



Greater Olney Civic Association

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www.goca.org

MINUTES – AUGUST 12, 2003

The meeting was called to order by President Stephen Smet. Following introductions, the minutes from the July meeting were approved with no additions or corrections. The agenda was approved with no changes or additions.

PUBLIC COMMENTS.

Leslie Cronin noted that the Audubon Society and the Sierra Club have filed an objection with the Planning Board regarding the development plan for Good Counsel High School in Olney. They have also filed an appeal with the Circuit Court of Maryland. Since that filing they have agreed to a stay of the judicial process and will meet with the school probably in September to see if they can reach an agreement on their issues and concerns. The contact person at the Audubon Society is Delores Milmoie, 301 652-9188 x 19 or delores@autobonnaturalist.org.

Lt. Demitri Kornegay of Montgomery County Police District 4 noted that: (1) The office that runs the Police Academy, a program to give citizens a better perspective on the role of the police, is considering starting a Citizens' Academy in which people will learn what their rights are within the legal system. (2) There are 59 new police candidates in training. A great many Vietnam veterans that came into the police force after leaving the military are now retiring and those positions need to be filled. Nine newly trained officers were recently assigned to District 4 and they will now ride with more experienced officers for about 4 months. Three other officers transferred into the District from other jurisdictions. (3) The District 4 Station on Randolph Rd is currently undergoing extensive renovations and is not open to the public for walk-in visits. It should be open soon. (4) John DeSalis, a crime analyst for the District is a good source of information on criminal activity in the area. He can be reached at 240 777-5500. (5) On July 20th the Command Center moved to its new location in Gaithersburg. 911 calls go to the Command Center. The number for non-emergency situations is 301 279-8000. (6) Between 7/23/03 and 7/31/03, there were 3 cases of larceny from automobiles, 1 residential burglary with nothing taken, 1 commercial burglary with nothing taken, and 1 strong-arming with a pair of shoes taken.

Heidi Leineweber noted that in the master plan process the Park and Planning (P&P) staff seemed to be listening until December. Now that the Draft is out, they seem to have disregarded the community's comments, and she is very upset about that. It makes her worry about how much comments will be listened to as the process moves forward.

DISCUSSION OF THE PUBLIC HEARING DRAFT OLNEY MASTER PLAN

Steve Smet invited Khalid Afzal, P&P Team Leader for the Olney Master Plan project to give a brief overview of the Olney Master Plan process. Khalid noted that the Olney Master Plan was last updated in 1980. They try to review master plans every 10-15 years. This review process began in July 2001. Since then the Greater Olney Master Plan Advisory Group that consisted of 40 members from all facets of the community met about 20 times in public meeting. At these meeting, they were discussing ideas for different areas of Olney. Their staff worked with the Advisory Group. After this series of meetings, the staff put together the Staff Draft to present to the Planning Board for approval to release it for comment. The Planning Board approved the Staff Draft with no changes, so that draft went out as the Public Hearing Draft. The comment period goes up to the Public Hearing date on Sept 18th. People can submit oral or written comments up to and during the hearing. Then the Planning Board goes into work sessions. The number of sessions depends on the number of issues that need to be discussed. They hope to finish the work sessions by the end of 2003 or early in 2004. The Planning Board makes changes it deems appropriate and then send the Draft to the County Executive and the County Council. The Draft goes to the County Executive for 60 days for a fiscal analysis of the recommendations in the draft. They look at public improvements to see what the cost would be to the County if they do everything proposed in the plan. Then the Draft and any comments from the County Executive go to the County Council. Then the County Council holds a second public hearing. The Council has the final approval of the Master Plan. Then it goes back to the P&P to make changes to the zoning maps as needed to make them consistent with the approved plan.

The following points were made during the questions and answer period that followed:

- The Planning Board will not likely respond directly to each comment, unless people send letters to the Chair and ask for a response.

- Steve Smet noted that the Bowie Mill school site was not discussed as a site for affordable housing in the Advisory Group discussions. Towards the end of the Advisory and update meetings, it was noted that they would be identifying sites that might be used for affordable housing. It came up as a result of a P&P study the County Council directed them to undertake to identify additional opportunities for affordable housing throughout the County and they were instructed to look at all County-owned sites first.
- In developing the Draft, P&P determined that the School Board determined in the early 1990's that it did not need the Bowie Mill high school site, surplused it and turned it over to the County. The property is zoned R-200 and would yield 64 single-family units. A developer could provide up to 15% moderately-priced dwelling units (MPDUs) with a bonus of 22% that would yield 74 units with 12 MPDUs under the current zoning. To accommodate the MPDUs there could be up to 40% townhouses with the remaining 60% single-family. Khalid did not know what the process would be yet for development under this program. Steve Smet noted that, according to Janice Turpin of MCPS, a large portion of this school site property is not buildable which will limit the density of development.
- A resident near the corner of Cashell and Bowie Mill noted that her family had done a lot of work on their house specifically to keep the existing traffic noise out. She is very concerned about added noise from additional traffic generated by development on the Bowie Mill site.
- The Annual Growth Policy indicates that there is a residential moratorium in the Olney area unless a developer is building MPDUs.
- In response to a question about the criteria used to identify the Bowie Mill site for MPDUs, Khalid noted that this is only a zoning issue. They are only recommending that if the site is not being used for a school that it be considered for affordable housing. He noted that a master plan is not about the timing of development. The annual growth policy is the tool the County used to control the rate of growth using tests such as transportation and schools. For example, if a proposal to develop a property comes in and meets their criteria, it cannot move forward unless they do something to mitigate any additional traffic it will generate.
- Art Brodsky noted that the Master Plan Advisory Group spent a lot of time talking about the town center area and there was no real discussion of this land use, but this is still a public process now. Steve Smet added that the community needs to say what they want to see on this property if it were to be developed with MPDUs. It was noted, however, that nothing had been said at the earlier meetings that this was being considered, so that made it hard for the Advisory Group to say what they wanted to do here. It was also suggested that we initially heard this site was being recommended for use as a school site, now for affordable housing, so what the surrounding developments should do is get together to formulate a positive suggestion for alternative language in the master plan relative to this site.
- A concern was raised about where schools were going to be built if we need them in the future if we give this up since the plan is proposing an additional 400 units in the planning area. Khalid noted that there are two other school sites in the planning area and MCPS feels that is sufficient to meet any future needs.
- It was noted that if the site is now, in fact, the County's and not MCPS', there is no guarantee that MCPS will get it back. In the County's disposal process, they ask all the County agencies if they have a need for the site and others may express a need for it. The County should look at the best use of this property from a public policy perspective and they may determine a use other than a school may be best.
- A Williamsburg Village resident, noted that when they came into the master plan process they were very upset because of the possibility of the Olney Elementary School being relocated to the Bowie Mill site. But now, having gone through the process they are now happy with the outcome. They worked with GOCA and with P&P and, as a result of that process, the language in the Plan relative to the Olney Elementary has been changed to language they are happy with. Now the language suggests the use of the site for a civic center if the school site is disposed of and then goes on to describe what the site would look like. They do still have one concern since the possibility does exist that the civic center may be put somewhere else in the town center area. If that were to happen and the school site were disposed of, then there would not be any language in the Plan recommending how the site should be used if not used as a school or civic center. They would like to see a fourth alternative suggesting that it be used for a park, recreation, or town commons use.
- The Plan recommends that Appomatox Avenue not go through to Georgia Avenue, but suggests instead that it swing down, basically through the area where the new building is in the rear of the Olney Village Mart and connect to Hillcrest. The right of way was left in as a buffer between James Creek and the Olney Village Mart. This suggestion was included in the event this area is redeveloped later on.
- Steve Smet noted that a goal of Plan is to concentrate commercial development in the town center area to retain the rural entry-ways into Olney, and to add vitality to the town center area which is difficult with 2 major highways going through the town center.
- In response to a question about why the civic center is in the town center rather than down near the pool at Olney Manor Park. Steve Smet suggested that the traffic that would be associated with it is more fitting in the town center area and it would be more accessible by pedestrians from all portions of Olney. Khalid added that it gives the town center a greater focus. People are already in the town center area for retail, dentists, doctors, etc. and you want to take advantage of this existing activity to draw people to the civic center. The question is where should the civic center go. Most of these uses do not require a lot of room, so there is no advantage to housing them in separate buildings so the building could be smaller. Having them in one space reduces the total amount of parking needed. Having a small amount of retail adds vitality to the center. You would need approximately 4-5 acres for the center and it is not practical to ask a private developer to give up that much acreage, and there is a question of who would pay for it. But, once you get passed that, it would be okay for the center to be on such property. If the shopping centers redevelop they will be asked to provide public amenities, but that would not likely involve enough space for a civic center.
- Part of the goals of the Plan is to identify opportunities for affordable housing and the properties in the vicinity of the Golden Bear properties in the northeast corner of the Rte 28/97 intersection could be assembled with several other lots nearby and used to help achieve that goal. Khalid felt that there needed to be something to encourage the property owners to reassemble the site.

So they are recommending rezoning there from RE-2 to TDR-2, a zone in the transfer of development rights program which increases the yield of a site from 1 unit per 2 acres to 2 units per 1 acre. The area includes about 40 properties totaling approximately 85 acres. The plan recommends a mix of single-family and townhouses with a maximum density equal to the R-200 zone.

- Outside of the town center area, the level of growth in the proposed master plan is the same as the current plan, 800-1,000 units. The proposed plan does not change the number, but does change where the units would be located. The only area not sewered is in the southeast quadrant. In that area, there is an assumption that the area would yield 1 unit per 3 acres under the current zone. There was a suggestion made that by putting the Inter-County Connector (ICC) in the vicinity of the southeast quadrant, with the density of development, we are back in the same place with respect to insufficient road capacity the ICC is suppose to be relieving.

- Inside of the town center area, the proposed plan includes an additional 300 units, including the MPDU bonuses.

- On page 112, Muncaster Mill Rd needs to be added, and there will need to be a safe crossing for the ICC.

- On page 122, the language should be consistent with the language that is developed for the Bowie Mill site.

- The Norbeck Country Club site is now zoned RE-1 and the plan is recommending that it be changed to the Rural Neighborhood Zone. The yield is rezoned RNC versus RE-2 cluster would be .33 vs. .4, which is about the same, but the RNC offers some design benefits over the RE-2 cluster zone.

Khalid noted that there will be a national conference on pedestrian safety in Montgomery County next Spring. It will involve one week of intensive workshops and he thinks the Olney Town Center would be a good topic for discussion at this conference. He would like to recommend it to the organizers of the event. But, it would mean that several people from the community would need to participate in the conference. He thought it would be helpful to us in looking at the pedestrian safety issues in the town center area. The consensus was that it would be a good idea to participate in this effort.

Update on the Inter-County Connector – Steve Smet reported that Sam Raker, the coordinator for the County's current outreach effort on the Inter-County Connector attended the officers meeting to discuss the current ICC progress. Steve noted that Mr. Raker had not been able answer the question John Lyons asked about what specific transportation problem they are trying to solve with the ICC. His response was that the ICC is 10 times better than any other solution, but Steve noted it still only offers a 1-3% improvement in the beltway congestion. The officers suggested to him that in the 30 years that the ICC has been under discussion, the new areas of growth have shifted further north and it would make more sense to build the road further north where the current growth is. It could connect to the new Rte. 32. Steve added that it is clear that because Governor Ehrlich made construction of the ICC a priority in his campaign, it is clear that there will be some action on this. Mr. Raker is going to provide us with information about future forums and opportunities for community input as the process to identify options to explore moves forward.

Following a few announcements, including a continuation of the discussion of the Draft Master Plan at the September meeting and a reminder that the public hearing on the Plan would be Sept. 18th, this meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Helene Rosenheim

Helene Rosenheim
Recording Secretary

People in attendance: Michael Ackerman, Gerry Adcock, Khalid Afzal, Carey Alley, Mark Anchor, Mary Barber, Kathy Basye, Robert Bell, Ron Berger, Art Brodsky, Joe Buffington, Rick Coburn, Allison Corbett, Maryellen Corbett, Leslie Cronin, Bill Davis, Pedro Del Valle, Mary Dolen, Chris Doyle, Alice Dickerson, Harvey Dickerson, Dave Eskenazi, Mark Feinroth, Brian Flinn, Chuck Graefe, Grace Grohs, Robert Hails, Anthony Innocenti, Anne Kaiser, Darrell Kelly, John G. Kerekes, Polly Knight, Lt. Demetri C. Kornegay, Debbie Koski, Andrea Latish, Angela LeBouer, Heidi Leinnewebber, Ken Lubel, Jim Lynch, Matty Mainen, Mariann & Don Miller, Karen & Harry Montgomery, Astrid Pages, Art Paholski, Lois Parker, Chris Patton, Ellen Quirk, Roy Peck, Susan Petrocci, Chet Poslusny, Amy Rathbun, Helene Rosenheim, Don Schmelter, Robin Shea, Mark Singer, Stephen Smet, Clara Smith, Larry Solomon, Lisa & Herb Sutcliffe, Herman Taylor, Scott Wolfson, Nancy Wendt, Molly Yankanich, and Chuck Young