



# Greater Olney Civic Association

Post Office Box 212 Olney, Maryland 20830

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

**GOCA MEETING - OCTOBER 9, 2001**

The meeting was called to order by President Art Brodsky. There were one changes to the agenda moving Redistricting to Special Presentations and no additions or corrections to the minutes of the September 2001 meeting.

## **SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS**

**Our House - A Residential Job Training Program** - Ron Berger introduced Jeannette Mendonca, President of the Advisory Board for Our House. Jeannette noted that they had just dedicated their new facility on a 140-acre farm on Zion Rd that was formerly the Melwood site. Her office is currently in Ellicott City. This is a residential, 24/7 training program for 16-21 year youths. Their residents come through Health and Human Services foster care programs or as first offenders in the Juvenile Justice system not involved in violent crimes. This program was started by Richard "Benny" Bienvenu, a teacher of at-risk kids who saw kids going back into the bad environments that undid all that he had been able to do with these kids. So, he developed this residential program. The participants receive carpentry and building instruction in the mornings, do classroom work in the evenings for the GED's, and perform 4 hours of community service on the weekends to learn to give back to the community such as snow blowing for senior citizens. They currently have 3 teams - one at their facility in Ellicott City, in Howard County, and now at this farm. The residents there now rebuilt the farm buildings that had been seriously vandalized and needed to have walls rebuilt and to be re-roofed. They program has received a number of awards, They were selected to be an Oprah Winfrey's Angels, WUSA-TV's 9 Who Cares Award, the President's Service Award from the Point of Lights Foundation, the Governor's Service and Volunteer Award for 1998 and more. Representatives from the governments of several countries have visited their facilities as examples of successful residential job training programs, and their residents have testified before Congress on the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999. They have received a State of Maryland bond to restore the farm to operate as an organic farm with fruit trees and bee farming. Jeannette added that she volunteers as much as she does because she feels like she is part of miracle. When the kids come, they do not make eye contact, but over time, they learn to trust other people and begin to make eye contact.

There are currently 8 residents at the farm in Brookeville, but they will soon be able to house 16 students and later 24. Benny also wants to start a "graduate" program. The average age is 17 ½ and they usually stay for 2 years. This is not a rehabilitation program, but they do have clinical staff with individual and group counseling. During the day, there are 4 instructors and 2 instructional aides and in the evening there are 8 instructors helping them get the GEDs. There are 4 administrative staff members. They have more than the usual ratio of staff to residents. The staff is headed by a teacher, one is a Navy Seal, and most of the staff are in construction. Some of their graduates do go on to college. They have an 81% success rate. There is a 19% recidivism rate with kids in the Juvenile Justice system vs 84% for participants in State programs. They have gotten that rate down under 10%. They get great Foundation support for their operating costs. They need one last permit and hope to be in the Farm by Thanksgiving or possibly by 12/20. They have extensive mailing lists, and have gotten requests from as far away as California since the coverage on Oprah. All of their graduates are hired by unions. She reiterated that as a part of their program, the residents do volunteer work in the community to help them learn about the need to give back to the community. So, she encouraged individuals and groups to contact them if they had projects for them to work on. She thought that they could help build floats for the Olney Days Festival as well as with other projects.

**County Council Redistricting** - Art noted that he and Peter Esser had testified before the Councilmatic Redistricting Committee concerning the desire to give Olney more unified representation. He introduced Steve Barry, a member of the redistricting committee from the Olney area. Within the County it is more of a question of shifting population than starting from a clean slate. So, he felt the process at the County Council level is less interesting than at the State level. There are a number of legal points that have to be adhered to, but a lot of the process is about politics and the self-interests of incumbents. Howard Denis is in District 1, Nancy Dacek is in District 2 that includes most of the Olney area, Marilyn Praisner is in District 4 and Mike Subin and Phil Andrews, both members at large, live in District 2. Nancy lives in a precinct immediately adjacent to District 1. Her district could easily be moved into District 1, but they are the only two Republicans on the Council and if that were to happen, they might lose a Republican seat. Nancy's District has grown by 32%, so the question is how to break up the population in that District. One problem is that they do not want to break up municipalities like Rockville and Gaithersburg up through this process. District 3 is kind of a hole in the middle of District 2. Several of the proposed plans split Olney along Georgia Avenue. He favored one that put all of Olney except Magruder in District 4, but some politicians got involved and wanted to split 2 precincts out of Andrews district and split Aspen Hill out of

District 4. Marilyn Praisner was opposed to that. She did not want to see a lot of change in her district since she knows her precincts well. It was not that did not want to represent Olney.

The Council can amend, or even substitute a whole new plan, so there is still time for input to the Council. The plan that was the final recommendation of the Redistricting Committee (Plan L) does keep the core of Olney together and splits along Batchellors Forest Rd. The Sandy Spring/Ashton areas would move into District 4. Art concluded by noted that we will stay involved in the process to see if we can keep our community whole, including the southeast Olney area.

## OFFICERS/COMMITTEE REPORTS

**President's Report** - No report.

**Correspondence Report** - No report.

**Treasurer's Report** - Roy Peck reported that we currently have a balance of \$5,336.62.

**Membership Report** - Rich Kopanda reported that there was no change in membership this month.

**Chamber of Commerce Report** - Joe Buffington, the new liaison from the Chamber, reported that there would be a groundbreaking for the enlarged Police Substation on Friday, October 12<sup>th</sup> at 8:30 am.

**Transportation Report** - Dave Eskenazi reported on the public hearing on the options for the alignment of the Brookeville Bypass. The hearing was well attended and the general sentiment seemed to be to support Alternative 7 with roundabouts from at Brookeville Road and south of Brookeville. Olney Village residents supported Alternative 7. Other transportation activities such as the Norbeck Rd/Rte 97 intersection study have been quiet. Mike Kelley asked if there had been other discussion of the Norwood Rd rerouting. He did not think the improvements had been as effective as had been anticipated. Dave indicated that he had not heard anything, but if people were having a problem, he was not sure what they might be able to do without impacting the schedule or the cost, neither of which the State Highway Administration is willing to do.

Dave also reported that the Transportation Policy Review continues to be moving on a path of building roads like the Inter-County Connector (ICC). They are focusing on development around Metro stations. They are having a hearing on Oct 16<sup>th</sup> at the Casey Community Center in Gaithersburg from 7-9:30 pm. He is hoping to get a presentation at a future GOCA meeting, but it is not likely to happen before December.

**Land Use Report** - Art reported that we had just received a site plan for the Springview development off Norbeck Rd. It is using the Rural Neighborhood Cluster zone create with the development of the Sandy Spring Master Plan. There are also plans for 25 homes in the Southeast Rural Olney Civic Association (SEROCA). They are in 3 projects and would nearly double the density in that area.

## OLD BUSINESS

**Project Change Update** - Mike Kelley reported that Project Change is in its 3<sup>rd</sup> year of a collaboration of teens and adults trying to improve the community by providing drug-free activities for Sherwood, Magruder, Blake, Sandy Spring Friends, and Good Counsel High School students. They have held a number of dances and pool parties that were very successful with a couple hundred teens attending each event. They received a Contribution to Community Award from GOCA and took a 3<sup>rd</sup> place in a national award recognizing their efforts. They conducted a safety-belt survey at Sherwood and have participated in several youth leadership activities and are working to increase community awareness of their efforts and goals of creating a safe-haven teen center where local teens can hang-out. Last year an adult support group called Olney Buzz was formed to see what parents can do to help the kids in Project Change reach their goal of a safe haven. They had a retreat in July where a group of teens and adults came together and set some short-term and some long-term goals. They announced at the retreat that Freeman Associates was making the space previously occupied by Play It Again Sam until next May. In the meantime, they are looking for a long-term solution for a space to use. There is a 501(c) corporation being formed by parents called Project Change. Mike will be on its Board and will serve as Treasurer. On Oct 10, from 12-2 pm there will be a meeting with business leaders at the Sandy Spring Bank where they will be discussing what they can do.

**Olney Master Plan Review Update** - Art reported that Park and Planning (P&P) staff had determined that there was not any real need to split the planning area separating the agricultural areas in the northern part of the planning area from the more southern

parts of the area. Khalid Afzal, the Park and Planning Georgia Avenue Team Leader heading up this review will continue to meet with associations and the business community in the area to identify issues and concerns that should be addressed by the review.

**Olney Village Mart Shopping Center Development Plans** - Art noted that the Village Mart had gotten the okay from the Planning Board relieving them of the requirement to build a walk-thru from inside the center to the corner of Appomattox and Spartan Rd. In response to a request from the Towns Homeowners Association, Freeman Associates have agreed to put in a buffer fence behind the center. Park & Planning has also required that they do some traffic improvements at Georgia Ave and Rte 108 and at Spartan Road and Rte. 108. At Georgia Ave, the improvement consists of adding more pavement northbound Georgia on the south side of Rte. 108 so there can be 2 left turn lanes, 2 straight-through lanes and 1 right turn lane. Then north of Rte. 108 there will continue to be 2 northbound lanes that merge into one. This is not an improvement that GOCA has requested or is interested in. Ed Weisel noted that if there is going to be more asphalt added to this intersection, something needs to be done to protect pedestrians. There was also some interest expressed in seeing if there is still any possibility of getting this proposed modification changed. At the Spartan Rd/Rte. 108 intersection, there will end up being 2 thru lanes and right turn lane north on Spartan. And 2 left and right turn lanes on Spartan south. They are breaking ground in April. The fence should go in before construction begins. They will be putting a 6 ft. sidewalk by the hill.

## NEW BUSINESS

**Safe Neighborhood Day** - Helene Rosenheim reported that as Olney Liaison for the Mid-County Services Center she is coordinating Olney's involvement in the second Safe Neighborhood Day event being planned by the Pam Miller on behalf of the Blue Ribbon Panel on Pedestrian Safety. Pam originated the idea of having groups of citizens stand on the corners of dangerous intersections around the county during the morning rush hour holding signs that would help make drivers more aware of the need to increase pedestrian safety on our streets. This is just one step in the process of education drivers and making them more sensitive to and careful about pedestrian traffic, and to make pedestrian more aware of the need to be more careful as they walk near along major road and near dangerous intersections. The intersection they have identified in Olney is Georgia Avenue and Queen Mary Drive that was the scene of a hit-and-run accident in which a resident on Queen Mary Drive was hit as she tried to cross from the Sandy Spring Bank side toward Olney Elementary. They will be holding signs at that intersection from 7:00-8:00 am. Helene invited anyone interested in participating to contact her at 301 570-2884.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

- In response to a question from Steve Smet, Mike Kelley noted that the Fire and Rescue Service has a good web page with information about things people can do to prepare for emergency situations. On October 27<sup>th</sup> they will be presenting a Family Emergency Preparedness Class. It is a 4 hour class. Mike is trying to get the woman who is teaching that class for our November meeting in which GOCA will be hosting an Emergency Preparedness Forum. In addition, he is having someone from the Sandy Spring Volunteer Fire Dept will speak about preparedness at home and other first line of defense initiative of the volunteer fire department, as well as some others to discuss State and Federal preparedness initiatives.

Respectfully submitted,

Helene Rosenheim  
Recording Secretary

People in Attendance:

Steve Smet, Roy Peck, Jackie Benn, Michael Kay, Ed Weisel, Mike Kelley, Terri Hogan (Gazette), Art Brodsky, Helene Rosenheim, Rich Kopanda, Don Schmelter, Chuck Keyserling, Dave Eskenazi, Ron Berger, Mark Simon, Polly Knight, Sandy Shulman, Jeannette Mendonca, Bill Thewes, John Lyons, Joe Buffington, Dan Walsh, Jack Meyer, Robert W. Stout, III and Robert W. Stout, IV..