gas stove because it produces cancer-causing emissions.

## Are We Done? What Else Is There to Do?

Around the house, there are many things we can do to be more sustainable. They include:

1. **Compost:** Call the Town Hall if you are not yet signed up to receive FREE composting service. Already half the town is signed up
2. **Insulate your house:** Have a professional come to your home for an assessment. Insulating your home better will reduce your energy bills significantly, saving money in the long run
3. **Use less plastic** in any way possible, such as substituting reusable shopping bags and not buying plastic items
4. **Rake more and blow less:** Electric blowers should only be used to clean drain areas and hard surfaces, not the grass, where leaves should be mowed into the grass to create free mulch
5. **Buy an electric vehicle or mower**
6. **Ask restaurants to consider not using plastic utensils, plates, and packaging**
7. **Divest in fossil fuels:** This could be not using banks that fund fossil fuel companies, index funds, etc.
8. **And, most important, the four Rs:**  
REFUSE to buy or use wasteful or nonrecyclable items  
REDUCE the use of harmful, wasteful, or nonrecyclable items  
REUSE items and use fewer single-use items  
RECYCLE whenever possible

Please discuss ideas with your family.

Please let us know if you have any comments or ways that our town can become more sustainable by emailing us at: [tos.environmentcommittee@gmail.com](mailto:tos.environmentcommittee@gmail.com).



# From the Mayor's Desk

By Mayor Jeffrey Slavin



"School's open. Vote carefully."

As I mention every Fall, that catchy phrase was used by a school board candidate I knew decades ago. I think about it every year at this season of school openings for the new academic year. I want to wish good luck to all our students in these challenging times as you continue to cope with new ways to learn and with post-pandemic changes.

In addition, the general election is just around the corner. With all the turnover and retirements in the State, it is very important to educate ourselves on the candidates for Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General and Comptroller. There are still highly contested elections for the all-important Montgomery County Board of Education. These decisions impact all citizens, not just those with public school students in their households.

We continue to get complaints about residents parking their vehicles on their lawns and in the wrong direction on the street. Both of these are code violations and violators could be ticketed. The staff and I would greatly appreciate your cooperation.

As Halloween is just around the corner, the Town Staff and I will again assist a working group of parents to help make public and private plans. Please contact me if you are interested in helping.

Each month I continue to enjoy reading the *Agenda News* online, which always has lots of information you cannot get elsewhere about what's going on in the Town's vicinity. The publication is published by Friendship Heights resident **Bob Joiner** and is available at: [theagendanews.com](http://theagendanews.com).

## Back-to-School Classic Returns OCTOBER 16



**By Tom TerBush, Race Director, Cumberland Avenue**

Kids are back to school and the Back-to-School Classic is back to its traditional spot on the autumn calendar. Hundreds of runners, spectators and volunteers will be there to participate, support the school and have a lot of fun. This is the Somerset Elementary School PTA's largest fundraising event,

bringing the extended Somerset community together for one magical Sunday morning.

What you need to know:

- When: Race will be held the morning of Sunday, October 16
- How: Register to run and sign up to volunteer at [somersestrace.com](http://somersestrace.com)
- What: The 8K course runs throughout Somerset and loops through Kenwood. The 2K stays in Somerset. For the 2K, children, walkers and strollers are welcomed and encouraged.
- SSL hours will be available for students who volunteer

**Spread the word! Register to run or walk. Sign up to volunteer.  
Come and cheer! We'll see you there!**



# Manager's Corner

By Matt Trollinger, *Town Manager*

Happy Fall! Autumn is probably my favorite season – the weather is cooler, there are lots of great opportunities for outdoor activities, and lots of sports to enjoy as well (especially football). In Somerset, we are continuing to work on streetlight conversions (expect some new pilot lights later this year!), have a Request for Proposals out for Solar Panel installation at the Town Hall, and are also reviewing bids for the evaluation of the streets and sidewalks.

Below are some of the big topics that will be discussed in October. As always, please feel free to reach out to the Town Hall with questions, concerns, or comments.

## Election Regulations

The draft agenda of the upcoming Council Meeting may appear long. However, many of the items can be thought of as one item, although they procedurally are listed separately. The Board of Supervisors of Elections has worked very diligently since the last election to recommend revisions to the Town's Charter, bring it into compliance with State law, and to align things such as the time between nominations for Council and the nomination by petition, so that printing and delivering ballots can be done efficiently in future election years.

There is a very strict procedure for any Charter amendments, so residents will have ample time to review before and after introduction, and before any vote for adoption.

Similarly, the Council is entertaining a Charter amendment that would lower the voting age in Somerset to 16. As a reminder, the Town held an online forum (which can be viewed at <https://bit.ly/3DMydxL>). Although this request did not come from the Board of Supervisors of Elections directly, it will follow the same procedure for a Charter amendment. I encourage residents to watch the forum and weigh in on this important issue.

## Town Pool Renovations Update

The Town budgeted for massive renovations to the Somerset Pool this off-season. For several years, we have been told that repairs are needed to the deck surrounding the Town Pool, and this year we planned to do the work.

Upon further inspection, we realized that the piping underneath the deck, as well as a lot of the equipment,

may need repairs. This additional work would add significantly to the construction costs. As a frame of reference, the deck repairs would cost the Town almost \$280,000. All the piping work, equipment upgrades, and repairs could cost the Town upwards of \$800,000.

This increased price tag has serious budget implications. In addition, as a best practice, the Council felt that a change order of that amount was inappropriate, and that the Town should bid the extensive construction competitively.

This fall and spring we will do more robust inspections of the piping, sample the concrete around the pool and in the pool, gather data to get bids that are true apples-to-apples comparisons, and make the best decision for the Town, so that we might enjoy the Town pool for the next 50 years just as we have for the last 50 years.

Because the construction work did not occur this fall, we were able to keep the pool open through its contracted end — last weekend of September. I hope residents were able to take advantage of the nice weather and the long pool season — for this year, at least!

## Town Hall Rentals

Last month, the Town introduced some changes to the Town Hall rental rules. The rules are not meant to fundamentally change use of the Town Hall, but just to ensure a few things as we open it back up:

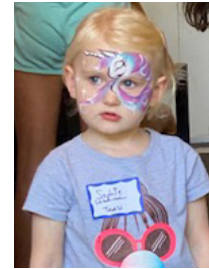
1. That the fees are covering the cleaning costs of maintaining the Town Hall. The Town is hiring a cleaning crew to thoroughly clean after each event at the Town Hall, to ensure that it is clean for the next renters and staff. The Town had previously broken up rental fees vs. cleaning fees. In this simpler version, there is one lump fee that covers everything. Altogether, the fees are proposed to go from \$200 to \$300
2. That the fees and usage rules are still fair and not overly burdensome for residents, and that rental is prioritized for residents, so that it is an amenity of living in town. There were some old provisions in the rules about the percentage of children over a certain age that were allowed at one time
3. To clarify that rentals are primarily for after business hours and weekends. While the Town Hall is a great

*Continued on page 16*



# Newcomers Party a Success

Somerset's annual party for newcomers was held Sunday, September 18, at the Town Pool. The weather was perfect, and the event provided something enjoyable for everyone – ice cream (courtesy of *Here's the Scoop*), face painting and balloon animals (courtesy of *Faces By Sonia*), and the opportunity to get acquainted. According to **Phyllis Wiesenfelder** (Chair, Newcomers Committee, Cumberland), members of 17-20 of the 25 new households in Somerset joined the festivities. Many thanks to Phyllis and the other members of the Committee: **Alan Kaplan** (Cumberland), **Ayasha Williams-Sharron** (Essex), **Kathryn Schwartz** (Essex), **Cindy Chambers** (Greystone), and **Maya Hyman** (Falstone).



## Council Meeting Recording and Actions

The following actions were taken by the Somerset Town Council at its monthly meeting, held September 6, 2022.

The recording of this Council meeting can be found at:  
<https://youtu.be/X9ccQNAeIJY>

### CONSENT AGENDA

- Introduced amended Town Hall Rental Rules, for consideration for adoption at the October Council meeting
- Approved the annual Somerset Back-to-School 5K Race, with the following street closings on October 16 from 7:00 am–11:00 am
  - Warwick Place; Uppingham Street; Greystone Street; Falstone Avenue; Surrey Street; Dorset Avenue

### NON-CONSENT AGENDA

- Approved two variance applications, submitted by **Geoff** and **Amy Buteau**, for the property located at 5522 Uppingham Street. The applicants were seeking variances from Section 112-14.C(1)(c) of the Town Code. The following variances were requested and approved:
  1. A front stoop lattice enclosure, to be located 22.5 feet from the front property line (a variance of 6.35 ft.)
  2. A front stoop roof, to be located 22.5 feet from the front property line (a variance of 3.85 ft.)

- Denied approval of four variance applications, submitted by James Alpi, representing Rockledge Capital, LLC, for the property located at 4806 Grantham Avenue. The applicant was seeking variances from Section 112-14.C(1)(c) of the Town Code. The following variances were requested, but denied:

1. An enclosed carport to be located 25.6 feet from the front property line (a variance of 7.7 ft.)
2. A carport eave located 23.6 feet from the front property line (a variance of 7.2 ft.)
3. A front porch located 27.3 feet from the front property line (a variance of 6 ft.)
4. A front porch eave located 26.3 feet from the front property line (a variance of 4.5 ft.)

- Approved the removal of 8 Town trees, at the recommendation of the Town Arborist (dbh = diameter at 4.5' above ground level):

1. Dogwood 5" dbh, 4904 Cumberland Avenue
2. Ash 33" dbh, 4507 Dorset Avenue in Capello Park
3. Red Maple 20" dbh, 4807 Essex Avenue in Capello Park
4. Serviceberry 2" dbh, 4809 Falstone Avenue
5. Pin Oak 33" dbh, 5604 Warwick Place
6. Red Maple 15" dbh, 5811 Warwick Place on Deal Place
7. Sycamore 2" dbh, Capello Park
8. Pin Oak 23" dbh, 4912 Essex Avenue



# For Your Reference

## TOWN OF SOMERSET COMMITTEES AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

COMMITTEE	CHAIR
Audit Committee	Chuck Edson (Surrey)
Budget Committee	Ann Kelly Bolten (Cumberland)
Communications Committee	Barbara Marenus (Surrey)
Environment Committee	Barton Rubenstein (Dorset)
Equity & Inclusion Committee	Atsuko Horiguchi (Essex)
History & Archives Committee	Paige Whitley (Cumberland)
Newcomers Committee	Phyllis Wiesenfelder (Cumberland)

COMMITTEE	CHAIR
Parks and Natural Resources Committee	Kristen Khanna (Uppingham)
Pool Committee	Matt Zaft (Dorset)
Public Safety Committee	Kumar Vaswani (Trent)
Revenue Committee	Nick Fox (Cumberland)
Stormwater Study Committee	Ellen Globokar (Dorset)
Swim Team Committee	Jeff Mascott (Surrey)
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, October 3, 2022
- Monday, November 7, 2022
- Monday, December 5, 2022

### WORK SESSIONS

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

- Monday, October 17, 2022
- Monday, November 14, 2022
- Monday, December 19, 2022

## 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>
- Recording of May 10, 2022 Stormwater Study Committee Town Forum: <https://bit.ly/39FMAr3>

### 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>)
- Recording of June 7, 2022 Bee Forum: <https://bit.ly/3be19SN>

### EQUITY AND INCLUSION COMMITTEE

- Resolution Condemning Anti-AAPI Hate: <https://bit.ly/38I0t7r>
- Recording of January 18, 2022 Slavery & Segregation History Forum Recording: <https://bit.ly/3MHSV3o>

## VIDEO RECORDINGS OF 2022 TOWN MEETINGS

All Town Council and Work Session meetings are available for viewing on the Town of Somerset YouTube channel:

<https://bit.ly/3Uq7Tz4>

# 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 October 3, 2022 at 7:00 p.m.

The Somerset Town Council will hold a "hybrid meeting," both in-person at the Town Hall and simultaneously cast via Zoom on Monday, October 3, 2022, at 7:00 p.m.

Agenda and updates are posted on the Town website: [www.townofsomerset.com](http://www.townofsomerset.com)

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://bit.ly/3Uo0wZ4> 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

## PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

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

## APPROVAL OF AGENDA

7:15 p.m. **Motion:** To approve of the following items without discussions:

- The annual Halloween block party, and closure of Cumberland Avenue between Warwick Place and Devon Lane on Monday, October 31 from 6:30 – 9:00 p.m.
- Proclamation declaring November Municipal Government Works Month

## NON-CONSENT AGENDA

7:15 p.m. **Public Hearing/Motion:** To consider approval of four (4) variance applications, re-submitted by James Alpi, authorized agent of Rockledge Capital, LLC, for the property located at 4806 Grantham Avenue. The applicant seeks variances from Section 112-14.C(1) (c) of the Town Code which provides, in part, "No main building, or any part or projection thereof, may be constructed nearer to any front lot line than the established building line or twenty-five (25) feet, whichever results in a greater setback," as modified by Section 112-14.C(1)(d)[1], which allows cornices and eaves to project 2.5 feet into a required setback. The required established building line front setback for the subject property is 33.3 feet

Accordingly, the following variances are requested:

1. The enclosed carport would be located 25.6 feet from the front property line. Thus, a variance of 7.7 is required ( $33.3 - 25.6 = 7.7$ )
2. The front porch would be located 27.3 feet from the front property line. Thus, a variance of 6 feet is required ( $33.3 - 27.3 = 6$ )
3. The carport roof eave would be located 23.6 feet from the front property line. Thus, a variance of 7.2 feet is required ( $(33.3 - 2.5) - 23.6 = 7.2$ )
4. The front porch eave would be located 26.3' from the front property line. Thus, a variance of 4.5 feet is required ( $(33.3 - 2.5) - 26.3 = 4.5$ )

8:15 p.m. **Discussion:** Building Administrator's Report

8:20 p.m. **Public Hearing/Motion:** To consider Adoption of Resolution No. 9-22-1, to amend the Town's Election Rules and Regulations, as recommended by the Somerset Board of Supervisors of Elections

8:30 p.m. **Public Hearing/Motion:** To consider Adoption of amended Town Hall Rental Rules

8:40 p.m. **Discussion/Motion:** To introduce a Charter amendment lowering the eligible voting age in the Town of Somerset to 16

8:50 p.m. **Discussion/Motion:** To consider introduction an amendment to Section 83-21 of the Charter to add a definition of "resided", as recommended by the Somerset Board of Supervisors of Elections

8:55 p.m. **Discussion/Motion:** To consider introduction of an amendment to Section 83-26 of the Charter to provide that if a resident if registered to vote with the Montgomery County Board of Election, they shall be deemed registered for elections in the Town so long as the resident remains qualified to vote; to provide that voters may be removed from the list if not qualified to vote; and to provide that the removal of voters from the registration list shall comply with the applicable procedures set forth in State law, as recommended by the Somerset Board of Supervisors of Elections

9:00 p.m. **Discussion/Motion:** To consider introduction of an amendment to Section 83-28 of the Charter to advance the nomination meeting from 4 weeks to 8 weeks prior to the election, and the nomination petition deadline from 21 days before the election to 10 days after the nomination meeting, to allow more time to prepare ballots and administer the election, as recommended by the Somerset Board of Supervisors of Elections

9:05 p.m. **Discussion/Motion:** To consider introduction of an amendment to Section 83-35 of the Charter to allow uncontested elections to be canceled, as recommended by the Somerset Board of Supervisors of Elections

9:10 p.m. **Discussion/Motion:** To consider introduction of an amendment to Section 83-30 of the Charter to allow

*Continued on page 16*

## Preliminary Agenda

elections by mail and other means, and to remove the requirement for incapacitation or absence for absentee voting, as recommended by the Somerset Board of Supervisors of Elections

9:15 p.m. **Discussion/Motion:** To consider introduction of Ordinance 9-22-1, an Ordinance to Amend the Code of Ordinances to include tiered preferences for onsite stormwater mitigation; to permit variance

hearings absent a County permit; to require a wall check at the completion of building construction; to clarify the criteria for permit decisions; and to waive the requirement for permeable driveways if site conditions are not favorable

9:20 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](mailto:manager@townofsomerset.com) or [town@townofsomerset.com](mailto: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](http://www.townofsomerset.com)) seven days prior to the meeting. A copy is also posted on the bulletin board on the Town Hall porch.

## Manager's Corner

space, the main purpose is as the Town's main place of government and business; and

4. To ensure that the rules aligned with Somerset and Montgomery County health and safety standards, including capacity, noise restrictions, and parking requirements.

The Town Council will vote on this at the next Council meeting. Input from residents is encouraged.

### Leaf Blowers

The Town's gas-powered leaf blower ban went into effect in September. The Town may begin issuing fines to households that are in violation of this new provision, so please make sure to check in with your landscaping company to

ensure that they are aware of this regulation and have the equipment to comply.

### Halloween

The Town is tentatively planning for another year of Halloween celebrations. That means closure of Cumberland Avenue between Devon Lane and Warwick Avenue on the evening of Halloween to allow for safe trick-or-treating on that street. We will plan to have police officers to assist with traffic flow and provide other safety assistance as necessary.

Stay tuned for other community engagement activities — at the very least, residents are encouraged to decorate their houses and get in the "spirit" of Halloween.

## Town Council Meetings Return to Town Hall

The Town Council began "hybrid" meetings starting in September for both Town Council Meetings and Town Council Work Sessions. These meetings allow residents to attend either in-person at the Town Hall, or via Zoom.

Photo courtesy of Linda Williams, Assistant Town Manager.

