



Greater Olney Civic Association

Post Office Box 212 Olney, Maryland 20830

www.goca.org

MINUTES –October 14, 2003

The meeting was called to order by President Stephen Smet. Following introductions, the September minutes were approved with 1 correction adding the text of John Lyons' motion on page 1 that GOCA support Park & Planning's (P&P) construction of a skateboard park in Olney Manor Park on some portion of the L-shaped parking lot behind Ball Field 1 and adjacent to Georgia Ave, hereafter known as Site 5. The agenda was approved with no additions or corrections.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

- Officer John DeSales, a crime analyst with District 4 Police reported that there had been 5 incidents of vandalism in Olney Oaks, mostly to vehicles that had been classified as hate crimes. It appears to have been done by juveniles. One of the juveniles in the car called the police to say he had not done any of the vandalism and he was willing to identify the others in the car who had done it. Several males who live in Olney were identified. They are high school aged, mostly from Good Counsel High School. The police do not know yet if they are connected to any other incidents. Judy Young, an Olney resident, noted the article in the Washington Post about the incident and that she had spoken to the Sherwood High School administration because of her concern about the incident. She was also going to attend a meeting of the Northeast Montgomery County Clergy Association the next day to ask them to consider making a statement against these kinds of acts and supporting some kind of community response such as a candlelighting vigil. Terri Hogan noted that she had spoken to the police and they indicated to her that the article in the Post had exaggerated the situation. Councilmember Mike Knapp indicated that he would be willing to organize a meeting on vandalism if the community was interested in doing that. John Lyons suggested that GOCA take a position against these types of acts and moved that:

GOCA RESOLVES THAT IT ABHORS AND CONDEMNS, IN THE STRONGEST TERMS, THE VANDALISM THAT OCCURRED IN THE OLNEY AREA DURING THE WEEKEND OF OCTOBER 10TH-12TH, AND THAT REPORTEDLY INCLUDED EXPRESSIONS OF HATRED BASED ON THE RACE OR ETHNICITY OF THE INTENDED TARGETS OF THE VANDALISM; AND CONVEYS OUR REGRETS TO THOSE INVOLVED.

The motion was seconded by Art Brodsky, and passed unanimously.

It was agreed that a candlelighting vigil was a good idea and that GOCA would be willing to have a representative read this statement there. Helene Rosenheim would work with Judy to help organize the vigil.

- Del. Karen Montgomery announced that there were 2 positions open on Agricultural Preservation Commission and on the Rustic Road Advisory Committee. Also, she had heard that there were drug sales occurring on school buses, and the community may want to take some action.

- Arnold Gordon encouraged people to attend the Norbeck Meadows Association Meeting where they will be discussing the proposed Annual Growth Policy and the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinances. The meeting is on Wednesday, Oct. 29th at 7:30 pm at Cashell Elem. School. Cary Lamari, Pres, Civic Federation, and Mark Elridge, with Park & Planning will be on the panel and Susan Petrocci will moderate.

- Ed Weisel reported that WMATA has cut bus service along Georgia Avenue again. Service to Leisure World has been reduced by about 50%. A new schedule had just gone into effect in September and now they are making more changes, again with no opportunity for public comment. Now, there is no evenness in the scheduled service with some arriving at the Park & Ride Lot at 12 after the hour and others at 24 after the hour. Without a schedule in hand or having memorized the schedule, a person would not easily know when to expect a bus. The convenience of the passengers seems to be their last concern. Ed plans to talk to the Transportation and Public Safety Committee of the Mid-County Citizens Advisory Board to enlist their assistance.

OFFICERS/COMMITTEE REPORTS

President's Report - Stephen Smet reported that:

- The Park & Planning Commission's Planning Board will officially close the record for comments on the Draft Olney Master Plan on October 17th. However, the staff and the Planning Board will continue to accept and consider comments all through the process prior to their final approval of the version being forwarded to the County Council.

There are 3 upcoming workshops on the ICC Study on Nov 13, 15, and 19. The meeting on the 15th is at Blake His from 9 am -2 pm and on the 19th at Bohrer Park in Gaithersburg from 2:00-8:30 pm. He will invite Sam Raker, the State Highway Community Outreach Coordinator, to the next GOCA meeting.

Correspondence Report – Don Schmelter reported that we received:

- a letter from Timothy Duncan from the Marian Fathers Assisted Living Development is planning to add 45 townhouses to their property, but they may not be elderly housing.

Treasurer's Report - Roy Peck reported that we have a balance of \$7,583.58 with \$200 in outstanding bills.

Olney Chamber of Commerce Report – Joe Buffington reported that Community Night was a great success and he thanked all who came and encouraged others who didn't to plan to attend next year.

Membership Committee - John Lyons reported that there was no update.

Land Use Committee – John Lyons reported that there were no items outside of the Master Plan that would be discussed later.

SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

Development Proposal for the Freeman Property on Rte. 108 in the Upper Rock Creek Planning Area - – Barbara Sears, Linowes & Blocher, representing the Pulte- Del Webb developers introduced Steve Kaniglio from Pulte. Steve indicated that Del Webb is the largest producer of senior housing developments and Pulte recently bought them. They are one of the largest builders in Montgomery County and recently build houses near Sherwood High School and are now building on the Wheaton Lumber site in Wheaton. They looked at consumers in the housing market to see where the holes are in the market and found that it was in the area of senior housing.

Pulte first looked at a site on Batchellors Forest Rd, but found it not appropriate for the type of project they are envisioning – middle-income affordable housing for people 55 and older with lots of amenities. They feel the Freeman property on Rte. 108 is the best property in the County for this type of development. With the Upper Rock Creek and Olney Master Plan processes both being underway, they felt this was a good opportunity to design this project together with the community. They are not tied to a number of units. They do not expect it to be high-rise or condominiums, but more likely single-family and villa units for "active adults" People 55+ are the largest percentage of the population in the County and they have the highest incomes. A lot of this group move out of the County, but most that move, move near their current homes. They will not disturb the existing tree stands, but will build in the existing fields. Under current zoning the property would yield 66 units. If they built it under the proposed Rural Neighborhood Cluster zone, they would build in the same areas. In the Upper Rock Creek Draft Plan now before the County Council, it will yield 220 units. They will be proposing a higher density of 1 story units. The units will be single-family, probably between 1,500 – 2,200 sq. feet with options for a second bedroom and bath on a second floor. They are proposing holding a charette with the community to design the project. The site is 339 acres, and more than 51%, possibly more, would remain undeveloped.

The demands this project would make on public facilities is low, except for fire and rescue. Like Leisure World, there will not be any school aged children. Traffic generation for a substantially higher number of units for active adults is lower than peak hour traffic for other types of housing with fewer units. For example, in a study they did, they found that 135 single-family units yielded 109 trips; 528 active adults yielded 90 trips and 726 active adults yielded 122 trips. The sewer line would only be made available for this type of housing on this property. With their site in Sandy Spring, they dedicated the open space area to John Chirtea's group, Greater Sandy Spring Green Space, for custodianship and they would do something similar here.

There will be a hearing on October 21st before the County Council to hear testimony on the Upper Rock Creek Master Plan. He asked that even if GOCA did not have a position on the proposal yet, that we consider submitting testimony indicating that we feel it is an interesting idea worth discussing to see where it will go.

Sandy Spring Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Project – Erin Johnson, the Outreach Coordinator for CSA reported that community supported agriculture is a 25 year old system of subscription farming that may save small organic farmers. Anyone can be a member of the Sandy Spring CSA. They will be investing in a group of Maryland-based organic farmers who deliver produce from May to October. Each member will get a weekly share of the produce that is harvested that week. A share costs \$545 per season and will serve a family of 4 or 2 vegetarians, and can be shared with other households. Pick up is on

Mondays between 3:00 – 7:00 pm in the Sandy Spring Friends Nursing Home parking lot and any unclaimed food goes to the Friends Home. January 1st is the deadline for signing up.

OLD BUSINESS

Draft Olney Master Plan – Steve Smet and John Lyons presented an overview of the testimony at the September 25th public hearing at P&P on the Draft Olney Master Plan. Several developers presented new plans with requests for higher density than the staff was proposing. In the triangle formed at Norbeck Rd & Georgia Ave on the northeast corner, the Draft Master Plan is proposing to go from RE-2 to RE-2/TDR-2 which means increasing from 1 unit per 2 acres to 4 units per 2 acres. Winchester Homes has purchased 35 of the 87 lots in that wedge. The rest, so far, are not interested in selling. Winchester feels this is a good site for increasing the density because it is near an intersection that is planned for improvement, and is near the park and ride lot, which they feel is second best to being near a METRO stop. The current zoning on the 35 acres would yield 70 units. They want a planned development, PD-7 zone that would yield 210-240 units on the 35 acres. Dave Eskenazi noted that this is a development proposal that seems to be resulting from the expectation that the ICC will lessen traffic through that intersection.

Another development is in the Southeast Quadrant. A representative from the Hyde family testified that they supported the RNC zone, but felt that the 1 unit per 3 acres density proposed was too low and should be substantially higher.. They also felt they needed more flexibility in the design than the existing Master Plan language. The Northwest Investment Group has the property that the Good Counsel site is being carved out They have 2 access points on Old Baltimore and public sewer. They also want to increase the density. They suggested that the Rural Cluster zone in place there now was a mistake and makes no sense since most of it is surrounded by RE-2 zoning. They see it as a transition zone between the St. Andrew Kim Church and Senior Housing and Good Counsel High School. They felt there had been a wave of changes to this area that were not residential uses. So this would be a transition from the non-residential uses to the residential development south of there and so should be higher than the 1 unit per 3 acres being proposed.

There was also a representative for the Pollinger's Trotter's Glen property that also asked for higher density. The draft calls for 58 units and they are asking for 80 which is more like the density in the Sandy Spring Master Plan for the RNC zone. They did not describe much more of what they had in mind.

There were representatives at the hearing from the Washington Christian Academy who are interested in developing on the Gandel property. It is a 59 acre site near the ICC and cemetery on Georgia Ave. They have a contract to buy that expires in 3 years. They will need to get sewer and can as an institutional use. But, this is an uphill battle because they will need a grinder pump which P&P and the Dept. of Public Works and Transportation (DPWT) don't like. The buildings would be 35'. The school will be K-12 with 1,100 students. The high school will have 500-600 students. John noted that the 1980 Master Plan calls for preserving the bucolic character of the southeast quadrant and the Draft Master Plan talks about preserving it as well and this would be a dramatic change in the character, especially with Good Counsel High School at the other end of Batchellors Forest.

SEROCA expressed concern about the proposed density for the Southeast Quadrant because they feel it is too high if the goal of the Plan is to preserve the rural character of that area. They are suggesting that the density in the Rural Neighborhood Cluster zone being proposed for use in this area be decreased to 1 unit per 4 acres or 1 unit per 3.5 acres. The concern with the current recommendation in the plan is that even though their projected yields are lower than the yields permitted under the current zoning, in reality, because large portions of the area will not perk, the yield projected under the current zoning would never likely be achieved. It was suggested that it might be appropriate to provide for higher density in the Golden Bear area in exchange for the lower density in this area which contains the headwaters for the Northwest Branch and, so, is more environmentally sensitive.

Ron Berger moved that:

GOCA, FOR ENVIRONMENTAL REASONS AND IN LIGHT OF THE RURAL ENTRYWAY THAT IS TO BE PRESERVED IN THE SOUTHEAST QUADRANT, URGE THE PLANNING BOARD TO ADOPT LOWER DENSITIES FOR THE PROPERTIES IN THE SOUTHEAST QUADRANT THAN THOSE PROPOSED IN THE STAFF DRAFT, AND IN NO EVENT TO ADOPT HIGHER DENSITIES AS REQUESTED BY CERTAIN DEVELOPERS AND PROPERTY OWNERS.

The motion was seconded by Ed Weisel, and passed unanimously. It was also noted that there was no discussion of light pollution, so it was recommended that this be added to the analysis of this area.

Some additional language was suggested relating to the middle school site on Cashell, similar to the language for the Bowie Mill school site. The consensus was that the plan identifies more sites than are needed to yield the amount of affordable housing the plan suggests be added to the Olney area. And we would like to see some language added that notes that sites identified for affordable housing do not necessarily need to be developed that way if the needs have be met through development elsewhere in the planning area.

It was also suggested that because the face of the town center area will have 40' or 4-story building lining the Georgia Ave and Rte. 108, we should ask for a minimum set back so that the buildings are not so imposing, such as the current office building on the west side of Georgia just south of Morningwood.

It was suggested that GOCA's comments should stress our support for the proposed above-grade improvements to the Rte. 97/28 intersection. This improvement needs to move forward.

It was noted that, unlike the previous master plan, this plan addresses more the lack of connectivity between developments and the County's parks and trails.

With respect to roads, it was noted that the standard for arterial roads is that they connect State roads and have no driveways entering directly on them. Bowie Mill does that, but it goes through a residential development, so the recommendation is that it be downgraded. And, if Bowie Mill is being downgraded, then all of Cashell should be downgraded as well.

The schedule for the Planning Board's worksessions on the draft is as follows:

Land Use in the Southeast Quadrant - Nov 6th

Finish Land Use in the Southeast Quadrant & Bowie Mill Rd Issues – Dec 4th

TBA – Jan 8th – Tentative

Town Center – Jan 28

Silo Inn Development Proposal – Steve Smet reported that there seem to be development plans for the Silo Inn property, but no one has seen them. There is an issue associated with the site of the continuation of a no-conforming uses. In 1994 there was a letter that stated the use had been abandoned. We are drafting a letter to go to the Department of Permitting Services which asked us to certify that the restaurant was not operating and the parking lot was not available for public parking. John will attach a copy of the Gazette article about the building being demolished.

NEW BUSINESS

Shaare Tefileh Plans to relocate to Olney – Roy Peck reported that the Shaare Tefileh Synagogue had purchased land on the west side of Georgia Ave, south of the Silo Inn property and north of Emory Rd. To access the site from Georgia Avenue cars will have to make u-turns in and out. It is opposite the Golf Learning Center, and the u-turns would be at the break for the fire department or at Old Baltimore Rd. He suggested that they should contact P&P while the master plan is being reviewed to discuss better access with a cut in the median between the service road and the main roadway.

Development on N. High Street – Steve Smet reported that a 2,500 sq. foot building is being built on N. High Street and they have requested that the abandonment of a part of the road that was used in the Master Plan as a part of the road network intended to improve the flow of traffic around the town center area along with an unbuilt alley. It was noted that abandonment is a separate process from the site approval process and it will take the master plan recommendation into account is considering the abandonment request.

Removal of Trash Containers from County Parks – Arnold Gordon reported that the Civic Federation had passed a motion objecting to the recent decision of the Director of the Maryland – National Parks and Planning Commission to eliminate trash cans from all County parks as a cost saving measure by eliminating trash collection costs. Park users will be asked, instead, to take their trash with them. They are concerned that people will not take their trash with them which will lead to the attraction of vermin to the parks and will become a health hazard. He agreed with there position and felt that GOCA should adopt a similar position. So he moved that:

GOCA SUPPORT THE FOLLOWING MOTION PASSED BY THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY CIVIC FEDERATION AT THEIR OCTOBER 13TH MEETING:

“THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY CIVIC FEDERATION DEPLORES THE DECISION OF THE DIRECTOR OF PARKS AND PLANNING COMMISSION TO REMOVE, WITHOUT EXCEPTION, ALL TRASH CONTAINERS FROM, AND ELIMINATE ALL TRASH COLLECTION, IN OUR PARKS. THE FEDERATION CONSIDERS THIS “ECONOMY” MEASURE MISGUIDED AND CERTAIN TO LEAD, OVER TIME, TO EVEN GREATER EXPENDITURES TO ELIMINATE THE VERMIN INEVITABLY ATTRACTED TO OUR PARKS BY THIS ACTION, AND TO DEAL WITH THE ASSOCIATED HEALTH HAZARDS. THE FEDERATION CALLS ON THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE AND COUNCIL TO INTERVENE IN THIS MATTER ON AN URGENT BASIS AND REQUEST ALL AFFILITATED ORGANIZATIONS TO MAKE SIMILAR REPRESENTATIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE AND COUNCIL.”

The motion was seconded by Roy Peck, and passed unanimously with little discussion.

Discussion of Special Presentations

Pulte-Del Webb proposal for the Freeman property on Rte. 108 – Rick Coburn moved that:

GOCA ADDRESS THE PROPOSED FREEMAN PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL TO THE COUNTY COUNCIL USING THE FOLLOWING LANGUAGE AS A GUIDE:

“THE GREATER OLNEY CIVIC ASSOCIATION HAS RECENTLY LEARNED OF A PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT FOR THE FREEMAN PROPERTY (CONTAINED IN THE UPPER ROCK CREEK MASTER PLAN AREA, BUT HEAVILY IMPACTING OLNEY). THE PROPOSAL REPORTEDLY CONTAINS 718 HOUSING UNITS. THIS PROPOSED USE DIFFERS GREATLY FROM THE CURRENT RE-1 ZONING WHICH MAY YIELD ONE UNIT PER FIVE ACRES, OR 66 UNITS, USING INDIVIDUAL SEPTIC SYSTEMS. IT ALSO DIFFERS GREATLY FROM THE PLANNING BOARD RECOMMENDED RNC ZONING, WHICH WOULD ALLOW 110 UNITS USING COMMUNITY SEWER SERVICE.

GOCA IS CONCERNED THAT THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT IS SO OUT OF TOUCH WITH THE CHARACTER OF THE AREA THAT A MASSIVE PUBLIC OUTCRY WILL BE INEVITABLE. ALREADY, NUMEROUS OLNEY CIVIC GROUPS ARE MEETING TO VIGOROUSLY FIGHT THE PROPOSED USE OF THIS VERY SENSITIVE AREA. THE PUBLIC OPPOSITION, WHICH HAS JUST BEGUN, IS ALREADY SIGNIFICANT.

GOCA BELIEVES THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT’S SUBMISSION DIRECTLY TO THE COUNTY COUNCIL MEMBERS IS AN OBVIOUS ATTEMPT TO CIRCUMVENT THE PLANNING BOARD AND THE NORMAL MASTER PLAN PROCESS AND IS AN IDEA THAT IS EXTREMELY OUT OF CHARACTER FOR THIS AREA. IN ORDER TO SAVE THE DEVELOPER, THE COUNTY, AND THE CITIZENS OF TWO MASTER PLAN AREAS AN EXPENDITURE OF MUCH TIME, ENERGY, AND MONEY, GOCA URGES, IN THE STRONGEST TERMS POSSIBLE, THAT THE COUNCIL NOT CONSIDER THIS A PART OF THE UPPER ROCK CREEK MASTER PLAN AND THAT IT BE SUBMITTED TO THE PLANNING BOARD TO BE EVALUATED IN THE PROPER MANNER.”

The motion was seconded by Arnold Gordon and passed unanimously.

It was noted that this is not likely to be made part of the master plan, but the developer will likely be going for a planned rural cluster zoning change.

After the following announcements, the meeting was adjourned:

- The Olney Rotary Club is sponsoring a music fest by Todd Snider on Thursday, November 13th at the Inn at Brookeville Farms. It includes a 7 course meal for \$25, about 1/3rd the normal price. The event will benefit Camp Fantastic.
- The County Council worksessions on the Upper Rock Creek draft master plan are scheduled for Oct 21st & 23rd. It was suggested that people email their concerns to Council President Mike Subin. It was also noted that this will be the first master plan that many of the Council members will be considering. This is the first master plan being reviewed since the Potomac master plan was approved and they got most of what they wanted. It is important that the Council know of the community’s concerns and preferences.

Respectfully submitted,

Helene Rosenheim

Helene Rosenheim
Recording Secretary

People in attendance: Carew Alley, Jackie Benn, Ron Berger, Greg Branne, Art Brodsky, Joe Buffington, Jack Carey, Rick Coburn, Martha Cunningham, Bob Cunius, Helen Dodson, Dave Eskenazi, Barbara Falcigno, Jay Feinberg, Mark Feinroth, Brenda Finkel, Stephen Fye, Tom Gallagher, Arnold Gordon, Grasce Grohs, Steven Gudelsky, Cynthia & Allan Halper, Terri Hogan (Gazette), Erin Johnson, Steve Kaniglio, Mike Knapp, Rona Kramer, Bruce Lipka, Ken Lubel, John Lyons, Sharlene Monroe, Karen & Harry Montgomery, Brian Oettinger, Art Paholski, Meg Pease-Fye, Roy Peck, Susan Petrocci, Mark Pever, Kathy Ravenscroft, Helene Rosenheim, Don Schmelter, Barbara Sears, Robin Shea, Ken Silverstein, Larry Soloman, Ann Sprinkle, Emmet Tydings, Ed Wallington, Ed Weisel, Nancy Wendt, Pam Witczak, Chuck Young, Judy Young, and Rich Young.