



Greater Olney Civic Association

Post Office Box 212 Olney , Maryland 20830

www.goca.org

MINUTES – July 13, 2004

The meeting was called to order by President Steve Smet. Following introductions, the June minutes were approved with no corrections or additions. The agenda was approved with no additions or one deletion – the report on the Bowie Mill site.

OFFICERS/COMMITTEE REPORTS

Treasurer's Report - Roy Peck reported that the current balance is \$6,535.20.

Membership Committee Report – John Lyons reported that we had received dues from Williamsburg Village which brings the total of paid up associations to 18. He noted he had done an analysis of the associations that had not paid this year and will reach out more aggressively to get them to be re-involved.

Land Use Committee Report – John Lyons noted that Park and Planning (P&P) has not yet received a final traffic study from the Washington Christian Academy. So, he was not sure yet what they are proposing for the intersection of Batchellors Forest Rd and Georgia Avenue with respect to traffic heading southbound on Georgia.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

- Helene Rosenheim noted that the Mid-County Regional Services Center is looking for volunteers to staff the Olney Satellite Office on Tuesdays and Thursdays mornings from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm. The volunteers will provide information and referral services to individuals who walk into or call the Satellite Office. The volunteers will be receive training to familiarize them with the various County agencies and their missions. Helene encouraged anyone interested or who knows someone that would be interested in volunteering to contact her either at 301 570-2884, 240 77-8107, or by email to helene.rosenheim@montgomerycountymd.gov. Helene added that a group of volunteers can cover the hours.

- Jim Donlin, BF Saul's property manager for the Olney Shopping Center presented a design sketch for a "monumental sign" for the Center that they propose to place on the corner of Rtes. 97 and 108 in place of the pylon shopping center sign on the edge of the parking lot near that corner. The design of the sign was modeled after the Welcome to Olney Sign and the Sherwood High School sign. They are proposing to place the sign in the grassy area between the two sidewalks on the corner near the place where the gazebo had been years ago. The height of the sign is approximately 7' above the grass and the grass is about 3' above the street level. That area is within the State right-of-way, as is the location of the pylon sign. So, they will need to obtain approval from the State Highway Administration (SHA). BF Saul asked GOCA for a letter of support for placing the sign at that location.

The following points were made in discussing the request:

There were a number of concerns about the sign being that far into the State right-of-way. The community agreed years ago to eliminate trees to give the Center more visibility with the agreement to put in an extensive landscape plan on the grassy area between the parking lot and the sidewalk which was not ever completely implemented and the oversized Rite-Aid sign was added to the top of the building, so there is a sense in the community that BF Saul did not act in good faith with the community. It was also suggested that there are a number of other issues that BF Saul needs to address along with putting in a new sign. There needs to be a more comprehensive plan including a landscape plan that would freshen the landscaping and would make the parking lot look less barren. They might need to widen the sidewalks along the stores to add landscaping pots. However, Mr. Donlin indicated that their parking is currently maxed out and they would have to eliminate parking space to do that and that was not likely. It was noted that there were a number of problems with the current parking layout, especially in the rear parking lot and in the area near the entrance on Georgia Ave where parking spaces were added along the end of the building by Popeye's. It was also suggested that they might want to look into connecting the rear parking lot into 3rd Ave, the road north of High Street that has never really been built and is part of the parking lot behind the strip that Mannequin Pis is part of. It was also suggested that GOCA had gotten on board in the past with an agreement with BF Saul that they didn't follow through on, so the community would now need to see a better show of faith before participating in a new agreement. It was also noted that placing the sign between the sidewalks would give the sign for this shopping center equal prominence with community-based signs on the other three corners in the intersection right-of-way that the State widened to enhance the intersection to make it more of a focal point for the community, not a place to advertise the commercial development surrounding the intersection. It was agreed by consensus that BF Saul would need to provide more details about the proposed placement of the sign and its dimensions and exact distances from the roadway, etc. before

GOCA could make a decision on whether to support the proposal. They also asked the name of the contact at SHA that they would need to send information to.

OLD BUSINESS

Draft Olney Master Plan and Rural Neighborhood Cluster Zone Review – Khalid Afzal noted that the County Council had asked P&P to review the implementation of the Rural Neighborhood Cluster (RNC) zone. Some of the questions they were looking at were the kind of developments that had been built in the RNC zones to date as compared to the purpose and mission of the zone. Fred Boyd, also on the P&P staff and the lead planning specialist in the Upper Rock Creek Master Plan review, discussed the process for amending the zone. He noted that they are just beginning the process and will be looking at the zoning ordinance definition and guidance related to the zone for the next several months. The P&P staff will be presenting a draft of the revisions to the definition of the RNC zone to the Planning Board the following Thursday for approval for forwarding to the County Council to be introduced as a zoning text amendment (ZTA). Mr. Boyd noted that large parts of the process are not in the hands of P&P which largely has an advisory role. Within 5 days of introducing the zoning text amendment, the Council will set a public hearing date, but he expects they will have a date in mind when the ZTA is introduced. Once it is introduced, it will be returned to P&P for them to prepare a staff recommendation, even though P&P prepared the ZTA for introduction. There will be a public hearing before P&P before they prepare their recommendation to the County Council. Mr. Boyd has already held several meetings with groups such as the Upper Rock Creek and Olney Coalitions in drafting the ZTA, but hopes to have at least one more meeting before the public hearing. He has been invited to speak on the ZTA before Montgomery County Civic Federation and hopes to do that. The P&P hearing is likely to be in early September. The Planning, Housing, and Education Committee gets the P&P recommendation along with the input from their public hearing, reviews them and then makes its recommendation to the full Council. The County Executive will also have an opportunity to comment on the ZTA and it will be looked at by County agency staff that would be implementing it.

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

- The RNC zone has been used in Sandy Spring, and is proposed for use in the draft Upper Rock Creek and Olney Master Plans. It may also be used in the Damascus and Potomac Master Plan areas. It is not likely to be used in the down county area, but needs to be in areas that have access to sewer and water.
- Master Plans guide development, zoning ordinances are the law that controls development and is used to implement the guidance in the master plans and the Rural Neighborhood Cluster is a zone within that ordinance. Most zones set density and development standards, etc.
- The RNC has 3 goals: to preserve open space, the character of an area, and environmentally sensitive areas. Master Plans can contain additional guidance relating to setbacks, when open space should be, density of development, etc. It lets planners look at a specific property in context with its surrounding area and of the objectives of the zone. In the Upper Rock Creek area they are attempting to preserve the character of the area and protect sensitive areas. In that plan, they looked at 4 properties as potential sites for using the RNC zone.
- In looking at refining the definition of the zone, P&P staff looked at ways to strengthen it so that it makes it easier to achieve what the community is looking for in the draft master plan through such features as diverse lot size, and improved open space. The new language in the ZTA directs the Planning Board to look at the range of lot sizes in the plan.
- With respect to open space, P&P looked at the idea of open space being contiguous, as now required in the definition of the zone. They are proposing to change the language in the ZTA from “must” to “should” so that if there is a good reason for the open space to not be contiguous, the Planning Board will have the ability to make that recommendation. There is new language to clarify that the designation of land as open space is in perpetuity. They also hope to make it clearer that there were sound environmental goals that are part of the zone for the preservation of sensitive natural resources. It was suggested that the word “must” be retained, but that they add, “unless the Planning Board finds that splitting it up is the optimum way to develop” Mr. Boyd and Khalid both thought this was a good suggestion that they would consider.
- An Ashton resident noted that their experience under the Sandy Spring Master Plan was that they got development with sewer and water that they did not want, they lost the agrarian buffer zone, they lost the rural character of the area, and they lost natural resources, including 100 year old trees which they had trying to preserve.
- A representative of the Upper Rock Creek Coalition suggested that the word “must” should be retained in connection with the contiguous open space guidance or developers will have a huge “out”.
- It was suggested that the language on pg. 6 of the ZTA should be changed from “consider compatibility” to “must be compatible”. Staff indicated they would look at that.
- The upper limit of 85% open space is there so that the Planning Board cannot require 99% open space and to reflect the economic realities of development.
- It was suggested that it might be useful to include language that makes it more clear what the goal of contiguous open space is within the zone. There needs to be more of a definition for this concept so that a judge can “judge” if a development plan is achieving that goal.
- It was suggested that if there had been more of this type of meeting before the ZTA was drafted, so the staff would have had the benefit of more of these kinds of comments and could have reflected them in the language now being presented to the Planning Board and to the County Council.
- In the three developments in Sandy Spring that used the RNC zone, the average house sizes are 3,800 sq. ft, 50,000 sq. ft. and 50,000 sq. ft., so these huge houses are sitting right along the road.

- This zone is now going to be applied to areas where agrarian character is not the key issue, but where environmental issues are the primary concern the zone is trying to address.
- Mrs. Praisner wanted the text of the zone looked at to see what needed to be done to make it work in all the situations meant to be addressed by the zone since all areas are not alike. There needs to be a clearer nexus between the ZTA and master plans.
- It was suggested that it might be useful to have a sense of where the County is expected to be growing in the years ahead in order to put the impacts of this zone in a context of what increased density will occur elsewhere in the County. In response, Khalid noted that master plans really make the decisions on where density will go. After that is decided, then the planners look at what zoning tools will make it possible to achieve those goals. That means determining which, if any, of the existing zones will work and, if not existing, creating new zones that will. The County Council does make policy decisions about things like where they want employment vs residences and the percentage of increase in development they want under the annual growth policy.
- The notion of "public use" in this zone may be broader than intended. "Public ownership" or other similar language may be better.
- Susan Petrocci thanked Fred Boyd for the time he spent with the Upper Rock Creek Coalition, the Olney Coalition, and the Sandy Spring to date because the current language reflects many of the issues raised in those meetings. She recognized that it is a balancing act between what the community wants, what developers will accept, and what politicians want. She noted too, that, she realized that their hands were tied with respect to meeting with other groups before drafting the ZTA because of the July 15th deadline for getting on the ZTA on the Planning Board's agenda. She added her hope that input from other areas, such as Damascus, even though their master plan is not being developed yet.
- Delegate Karen Montgomery indicated that she would like to see more clarity in the definition of the zone and more emphasis on the "perpetuity" aspect of the designation of land as open space. Open space is an issue, not just in Montgomery County, but throughout the State.
- Sometime things need to be defined by what they should not be, so they may need to add language to the ZTA that says what it cannot be.

Proposed Development of the Washington Christian Academy – John Lyons reminded everyone that the Washington Christian Academy (WCA) want to build on Batchellors Forest Rd on the property behind the cemetery. Representatives from the school met with the Southeast Rural Olney Civic Association (SEROCA) last month and they believe they are closer to satisfying the requirements of P&P's Development Review Committee. They currently have 500 students, but expect their enrollment to grow to 1,200 K-12 students over time. They hope to be ready for a Planning Board hearing by October or November. John felt that the revised plan is better, but still raises some issues. The WCA is concerned about the ICC northern alternative east of Georgia Ave because of its proximity to their property but are moving ahead. John has no sense from WSSC or the County's Dept. of Environmental Protection whether they will accept the WCA's request to allow grinder pumps. Normally grinder pumps are not permitted in institutional uses. They do plan to bus 75% of their students, but hope to achieve a higher percentage. They started with a plan to bus 100% of their students, but P&P staff said that was not realistic. Steve Smet added that he was concerned about the traffic impact the school could have because cars and buses leaving the school site will have to make u-turns to head south on Georgia Ave. Vehicles would have to go through Olney Manor Park to avoid making u-turns.

Proposed Development of the Winchester School on Georgia Avenue near Rock Hill Lane – Steve Smet reported that he had looked at the Board of Appeals file on the special exception application for this proposed school and found that there were 15 letters in the file, all of which were in support of the application. Thirteen of them were from parents of children enrolled in the current School on Bel Pre Rd. that generally support the program offered at that school, not specifically the development at this particular location. Steve noted that he had spoken with Marty Klauber, the People's Advocate who indicated that it appeared that the applicant was doing all they were suppose to do, so if there are people that oppose this application, they need to communicate that to the Board of Appeals and the Planning Board.. GOCA had already voted to send a letter in opposition to the application that he is preparing; and he suggested that other civic and homeowners associations, as well as the abutting property owners write about their opposition as well. Letters to the Board of Appeals can be addressed to the Board's Chair, Donald Spence. There will be a hearing before the Planning Board on July 29 so they can prepare their recommendation to the Board of Appeals. The P&P staff is recommending denial of the application.

Plans for the Inter-County Connector – John Lyons reported that the State Highway Administration (SHA) had just held a series of public forums to present the information developed to date on the various alternative routes being studied for the Inter-County Connector (ICC). The P&P Planning Board is scheduled to hear testimony on the proposed routes on July 15th. The two-hour time slot for public comments following a one-hour staff presentation is already filled, but people can submit written testimony either by mail, fax, or email. The Planning Board has scheduled 1 hour following the testimony to discuss the plans and the comments they hear. The Planning Board is pushing the SHA hard to meet the demands of Montgomery County, which in some cases exceeds the minimums required by Federal agencies rather than going with the cheaper construction techniques. It was recommended that people visit the P&P website for additional information. It was noted that the SHA staff working on the ICC project are meeting monthly with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as they develop the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, and it is not appear that anyone from the public is there hear what is being said. There was a concern expressed as well that things are moving at such a fast pace that things may fall between

the cracks in the planning, without being fully aware of the discussions between SHA and EPA it is difficult for the community to prepare a thorough response to what is being proposed..

New Business

Draft Fire, Rescue, and Emergency Management Services Master Plan – Helene Rosenheim reported that the Fire and Rescue Service has prepared a draft Fire, Rescue, and Emergency Management Services (EMS) Master Plan for 2005-2015. The current master plan will expire on December 31, 2004 and the draft must be approved by then to replace it. The purpose of the plan is to continue the delivery of effective and efficient fire, rescue, and emergency medical services and to provide a guide to the Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Services (MCFRS) for how best to meet the County's needs and expectations with respect to emergency and non-emergency programs, facilities, and training and deployment of MCFRS personnel. Helene noted that Steve Lamphier had hoped to attend the meeting, but was unable to at the last minute, but he had forwarded some comments. Steve noted that one of the basis for the plan is the top 10 fire/rescue priorities recommend by the County's Citizen Advisory Boards. And, the master plan issues are based on risk and customer needs as defined by those CAB priorities. Helene noted that approximately 75% of the fire-rescue incidents responded to are EMS-related, and 10% are vehicle collisions. The number of incidents of pedestrians struck by vehicles is the fastest rising incident type. Surprisingly, responses to fires represents a relatively small percentage of what fire and rescue workers actually do., The fire-rescue population density zones projected in the County by 2015 indicate that the urban areas will be two times larger than in the current plan, the suburban area will have moved further out into the County, and the amount of rural area will have been reduced. Each zone has different guidelines for response time to different types of incidents. The proposed guidelines are based on national guidelines. Insurance companies use response time and distance from a station as factors in determining levels of risk in different areas which directly affects premiums County residents pay.

Some of the points in the plan that Helene and Steve noted include:

- The proposal for apparatus and equipment includes an additional dedicated aerial unit at the Sandy Spring Station 40, pumper trucks with compressed-air foam systems that are 4-5 times more effective than water throughout the County, new decontamination vehicles to service the entire County, and increasing station stockpiles of supplies to use in situations like Hurricane Isabel when off-duty are called in.
- Resource deployments including adding staff to Sandy Spring Station 40, establishing 6 primary "heavy rescue" squads, establishing a "special operations" capability at Kensington Station 25 in Aspen Hill for hazardous materials, water rescue, and terrorism response; and establishing a policy to place additional units in service county-wide prior to existing units exceed responding to 2,500 incidents per year. Once beyond that level, a station is too busy and there are currently 25 that are close to over that response level.
- Key issues for the MCFRS over the next ten years are readiness and risk reductions, both with respect to County and Volunteer Fire Departments. During that ten years, station location and resource allocation will be studied for both the Norbeck Road corridor and for the northeast quadrant of the County which includes Station 4. There is a recommendation to rebuild or relocate the Laytonsville Fire Station. Potentially the relocation could move the station closer to Olney which would help the Sandy Spring Vol. Fire Dept (VFD). Water supply practices in non-hydrated areas will continue to improve.
- In response to that last comment, Joe Hess noted the situation that occurred several years ago where a house on Emory Church Rd, a road with no hydrants, burned down because the fire fighters were not aware that there was a hydrant on an adjacent property that did not front on Emory Church Rd, but could have been reached by going through back of a property near the affected property. He was concerned that the fire department still does not have a clear picture of where adjacent hydrants are in areas with no hydrants, and he suspects that is not a situation unique to Olney.
- The draft can be viewed at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/fire/rescue/frc/masterplan0515 Groups and individuals are encouraged to provide input on the draft Master Plan. There will be a public hearing on July 14th, but the public comment period does not end until August 13th. The Sandy Spring VFD will be participating with the County to meet the established goals of the Plan. Steve Lamphier indicated that any one with questions about the Plan should feel free to contact him or any other member of the Sandy Spring VFD.

Following several announcements, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Helene Rosenheim

Helene Rosenheim
Recording Secretary

People in attendance: Elaine Adornexter, Khalid Afzal, Ron Berger, Emmregg Black, Jim E. Black, Jim Bonlin, Art Brodsky, Rick Coburn, Brenda Egeland, Arnold Gordon, Joe Hess, Bill Hicks, Claire Isli (Marilyn Praisner's office), Lee Kidd, John Lyons, Karen Montgomery, Alyce Ortezar, Roy Peck, Susan Petrocci, Dave Quirk, Helene Rosenheim, Don Schmelter, Robin Shea, Steve Smet, Herman Taylor, Ed Weisel, and Chuck Young.