



# Greater Olney Civic Association

Post Office Box 212 Olney, Maryland 20830

[www.goca.org](http://www.goca.org)

## MINUTES – JANUARY 14, 2003

The meeting was called to order by President Art Brodsky. Following introductions, the minutes from the November meeting were approved with no additions or corrections. The minutes from the December meeting were approved with 2 corrections (to Joe Hess' public comments: they saw 2-3 deer every 2-3 months not a day; deer seldom migrate more than 2-3 miles from where they were born not from their homes and credited this statement to Rob Gibbs) The agenda was approved with no changes or additions.

### PUBLIC COMMENTS

- Mike Weiner, President, Sandy Spring Volunteer Fire Department (SSVFD) spoke about the budget crunch that the Montgomery County government is experiencing that has resulted in Mr. Duncan mandating a saving plans for the current fiscal year. Each agency must eliminate 3% of their yearly budget. The Fire and Rescue Service must cut \$1.5 million from its budget and they are proposing to do this by closing the fire station in Kensington, moving apparatus from Station 4 (the new SSVFD station), and destaffing the Rescue Squad in Laytonsville. He wanted to let the local civic associations know that they are already at bare bones conditions and they believe that what the Fire and Rescue Service is suggesting does not make sense and will endanger lives. The SSVFD is getting a new tanker to hold water for areas north of Rte. 108 that do not have fire hydrants that was to be at Station 4. The Fire and Rescue Service wants to move it to Station 40 on Georgia Ave., 3 miles from the area with the greatest need and they want to move the Quint to Station 4, but it does not hold as much water as the new tanker. In addition to questions the safety of this swap, they do not understand how this will save money. The Fire and Rescue Service also want to abolish 20 administrative positions, rehire 12 and centralize the positions. Centralizing these positions does not work for them because they loss the ability to respond quickly which is key to fire and rescue operations.

A lot of what the Fire and Rescue Service has done was without the analysis and consultation with the volunteer fire departments which is illegal because of the legislation forming a partnership between the career and volunteer firefighters. The volunteer fire departments are angry because they are taking money that will directly impact their ability operate at the same time they are being asked to do more because of Homeland Security. They have reviewed the budget and think they have identified some alternative savings measures. They presented those alternatives to Mr. Duncan earlier that day and Mr. Duncan is reviewing them versus the Fire and Rescue Services proposals. They believe their alternatives will not impact operations. Centralizing the administrative functions as currently proposed will take away the reasons for the volunteer fire departments to exist. Even the career firefighters union is opposed to these proposals. These proposals were to go into effect on January 24<sup>th</sup>. The volunteer fire departments have filed a stay of action for 30 days. They need the County Executive and the County Council to know that the community is aware of the volunteer fire departments recommendations and support them.

- Fran Ware also spoke about the impact of the cost saving plan on the County's libraries. The Library budget only represents 1% of the total County budget and they have also been asked to cut 3%. Libraries are used by half of the County's population and they get over 1 million hits on their Internet site with 30,000 from Olney. They have lost 1 full-time and 2 part-time positions from vacancies they are not being allowed to fill. They also need the community to be proactive in conveying their concerns. Beginning the following Tuesday, the Friends of the Olney Library and the Olney Library Advisory Committee will have a flyer available in the Library for people to come in and sign. The cuts last year were achieved by cutting back on purchases of new circulation materials. Last year they reduced their materials budget from 17%, an excellent percentage for a public library, to 16% which means a reduction in titles and in the number of copies they purchase; and a reduction in the number of periodicals. They do not want to do that again. Their personnel costs are 77% of their budget and now the only areas of the budget left to cut is personnel costs. They are currently open 4 nights and do 7-8 preschool programs a month. But with these cuts they will likely not have the staff to be able to stay open from 9-9 and do all of these programs. They would have to eliminate a shift which would mean either opening late or closing early one or more days. Their focus has been on preschool programs because of the large preschool age population in the Olney area. So, they would likely keep open in the morning. She encouraged people to come by to sign the flyer

## OFFICERS/COMMITTEE REPORTS

### President's Report - Art Brodsky reported that:

- The zoning application filed by Jeff Kirby to change the zoning on the property he is interested in on Georgia Ave, north of Rte. 108 for a retirement community to PD-9 goes before the Park and Planning Commission (P&P) Planning Board on February 6<sup>th</sup> and before the zoning hearing examiner on February 19<sup>th</sup>. The design has changed since Jeff last presented it to us and there are some issues with the design: where to measure the height and setbacks of the building (4 stories), whether the plan satisfies the requirements for a PD-9 zone, and whether the plan has an environmental impact on the stream at the rear of the property. There are also concerns about the traffic circulation on the site and the alignment of the entrances. They need the zoning change because the C-1 zone on the land involved does not permit elderly housing even as a special exception use. They presented 2 plans to us with one having 5-10 fewer units in the event that new Olney Master Plan recommends that Appomattox Way be cut through to Georgia Ave. The zoning application is for 100 units, i.e., the larger building. There is a concern that the building will be too tall if 4 stories are visible from Georgia Ave. Art noted that we had passed a motion in May that stipulated that the amount of the building visible from Georgia Ave not exceed 50', the roofline of the courtyards be lower than the rest of the route, the trees planted in the courtyard be mature trees, and that GOCA would only support this type of use if it is consistent with the recommendations of the new master plan. Khalid noted that GOCA's position was more limited than the P&P staff position.

**Treasurer's Report** – Roy Peck reported that the current balance is \$5,433.05 as of January 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Olney Chamber of Commerce Report** - Joe Buffington reported that they are going ahead with the improvements for the Police Substation.

Joe also noted that his family has to go before the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) again regarding the signage for their building that will be a ground sign at the entrance to their driveway at Rte. 108. It will be made of brick and will be front lit. They are also putting plaques on the Olney House and the Spring House. He is working with Roger Brooke Farquhar and the Sandy Spring Museum on the text for the signs. There will be well markers in the parking lot and they are putting together a brochure with the history of spring houses. They do not have any word yet from the HPC if that is approved.

**Membership** – Art reported that we are about to send out dues letters for 2003 and commented Rich Kopanda for the great job he has done with following up on these the past few years.

**Legislative** – Steve Smet reported that the new State Legislature is in place, but he has not met with all the local representatives yet. He plans to visit them in Annapolis shortly.

## OLD BUSINESS

**Upper Rock Creek Master Plan Review** – Khalid Afzal and Fred Boyd, both P&P staff reported on the status of the Upper Rock Creek Master Plan. The Planning Board has held 3 work sessions on this plan so far and anticipates 2 more sessions. The two issues he felt were of primary interest to the Olney community are transportation and land use. In the transportation work session, the Planning Board unanimously supported the elimination of the extension of Cherry Valley Drive. On east/west transportation, the Planning Board supported retaining the right-of-way and classification of the Inter-County Connector (ICC). They have included language stating that the alignment preferred is through the central part of Montgomery County. For the extension of the Mid-County Highway to Rte 28, they are recommending the Western Connector alignment along the ICC right-of-way as a 4 lane arterial road. They did not support widening Muncaster Mill Rd for any capacity enhancement. They have not made any recommendations yet for the land use for the major land pieces. On Dec 15<sup>th</sup>, the Planning Board said that the staff had not satisfactorily considered opportunities to provide affordable housing in this planning area and directed them to go back and look at this issue. The draft should be submitted to the County Council by early March and to the County Executive who has 60 days to review the plan for fiscal impacts of the recommendations. Following the 60 days, the Council will hold a public hearing that is the community's next opportunity to comment on the draft. Then the Planning, Housing and Economic Development (PHED) Committee will discuss the draft for as much time as they feel is necessary. Their recommendations go to the full Council which also considers it for as long as they feel necessary. Then any zoning changes recommended in the plan are accomplished through a zoning map amendment. They expect the Plan to be complete by mid-2004.

Some of the points made during the questions and answers that followed are:

- The number of deaths on Muncaster Mill does not impact the draft because this is not an issue addressed by a master plan. The \$10 million the State is spending on road improvements is meant to address this issue. Safety of the road is a Dept. of Public Works and Transportation issue. The Annual Growth Policy addresses capacity issues. All that master plans can address is alignment, right-of-way width, and classification of the road. Dave Eskenazi noted that the road will continue to be unsafe.
- The time horizon for the use of the draft plan is 8-10 years.. Master plans are not able to state anything about geographic improvements.
- The Planning Board said that the M-83 improvement will address the short term needs rather than widening Muncaster Mill Rd and feel the M-83 is the best solution to help traffic move from Shady Grove to the Rte. 97/28 intersection.

- If the ICC does go through, all that will be necessary to do is widen the 4-lane roadway they are recommending now and possibly add an interchange. They do not anticipate any changes to the density along the ICC alignment.
- Susan Petrocci expressed concern that the Planning Board seems to be discounting all the testimony in support of Option 4 for the Western Parkway. She also expressed concern that there will be in-fill development. However, Fred indicated that the density supported by the ICC is already accounted for in the plan because the road has been on the books for so many years.
- The Planning Board Chair wants to see every conceivable option for providing affordable housing which means looking at every available property and doing an analysis of the impact. This does not necessarily mean additional density because it may have already been covered by the current density recommendations.
- The P&P staff work with the MCPS staff to give them a sense of the 5-6 year impact on density so they can assess the need for additional school capacity.
- The plan does not now include an off-road path for bicycles connecting Emory Rd. and Rock Creek Park, but they are trying to find one. The plan initially recommends a Class 2 bike path, i.e. on-road path, but recommend an off-road path on Bowie Mill and Muncaster Mill Rd as a capital improvement project some time in the future.

**Greater Olney Master Plan Review** – Khalid Afzal reported that completion of the staff draft has been delayed, primarily because of workload problems. The delays are not because of unresolved issues, but just the time it takes for production of the document and coordination with other offices and agencies. He now anticipates completing the draft by the end of January or early in February. The public hearing would then be in March. He observed that the Olney plan has housing diversity. They were planning to include a section on housing to include affordable housing and elderly housing. The definition of affordable housing is very broad, 50% - 81% of the median income in the County. His sense is that the housing mix they were already planning would address the affordable housing issue in the Olney Plan, but they will need to respond to the direction from the Planning Board to look at all developable land for opportunities for affordable housing. The moderately-priced dwelling units (MPDUs) proposed for the site on the northeast corner of Georgia Ave and Norbeck Rd., on the Bowie Mill school site and in the town center area will contribute towards this goal.

Normally a development with MPDUs will add 12 ½% - 15% to their density, but on County owned sites, such as schools sites being used for residential development, the percentage can be as high as 20%. The percentage with bonus density can go up to about 22% with 15% being MPDUs. The Dept. of Housing and Community Development sets the cost of MPDUs annually based on the median County income. Generally, an MPDU needs to be affordable to a family earning approximately 60% of the median income. The price remains at that percentage for 15 years and after that the price can go back to market values. The staff estimates another 400 housing units being added to the total number of housing units for the Plan, including the 300 units in the town center area as a part of a mixed used design recommendation. Of the 1,300 total units in the Plan, Khalid calculated that they are proposing about 10% affordable units, about 130 units. Olney gets a lot of credit for existing diversity in its housing mix. It is not as high as some areas, but it has more than the Upper Rock Creek area. The development Jeff Kirby is proposing is an affordable housing project, and the Victory Housing projects also count.

The Draft will also include a discussion of the job/residential ratio even though this was not a big discussion point during the Advisory Committee meetings. There is very little change from the ideas presented at the last Olney Master Plan Advisory Committee meeting. They do not plan to change from the satellite concept from the earlier plan, so they will not meet the suggestion that there is a need for more jobs in the Olney area.

**Good Counsel High School Relocation Proposal** – Art Brodsky reported that at the last meeting, the traffic mitigation plan for Good Counsel's proposed development on the relocated Batchellors Forest Rd was not completed yet. He contacted Art Raimo to try to get a copy for this meeting, but had not gotten any reply. He also spoke with Marty Klauber, the People's Counsel, who indicated that we are entitled to see the plan, but they are not required to provide it to us. So, we may need to get a copy from P&P. On January 27<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup>, there will be hearings on the redevelopment proposals for the property in Wheaton where the school is currently located. The citizens association for the homes behind Wheaton Recreation Center is negotiating an agreement with the developer and asked GOCA to testify in support of their position. Art felt that it would not really be appropriate for GOCA to be testifying on the use of this property, but did feel he could testify that the 2 projects should move concurrently and not let the Wheaton project move ahead of the Olney site.

**Olney Days Festival 2002** - Helene Rosenheim reported that the next planning meeting for the Olney Days Festival was changed from January 16th to January 22<sup>nd</sup>. Plans are progressing well. The plans for Joe's Ride are moving ahead. We are getting a map from P&P showing the bike trails around Olney Manor Park to help in planning the routes for the intermediate and long-range bike riders. The Bike Rodeo for the young children will take place in the parking lot of the Oakdale Emory Church.

**2002 GOCA Awards** – Ron Berger reported that we had received 8 nominations for the Contribution to Community and Citizen of the Year Awards. They are all good nominations. There is one GOCA Worker of The Year nomination and one for the GOCA Heritage Award. Ballots will be mailed to eligible voters, which is delegates from associations that have paid their 2002 dues and the officers and standing committee chairs. There will be brief descriptions of the actions or contributions that the individuals or groups are being nominated for. The completed ballots should be returned no later than at the February meeting.

Ron reminded everyone that the awards would be presented at a special 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary reception on Sunday, March 2<sup>nd</sup> from 5:00 – 7:00 pm at the Sandy Spring Volunteer Fire Department Ballroom. The food will be prepared by BJ Pumpnickel's

Catering Division. We have several corporate sponsors to help pay for the reception which will be considerably more expensive than our traditional cheese and cookies reception. In addition to recognizing the 2002 Award winners, we will also be recognizing previous winners, particularly the citizens of the year. Ron also noted that COMCAST has offered to record a session regarding the awards that will air as one of the COMCAST Local Edition programs a number of times between now and March 2nd.

## NEW BUSINESS

**2003 Slate of GOCA Officers** – Ron Berger reported that the By-Laws require that the slate of GOCA officers be announced the month before the election of the officers that takes place at the end of the February meeting. At the same time, the floor is opened for additional nominations. The slate he presented is as follows:

President – Steve Smet, Norbeck Meadows  
 Executive Vice President – John Lyons, SEROCA  
 First Vice President – Rich Kopanda, North Creek  
 Second Vice President – Chuck Young, Individual Member  
 Corresponding Secretary – Don Schmelter, Highlands of Olney  
 Recording Secretary – Helene Rosenheim, Mid-County Regional Service Center, Olney Community Liaison (Does not vote)  
 Treasurer – Roy Peck, Norbeck Meadows

No other nominations were offered from the floor.

**Discussion of Budget Presentations** – Art noted that Mike Weiner had asked for the support of local civic and homeowners associations by writing letters to the County Executive supporting their recommendations for cost-saving measures for the remainder of this fiscal year's budget. Art wanted to discuss whether GOCA should write a letter. A number of people agreed that the measures being proposed by the Fire and Rescue Service did not seem to make sense, particularly relocating the new tanker and the quint. There was some discussion of the appropriateness of the Fire & Rescue Service making these recommendations without consulting the volunteer fire departments. However, the consensus was that it would be better to limit any comments to the recommendations themselves, rather than getting into the process itself when writing to the County Executive. It might be more appropriate to address that aspect of the issue with the County Council. There was agreement by consensus that GOCA should write to both the County Executive and the County Council in support of the budget saving recommendations made by the Sandy Spring Volunteer Fire Department.

Art also encouraged everyone to go by the Library as Fran Ware had requested.

Following a few announcements, including one by Ron Berger that the County had just announced the beginning of the construction of the Bordley Rd extension using a new brochure they are initiating with this project, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Helene Rosenheim

Helene Rosenheim'  
 Recording Secretary

**People in attendance:** Khalid Afzal, Ron Berger, Fred Boyd, Art Brodsky, Joe Buffington, Dave Eskenazi, Robert Hausman, Terri Hogan (Gazette), Claire Iseli (Marilyn Praisner's Office), Paul Jarosinski, Mike Kelley, Chuck Keyserling, Polly Knight, Rich Kopanda, John Lyons, Roy Peck, Susan Petrocci, Helene Rosenheim, Don Schmelter, Tod Sher, Ken Silverstein, Stephen Smet, Clara Smith, Lisa Stancik, Mark Torrence, Fran Ware, Mike Weiner, and Chuck Young,.