



Greater Olney Civic Association

Post Office Box 212 Olney, Maryland 20830

www.goca.org

MINUTES – December 9, 2003

The meeting was called to order by President Stephen Smet. Following introductions, the October minutes were approved with no additions or corrections; and the November minutes were approved with 2 corrections & no additions (pg.7, ¶ 7 replaced “presented to” with “obtained by” and pg 9. In 7, changed 1998 to 1996). The agenda was approved with no additions and 1 correction (Rte 97/28 changed to Rte 97/Randolph Rd).

OFFICERS/COMMITTEE REPORTS

President’s Report - Steve Smet asked Stephen Harris, delegate from Victoria Springs HOA to report on the status of development plans for the Silo Inn property. Stephen H. reported that Victoria Springs was not opposed to the current proposal to use part of the 3 acres for a 26,000 sq. ft. strip shopping center. However, they had written to the Dept. of Permitting Services (DPS) because they questioned the information the developer had given them that he had a valid special exception to use the 1 acre of residential land on the southern end of the site for parking. Ms. Scala-Demby of DPS has since told their association that the developer must apply for a special exception for this use because the grandfathered use has expired. Steve Smet noted that we are watching to be sure they are not issued a building permit mistakenly because of the earlier finding by DPS that the grandfathered use was still valid.

- Steve noted that GOCA had received a request for support from Heon Enterprise for a proposed use of the 5 acre site on Rte. 108 west of Dr. Ring’s chiropractic office, previously considered for a government center.

- Steve also noted that consideration of Fire Bill 36-03 by the County Council has been postponed till June, after the budget discussions are finished. The Sandy Spring Volunteer Fire Department will have some worksessions to help the community understand the legislation and the anticipated impacts.

Treasurer’s Report - Steve Smet reported for Roy Peck that we have approximately \$7,500 in the bank. The only outstanding bill is a \$100 tax bill, and we received a donation from the Cherrywood HOA for fireworks.

Olney Chamber of Commerce Report – Joe Buffington reported that they have gotten plans approved for the expansion of the Olney Police Satellite Station and are waiting for the permit to begin the digging needed. The expanded facility will be on the same site, but will go into the grassy slope that separates the Bank and the Giant Food parking lots. Joe thanked the civic and homeowners associations that had donated to the project. The funds to support the satellite facility come from the community. They did get \$10,000 from Chief Moose.

Joe also noted that Dudley Finneyfrock, Jr. is selling their property and that Dominos is a possible buyer.

Membership Committee – John Lyons welcomed the delegate from Norbeck Hills that will be joining GOCA. This brings the number of member associations to 25.

Land Use Committee – John Lyons reported that last month GOCA had voted to oppose the proposal from Pulte-Dell Webb for a 538 unit active adult community on the Freeman property on the south side of Rte. 108 near Johnson’s Nursery. He presented testimony before the Park and Planning (P&P) Planning Board that recommended that the County Council should stay with the Upper Rock Creek (URC) Master Plan proposal as they had forwarded it to them. The Council’s PHED Committee has looked at the URC land use issues at their worksessions, including the Planning Board recommendations. They have been talking about some densities that had been recommended to be .33 units per acres which is approximately 1 unit per 3 acres. The staff is now saying it might have been more appropriate for the Freeman property to be .4 or .5 units per acre. John suggested that with the somewhat fluid position of the staff, he recommended that GOCA send a letter to the Council reiterating its position. While the exact Pulte-Dell Webb proposal may have gone away, the issue of density in the URC plan is still open. He noted also that the next Council worksession on the Olney Master Plan will be on Jan. 8th when they will be discussing land use issues, particularly the southeast quadrant. Then the next session will be Feb. 5th.

Susan Petrocci noted that the County Council is still considering the proposal submitted by the Pulte-Dell Webb developers for the Freeman property and the related zoning text amendment which could have impacts not only in the southeast quadrant of the Olney Master Plan, but throughout the County and that it would be prudent for GOCA to restate their position presented in their testimony before P&P directly to the County Council. Therefore, Susan moved that:

GOCA SHOULD SEND A LETTER TO THE COUNTY COUNCIL BY JANUARY 1, 2004 OPPOSING THE PULTE-DELL WEBB PROPOSAL ON THE FREEMAN PROPERTY. AND, THAT THE LANGUAGE FOR THE LETTER SHOULD BE TAKEN FROM JOHN LYONS TESTIMONY BEFORE THE PLANNING BOARD, AND THAT GOCA SUPPORT THE PLANNING BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THIS PROPERTY IN THE DRAFT UPPER ROCK CREEK MASTER PLAN.

The motion was seconded by Art Brodsky. John summarized the points he made in his testimony: GOCA opposed the proposal because (1) the developer had not shown a need for this project in Olney, (2) there were environmental impacts, (3) its late submission undermined the integrity of the master plan process by undercutting a carefully crafted compromise position, and (4) it required a zoning text amendment that would make unnecessary changes to the RNC zone, especially with the existence of the Planned Retirement Community zone that would have Countywide impacts. The motion passed overwhelmingly with little additional discussion. Susan asked that a copy of the letter be provided to Marlene Michaelson on the Council staff. Karen Montgomery suggested that individual civic and homeowner association also write to the Council.

Transportation Committee – Dave Eskenazi reported that he had attended a focus group meeting on the Rte. 97/Randolph Road Intersection improvements. This meeting seemed more contentious than previous meetings. The plan will not be ready until mid-2006 with a 2-3 year construction timetable. So, it would not be completed until mid-2009 at the earliest. But with the State's current money problems, it could be substantially later than that. The State's priority is the Randolph Rd/Montrose Rd/Rte. 355 project. There will be a public hearing on the Rte. 97/Randolph Rd plan in February or March. While Olney is peripheral to this intersection, this intersection does have an effect on residents in our community trying to get downtown.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

- Nancy Wendt with the Olney Coalition noted their group, which had begun by working with the Upper Rock Creek Coalition was kicking off three new projects that are more focused on the Olney area. They will be looking at (1) traffic impacts with the demise of the policy area review in the Annual Growth Policy, (2) the impact on traffic of the full build out of the proposed Olney Master Plan, and (3) alternative uses of the Bowie Mill Rd. school site. Barbara Falcigno reported that they had gone out and actually counted cars and they are getting use of some County equipment to assist with their traffic count. They hope the information they collect can be used as base information as they do some of the analysis they expect to be doing with respect to Muncaster Mill Rd and Bowie Mill Rd. She also asked that people let them know of other streets they think need analysis. Steve Smet noted that Mike Kelley has accident data from the County and the State and that Dave Eskenazi would be a good resource for them.

- Karen Montgomery noted that (1) on January 7th there will be a Sandy Spring Town Meeting with State and local representatives to look at a number of issues and (2) she will be staying in Annapolis this year during the legislative session from January – April. The phone number at her desk is 410 841-3308 and her aide's number is 301 858-3380. She encouraged people to call or visit.

- Jay Feinberg noted that he was glad to see progress being made on the police satellite facility. The community has done a lot and it seemed to be falling apart. He felt that it was time to revitalize efforts to get the Council to add funding to improve the level of police response in the area.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

Washington Christian Academy – Steve Robins, attorney for the Washington Christian Academy, introduced Larry Danner, Headmaster for the Academy and Dan Drew, a member of their Board of Trustees, and Steve Rhis, their engineer. Steve noted that the Academy was established in 1957, and now meet at Arcola Elementary School. Their lease is about to run out so they have been searching for some time for a site where they can build a school. They believe the 60-acre Gandel property on Batchellors Forest Rd, behind the cemetery on Georgia Ave. After meeting with the Southeast Rural Olney Civic Association (SEROCA) and GOCA, they feel they have made changes that makes their plan more compatible with the neighborhood and with Olney. And, they are eager to continue working with the community.

Mr. Danner noted that the school had been formed in the 50's by three churches with a vision of a diverse school enrollment, racially and economically. They now have a 41% minority enrollment, and about 1/3rd are on financial assistance. The bulk of their students are from Silver Spring and Rockville. The others come from all over the County. He noted as well that they had met with SEROCA and had adjusted their plans in response to the concerns raised at that and their meeting with GOCA.. Mr. Rhis described the layout of the plan. The entrance is angled with an s-curve and landscaping to minimize the direct view into the site. It has a traditional campus layout. The education buildings are on a grid oriented off of two roads through the property. There is a football field approximately 10' lower than the area where the school is and their baseball field is an additional 8' lower. The site also includes 12 residential units to the west of the entry road that will be used to house some of their teaching staff. There are 3 storm water management ponds. The buildings nearest to the existing homes on adjacent properties are built into the slope of the land so the visual impact of their height is minimized. There is a 12' drop in the height of the land from the front to the back of the property. They have responded to SEROCA's request that the buildings be clustered and about half of the property will remain forested.

The following points were made during the questions and answers:

- This will be a K-12 school. They currently have 340 students, but over the next 20 years they hope to increase their enrollment to 1,100 students, but they don't know if they will reach that number. They would like to break ground as soon as possible

because of the situation with their lease in their current building. They are submitting their plans and are working with the master plan process. They hope to be built within 2 years.

- They will be using extensive busing that will include nearly 100% of their student body. They are working with Ron Welke at Park and Planning on their transportation plan.
- There are currently 45 staff members and will expand to 100 when they are at full capacity. They do plan to offer housing to some of their teachers as a perk. It is a benefit to the school as well to have faculty on site. They do not plan to offer their homes for commercial sales, but will use them all themselves.
- They are willing to work with the community to see how some of their facilities such as the fields could be used by the community.
- They will not have any weekend church services on the weekends, and anticipate having as little activity on the weekends as possible.
- They began looking for a site about 2 ½ years ago. They did talk with Good Counsel about their existing site, but it was not available to them.
- While this seems to be a nice plan, it is not in a vacuum. Good Counsel High School and Farquhar Middle School are also on Batchellors Forest which is being designated as a rustic road in the new master plan.
- The entrance is designed to make it harder to come west on Batchellors Forest. They also suggested that the rustic road designation start after their property, about 1,500 ft from Georgia Ave.
- The northern loop of the northern alignment of the proposed Inter-County Connector cuts across their property. They are opposing that alignment and are supporting the master plan alignment.
- They do not know whether they will need to pay real estate taxes on the 12 residences, but will look into that.
- Tuition for the high school is \$8,800 and less for the middle and elementary schools.
- The tallest building height is 50 ft. for the gym and the Fine Arts building on land that is at a 420' elevation, approximately 70' higher than Batchellors Forest. But the trees in between are 30'-50' tall. Along Georgia Ave, their buildings are about 2,500' from the road and the elevation drops as you move away from Georgia Ave.
- They do not have a lighting plan yet. We noted the problems we had with the lighting at golf driving range on Norbeck Rd, so suggested that they would need to be careful in the way the light is directed.
- There will be 200-250 parking spaces. People will drive to the school for special events. They are talking to the County regarding using satellite lots for parking and bussing from there. They are looking at leasing buses versus owning them. It was noted that County buses go through Olney Manor Park.
- Steve Robins can be reached at 301 657-0747 and Larry Danner at 301 649-1070

OLD BUSINESS

PROJECT CHANGE Funding Suggestion – Ellen Lent noted that PROJECT CHANGE started in 1998 and is still growing. They are back to talk about an idea they presented to GOCA about 6 months ago. They have completed a survey at Sherwood High School and found that a large number of Olney teenagers are driving out of the area for recreation with an increased likelihood of accidents with inexperienced drivers. Also, that of the 1,000+ respondents, 29% of the senior stay out passed 2 am, and 23% of the freshman do so also. The students spend approximately \$9,600 a week and of that \$3.5 million leaves the Olney area with just the students from Sherwood. Also, if the students stay in Olney, many of the parents stay in Olney as well. With the younger teen students, parents have to take them to the events outside Olney and then tend to stay in those areas, spending time in restaurants and stores there while waiting for their children instead of driving back and forth to Olney.

Amanda Partington, the current PROJECT CHANGE President noted that she joined the organization 2 years ago, and they had been talking about a space for youth to go to and hang out with such features as a TV, video games, a cyber café, a snack bar, space for a band, music lessons, and practice space. They have expanded the idea to making the space available to others such as senior citizens, especially during the time students are in school, but still focusing on music related uses. They also did a safety belt check of students as they were leaving school one day and found that a number do not use their safety belts. They have done activities at school to help build a sense of community among the students. They helped run a “Why the Hate” program to increase student sensitivity to racial issues. Some of their members are working with Karen Montgomery on a project relating to mercury in the water with a goal of developing some legislation. Their members are involved in activities in the community in many ways. Most of their members are students at Sherwood High School, but they are also trying to solicit participants from Magruder and Blake High Schools.

Ellen noted that they hope to find a space to build a facility, but they are also looking for an interim center as well, both to be multi-use and multi-generational. They are in discussions with Olney Theatre about using their space for things such as open-mike nights. They are looking at other places and will continue to use Longwood for parties. They have had a discussion with Peter Monge, President of Montgomery General Hospital about the possibility of building the music center on the hospital grounds west of Prince Philip Dr. They are also looking at other needs in the community such as lodgings, more musical instruction space. The Olney Community Band would be interested in using this kind of space. There are models for non-profit and profit organizations working together to help generate a stream of income that would support the use of the space by the teenagers. It was suggested that they look at the Silo Inn site. They do have parental supervision at all of their events. They believe it is good for the mental health of the teens to have them work with caring adults.

They asked GOCA to ask their member associations to consider passing along a \$1 a month per household (\$12 a year) that would go to PROJECT CHANGE to fund the activities at either the interim or permanent center. There are a lot of people interested and ready to go, such as the Freeman Foundation, if GOCA can get this funding source started. Amanda noted that while teenagers like to go to events and places outside of Olney, they also like to have someplace to go in Olney, especially on weekdays. Ellen noted that there is a serious alcohol and drug problem in the area, in large part as a result of boredom more than anything else, and we have students with a large disposable income that could be spent in Olney.

Draft Olney Master Plan – Steve Smet reminded everyone that the public record on the Draft Olney Master Plan, before the Maryland-National Capitol Park & Planning Commission's (P&P) Planning Board, does not close. Steve encouraged anyone that had concerns or suggestions about any part of the Plan to submit their comments to both the Planning Board and to GOCA. He noted that the worksessions before the Planning Board end in April. The Planning Board's draft plan then goes to the County Council in May, and should be through the Council by Fall 2004.

New Development Proposed for the Silo Inn Property – Steve Smet noted that Max Spicer, Department of Permitting Services (DPS) had indicated that the developer will need a special exception to use the residential portion of the property for parking. This will give the community an opportunity for commenting on the proposed use. Khalid Afzal thought they might only need a variance because they were not able to use the grandfathered status. Steve added that GOCA had challenged an earlier decision made by the DPS that the timetable for abandoning the grandfathered status did not begin until they were notified that a use had ceased and the Department had reversed their decision based on the evidence we submitted indicating that the use had ceased well over 4 years ago. Since the grandfathered use has expired, the property will be treated like any commercial and residential property. They will need to go to the Board of Appeals which will then forward the proposal to the P&P for their recommendation on the proposed use. Khalid noted that site plans can be deferred or denied if the Master Plan is being reviewed by the Planning Board at the time the plan is submitted, but he was not certain if the same was true with special exceptions. He thought the decision on a special exception had to be based on the current master plan in force.

We currently do not have any real information on what the property owner is planning, just a statement from the owner that it would be nice and there would not be a 24 hour drive-thru.

Olney Days 2004 – Helene Rosenheim reported that the Planning Committee had considered moving the festival to Memorial Day weekend. However, since the fireworks would have cost more than twice the price, the planners for Joe's Ride did not want to have it that weekend because they would be competing with other major bike rides, the entertainment provided by the Olney Library and the Friends of the Olney Library would be more expensive and more limited, and it would be more difficult to get volunteers, we had decided to stay with the weekend before Memorial Day as it has traditionally been. So, the dates would be May 14th -16th. The Planning Committee will begin meeting in January. Helene invited anyone interested in helping with the planning to contact her.

2003 GOCA Awards Nominations – Helene Rosenheim reported for Ron Berger that the deadline for nominations for this year's annual awards is January 13th, the date of the next GOCA meeting. She noted that we do rely on people out in the community to help us identify individuals and groups that are deserving of receiving this recognition from the community. She noted that the awards are: Citizen of the Year, Contribution to the Community, Olney Heritage, and GOCA Worker of the Year. She reminded everyone of the value of recognizing those who contribute to making Olney such a special community. The awards will be presented at our annual award ceremony on Sunday, March 7th. This year the ceremony will return to Longwood Recreation Center and would not be anything on the order of our 25th Annual celebration last year.

2004 GOCA Officer Nominations – Helene Rosenheim also reported for Ron Berger that he is continuing to contact current officers eligible to continue on in their current offices to see if they are interested in doing so. Then, he will be contacting others to fill any vacant positions. He also asked that anyone who thought they might be interested in taking on more responsibility or had suggestions for individuals they thought would be good candidates to contact him. A slate will be presented at the January meeting, and then voted on at the February meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

Proposed Olney Mill Neighborhood Nature Trail – Dave Eskenazi reported that Olney Mill had been approached by P&P about a year ago with their interest in building a nature trail that would go through parkland, and along the Olney Boys & Girls Freeman Fields, behind Rosa Parks Middle School, through Olney Mill, across to Oakley Cabin and on to Longwood. He had heard recently that it was being considered more actively now. GOCA had invited a representative from P&P, Lyn Coleman, to give a presentation at the January meeting on their proposal for this natural trail; along with a representative from Olney Mill to present their reaction to the proposal which is in its very preliminary phases.

Dennis Twombly, President of the Olney Mill Community Association (OMCA) noted that there are several trails already in existence in the area and the question had come up as to what it would take to connect the trails. P&P is interested in adding this to its trail system and had approached OMCA. They looked at the scope of the proposal, impacts, and costs. Their Board was satisfied with the proposal. Then P&P was interested in the reactions of property owners along the trail. They have had some

opposition to the proposal, some of which is based on misinformation that this would be a hard surface trail. They are now ready to contact others affected by the trail and OMCA and P&P are ready to have some public meetings concerning the proposal.

After a few brief announcements, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Helene Rosenheim

Helene Rosenheim
Recording Secretary

People in attendance: Cameron Adams (BSA Trp 941), Khalid Afzal, Art Brodsky, Joe Buffington, Rick Coburn, Larry Danner, Vincent Dell'Orto, Helen Dodson, Dan Drew, Dave Eskenazi, Barbara Falcigno, Jay Feinberg, Paul Gorman, Stephen Harris, Bill Hicks, Robert Hausman, Terri Hogan (Gazette), Claire Iseli (Marilyn Praisner's office), Mike Kelley, Ellen Lent, John Lyons, Karen Montgomery, Astrid Pages, Amanda Partington, Susan Petrocci, Steve Rhis; Helene Rosenheim, Don Schmelter, Ken Silverstein, Steve Smet, Dennis Twombly, and Nancy Wendt