



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

SomerseT TOWN JOURNAL



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May 2023

TOWN OF SOMERSET ELECTION NEWS

Plan for Town Election Tuesday, May 9, 2023

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

The Town of Somerset Election Day is **Tuesday, May 9, 2023**. Voters will have the option to vote in person at Somerset Town Hall on Election Day between the hours of 5:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. or by mail-in ballot. This year's election is for three Council seats currently held by **Debbie Heller** (Falstone), **Kabir Kumar** (Trent), and **Shannon Rovak** (Cumberland). In addition, the Town Council has directed the Board of Supervisors of Elections (the "Board") to include on the ballot a non-binding referendum item to provide guidance on the issue of whether to lower the voting age to 16. The pros and cons of lowering the voting age have been widely debated across the country and residents may want to look at the many articles that have been published on the issue.

Voter Registration Procedures

- Every person who (1) is at least 18 years of age, (2) has resided within the Town for at least 14 days immediately preceding the election, and (3) is registered with the Town or the Montgomery County Board of Elections, is a qualified voter of the Town.
- The term "resided" and "resident" refer to the location deemed one's permanent abode and single domicile

for voting purposes, and where one intends to return after a temporary residence elsewhere. Actual physical presence in the Town for 14 days before an election is not required.

- Registration is permanent so long as the voter is a qualified resident. Voters already registered need not register with the Town again.
- A Town resident may register to vote by requesting a voter registration card from the Town Manager and delivering a completed card to the Town Office during normal business hours by election day, **May 9, 2023**.
- Due to the uncertainty of obtaining current Montgomery County voter rolls, all residents of the Town who have moved into the Town, or come of voting age, since **June 1, 2022**, are encouraged to fill out a Town of Somerset voter registration card so the voter list can be updated for the 2023 election.

Vote by Mail and In-Person Procedures

This year the Town will be mailing ballots directly rather than using the services of an outside election provider. Some dates to note are as follows:

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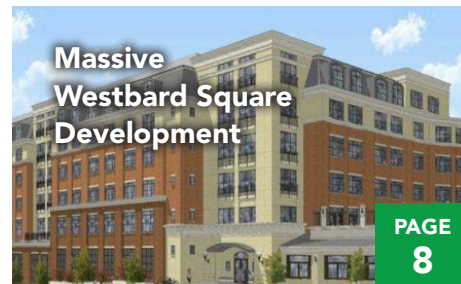
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MAY 2023

TOWN CALENDAR

MONDAY, MAY 1

Town Council Meeting
7:00 p.m., Town Hall (in person)
and via Zoom^{o*}

MONDAY, MAY 8

Pool Committee Meeting
(via Zoom)*

TUESDAY, MAY 9

Somerset Election

FRIDAY, MAY 12

Pool Opening

MONDAY, MAY 15

Town Council Work Session
5:30 p.m., Town Hall (in person)
and via Zoom^{o*}

MONDAY, MAY 29

Town Hall Closed in
observance of Memorial
Day holiday

^oThe Town Council has instituted "hybrid" meetings starting in September 2022, to allow residents to attend both in-person at the Town Hall, or to continue to participate via Zoom.

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

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Open: 9:00 a.m. — 4:30 p.m.
Monday thru Friday
301-657-3211 | Fax: 301-657-2773
TTY users call Maryland Relay

SOMERSET TOWN JOURNAL

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The Town Journal is the official publication of The Town of Somerset, Montgomery County, MD.

If you prefer to receive the Journal via email, please provide your request to manager@townofsomerset.com or call Town Hall at 301-657-3211.

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

POST OFFICE ADDRESS:

4510 Cumberland Ave.
Chevy Chase, MD 20815

www.townofsomerset.com

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)

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.

Town of Somerset Election News: Plan for Town Election Tuesday, May 9, 2023

- A ballot and return envelope has been mailed to each registered voter who appears on the voter registration list compiled by the Election Board.
 - In the event an issued ballot is lost or missing, a voter may request by e-mail to the Town at **Election@townofsomerset.com** that a new ballot and return envelope be issued. In order to allow sufficient time for a replacement ballot to be issued and voted, any such request shall be made no later than **5:00 p.m. on Friday, April 28, 2023**. Upon receipt of such request, any previously issued ballot and return envelope for that voter will be voided.
 - Qualified voters who registered after April 11th at 5:00 p.m. may pick up a ballot at Town Hall after **April 20, 2023**.
 - **Voters may vote by mail or in person.**
 - To vote by mail, voters shall mail completed ballots in the Town-issued return envelope. They must be post-marked no later than Tuesday, **May 2, 2023**, and/or received by the Town by **5:00 p.m. on May 9, 2023** in order to be counted.
 - There will also be in-person voting at Town Hall on **Tuesday, May 9, 2023 from 5:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.** Voters who wish to vote in person may bring their ballot in the Town-issued (and signed) envelope to the Town Hall and drop it in the ballot box during this time.
- If you have questions regarding the Town election, please contact the Board of Supervisors of Elections at **Election@townofsomerset.com**.



Mary Barton-Dock (Falstone) and **Carrie Wofford** (Essex) represented the mid-Atlantic region at the U.S. Tennis Association Nationals for 55 and older ladies doubles at the 3.5 NTRP level, held in Phoenix Arizona. The pair came in 10th out of 18 teams nationally — a solid performance!

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 202-368-9986 **Kathleen Kenyon** at 301-651-0758 or **Jim Berry** at 240-994-3939.

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

Somerset's Annual Budget Roundup

By Ann Bolten, Chair, Budget Committee, Cumberland Avenue; Jon Medalia, Member, Budget Committee, Surrey Street; and Meredith Wade, Member, Budget Committee, Essex Avenue

The Budget Committee presented a revenue forecast and reserves recommendation to the Town Council over the course of two working sessions in March. The FY24 (July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024) budget included in this issue is the Mayor's proposed budget introduced for public comment at the April 3 Town Council meeting. It also includes a *nonbinding fiscal outlook* for fiscal years 2025 to 2028.

The Budget Committee offers here our analysis of the budget as presented. Please remember that the Budget Committee's role is to provide analysis and make recommendations on the revenue forecast and reserves; it is up to the Town Council to make decisions on policy priorities and spending.

FY23 Revenues and Outlook: We project FY23 tax revenue to be \$576K higher than forecast, mostly due to late receipt of prior year returns, leading to a 25.4% higher revenue overall than budgeted. Somerset derives 50% to 60% of its revenue every year from our share of income tax receipts from tax rates set by the state. Income tax revenue is highly variable because 40% to 50% of Somerset's tax revenue comes from 6% to 10% of households. Incomes at the high end can vary greatly year to year based on the mix of non-salaried compensation and capital gains. These households also tend to file late, and the state tends to process them late, so an increasing share of income from prior tax years is being distributed in our current year receipts. COVID added more variability, with the "new normal" not yet clear based on the detailed tax revenue model we use. Property tax revenues contribute another 20% to 38% of overall revenue; the rate is set by the Town, and these revenues are stable and known. The balance of revenues comes from service fees paid by residents. In FY22 and FY23, Somerset also received \$1.2 million in economic recovery funds from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) to offset revenue shortfalls the Town experienced due to the pandemic.

Given the variability and uncertainty of Somerset's income tax revenue, the Budget Committee recommended that FY24 income tax revenue increase by the average rate of inflation (5.1%) over our FY23 budgeted (not actual) receipts, with the inflation rate declining over the five years. Property taxes would increase by 2.6% based on

detailed assessed rates provided by the state while fees revenue would increase by 3.4%.

FY23 Expenditures: FY23 operating expenditures are projected to be 1% lower than budgeted but capital expenditures will come in 56% lower due to the change in implementation schedule of two projects in particular: the concrete resurfacing of the pool deck area and the installation of improved street lighting. These projects are included in the FY24 proposed budget. The Town also recovered \$87,100 budgeted for snow removal that was not needed this past winter.

FY24 Proposed Expenditures: Operating expenses account for the bulk of the Town's cash outflows but with the unexpected improvement in income tax revenue, the stability and predictability of property taxes, the ongoing mandate to apply ARPA funds to specific uses, and the underspend in budgeted capital projects, Somerset's FY24 budget includes a \$1.6 million capital expenditure plan, with sizeable investments in the pool (\$899,000) and streets, sidewalks, and curbs (\$358,000). The FY24 investment in the pool will catch up on long-deferred maintenance to ensure the life of this asset for many years to come. Delaying regular maintenance can lead to excessive deterioration, resulting in higher replacement costs, impacting residents' quality of life, and possibly reducing property values. Operating expenditures will also increase by 10% over the FY23 projections, driven primarily by additional personnel (hired and contracted), some of which was budgeted for FY23 but not spent. While improvements in streets, sidewalks, and curbs are part of the Town's stormwater mitigation planning, the Town has also budgeted \$150,000 per year in the Special Capital Fund for FY24 and in the Five-Year Plan to potentially address stormwater mitigation projects (such as for high priority multi-property projects) that have been previously identified by the Stormwater Committee but do not yet have a master plan or defined budget.

Budgeting for Emergencies and Planned Capital

Expenditures: The budget contains several types of reserves. The Rainy Day Fund (RDF) is intended to cover up to 12 months of operational spending to be drawn on if the Town suffers an extreme revenue shortfall as happened after the 2008 financial crisis or to make a major unplanned capital outlay. Under the proposed Five-Year Plan, we would achieve this RDF goal by FY28. Each fiscal year also contains "Unencumbered Reserves" equivalent to

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Somerset's Annual Budget Roundup

2-3 months of operating expenses. An additional \$60,000 is budgeted as contingency funds, split evenly between operating and capital expenses.

Five-year Outlook from FY24 to FY28

The Five-Year Plan has a balanced budget with a healthy buildup of reserves. The main levers that the Council can use to adjust the proposed budget each year are to pare down or reschedule capital expenditures; reduce operational expenditures; raise the property tax; raise fees; and revise reserve targets, e.g., slow the buildup of the Rainy Day Fund (RDF). Maintaining a healthy level of reserves is critical when revenues are less predictable as is the case with Somerset's income tax revenue.

The current Five-Year Plan contemplates a non-binding two cents per \$100 property tax increase in FY25.

The property tax rate remains the Town's single biggest lever for increasing revenues and providing more stability and predictability to the Town's revenue base. Non-tax discretionary revenue (e.g., fees, permits, and donations) only represents about 2 percent of total revenue. However,

if the FY23 income tax revenue windfall reflects a new normal instead of a one-off, a property tax increase may be unnecessary as contemplated.

The Five-Year Plan projects continuing investments in streets and stormwater mitigation. The Town has taken a more deliberative approach to capital expense planning for streets, sidewalks, and curbs, developing master plans for maintaining this critical infrastructure. The \$750K allocated to the Special Capital Fund will allow for stormwater and other projects to be fully developed with real budget numbers before commitments are made to specific projects.

The Town Council will vote on adopting the introduced budget at its May 1 meeting. Town residents are encouraged to review the budget and submit comments to the Council in advance or during the public comment period at the meeting.

Editor's Note: For more detailed information about the budget, please go to <https://bit.ly/40yN869>.

A Position to Not Lower the Voting Age

By Council Member Debbie Heller, Falstone Avenue

In our next election, a nonbinding referendum to advise our Town Council on the issue of lowering the voting age to 16 for Town residents will be on the ballot. I would like to suggest that we **don't** vote in favor of the referendum. There have been arguments about lowering the voting age, with the "pro" side claiming that engaging teens earlier to vote will make it more likely that they will become lifelong voters. Since we do not have evidence to support this claim now, I do not think that is a valid argument. Instead, I would like to suggest that we work

with teens to develop a program of teen engagement for the Town. I have pledged to work on this. I truly believe that if we engage teens in both Town and world issues, they will become more committed voters when they come of age. I invite anyone in the town both young and old that would like to work with me on this to please join me in this endeavor. I will begin work on this next September. Thank you for considering my view.

Editor's note: For more discussion of this issue, please see previous issues of the Journal (May 2022: <https://bit.ly/3Am7vZT>. October 2022: <https://bit.ly/3n0eEff>).



SOMERSET ELECTIONS ARE MAY 9, 2023

Candidates' Statements



Debbie Heller

Falstone Avenue

CANDIDATE FOR TOWN COUNCIL MEMBER

I am seeking a second term as Town Council member. During my first term, I enjoyed working with the other Council

Members and learning all about how to govern the Town. I think that as a team, we tackled a lot of important issues and did our best to move the Town forward. During this term, I have been the liaison to the Communications and Pool committees and also worked a bit with the Traffic Committee. I have been the liaison to the Citizens Coordinating Committee of Friendship Heights (CCCFH), where a diverse group from the surrounding neighborhood represents and tackles difficult situations that affect all of us.

In a second term, I am going to seek to create a program for teens that promotes teen leadership and civic engagement. I also look forward to continuing my committee work both in Somerset and in representing the Town on the CCCFH. As always, I will always represent all of Somerset's residents and try to do my very best to make Somerset the best place to live.

About me: I am a graduate of Lehman College (CUNY) where I got my BA in Public and Group Communication. I hold graduate degrees from both Michigan State University (Higher Education Administration) and Johns Hopkins University (School Counseling). In my professional career, I was the Assistant Middle School Director and Chair of the Middle School Guidance Department at the Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School (JDS). One of my passions while working at JDS was to create an environment that was safe for all members of the community. I took on bullying and mean behavior and always insisted on civility, which is part of my personal credo. I have also been the Director of Student Activities at both Georgetown University and the University of Detroit, as well as a dormitory director at Michigan State University. I volunteer with Project Knitwell, a group that teaches knitting to children and adults who are in stressful situations. The project I lead is at the Regional Institute for Children and Adolescents (RICA), a school for emotionally disturbed children and youth.

I have served on several boards of directors, most recently on the board of the Lavinia Engle Scholarship Fund, which gives grants to women who are attending Maryland colleges and are in financial need. I have served on the boards of Keshet (an organization that works for the full inclusion of the LGBTQ Community in Jewish life), the Kol Shalom Synagogue, and the Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School. Being on these boards has been transformative for me.

Along with my husband Jamie, I have lived in Somerset for the past 38 years. I am always thankful that I live in Somerset and that I got to raise our three children, Adam, Daniel, and Jacob here. I always strive to help make this town the best it can be for all of us! Thank you for the opportunity to serve Somerset.



Kabir Kumar

Trent Street

CANDIDATE FOR TOWN COUNCIL MEMBER

I am running for a second term as Council Member (CM) for the Town of Somerset.

Several residents encouraged me to run again – I am grateful for your support and engagement in the Town's government. Serving Somerset as a volunteer CM has been an extremely rewarding experience, no matter the challenges and some ugliness.

I share here three areas that I believe are on a positive trajectory and which I will continue to emphasize as CM for the next two years, if re-elected:

- 1. Improving our financial management.** We have suffered from chronic financial short-termism. As a result, we have for years postponed critical infrastructure upgrades. We are getting better at long-term planning and have an opportunity to make meaningful changes in the next few years. A few big things (i.e., fiscal prioritization, capital planning, alternate revenue, etc.) and small things (i.e., making activities cost recoverable, reducing waste, etc.) will need to be realized to support these changes. Both the existing Budget Committee and newly minted Revenue Committee will be an important part of this effort.

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Candidates' Statements

2. Strengthening our sense of community. We will undoubtedly face many unprecedented challenges as a community in the coming years — from environmental concerns to inevitable County and State development forces. We will weather those kinds of storms if we invest in building our sense of community and shoring up mutual trust. I found us ill-equipped as a community to navigate the Thrive Montgomery process, for instance, even in the face of what was clearly an inept County Planning Board. The pool and summer pool season are an important aspect of building community. We come together at the pool. The sense of unity we all feel stays with us throughout the year. We must keep making more of what is a good thing.

3. Data-driven Council decisions. I was a strong advocate for several code changes that are likely to be seen as historic (e.g., changes in stormwater, tree and building codes). I don't see these changes as one-and-done, however. We need to assess whether they yield the desired results or create unexpected outcomes, as policy changes often do. We must look at data on impact, and reverse course if necessary. Relatedly, we must keep improving our building permit process in the interest of residents. Some of this is how we show up as leaders at a permit hearing, but most of it is how we implement a process that encourages compliance and minimizes conflict.

Somerset is a big part of my family's life, as it is for many of you — from octogenarians to teenagers, from young families to those retiring in place, from homeowners to renters, from passionate tennis players to water aerobics enthusiasts, from labrador parents to labradoodle parents, from US citizens to non-citizens, new arrivals to 50-year residents. I am grateful for the opportunity I have had over the last two years to make our government work better for all of us. I hope you will give me the opportunity to contribute towards that overarching goal for another two years.



Shannon Rovak

Cumberland Avenue

CANDIDATE FOR TOWN COUNCIL MEMBER

I am a current Town Council Member seeking re-election for a second term. I have learned a lot over the past two years

about our wonderful Town and I'm looking forward to continuing the work that we are doing to keep Somerset the amazing Town that it is. I am the Council liaison to the Public Safety Committee, the Tennis committee, and the Swim Team Committee. I also represent the Town on the Friendship Heights Transportation Management District Advisory Committee.

Stormwater management has been a particular interest of mine on the Town Council. I believe that the decisions we make today will help to better prepare our neighborhood for the future. This past summer there were 5 "1000-year" storms within five weeks that caused major flooding in municipalities across the U.S. Our infrastructure is not set up to handle that volume of water. When building new homes, there are ways to offset increased water runoff and I'm excited that we are partnering with a company that will help us identify approaches to mitigating excess water runoff.

I moved to Somerset ("Little" Cumberland) with my husband, Kenny, and daughter Claire (8) 4 years ago. Claire is a proud member of the Somerset Dolphin swim team and is looking forward to the new season starting in June. We love the pool and it is one of the main reasons we started looking for a house in Somerset. The neighbors/friends we have met have been equally as wonderful. During the day I work in advertising as Director of Revenue Management for Audacy, one of the largest radio broadcasters in the U.S. I grew up in Minneapolis and graduated from the University of Wisconsin. I've enjoyed being a part of this wonderful Town and look forward to meeting more neighbors.

Massive Westbard Square Development

By Bill Marmon

The following article appeared originally in Somerset House II Newsletter, Spring 2023.

Ten years of planning, meetings, law suits, and appeals. Gnashing of teeth about traffic and environmental impact.

Then in June of last year the bull dozers, cranes and wrecking balls moved in. Streets were dug up. Structures demolished. Mountains of dirt moved.

What, in heavens name, is going on around the old Westbard Giant, once an icon of supermarket excellence?



It is Westbard Square, by far the largest development in the immediate vicinity of Somerset House—22 acres of commercial property running along River Road in the North, Westbard

Ave. to the East and Massachusetts Ave, to the South. The Montgomery County planners call it the “Westbard Sector” (see diagram).

The plan was approved in 2016. The developer is Regency Centers, a large national outfit, headquartered in Jacksonville, Florida.

Phase one of Westbard Square involves construction of a huge three-story multi-use building where the existing Westbard Giant will be relocated on the 70,000 square-foot third floor over two floors of retail, restaurant, and office space. Residential town houses and apartments will be behind the new Giant. A park is promised on the north side. Completion is scheduled for this summer, at which time the existing Giant, which has remained open, will be torn down. The stores that remain open in the old shopping center will remain open until 2027 when they too will be demolished. (Replacement plans not yet announced.)



Already mowed down and plowed under is the entire complex across Westbard Ave. at the north entrance

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Current aerial view

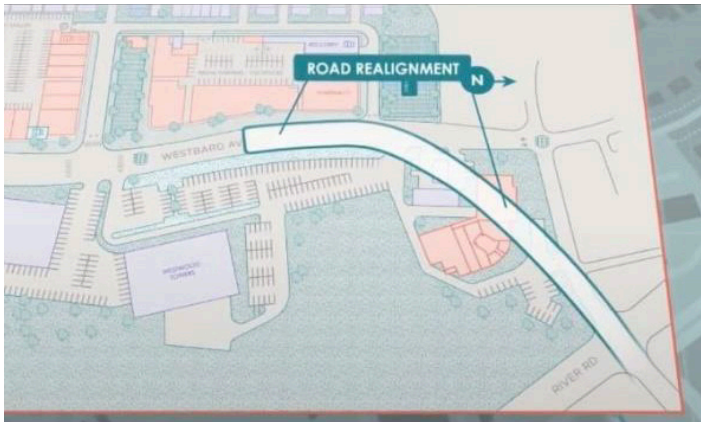


Proposed view



Massive Westbard Square Development

of the shopping mall, known previously as Westwood II and former home of Westwood Cleaners, and other commercial establishments. Gone is the part of Ridgefield Road that connected Westbard Ave. to River Road. The Montgomery County sector plan requires this demolition to reroute Westbard Ave. in a sweeping arc to intersect with River Road (see diagram).



The upshot: road closures and detours that will extend into this fall. A small muddy footpath now affords pedestrians a way between River Road and Westbard where Ridgefield Road used to be. The closures mean that the access to the existing Westbard Giant and the stores that remain open, including the swim and toy store Anglo Dutch and Montgomery Liquor, are accessible only via Massachusetts Ave.

Another part of phase one is a six-story assisted living facility located along Westbard Ave., developed by Kensington Senior Development LLC. Construction has started on a 155-unit apartment complex that will include underground parking spaces. (See diagram of rendering supplied by developer.)



Completion is slated for 2024.

While construction on the new Giant complex continues, a virtual army of leasing agents from Regency assisted by local H&R Retail Inc. office is scurrying to find retail tenants for the 29,000 square foot on the first floor and 23,000 sf second floor. (Regency says announcements are expected soon.)

To attract leasers Regency parades impressive demographics, gleaned from census data for the area within a three-mile radius, including Somerset House.

- Population: 143,155
- Average Household Income: \$255,580
- Average Home Value: \$1,417,819
- Bachelor's Degree or Higher: 87.7%
- Vehicles per day: 34,307

Cost of development: a whopping \$50 million. Regency Centers acquired the property in 2017, when it purchased Equity One, the previous owner, for \$5 billion. Regency Centers is publicly traded on NASDAQ under stock symbol REG with a market capitalization of \$10.81 billion.

Regency has set up an attractive Westbard Square website **www.westbardsquare.com**, with video updates and a live construction cam. On the fence along Westbard Ave. in front of the new building is a large posted QR code (see diagram), that can be photographed from a car window, routing a cell phone to the Westbard Square website and to an invitation to a "Life is Good at Westbard" party on Saturday, June 11 for "music, food and fun."



Breast Cancer Dragon Boat Team Goes to New Zealand: A Lesson in Resilience

By Leslie Caplan, *Essex Avenue*

We cancer survivors excel at dealing with challenges. Recently, my breast cancer dragon boat team, GoPink!DC (www.gopinkdc.com), the DC area's only breast cancer dragon boat team, had that skill tested.

Dragon boat racing, a sport of Chinese origin, involves a long canoe, which typically seats 20 paddlers, seated two to a seat. The boat has a dragon head at the front, a dragon tail at the back, and a drum (with human drummer) at the front. Since 1996, the number of breast cancer dragon boat teams across the world has exploded to over 300, as breast cancer survivors (BCS) have discovered the sport's social, psychological, and physical benefits.

This April, GoPink!DC gathered with other BCS teams from around the world to race, and to celebrate life and sisterhood. The event took place at Lake Karapiro, a beautiful mountain-ringed venue in New Zealand.



GoPink!DC coach provides feedback during practice session on Lake Karapiro. Photograph courtesy of Robin Barr (Essex).

Two natural events provided unexpected challenges. The first was COVID. Of the 16 members of GoPink!DC who traveled to New Zealand, eight came down with COVID. The second challenge was wind.



Some marchers at the Pink Parade of Nations. Photograph courtesy of Robin Barr.

Before races began, we participated in the Pink Parade of Nations. Eighty-one teams from all over the world participated in this festive, colorful event on the streets of Cambridge, New Zealand. Local residents came out to cheer us on. Children waved flags. Supporters, family, and friends swelled our team's numbers in the parade.

On the first day of races, due to COVID, we lacked the required minimum of 16 paddlers. Fortunately, some lovely paddlers from the team Dragons Abreast, from Canberra, Australia, helped to fill our boat. We raced well together. Although we didn't win, we stayed competitive. And we had a blast.

Then came the wind. The winds were so high that it wasn't safe to race on the second day, even though the Dragon Divas from Duluth, Minnesota offered to help fill our boat. After races had been cancelled, the wind kicked up even more, and two of the team tents became kites, lifting in the air and landing upside-down. Paddlers rushed to gather their belongings as they prepared for the possibility that more tents would come down.

The end of the event was to be marked by the flower ceremony, which takes place when breast cancer teams compete. These ceremonies gather boats of paddlers on the water, from all breast cancer survivor teams. There, those paddlers and those watching from the shore honor those who have died of breast cancer as well as those still in treatment. Since every team has lost members to the disease, these are very moving events. The wind made it unsafe to have boats on the water. As a result, seven boats were pulled out of the water, and selected participants from all teams stood next to them. Thousands of survivors and supporters gathered around them as each person held a flower high, then tossed the flowers into the water in honor of people they knew who had fought breast cancer.

In the end, we traveled far, we raced hard, we mourned those we had lost, and we celebrated life. No wind or virus was going to keep us down.



Three survivors comfort each other after flower toss at flower ceremony. Photograph courtesy of Robin Barr.



Public Safety Roundup

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

This is a crime update for the first quarter of 2023. Somerset continues to enjoy an extremely low crime rate.

From January 1 through March 31, Somerset experienced four reported crimes, according to the County Police Department's interactive crime map. In January, a resident on Dorset Avenue experienced a house break-in, along with a vehicle theft. Also in January, a theft from a vehicle occurred on Surrey Street. In February, a resident on Cumberland Avenue was the victim of identity theft.

We have all done a better job recently with crime prevention, but this is no time to become complacent. The County police have advised us that the best way to prevent most crimes in our area is to take the following precautions:

- **Please keep vehicle doors, garage doors, and house doors locked, even when you are at home. Even if you leave your house for a few minutes, lock your door.**
- **Avoid keeping keys, fobs, cash, electronic devices, or purses near exterior doors or where they can be viewed through windows.**
- **Avoid leaving anything (even an object of no value) in your vehicle where it can be viewed by a passerby.**
- **In these busy times, it's easy to forget to lock your vehicle. Consider setting a reminder before bedtime each night: did you lock your car?**

The police have told us that theft from vehicles and vehicle theft are crimes of opportunity. **There are no guarantees,**

but when criminals encounter locked houses or vehicles, they generally move on. This strategy seems to be working in Somerset. In fact, as this issue of the *Journal* goes to press, we have had no reported crimes in Somerset in the second quarter. Let's keep up the good work!

Vacation Safety

With summer around the corner, please take some basic precautions when going out of town, as recommended by the County police. See the following link for tips: <https://bit.ly/41y1gxP>.

Driving around Town

Finally, I hear occasional complaints about drivers' failures to stop at stop signs. Sadly, many of the offenders are our own neighbors or their guests. On the upside (because all of our residents assiduously read the *Journal*!), it's easy to get the following message out: **Please stop at all stop signs. I promise that even if you run every stop sign on your way through Town, you won't shave more than 30 seconds off your entire trip.** It's just not worth it.

Coming to a complete stop reduces the chance of a collision and enhances our neighbors' safety as they walk, ride, or roll about Town. Even if you see no vehicles or people about, stopping at stop signs is a legal duty—and it reduces the stress levels of residents who are in their yards or who happen to glance out the window.

You can view the County's crime map at <https://bit.ly/3BRF1rl>. I hope all residents have a safe and enjoyable summer.

2023 TENNIS FEES

Please pay your 2023 Tennis Fees to Town Hall: **\$25 per family**

TWO WAYS TO PAY:

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



The Joys and Benefits of Vegetable Gardening

Have you experienced the pleasure of eating a tomato off the vine – the incomparable smell, taste, and texture? If not, it is time to try growing your own produce. All you need is a small, sunny spot and a willingness to learn. Vegetable gardening is not rocket science, and basic kitchen crops -- tomatoes, lettuce, peppers — are quite forgiving.

Here are some top reasons to grow vegetables.

It tastes so good. A fresh tomato from the vine tastes better than the one from the store, hands-down. The vegetable is picked fresh when you're ready, with no transportation time or lingering on the shelves for days. As longtime vegetable gardener **Donna Harmon** (Dorset) advises, plant what you like to eat!

It is economical. Growing your own food can save you anywhere from \$300 to \$1000 a year. Buying organic at the store can be expensive. By spending a few dollars on seeds you'll produce vegetables that will yield pounds of produce.

It is good for the planet. Having your own vegetable garden helps the environment in many ways. Growing

your own food, particularly without pesticides and chemicals, prevents unnecessary water and air pollution and reduces the use of fossil fuels that results in pollution due to the transport of produce. Gardening also minimizes waste, as it is harder to waste food you grew.



Lauren Rubenstein and husband Steve Shapiro's recent harvest.

It is good for the economy. Buying seeds from local garden centers supports our local economy. And local sources will most likely carry a variety of plants suited to our area.

The health benefits are many. Gardening breaks a sweat. Whether you're digging, lifting, planting, or weeding, you

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TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL HOME GARDENING

SUGGESTED READING:

- *American Grown: The Story of the White House Kitchen Garden and Gardens Across America*, by Michele Obama
- *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*, by Barbara Kingsolver
- *The Well-Gardened Mind: The Restorative Power of Nature*, by Sue Stuart-Smith

GETTING STARTED:

- Start small and plant things you'd really like to eat.
- Pick a spot with at least 6 hours of good daytime light and access to water.
- Use contaminant-free soil.
- Consider using a raised garden bed, which allows you to control the soil and nutrient blend.

- Research what grows well in your region and when. Donna Harmon has noted how climate change has affected her crops over the years.

DEALING WITH COMMON OBSTACLES:

- Shade can foil your attempts to garden. I have asked both the Town and neighbors to prune trees.
- Deer: Fencing is expensive but it only needs to be done once.
- Lack of space: **James Astill**, formerly of Grantham Ave, built an amazing garden in his driveway. Since the beginning of the COVID pandemic, I have noticed more front-yard vegetable gardens in our neighborhood.

A Few Words about Norman Knopf—Our Dear Friend and Pre-Eminent Civic Leader

By Julie Davis and Jenny Sue Dunner [from Norman Knopf's memorial service]

From the Washington Post



We are very honored to have been asked by Barbara and the children to share a few memories about Norman, our dear friend whom we also knew as a pre-eminent civic leader. We regret that we could not be here to share them in person.

Many of you have known Norman only in more recent years as one of the leaders of the Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights (or CCCFH), and as land use counsel for the Village of Friendship Heights. However, we became acquainted with Norman over fifty years ago when, as a civic activist in his early thirties, he was organizing a new citizens coalition to monitor proposed development in the Friendship Heights area.

It was the early 1970s, and mass transit was coming to Montgomery County. In anticipation of a new METRO station in Friendship Heights, major real estate developers and property owners in the area announced plans for nearly 10 million square feet of new commercial and residential development on both sides of the Maryland and D.C. line.

If approved, the new development would have equaled the then square footage of two Rosslyn or four Crystal Cities. It would also have generated over 13,000 new vehicle trips during the evening rush hour on just the Montgomery County side of Friendship Heights.

It would be a gross understatement to say that the communities in and around Friendship Heights were shocked by these plans. However, they were uncertain as to how to respond to these unprecedented development proposals.

But not Norman. That's when his career as a civic leader began in earnest. He was already president of his Brookdale Citizens Association, but he realized that this situation needed a much broader response.

Working with a small group of civic leaders from other nearby communities (including the two of us), Norman formed CCCFH. More than 20 communities in the Friendship Height area, including Norman's Brookdale

community and the Village of Friendship Heights, ultimately joined the organization.

But this was just the beginning. Norman also understood that the real estate industry exercised significant influence over Montgomery County elections through campaign contributions and other means of support.

Although the CCCFH neighborhoods could never even that playing field, these neighborhoods had thousands of residents that could be organized and energized to vote for County Council candidates who would support controlled growth in Friendship Heights. Norman decided that CCCFH could and should become a political force to be reckoned with in County politics.

Keep in mind that political marches and rallies, whether for civil rights or against the Vietnam war, were hallmarks of the 1970s. Norman borrowed liberally from that playbook.

With a small group of other CCCFH volunteers, he organized hundreds of residents from the CCCFH communities to participate in marches throughout the Friendship Heights business district. His group also organized rallies at Planning Board and County Council hearings and meetings, making sure these events were covered by local news outlets.

Most Planning Board and Council hearings and meetings were in the evening, and many elderly residents in the Friendship Heights area were reluctant to drive at night. Norman and his CCCFH volunteers thus arranged for carpools and buses to bring residents to those meetings and hearings.

At several Planning Board and County Council hearings in the huge B-CC High School auditorium, so many buses brought in so many CCCFH residents that the auditorium was filled, and there was standing room only in the school hallways and parking lot.

Knowing that one picture is worth a thousand words, Norman also worked with an area public relations firm to make a video showing the potential impacts of overdevelopment in Friendship Heights on the residents in and around the area. He then made sure that the video was shown and reshown at as many Council and Planning Board hearings and meetings as possible.

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The Joys and Benefits of Vegetable Gardening

are using different muscle groups – all while soaking up Vitamin D from the sun.

Food from restaurants or store-bought meals tend to be high in sodium, sugar, and additives. In addition, vegetables that ripen in the garden have more nutrients than some store-bought vegetables that must be picked early. And there is even evidence that gardening improves your mental health – gardening can be a mindfulness practice.

It is good for the kids. Exposing your children to gardening can help them connect with nature and change their relationship with food. Learning where their food came from, how to grow and care for it, and how to harvest it will teach them how to be more responsible when it comes to food.

In addition, it has been shown that children who eat homegrown produce are twice as likely to eat five servings

of fresh fruits and vegetable a day, compared to children who rarely or never ate homegrown veggies.

You get to share it. Owning a garden means that most likely, you'll have more than enough for yourself, leaving plenty to share with friends and neighbors. Donna Harmon carried on her grandfather's vegetable garden from 1928 until recently. They supplied a huge number of people in the neighborhood with produce.

Gardening is fun. For long-time gardeners, tending a garden provides enjoyment. There is nothing quite like the satisfaction of watching your garden grow from seedling to production. Gardening also tends to be social, as gardeners love to share seeds, seedlings, and success stories.

Longtime Somerset gardener Donna Harmon loved all of it—from the planning to planting to harvesting and canning. She especially enjoyed digging up potatoes.

A Few Words about Norman Knopf

But political pressure alone was not enough to limit development in Friendship Heights. There were also significant legal battles to be fought. Norman, then practicing anti-trust law, developed an expertise in Maryland land use law that even the most experienced members of the County land use bar came to respect, if not fear.

With Norman leading the legal charge, court case followed court case. Several went all the way to the U.S. and Maryland Supreme Courts, and CCCFH was on the winning side in each. Norman also took an active role in raising funds to pay for the lawyers representing CCCFH.

By the late 1970s, development plans for the Montgomery County side of the D.C. line had been successfully limited by the provisions of the 1974 Sector Plan for Friendship Heights, which had finally been upheld by the courts after nearly a decade of litigation.

Through the years that followed, Norman remained actively involved in CCCFH, leading its involvement in the 1998 Friendship Heights Sector Plan. He also opened a law firm in Rockville, and successfully represented numerous other communities throughout the County in land use cases. And, after moving to the Village of Friendship Heights from the Brookdale community, he took on the role of Land Use Counsel for the Village.

Through his career as a civic leader for over half a century, Norman became a legend in his own time. Although we deeply mourn his loss, his memory will forever be enshrined in the Friendship Heights communities for which he worked so diligently for so many years to protect and preserve.

We again thank Norman's family for allowing us to share some of our memories of Norman's early life as a civic leader.



Report from the Mayor

By Mayor Jeffrey Slavin

What's Up This Month...

- The May 9 Town election is just around the corner, so don't be surprised if you see me (with perhaps a Council member or two) knocking on your door, urging you to re-elect the incumbents and to vote in favor of the idea that Somerset lower the voting age to 16. While I believe the arguments supporting the change in voting age far outweigh those against, the most important thing is that voters study the issue and participate. Our democracy is precious.
- I'm still waiting to hear from citizens with their ideas on how to improve the Town entrances.
- With the Spring weather I have noticed greater usage of our three Little Libraries and want to send my annual reminder not to overstuff books in the structures — and please don't leave torn, soiled, or damaged publications.
- I have begun classes (virtually) for the new Maryland Equity and Inclusion Leadership Program sponsored by the University of Baltimore. Unlike other leadership courses, this one is highly structured, taught by college professors, and is on the business school model. The class roster is impressive.
- I hope everyone is studying the proposed FY 24 Somerset proposed budget and preparing testimony. Please see the article by the members of the Budget Committee, on page 4.

And What Happened Last Month:

- I attended a lovely reception at the home of Environment Committee Chair **Barton Rubenstein** (Dorset), at which he read excerpts of his new book *Powered by Grief: My Adventures as a Scientist, Artist, and Activist*, which I highly recommend. One of my major takeaways from his work is gaining a greater understanding of how and why Barton developed his personal mission to improve the Earth's health.
- Thanks to the Council's smart decision-making, we are about to witness the installation of the first set of new streetlights — hopefully before the end of summer.
- I was honored to be invited to a Passover Open House at the Governor's Mansion in Annapolis hosted by **First Lady Dawn Flythe Moore** and **Lt. Governor Aruna Miller**. Next year I am going to request that a full Seder is held! There have been many events sponsored by the new Administration, showing how **Governor Wes Moore** is reaching out to citizens who have been left out in the past. I urge all Somerset residents to visit our State Capital in the near future.

GENERAL PERMITS

TREE REMOVAL PERMITS

5019 River Road

- Hemlock (10") – Tree is dead
- Norway Spruce (12") – Tree is 75% dead and will not revive

5522 Uppingham Street

- Red Maple (27") – Decay in the tree. Tree is hazardous.

4520 Cumberland Avenue

- Public tree — as recommended by Town Arborist

4824 Dorset Avenue

- Silver Maple (52") – Tree is hazardous
- Ash (20") – Tree is hazardous

BUILDING PERMITS

5522 Greystone Street

- 3-month extension for ongoing construction

4816 Essex Avenue

- Demo permit
- Dumpster permit

4719 Cumberland Avenue

- Approval of a building permit for the replacement of a rear deck on the property



Manager's Corner

By Matt Trollinger, *Town Manager*

Happy May! This past month, we had a few of those 80+ degree days that make you long for the pool, the budget was introduced, and, for me personally, my allergies have kicked in – a sure sign that spring is officially here.

There are three big items that I will cover here. I suggest everyone take a look at the proposed budget. It is a labor of love, and the Town is very lucky to have volunteers who put in a lot of their free time to help the Town stay on good financial ground. The Budget Committee is led by Chair **Ann Bolten** (Cumberland), and includes **Jon Medalia** (Surrey), the Town's resident property tax expert, and **Meredith Wade** (Essex), who joined the committee this year. The committee's Council liaison, **Kabir Kumar** (Trent), has also put in a lot of extra time on his own to help put together a document and lead a productive discussion among the Council that assesses the overall health of the Town's finances, and examines the projects and costs that drive it. I would also like to give a special thanks to **Mayor Slavin**, who introduces the five-year fiscal plan per the Town Charter, **Phil Young** (Greystone), who previously chaired the Budget Committee and has been an informal sounding board for everyone involved, and the rest of the Town Council, who ultimately pass the budget. (for more information on the budget, see the article by the Budget Committee on page 4, and the summary of the budget itself, provided in the print version of the Journal, as well as online at the URL provided in that article.)

The big projects that we anticipate for the next fiscal year (as a reminder, the Town's fiscal year runs from July 1 – June 30) are:

1. The renovation of the Town Pool deck and replacement of the pipes; and
2. Road repairs and sidewalk improvements.

The pool renovation work has been on the docket for several years. The pool was built over 50 years ago, and in order to maintain it in solid condition, various components of its infrastructure need to be replaced or repaired. The concrete decking around the pool has started to crack over the past decade or so, and is approaching the end of its lifespan, so this fall and next spring, we will hire a contractor to break up and re-pour the concrete all around the pool. This will entail removing the slide, diving board, light fixtures, water stations, and everything else on the deck, and replacing them once it is repoured. While

that work is being done, it also makes sense to replace the piping that feeds water to the pool, which is also the original piping from when the pool was first built in 1970. We experienced some leaking this past year that required more minor fixes, and conducted an inspection that showed some warping in the shape of the pipes. The bottom line is that they will last us this year, but the fiscally prudent thing to do is to replace the pipes while they are exposed from the deck replacement, otherwise we risk the pipes failing in the near future and needing to re-do the deck again. We will also put a new layer of plaster on the pool, and will replace the light fixtures in the pool. Altogether, this project will cost north of three-quarters of a million dollars, but the pool and surrounding deck will be good-as-new when pool season 2024 rolls around, and will hopefully last the Town another 50 years.

Earlier this year, the Town Council approved a contract with a company to do an evaluation of the Town's roads and put together a replacement plan. Those evaluations will begin this spring, and we expect to work our way through Town repaving streets as is appropriate per those evaluations. One of the exciting parts of the project will be correcting some irregularities in the Town's streets and sidewalks. For example, on Grantham Avenue, you might notice that the curbs are quite low and there is a drop-off from the sidewalk to the street. And on Trent Street, many of the driveways dip down at the sidewalk. We will fix these and ensure that the sidewalks and driveways line up with the road. This is going to be a multi-year project, with the idea being that the Town has a long-term roadways master plan.

As a last point, I also would like to thank the Board of Supervisors of Elections for all of their work this year, and to remind everyone to vote in the municipal election (see the Board's article on page 1). Although the Town Council seats are uncontested, your vote is still important, for a couple of reasons. First, it supports those who have volunteered their time to serve on the Town Council, which is necessary for the Town's operations; and second, there will be a non-binding referendum on the question of whether to extend the eligible voting age to 16. Ultimately, the Council will vote on this potential charter amendment, but resident input in the question will be critical to that decision-making process.

Council Meeting Actions

The following actions were taken by the Somerset Town Council at its monthly meeting, held April 3, 2023.

- Approved a Resolution Denouncing Anti-Semitism, as recommended by the Equity & Inclusion Committee
- Approved Budget Work Session minutes from 3/13/2023 & 3/20/2023
- Approved the renewal of the trash, recycling, and yard waste contract with Goode Companies, Inc. for Option Year June 2023 – May 2024 at an annual cost of \$147,34
- Approved the nomination of **Alexis Ettinger** (Surrey) to the Pool Committee, to replace the unexpired term of **Nancy Zuckerbrod** (Dorset), ending 12/31/2025
- Approved the nomination of **Russell Green** (Cumberland) to the Pool Committee, to replace the unexpired term of **Michael Veksler** (Warwick), ending 12/31/2023;
- Approved a three-month extension to the existing building permit granted to Miriam Rosenthal and Michael Phillips for construction at 5522 Greystone Street. The applicants had requested a six-month extension.
- Approved a demolition and dumpster permit submitted by **James Gillis** and **Alison Hooker**, for the demolition of an accessory building at the property located at 4816 Essex Avenue.
- Deferred Action and Continued the hearing for variances of 3.9' and 6.3' for the placement of a new HVAC unit and generator in the side yard of the building at the property located at 4815 Essex Avenue.
- Approved a building permit application submitted by **Elizabeth Ewing** for the replacement of a rear deck on the property located at 4719 Cumberland Avenue.
- Approved a tree removal permit, submitted by **Amy and Geoffrey Buteau**, for the removal of a 27" Red Maple at the property located at 5522 Uppingham Street, as recommended by the Town Arborist due to decay in the tree.
- Approved a tree removal permit, submitted by **Caroline and Stephen Springer**, for the removal of the following hazardous tree on the property located at 4824 Dorset Avenue, under the condition that a replacement canopy tree be planted in consultation with the Town Arborist, as recommended by the Town Arborist:
 - Silver Maple (52") – Extensive decay and close to the house;
 - Ash (20") – Decaying with reduced canopy, and leaning towards neighbor's property.
- Approved the removal of a public tree located at 4520 Cumberland Avenue, as recommended by the Town Arborist.
- Approved the Mayor's appointment of **Elizabeth Harris** as the official Town Beekeeper for a one-year pilot program to maintain an apiary in the woods at Vinton Park.
- Approved a contract with Celestial Solar Innovations, LLC for the installation of solar panels on the Town Hall roof at a cost of \$41,450.
- Approved a budget amendment for the reprogramming of \$85,000 from unencumbered reserves, for the purchase of an electric vehicle at the Town Hall.
- Introduced the FY24 Budget and Tax Rates.



For Your Reference

TOWN OF SOMERSET COMMITTEES AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

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

COMMITTEE	CHAIR
Parks & Natural Resources	Josh Rosenthal (River)
Pool	Matt Zaft (Dorset)
Public Safety	Kumar Vaswani (Trent)
Revenue	Nick Fox (Cumberland)
Swim Team	Dario Fuentes (Cumberland)
Tennis	Carrie Wofford (Essex)
Traffic	Elizabeth Hurwit (Dorset)

TOWN COUNCIL CALENDAR 2023

COUNCIL MEETINGS

(All times at 7:00 p.m.)

- Mon., May 1
- Mon., June 5
- Mon., July 10
- Mon., August 7
- Tues., September 5
(Sept. 4 is Labor Day holiday)
- Mon., October 2
- Mon., November 6
- Mon., December 4

WORK SESSIONS

(All times at 5:30 p.m.)

- Mon., May 15
- Tues., June 20
(June 19 is Juneteenth holiday)
- Mon., July 17
- Mon., August 21
- Mon., September 18
- Mon., October 16
- Mon., November 20
- Mon., December 18

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 May 1, 2023 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, May 1, 2023, at 7:00 p.m.

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

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://bit.ly/3TEP2Av> Meeting ID: 836 4271 5125 Passcode: 287338

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

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

CONSENT AGENDA

7:06 p.m. **Motion:** To consider approval of the following items without discussion:

- Somerset Dolphins Swim Team Schedule and Annual Plan
- Minutes from the April 3 Town Council Meeting
- Minutes from the April 17 Town Council Work Session

NON-CONSENT AGENDA

7:07 p.m. **Public Hearing/Motion:** To consider approval of a building permit application, submitted by **Marika and Michael Meyer**, for the demolition and construction of a rear addition on the house located on the property at 4823 Dorset Avenue

7:25 p.m. **Public Hearing/Motion:** Continuance of the hearing for the building permit application submitted by **James Gillis** and **Alison Hooker** for the demolition of an accessory building for the property located at 4816 Essex Avenue The applicant is also seeking variances of 3.9' and 6.3' for the placement of a HVAC unit in the side yard of the property.

7:55 p.m. Building Administrator Report

8:05 p.m. **Public Hearing/Motion:** To consider approval of the Spring Tree Planting List, as recommended by the Town Arborist. The

Arborist is proposing the following trees to be planted:

1. 4510 Cumberland Avenue – American Beech (in Capello Park)
2. 4510 Cumberland Avenue – American Beech (between Town Hall and garage)
3. 4812 Essex Avenue – White Fringe Tree
4. 4900 Falstone Avenue – White Dogwood
5. 5505 Greystone Street – Red Maple
6. 5404 Surrey Street – White Oak
7. 5604 Warwick Place – Redbud

8:15 p.m. **Public Hearing/Motion:** To consider the adoption of an Ordinance adopting the FY24 Budget and Tax Rate

8:25 p.m. **Public Hearing/Motion:** To consider approval of amendments to the Pool Rules, including the inclusion of lap lane scheduling, as recommended by Pool Committee

8:30 p.m. **Motion:** To consider Introduction of a Resolution establishing the pool's annual closing day as the annual dog swim date, as recommended by the Pool Committee

8:35 p.m. **Public Hearing/Motion:** To consider approval of an addendum to the existing contract with Fehr & Peers to conduct an evaluation of existing signage in town to compare to the Town Code, in an amount not to exceed \$10,000, as recommended by the Traffic Committee

8:45 p.m. **Discussion:** Update from Town Manager on Major Projects:

- Pool Repairs
- PEPCO LED Streetlight Replacement

8:55 p.m. **Discussion:** Manager Report

9:00 p.m. **Adjourn**

Continued on page 20

Preliminary Agenda

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.

KEY

*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.