



Greater Olney Civic Association

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Our Website Address: <http://www.goca.org>

GOCA MEETING - JUNE 13, 2000

The meeting was called to order by President Mike Kelley. There was one addition to the agenda and no corrections or additions to the minutes of the May meeting.

There were no Public Comments.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

Mike Kelley introduced Albert Genetti, the new Director of Montgomery County's Department of Public Works and Transportation. Mr. Genetti had been invited to give an overview of the status of a variety of road projects that are impacting the Olney community. After giving a brief description of his background, particularly with the Army Corps of Engineers, he discussed the 6 or 7 of the major road projects we had asked him about in advance of the meeting.

- 1. Georgia Avenue Transit Way:** Park & Planning (P&P) finished their study of the transit way in 1999, a study that had a lot of public involvement. The project is in the Transit Way Master Plan and is supported by the County Council. However, there is currently no funding budgeted either for construction or even for planning. While the County supports the project, he did not know if it was on the State's priority list for road projects. The priority for improvements to or the construction of State roads within Montgomery County is established by the County and each year the State adds the County's number one priority each year to its work plan. Joe Hess suggested that they looked a little further into the future, that with the rate of growth of the population in this area, they should just continue Metro out to Olney. Genetti agreed that it might be needed much later, but not likely to happen.
- 2. Brookeville By-Pass:** This project is in the planning stage of the study. There was a public meeting on June 8 to get input on the various alternatives. State Highway Administration's (SHA) staff is currently evaluating the 6 alternatives they considered and solicited comments on. The planning stage is scheduled to end next year and will include one more public hearing. The State needs to have a good feel for what the community want on the alternatives and on its impact on other issues such as the Bordley Rd. extension. He has not seen a schedule recently for the project, but will check to see if there is one in place. If the project is supported by locally and politically, there is a 1 ½ year design phase and ½ -1 year phase to go to contract. Genetti stressed the value of public input. Engineers cannot tell all the details of an area from the maps and need the knowledge of the people that travel on and live with a road situation on a regular basis. If the public is suggesting changes that are reasonable and not exceedingly expensive, they will often be accepted. The County has been able to achieve changes a number of times in State projects. They are also trying to change the way they present information to the public so that more people understand the issues involved. The earlier the input gets to the State, or to them on County projects, the better. If a particular alternative is gaining support, GOCA and others should let the State know as soon as possible. Rick Coburn and Dave Eskenazi indicated that Alternative 7 is the one GOCA is currently supporting and seemed desirable to many Dave has spoken with who attended the June 8th meeting.
- 3. Norwood Rd (Closure):** The groundbreaking for this project was held a few weeks ago. However, the road closure is not scheduled to begin until July 2001. The contract indicated that the road would only need to be closed for 11 months. But, the contractor has come to them with a proposal that will allow t to finish sooner. If it does not have any greater impact on the environment than is permitted, they will consider his proposal. There are three intersections that the State will be improving before the road closure occurs. Ednor & New Hampshire Ave, They also plan to improve the lighting on Ednor and hope to encourage the truck traffic to go south on Layhill. The Ednor/Layhill/Norwood Rd intersection will be improved, but that is limited by the park property on the northwest corner and of the historic Red Door store on the southwest corner. They are also raising Layhill Rd at Rte. 28 and the right turn lane is being extended. All of these should improve traffic flow and should be done by July 2001.

4. Muncaster Mill Rd: Genetti announced that there will be a town meeting at Magruder High School on June 14th organized by Nancy Dacek and Phil Andrews in response to the tragic accident on Muncaster Mill involving the school bus and the tractor. He noted that this road has probably double the accident rate per 100,000,000 vehicular miles than most roads in the area, with 269.2 @ 100,000,000 vehicular miles. The State average is 132. But, no matter what else might have happened with the ICC or other road improvements on Muncaster Mill, that bus would still have been on that road because it was a local school bus. However, the bus might not have been there. The MidCounty Highway extension through there was stopped because the community did not want it. Duncan asked the State to look at all of Muncaster Mill Rd and they have already looked at 3 locations along there.

Ed Partington noted that there is no place along the sides of that road for bicycle riders and it needs some kind of hiker/biker path. Genetti indicated that Duncan has a Pedestrian Safety Task Force meeting the following week to look at areas that need hiker/biker path retrofits. There is probably an issue of right-of-way acquisition along this road. Art Brodsky noted GOCA's history of concerns about this road and that we had gotten responses from the State indicating that we did not have enough traffic to warrant action. So, this is not a new problem. He felt that if this accident caused something to happen to remedy the problems there, the bus driver would not have died in vain. Dave Eskenazi noted our efforts to get a light at Muncaster Mill Rd. and Ednor Rd. Genetti indicated that he goes through that intersection on his way to work and has not experienced a problem; but speculated he might go through early enough to avoid the problem. He will ask his staff to look at that intersection. Ray Ammon mentioned that people are going to Georgia Ave to go east on Rte. 28 in order to avoid the Muncaster Mill/Ednor intersection.

5. Norwood Park & Ride Lot: Genetti mentioned the recent efforts by their department to improve use of this parking lot, in part because the Glenmont parking lot is filling up very early. Use of the Wheaton Plaza lot has increased, but they would like to promote use of this lot as well. They are working on improving the times of the bus routes through the lot. They also understand that part of the problem is access into and out of the lot. Dave E. noted that the lot was not well lit, and Ed Weisel mentioned our earlier proposal for an entrance directly on Georgia so that cars coming from and returning to Olney did not have to go through the intersection. Genetti noted that the Rte. 97/28 intersection is at Level of Service F in the morning and between D and E in the evening. He was not certain a left into the lot north of 28 from Georgia would be viable because it would add more cars to the cue and could then back up into the left straight-through lane. He noted, also, that a planning study is underway for improving that intersection and a focus group had its first meeting in late May. They expect the planning study to be done by early 2002 and will then go for funds for design and construction. He indicated that this project may be tied in with the western piece of the ICC project. The State is looking at an east-west improvement. They are not sure what the Governor's proposed "east-west connection" really means yet, but it could mean tying the western part of the ICC with a bridge across Georgia Ave at 28 that would go just passed Leisure World. He noted, too, that this would eliminate the light at 29, but would likely just shift the bottleneck to the next southern intersection. Ellen Bogage, one of the members of the focus group expressed concern that their goal was only to reduce the level of service to D or E, rather than looking for a solution with a better result.

6. Emory/Georgia Ave Intersection: The improvements to that intersection are about 25% done and should be completed this Fall. They are adding a third lane southbound on Georgia that will begin just above Emory. There had been an accel lane from the entrance of Brook Manor Estates a short distance and then an extended right turn lane for Rte. 28 with a small area in between that was only 2 lanes. This improvement will make that one continuous lane all the way to Rte. 28. Also, the lights will be changed. He was not sure of all the details, but guessed that there would be a dedicated left from Emory to go north on Georgia, not a left/straight through lane. But, everyone is aware there is a problem there.

6. Inter-County Connector (ICC): This is still in many Master Plans and enjoy a lot of support. In speaking with the Council, there are frequently differences in what they say publicly and privately. Duncan supports it. They are studying Georgia Ave to I-360 and I-95 to New Hampshire/29.

Ed Partington noted GOCA's long standing opposition to the ICC and asked how far in the study of rapid transit they are now for east-west traffic, i.e., the "purple line" or an outer beltway. Genetti indicated that the technology had not been settled on yet, i.e., light vs heavy rail. It will be very expensive. Monorail is 17 times cheaper than subways. He noted, also, even if they can arrive at consensus on a route those this, a western crossing of the Potomac that would be a piece of this would also be major political issue. There is support for the Georgetown Branch, but it is a short segment would cost a phenomenal amount to extend it into Silver Spring and there is a question about its cost-effectiveness. They need a decision in September on the route to just get a marker in line, not even for the money.

Dave E. noted that there are some improvements to the Georgia Ave/Rte. 108 intersection that are being required of the developers of the Olney House property and the Olney Village Mart that do not seem to make sense or offer any relief. We have asked that their road club activity be directed to the Rte. 108/Spartan Rd intersection, maybe adding lanes to the Spartan.

OFFICERS/COMMITTEE REPORTS

President's Comments - Mike reported that:

- Lori Wilen regrettably resigned as corresponding secretary due to other family commitments. We will vote for a replacement in July. He asked that anyone interested in filling the vacancy contact him, Helene Rosenheim or Ron Berger,
- As Mr. Genetti as noted, there will be a town meeting at Magruder High School on 6/14th to discuss Muncaster Mill Rd safety issues.
- He sent a letter to the Planning Board on the Olney House based on our motion. Eliot Rosenheim will attend the hearing, if no one else from GOCA can attend.
- The contractor for Norwood Rd had spoken with him and had indicated that he had a plan that would allow Norwood to stay open during the construction project. It will cost more, but Mike didn't know if the staff and the contractor have both said will be able to do it. Mike will continue to work with the NEMPAC and the school and Mr Gonzalez, DPWT, will let Mike know when he gets the plans. Ed W. reiterated what Genetti said about a 3 year delay for an environment impact statement for a change that would go into the wetlands at the site.
- He sent a letter to the County asking that the Liquor & Wine sign be removed from the rear of their building since it also faces Olney Elementary.
- He sent a letter to Bonnie Thompson expressing our concerns about the proposed subsidized elderly housing Victory Housing project on the St. Andrew Kim Korean Catholic Church site. The Board of Appeals hearing is not until July 26th, so we will discuss it more at the next meeting.
- There have been police traps on Georgia Ave, just south of the cut-off for Connecticut Ave, but before the light at Connecticut. There is a painted median there that is intended to keep cars from spreading out into 3 lanes until after the turn-off. Most of the activity seems to be during the morning rush hour and it is probably creating more of a problem than it is solving. It is causing traffic to back up as far as or beyond Bel Pre Rd. That curb lane often gets blocked by cars in the middle lane and doesn't let anyone take advantage of the curb lane. So, while this is a technically valid ticket, there may be other traffic problems that deserve more attention.
- (In response to a question from Joe Hess) he is waiting for a written response from the State Highway Administration (SHA) given permission to relocate the Welcome to Olney sign to a location a little further north, between Batchellors's Forest Rd and Emory Lane so that it will not be blocked by the fencing around the stormwater management pond and would not be directly under a SHA road sign that indicates Olney is 3 miles away which he feels is confusing.

Correspondence Report - Mike reported that the correspondence included the Civic Federation newsletter, and a copy of a letter regarding delays in the construction of the bridge at Rte. 97/70 intersection, and an appeal from Meals on Wheels for volunteers for a new route being established in Leisure World.

Treasurer's Report - Roy Peck reported that our current balance is \$2,814.11, but we are down \$1,323 for the year. Olney Days cost to date are \$2,624. Ellen Bogage asked if GOCA ever makes donations to such things as the memorial fund for the bus driver killed on Muncaster Mill Rd. Mike indicated that we had discussed those types of donations at a recent officer's meeting and had concluded that while we would like to make those types of donations, we really cannot afford to right now. Roy suggested that we might need some additional kind of fundraiser.

Olney Chamber of Commerce Report - Ray Ammon reported that they were having a reception for the installation of officers. The slate would be the same as last year, with Paula Kahla continuing on as President. Their membership has increased 15-20%. A major concern of theirs is the police substation. The Olney Village Mart has not offered any space in their preliminary plan that would serve the police department's needs (They offered a second-story office in the new building they are proposing for the rear parking lot. They are working now to get permission from Giant Food to put in a double trailer at the current location that would provide a bathroom and running water. Still waiting to hear from Giant.

Transportation Committee - Dave Eskenazi reported that the public meeting on the Brookeville By-Pass went well. There was a good presentation of the alternatives and a reasonable turnout, both from Olney Village and Brookeville. Most favored an alternative that was at grade with traffic circles on the west side of Georgia.

He and Ellen Bogage are participating in the focus group for the Georgia Ave/Rte 28 intersection. He has been trying to contact someone in the Brooke Manor development to get them involved and asked that anyone that has a contact there let him know. The Preserve and Sycamore Acres are represented. The next meeting will be at the Aspen Hill Library on June 29th. The

Randolph Rd/Georgia Ave focus group is still at a very informational level. Their next meeting is June 22nd at the Conservation Corps Building on the southwest corner of that intersection.

OLD BUSINESS

Olney Days Festival - Helene Rosenheim reported that she had declared the weekend a success, in spite of the impact of the rain that had significantly reduced the crowds at most of the events and resulted in canceling a couple of the events. Those who did attend the events all seemed to enjoy them.

The rains kept the turnout at our first Olney Days Family Golf Tournament to 15 golfers, those who came enjoyed themselves. We did have a few problems dealing with the Trotter's Glen management, in part because of the reduced numbers. So while we plan to do the tournament again next year, we will likely seek a different location. The Olney Community Band Concert ended up having to be canceled because we learned that Friday morning, that the inside space we had anticipated using in the event of rain was not going to be available after all.

Although 2 of the exhibitors for the Car and Truck Show sponsored by Fletcher's Amoco, we decided that most exhibitors would not come out because of the questionable weather and few people were likely to come to look at cars as well. So, we decided to cancel and briefly discussed the possibility of rescheduling it for some other time later in the year. So, we will explore that idea. We were not able to put up the moonbounce at the Fun Fair at Olney Manor Park, but all the other events went off. However, the crowds were substantially smaller than last year and most that came, came later, closer to the time for the fireworks. Participation in the Home Run Derby that was run this year by the Northeast Montgomery County Babe Ruth/Cal Ripken Baseball League was about the same as last year. Again, we believe the rainy weather kept participation down. And, again, those who participated seemed to enjoy themselves and those running the event seemed please with the way it went and expressed a willingness to do it again next year. The participation in the event does seem to be growing, but what doesn't seem to be happening is the spectators. Helene had hoped that people would not just come with their children as they competed, but that people would just come and watch the whole event. The Sandy Spring Fire Department did sell food and gave fire engine rides, but did not set up their carnival events. They seemed happy with their piece of the event. The fireworks did go off, but were somewhat of a surreal experience. There were clouds and fog that formed a backdrop for many of the bursts. They lit up the sky in much the way lightning does or they somewhat disappeared into the fog and appeared more like twinkles of light. They were not visible as far away as they usually are. Dave Septoff was working in the fallout area in the Park north of the swim center and said afterwards that it was the best fireworks he had ever heard. Though not your usual fireworks display, it was still enjoyable for most in the Park.

The weather also seemed to impact the turnout for the Walk-a-thon planned by the United Synagogue Youth group from B'nai Shalom of Olney. This was a fundraiser for the Cillie Gerstenzang Mobility Fund intended to assist in the cost of installing an elevator in Cillie's home to facilitate getting her in and out of her house in her wheelchair. They are still calculating their costs, so do not how much money they may have raised. They still have some t-shirts to sell. Later that day, the Parade and Bull Roast came off pretty successfully. As has happened in the past, some of the drivers for the elected officials did not show up, so the folks in the staging area had to be creative again this year in finding rides for all of them. But overall, things went well with the Parade. The weather finally cleared in time for the Bull Roast which, for a first time event, had a pretty good turnout. The entertainment arranged for by the Olney Village Mart went well and food sales of the food provided by B.J. Pumpnickel's went well. We netted almost \$2,000 from that, after covering Barry's costs. We are considering doing a talent show as a part of this event next year. The Village Mart staff were very pleased with the event and plan to expand what they do next year. One impact of the smaller crowds is that we still have a few hundred Olney Days Festival t-shirts left. We are going to try to market them at Paula's Boutique and Fletcher's Amoco, and are going to approach the Olney Ale House since their sign is prominently displayed in the t-shirt design. The Sherwood student who did the design, Rachel Herbst, did an excellent job on the design. We also plan to contact our member association to ask that they each take 5 or more of the shirts to sell within their communities.

Olney Village Mart Renovation - Khalid Afzal, chief of the Park & Planning (P&P) Commission's Georgia Ave Development Team, suggested that since Freeman Associates is planning a new building at the rear of the center and with the proposal for putting the new Post Office on Georgia north of where Appomattox would have intersected Georgia, it might be possible to put a hiker/biker path from the rear of the center to Georgia along the abandoned right-of-way for Appomattox to enhance pedestrian traffic in that area. He was not proposing that it all be done by the Center's developer, but that they could contribute to it. It could be a public/private venture involving Freeman Associates, the Postal Service, the County, and others. Mike Kay noted that the drive-through access to Appomattox had been one of the principal concerns of his HOA in the Towns of Environ. Late night noise was also a concern. They are planning to go to P&P to request that there be no late night deliveries from Appomattox and no late night use of sweepers. He liked the idea of the hiker/biker path, but was not sure how others in his development would feel. Security and vandalism seemed like two issues that might be a concern to them, but thought those issues could be addressed. Khalid noted that this could be part of a larger bike way system in the area. Ray Ammon noted that he had walked through that area and had observed that there are already some undesirable people hanging out in those woods. If the Post Office does not go in, people may not use the path. Safety and security would clearly have to be a key part of the

design. There was interest in Khalid pursuing the idea with Freeman Associates.

Victory Housing Project at the St. Andrew Kim Korean Catholic Church Site - Joe Hess indicated that Bonnie Thompson, project manager for Victory Housing for this project had made a presentation to their association. They had very much the same response we had at the May meeting. They supported the concept, but were concerned about the impact of the size building they are proposing - a 4-story, 74 unit facility. They did not get any indication of any flexibility on her part. They plan to write to the Board of Appeals supporting the concept, but not the particulars of the plan; and hoped that GOCA would do the same. Jim Folk indicated that she had met with the Lake Hallowell HOA as well. They were concerned about the safety of the intersection that would be created with Old Vic, Rte. 108 and the relocated Batchellors Forest Rd that would come out opposite Old Vic. They felt it would be difficult, if not dangerous to go east on Rte. 108. Bonnie indicated to them that she would pursue this idea with SHA, but he didn't think they would get much response from SHA about changing what they are now currently permitting. They also felt that once the Church is built, the Church will push for a light there. The consensus was that, even though this is subsidized elderly-housing, for which there is a clear need in the County, that this is fundamentally just an apartment building outside of the center of town where this type of development was intended to be. It was noted, also, that having a building of this type approved on this site could have implications as we move into revisions of Olney Master Plan. Ray Ammon noted, too, that Victory Housing is also applying for a special exception in the Cloverly area. SEROCA is also concerned about the impact this development might have on the rural legacy designation of Batchellors Forest Rd. The hearing before the P&P will be a few weeks before the July 26th Board of Appeals hearing. Ron Berger stated that we seemed to be concerned about the size of the project and a sense that it may be inconsistent with the current intent of the Master Plan. Following this discussion, Mike Kay moved that:

GOCA OPPOSE THE VICTORY HOUSING SPECIAL EXCEPTION FOR THE ST. ANDREW KIM KOREAN CATHOLIC CHURCH PROPERTY BECAUSE OF THE HEIGHT, MASS, AND DENSITY OF THE PROPOSED BUILDING, AND TRAFFIC AND SAFETY CONCERNS AT THE PROPOSED LOCATION.

The motion was seconded by Ed Weisel and passed overwhelmingly.

Olney Theatre Development Plans - Jim Folk reported that the Planning Board agreed with the staff and basically rejected their request for subdivision. The Board wants to see a unified approach with the Theatre. Khalid indicated that it did not have to be on application, but could be two application filed at the same time.

NEW BUSINESS

Library Internet Access - Janet Terry, a local resident express concern about a situation she was involved in recently at the Olney Library. She had been in the Library with her young child and as they walked passed the computers located in the center of the Library for use by the public to access the internet, she observed that one of the users was viewing a pornographic site that was clearly visible to her child. When she expressed her concerns about this situation to the Library staff and to the Police, she was told that what he was doing was within his First Amendment rights which the Library are required to protect. If he had been viewing child pornography, that would clearly be illegal and they would have stopped him. However, he was not doing that. She felt that, while it is important to protect his first amendment rights, there needs to be some way to protect our children from inadvertently being exposed to these kinds of sites as they pass by the computer. There was some discussion of things that might be done to make it less visible to people passing by. They included such suggestions as filters, putting some of the computers in more private areas of the library, putting up some sort of screening. There was a recognition that each of these solutions had some limitation. For example, the Courts had already found that filters on computers in libraries was unconstitutional, putting the computers in more private area might lead to more undesirable behavior that the librarians would not want to have to deal with or might require security cameras, and might be inconsistent with the County libraries current position with respect to first amendment rights. The consensus was that it seemed that there needed to be some balance in the first amendment rights of the library users and our responsibility to protect our minor children from inadvertently being exposed to undesirable material; and that we might want to approach Mr. Duncan with the community's concerns on this issue. Several individuals expressed an interest in pursuing this matter.

Relocation of GOCA Meetings - Mike Kelley noted that we had been considering relocating our meetings to the Olney Library. While there is a group that meets in the large meeting room on the second Tuesdays and have the room reserved until 8:00 pm, they usually are out of the room much before 8:00 pm. Mike asked people to think about moving to the Library because it would solve a number of the problems they have had at Longwood. While we now have access to restrooms at Longwood, the room does get warm when the door is closed and it is too noisy to open the door while the Center is open. Also, it is almost impossible for someone to get in after 9:00 pm because the only way in is the side door to the social hall and you can't hear someone knocking on that door from the lounge. At the Library there is an outside door directly into the large meeting room that could be used after the Library closes. The room is large enough to accommodate most of the crowds we get on the hotter issues. It is also, a little more centrally located. Mike noted that we would discuss the idea at a subsequent meeting.

Following announcements, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Helene Rosenheim
Recording Secretary

People in attendance: Mike Kelley, Ron Berger, Roy Peck, Al Genetti (DPWT), Christie Berman, Janet Terry, Peggy Vaughn (Gazette), Ray Ammon, Ed Weisel, Charles Pritchard, Bill Thewes, Toni Rossi, Bobbi Rossi, Dave Eskenazi, Michael Kay, Jim Folk, Joe Hess, Art Brodsky, Khalid Afzal, and Helene Rosenheim