



Greater Olney Civic Association

Post Office Box 212 Olney, Maryland 20830

www.goca.org

MINUTES – APRIL 8, 2003

The meeting was called to order by President Steve Smet. The minutes from the March meeting were approved with no additions 3 corrections (on pg.1 inserting e in Membership, and pg 2, inserting a space after 20 under 2002 GOCA Award, and correction of the spelling of Mizell to Maizel in several places in that item.) The agenda was approved with no changes or additions, except that some items will be taken out of the order listed because of scheduling needs of several speakers.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Roy Peck reminded those involved with purchases for Olney Days 2003 that GOCA is tax-exempt.

Don Schmelter reported that he had checked with the County and learned that the signs at the entrances to the Safeway on Spartan Rd. had been approved and that the County does not control what does on those signs. Chuck Young suggested that we check to see if there is any way for GOCA to be notified in advance when businesses apply for permits for signage. Khalid suggested that if the application is in conformance with zoning, Permitting Services can process it without any notification to the public. Ed Weisel suggested contacting Helene Jennings who used to be very knowledgeable

- OFFICERS/COMMITTEE REPORTS

President's Report – Steve Smet reported that:

- He believes that it is important that GOCA focuses on the mandate from the County Council and County Executive for moderately priced dwelling units (MPDUs). While providing this type of housing is a good concept, the Olney area is one of the last areas with undeveloped acreage. The Upper Rock Creek area had a bad experience in their recent master plan process and he does not want the Olney area to have a similar experience. He believes that the large parcel areas in the southeast quadrant may be targeted as areas for placement of MPDU's. The efforts to identify locations for MPDU's is a top-down policy. As such, the community needs to try to play a guiding role as opposed to an opposing role. The community needs to be on our guard to work with anybody, so that rather than trying to stop a rolling cannon ball we can guide it in the direction we want it to go. He believes this is going to be a big issue. We are targets because our master plan is open now. Dave Eskenazi suggested it is really a question of how it is done, the kind of density increase both with the regular development and with the MPDUs. Khalid Afzal noted there would be information at the May meeting relating to this. With respect to the Upper Rock Creek Master Plan, he noted that the staff had presented a plan that the Planning Board did not like. The community is working with staff and there will be a worksession before the Planning Board on the following Thursday. They are looking at a range of a 12.5% to 15-22%.density bonus. The decision in that Plan on the extent of the bonus will impact the proposal for MPDU density in the Greater Olney Master Plan. Currently any property that has 35 units has to provide MPDU's at a minimum of 12.5% bonus density. Formerly the threshold was 50 units.)

Under the current formula, if you provide the minimum 12.5% of MPDU's there is no density bonus. If you go above that, you get a bonus of up to 22%, of which 15% must be MPDU's. For example, if a development can yield 100 units under its zoning, they could get a bonus of 22 units for a total of 122 units of which 15% of the units have to be MPDU's. In the Upper Rock Creek area, they are considering a different option to introduce MPDU's. Much of the land in the Planning Area is not zoned for sewer and water. Sewer is a bonus for clustering because it creates open space, but they believe there needs to be a greater public benefit for extension other than increase in open space. They are looking at a range from 85 to 250 additional units.

John Lyons suggested that he agreed that we need to be aware of this issue, but that we need to take a firm stand on what we believe is in the best interest of our community. John believes that Olney is very different from Upper Rock Creek. Upper Rock Creek has no low density, no moderately priced dwelling, no mix of housing types in its whole master plan area. But, in contrast, Olney has a wide variety of housing types, a variety of densities in our master plan, and has substantially built out from the "80 plan. There is some undeveloped areas in the southeast quadrant, He did not think have to feel that this is a top-down supported policy. He did not believe that we had to assume that we can't do anything about it and we should take a stand for what we think is right. With respect to southeast Olney, the big issue is less MPDU's than the whole issue of rezoning. He is concerned with the potential of the area being rezoned to increase the base density and then having the MPDU formula added on top of that. There are substantial environmental issues in that area that need to be addressed as well. The staff has been considering not extending sewer and water into that area to protect that area and he will be interested to see where their recommendations come out. Chuck Young expressed concerns about the idea of extending sewer and water in order to increase density in a school cluster

that is already overcrowded without any evidence of plans to add the needed infrastructure to support that added density. About a third of the children in the planning area are in the Magruder cluster. He encouraged people to go to the hearing on Thursday on the Upper Rock Creek plan. Dave E. added that the Planning Board cannot ignore the problems of infrastructure needs as they consider potential density increases. Roy Peck noted that he has seen flaws in the methods used by the County and MCPS for calculating demographic impacts and we need to correct these baseline ground rule processes if we expect to have any success at addressing these other issues.

Correspondence Report – Don Schmelter reported that we had received notification from P&P that the Planning Board had recommended approval of the Kirby property on Georgia Avenue north of Rte. 108 for rezoning to the PD-9 zone.

Treasurer's Report – Roy Peck reported that the current balance is \$5,342.49. We also have close to \$4,000 in upcoming bills including \$2,500 for fireworks. That leaves a small balance to use toward other Olney Days expenses for now. He thanked everyone who worked on GOCA's Annual Awards Ceremony. We came much closer than ever on raising funds to cover our expenses.

Olney Chamber of Commerce Report - Joe Buffington reported that they are continuing to work the police substation with Capt. Walker since she came to GOCA's last meeting. There was a meeting to discuss the administrative issues relative to how to collect donations and process them so they are available for use for expenses relative to the substation.

Membership – John Lyons reported that all the letters have gone out requesting dues for 2003 and support for Olney Days. He indicated that 35-36 letters were sent out and he asked delegates to keep an eye out for them or let the people responsible know they are coming. Last year we had 24 member associations and he sent letters to some others to see if they would be interested in rejoining.

OLD BUSINESS

Proposed Location of Skate Board Park – Ellen Masciocni with the Maryland-National Capital Park & Planning Commission (P&P) and an Olney resident, noted that she had come before GOCA about 2 years earlier with Josh Foster, a Sherwood student, who had submitted a petition with 1,500 signatures requesting a skate park in Olney. She had Josh make his case to GOCA. Josh has gone on to college and Jimena Ryan has taken on this effort. They held a public meeting in Olney attended by 150 youths interested in having a place to skate board. She also authored a report relating to skate parks and noted in that report that there was interest in Olney for a skate park, but no site identified yet. After a second look, they did identify a potential site in Olney Manor Park and later identified a second site within the Park. They are early in this process and nothing is happening yet. But, she is preparing a facilities study outlining how this would work and possible locations. She was interested in hearing which the community preferred. One location is across from the swim center, next to Ballfield 3. It will take a minimal amount of grading. They would lay an asphalt pad the size of 2 tennis courts. Later, if interest in a skate park goes away, the pad could easily be turned into tennis courts. The second site was suggested by the park manager, John Boyd. It is a champion tennis court among the 18 courts in the Park that John indicated is not used much. There does appear to be a decline in tennis play. Many new parks do not even include tennis courts. But, regardless of the accuracy of that observation, Ellen is concerned about this location because of the proximity to the other tennis courts. So she is trying to get the reaction of tennis players. Ellen noted that there is also a concern about the other site with balls coming over the fence. Most of the games are at night, and for now, the plan is to not operate the skate park at night, so that will minimize that problem. Neither is ideal, but one of them is what they will go forward with. She reiterated that this was just a facilities study (a 30% plan) to consider feasibility. There is no budget yet. It would need to be put into the capital improvements project budget. There will be opportunities later in the process for more community input.

Dave Eskenazi suggested raising the fence around the ball field. Ellen added that she was considering netting over the skate park. Most of the parks people have seen are the ones on extreme sports which are concrete with big drops. More and more local communities are taking elements of skateboard elements and putting them on asphalt slabs or tennis courts. Then the elements can be moved around to add variety to the park and can be removed if the interest goes away. The city of Rockville is the best model of what we are considering. All the skateboarders wear pads and helmets and are supervised. Gaithersburg has one similar but with high drops. In talking with the skateboarders, they are more interested in a "streetscape" type of facility with lower ramps, rails, etc. similar to the areas around town where they skateboard now. Putting in a skate park may not eliminate the problem on skateboards in undesirable areas of town, but should help a great deal. The police are supportive of this effort. Most of the skateboarders are not interested in traditional sports, so they are out there with nothing to do which can lead to problems. So they are trying to provide something for this group. For this upcoming summer, they are considering a skateboard camp in which a contractor with the Dept of Recreation who has portable skateboard parks that can be moved from neighborhood to neighborhood and they can try them out for a week or two. This would give the community a good opportunity to see what one of these parks would be like. Last year the Rec.Dept. funded a van to take people to the park in Gaithersburg, but it was arranged on short notice, and we had very hot weather, so it was not very successful.

The following are some of the points made in the discussion:

- Since the children that will use this will be doing it after school, the notion of not being open in the evenings seems limiting.

- The experience in Rockville and Gaithersburg has been that it is better to have it during daylight hours. She anticipated that during the school year the hours would likely be from 3:00 – 7:00 pm; and during the summer they would have 2 sessions each day. They have not ruled out evening hours, but initially they would just have daylight hours and then, would consider adding them later. There would be a fee to use it. She emailed the people who had attended that earlier meeting and got a strong response from the parents that they were not concerned with the cost, but with providing an opportunity for their children to skateboard. Also, the skaters have indicated they would be willing to wear helmets and other protective gear that would be available for renting at the site.
- The court in question is not used much because it is not fenced so the balls get away. The others are used, but never all 18 at once. However, the major disadvantage to using this court is that it is in the middle of other tennis courts and tennis players prefer a quiet environment and there is a certain amount of noise from a skate park. She has been in touch with the president of the Montgomery County Tennis Association and other tennis players.
- The park is accessible by sidewalk. There is small parking lot near the area next to the ball field that could be a drop-off point for parents, there is a play area near by and the swim center is close, although they would discourage the skaters from going in there. There are existing bathroom facilities as well. So, the infrastructure there and it would be in a hub of activity. There is room to have bleachers. There would be a shed in immediate proximity of the facility with first aid and Station 40 is nearby.
- Helene Rosenheim is very aware of this proposed use and does not see it interfering with the fireworks display during Olney Days.
- Anyone with additional comments should contact Ellen or Steve Smet.

Sandy Spring Friends School Expansion Plans – Howard Zuses, business manager for the Sandy Spring Friends School reported that the Friends School has been in existence on their current site on Norwood Rd near the Layhill/Ednor Rd intersection for about 42 years. They are planning to go before the Planning Board soon. They are on 11 different parcels, some of which are subdivided and some not. They want to go through subdivision to merge them into one lot. They will also need to apply for a sewer and water category change. They currently get sewer and water from the Friends House, but do not actually have sewer and water through their own acreage, and need a change to Category 6.

They are planning on \$15 million in construction depending on their fund raising ability. They are proposing to relocate the road going into the center of their campus and put it around the perimeter of the buildings. They are planning to build a new middle school near Yarnall Hall, and new physical education building that will give them another gymnasium. They are upgrading the performing arts center with 375 seats to supplement their existing performing arts center which is basically a Quonset hut with bleachers. They currently have 500 students including 40 students that live on campus, with half being international students. When they move the middle school program into its new building they will be able to expand their lower school. The lower school now has its art classes in the middle/upper school art department, their music in the meeting house and their physical education in the Yarnall Hall gymnasium. This would allow them to move all these programs into their own building and make them a self-contained entity and would eliminate the need to move the children all around the campus as they have to do now. This will be the first phase of a 2 phase expansion plan. The second phase will involve more of the upper school. Once both phases are completed, the ultimate size of the school will be 680. Their current enrollment is 520. Most of the expansion is aimed at better serving the existing enrollment.

Their curriculum parallels the public school curriculum, but it may not be delivered in the same way as the public schools. There are different reasons parents enroll their students in an independent school like theirs. In the lower grades, and middle school grades the smaller class size is an attraction. The college preparatory nature of their upper school makes it attractive. It is unusual, though, for students to stay at Friends from K-12. They tend to plug in at different levels depending on the needs of their children. So, their curriculum needs to be such that children can move easily between their school and the public schools. They are also under the care of the Friends Monthly Meeting and must provide time for worship and Quaker practices. This is an element similar to other parochial schools that is not part of the public school system.

Their existing buildings were built 1,400 ft from the Norwood Road. The new construction within circle of existing building so those setbacks will be retained. Woodlawn is to the east and their pastures separate them. The Baltimore Monthly Meeting's office and the Friends House is on their west side, along with Tom and Cynthia Snyder's home on the corner of Dr. Bird and Norwood. The Rural Legacy Trail runs along the back edge of their property along with 2 or 3 outlots from Wincester Homes on Ednor RD. The only real neighbors they have are on the south side of Norwood. They have a good relationship with that development and they will not be any closer. All of their athletic fields separate their school building and this development. The real source of noise in there area is the medivac helicopter housed at Woodlawn as it takes off and lands. They anticipate 3 years for construction of Phase I. They will need to build the upper school expansion before they could add more students. The earliest they will matriculate new students into their middle school which is how they would expand their upper school would be about 5 years.

They have 18 buses and 7 bus routes. They do have some capacity on their buses for additional riders. Currently about 70% of their students come from Montgomery County, 10-15% come from Howard County and Prince Georges County from the Greenbelt, College Park, and Laurel area and from DC. As they have grown, they have gotten more students from the Olney/ Brookeville/Sandy Spring/Ashton area. They have spoken with Art Raimo from Good Counsel High School over the past couple years about making some of their capacity available to them. He would like to pick up additional paying riders on his buses.

Draft Greater Olney Master Plan - Khalid Afzal reported that staff is finalizing recommendations for the Olney master plan. They were hoping to have a community meeting in mid-May and asked if GOCA would consider merging their community meeting with the May 13th meeting. In response, John Lyons moved that:

GOCA COMBINE ITS MAY MEETING WITH THE P&P COMMUNITY MEETING TO PRESENT THE CONCEPTS THEIR STAFF IS CURRENTLY PROPOSING TO INCLUDE IN THE DRAFT GREATER OLNEY MASTER PLAN.

The motion was seconded by Dave Eskenazi and passed unanimously.

Following that meeting, depending on the comments they receive, they will be able to release the draft by the end of May. If so, the public hearing before the Planning Board in late June or early July, 30-40 days after releasing the draft. They will have hard copies two weeks prior to the May meeting and at the May meeting. Once it is released officially it will be on their website

Proposed Good Counsel High School Relocation – Steve Smet reported that the Planning Board approved the preliminary plan submitted by Good Counsel High School. John Lyons noted that nothing additional came out of the testimony GOCA presented at the hearing. There were 30 conditions of approval, which is a high number. The language on a couple of those items was clarified during the process, but essentially things are as they were presented at the last meeting.

Development of the Silo Inn Property – Steve Smet noted that Harvey Maizel, the developer of the Silo Inn property, had requested a parking waiver on the residential portion of their property. But there will not be any action on the property for a while. There was a question about whether the grandfathered use of the property had been abandoned since the restaurants that had been on the site had been demolished several years ago. The commercial zoning of that site had been “grandfathered” in because the Silo Inn had been there when the earlier master plans were written. A grandfathered use is considered abandoned and not longer in force if the grandfathered use is “abandoned” for a period of 6 months or more. Mr. Maizel’s proposal assumes this grandfathered use is still in force, and since most of the use he is proposing is permitted within the site’s C-1 zone, he only needs to obtain a building permit. If the C-1 use is “abandoned”, Mr. Maizel would need to go through the special exception process

Steve had received a copy of a letter from the Department of Permitting Services (DPS) indicating that the property had never been “abandoned” because their office had not been notified that the use had ceased and the buildings had been turned down more than 6 months earlier. Ron Berger was looking into the validity of this interpretation because he did not believe the determination that a use had been abandoned was conditioned on the DPS being notified. Steve noted as well that the revised master plan is going to recommend that this property be zoned residential, similar to the surrounding Victoria Springs development. But since the master plan will not go into effect until 2004, the proposed action is governed by the existing master plan. In addition to the question about the interpretation relating to the abandonment of the use, there are concerns about the turns that would be necessary for many of the vehicles coming into and leaving the site. But, until Mr. Maizel provides us with a current proposal, it is difficult to assess those kinds of issues. It was noted that if we support the recommendation to keep commercial development in the town center area, as the new master plan is likely to recommend, even if it won’t be in place in time to affect this proposal, we should say we do not think this commercial use should be approved.

Khalid Afzal of the Park and Planning Commission, noted that if the previous use is not abandoned, Mr. Maizel would only need to go to DPS for building permits, except for his proposal to put parking on the residential portion of the site. The use of the residential portion of the site for parking would require a special exception. He suggested that the only way to prevent the action from moving forward at this point would be to question the accuracy of the DPS interpretation. Khalid noted as well, that once the draft master plan has gone to the public hearing phase, the Planning Board could defer action on this proposal, but until then the current master plan is governing.

East Norbeck Park – Dave Hamet, a resident on Norbeck Rd, and a representative of a group called the Norbeck Conservation, Inc., noted that he was responding to the information in the minutes of GOCA’s Feb. 11th meeting relating to the proposed improvements to the E. Norbeck Park site. He felt that there had been some inaccuracies in the information that had been presented. He expressed concerns about the parking modifications being proposed. He suggested that most similar parks have 20 spaces and this park was going to go from 30 to 150 spaces with no changes to Norbeck Rd. The increased lighting and noise was also a concern because it would be more invasive for those living closest to the park. He also noted concerns about the environmental impact of the proposed changes. While they see the value of additional soccer fields, there is some question about whether the local children will get to use the fields. He also raised some concerns about the process for the approval of the proposed changes. He did not think the process had been as transparent as it should have been and suggested that people east and north of the park had not been told about the proposed changes. He noted, too, that under the current budget situation, it would be doubtful that there would be funding to make these changes. He added that he is putting together a neighborhood group to resolve some of these differences before the issue goes to the Planning Board.

Olney Days 2003; - Helene Rosenheim reviewed the schedule for the weekend, and noted that the response to Joe's Ride has been very good. Other plans are moving along well. We are looking for more contestants for the other new event this year, the Mr and Mrs. Olney Contest. She is also looking for volunteers for several of the events.. She encouraged people to encourage their friends and neighbors to participate in the weekends events and to volunteer to help. Anyone interested in helping should contact her at 301 774-6774 or at helener@pressroom.com. A copy of the schedule of events is attached.

NEW BUSINESS

Promoting More Active Participation by Member Associations – Steve noted that there had been a discussion at the last GOCA Officers' meeting with respect to finding some ways to encourage greater participation by the delegates from our member local civic associations. It was suggested that we produce a letter that could be given to local realtors to give to people that purchase homes in Olney. Chuck Young is drafting a letter for the other officers will review.

Paul Schroeder suggested that we needed to keep the meeting on task and more succinct. He proposed putting time limits on the agenda and having better presentations with brief, but useful information. He suggested that a topic we might have some positive, useful discussions about would be what kinds of things we could do to improve the town center area. John Lyons added that it might be useful to talk about what GOCA is suppose to be, what we can offer as an organization as a voice for the community, and possibly a lobby for certain legislation that impact the community. Dave Hemat noted that while he was president of the Rotary in DC they wanted a signature program They went to the DC Health Department to find out what they needed. They ended up purchasing a Medivac unit. He indicated that we wouldn't need to do that specifically, but we might be able to identify some other need in the community that GOCA could address. Dave agreed to serve on a committee to pursue this idea.

Following a few announcements, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Helene Rosenheim

Helene Rosenheim'
Recording Secretary

People in attendance: Khalid Afzal, Danny & Jackie Benn, Ron Berger, Art Brodsky, Joe Buffington, Kristi Cameron, Allison Corbett, Stanley Elswick, Dave Eskenazi, David Hamet, Joe Hess, Terri Hogan (Gazette), Claire Iseli (Marilyn Praisner's Office), Claire Jantt, Jack Kerekes, Chuck Kusbit, John Lyons, Ellen Masciocni, Roy Peck, Dave Quirk, Helene Rosenheim, Don Schmelter, Paul Schroeder, Stephen Smet, Clara Smith, Daniel Walsh, Ed Weisel, Chuck Young, and Howard Zuses.