



# Greater Olney Civic Association

Post Office Box 212 Olney, Maryland 20830

[www.goca.org](http://www.goca.org)

## MINUTES – December 14, 2004

The meeting was called to order by President Stephen Smet. Following introductions, the approval of the November minutes was tabled. The agenda was approved with 2 additions.

### OFFICERS/COMMITTEE REPORTS

#### PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Steve Smet indicated that he had no separate report.

#### TREASURER'S REPORT

Roy Peck reported that there had not been any activity that month. The current bank account balance is \$7,329.20.

#### CHAMBER OF COMMERCE REPORT

Joe Buffington reported that digging for the expanded police satellite station should begin within about 3 weeks. He thanked Peter Kahla for helping to get the new building permits issued by going to Rockville and standing in all the necessary lines to get the needed permits. When completed, the facility will be a double-wide trailer. It will include a reception area, a back office for more private discussions, and running water. Joe also noted that the Carl M. Freeman Company which now owns both the Olney Village Center and the Olney Town Shopping Center, has put a ramp in connecting the two shopping centers and there will be a ribbon cutting shortly.

#### LAND USE COMMITTEE REPORT

John Lyons reported that a preliminary plan for the Washington Christian Academy has been submitted to Park & Planning (P&P). If the Inter-County Connector (ICC) does not go through their property and they can raise the funds they need, the school will be built and Batchellors Forest will have major private schools at both of its ends.

#### PUBLIC COMMENTS

- It was noted that the Draft Environmental Impact Study for the ICC has been released. There will be a number of public hearings during January, as follows: Jan 4th in Greenbelt, Jan 8<sup>th</sup> and Jan 22<sup>nd</sup> at Blake High School, all from 9 am – 6 pm, with public testimony beginning at 10:00. There will be an opposition rally on the 22<sup>nd</sup> at 9:30 am. There is a copy of the Draft at the Olney Library, or it can be obtained on a cd. The timing of the release of the Draft just before the holidays and scheduling the hearings just after the holidays has been a point of controversy since it makes it difficult to organize responses. The number to call to sign up to testify on the ICC is 1 866 462-0020. Ed Weisel noted that he has bumper stickers opposing the ICC for anyone interested. Opposition groups will be handing out flyers at Metro stations. GOCA has registered to testify on 1/22. Roy Peck noted that he had downloaded 4 volumes of the Draft and will make copies available to anyone interested. He noted statements in the report that indicate there being a risk to the security of the Nation's Capitol if there is a hazardous material spill occurs on this road. The report goes on to say that there is a low likelihood that this will occur, so there is no need for concern. Fog has not been addressed. It states that no lighting is required, which suggests that lighting on this road could be dangerous. And, he notes that, for the first time, the State's report acknowledges that this road will have no impact on congestion on the Beltway.

#### OLD BUSINESS

##### Update on the Olney Master Plan/New Town Center Zone Definition

Khalid Afzal, Georgia Ave Team Leader, P&P, reported that the draft definition of the Town Center zone was introduced to the County Council earlier that day. There will be a public hearing before the Council on January 18<sup>th</sup> at 1:30 pm. The definition is the same as the description in the master plan, it has just been put in the format of a zoning text amendment. Khalid is a little concerned because the Council may not want to create a new zone and ask them, instead, to modify an existing zone. In response to a question about the definition of "1 story", noted that there is no definition other than the space between two floors. It is left undefined more precisely to allow for some creativity in building design, especially with changes in construction design and materials. There are costs with developments of more than 20,000 sq. ft which requires that preliminary plans be submitted to P&P. Smaller properties are not subject to this type of review. Properties that are 5 acres or greater than 20,000 sq. ft. are subject to this level of review.

The definition of the zone includes language that provides for 3-4 story buildings around the edges of the zone to create a step-down effect to be compatible with development surrounding the town center area. The definition has no setback requirements for the streetside of buildings. The reason for that is to get away from the large setbacks of buildings with parking lots in front of them and to get back to the idea of a streetscape of stores and buildings along a street as in old towns like Old Town Alexandria. The zone does provide for setbacks for public uses. No setback is just a starting point. If a developer wants more, they can talk with P&P to get permission to do more. There is language to encourage connection between adjoining buildings. New projects will go through Local Area Review for traffic impact in some capacity. He noted that the Freeman Companies have done a concept plan to test the zone.

Khalid noted that the County Council's Planning, Housing, and Economic Development Committee did not think the draft master plan had strong enough language to make a civic center a reality. They also voted 2-1 to keep the existing C-1 portion of the Silo Inn site commercial and to make the other residential acre commercial which would allow Marc Solomon to build his full plan. This still needs to go through a vote of the full Council.

Dave Eskenazi asked if there was any expectation to include language about what buildings will look like, signage, green space, parking, before the process is done. Khalid noted that the new zone will lower the FAR in much of the area. There is no limit on FAR in the C-1 zone. The limit in the C-2 zone is higher than what the new zone permits. More detail about the town center area can be done with a combination of the zone and language in the master plan. The master plan is the place for more detail about the specific concept for the town center. The C-1 and C-2 zone do not provide as useful tools for developing shopping centers under new construction approaches.

The zone has been approved by the Planning Board. But, the process for zoning text amendments, which this is, requires that once introduced to the Council it goes to the Planning Board for its recommendations for suggested changes being discussed by the PHED Committee to date. There will also need to be a public hearing before the Council with subsequent worksessions to consider the testimony and the Planning Board's recommendations. The Olney Coalition is working with the Council and P&P: to set up a task force to look at standards for the vision of how the whole town center should look. Khalid added that it was not really necessary to ask the Council for that, just the Planning Board, noting that they would be interested in doing that after the zone is approved and the master plan is in place. Khalid noted, too, that they had a desire to have less parking in the town center, but their hands were tied by the requirements for the various uses being considered. However, the parking can be more out of sight with the "mixed use" zone than under existing zones. They hope to encourage small properties to be able to take advantage of the new zone by assembling properties. Larger properties may assemble for other reasons. He noted that the Safeway is interested in rebuilding their store as a 1-story, 50,000 sq. ft. space which is substantially larger than the existing store.

There was a 2-1 vote (Floreen & Praisner) in favor of keeping the zoning of the Bowie Mill site as R-200. The Committee also voted to keep the classification of Bowie Mill split at Cashell to reflect the homes with driveways directly on Bowie Mill between Cashell and Rte. 108. They have recommended the Rural Neighborhood Cluster zoned with a density of .45 units per acre with an 11% imperviousness cap on the Norbeck Country Club instead of placing it in a special protection area. The recommendation for the Golden Bear site is to go from the R-200 to a TDR-7 which yields 726 units with MPDUs on 85 acres. The land is bordered by the ICC right-of-way, Georgia Ave, and Norbeck Rd. One developer has assembled approximately 40 acres. There is no plan currently for all 85 acres. It appears, too, that the other property-owners are not interested in selling now. The Committee also recommended RT-10 for the 3-acre Tower property. Ms. Praisner recommended RT-8. The RT-10 would yield 30 townhouse units. This is land in the Preserve not taken by the State for the ICC, and not being used for parkland.

The officers want to reaffirm their positions to the Council, such as (1) .33 units per acre in the RNC zone in the southeast quadrant. MPDU's would raise the density to .45 units per acre; (2) development of the Golden Bear property needs to be staged with the development of infrastructure since existing infrastructure is already overwhelmed; and (3) the Rural Entryway into Olney needs to be preserved. Historically GOCA has opposed expansion of commercial uses along Georgia Avenue. What is being proposed on the Silo Inn site is two times the total of all existing non-residential uses along Georgia Ave south of the town center area. The GOCA officers plan to reach out to the Council members not on the PHED Committee to make them aware of the history of the entryway, the timeline on the site, and the fact that this would totally change the look along Georgia Avenue to a commercial look rather than the rural character it has now, even with its non-residential uses. Nancy Wendt noted that most of the issues discussed by the PHED Committee received 2-1 votes, and it is hard to predict how the full Council will vote. The Olney Coalition has also been working with individual Councilmembers and will be putting information on their website that may help structure letters to the Council which does want to hear from the community.

There will likely be 2 and possibly 3 worksessions before the full Council, so there could possibly be a vote at the end of January. And there will likely be one more PHED Committee worksession. DPWT is pushing for a transit center in the town center as well.

**2004 GOCA Awards** – Steve Smet reminded everyone that we are still accepting nominations for the 2004 GOCA Awards, stressing how important of all the volunteer work done by community members to maintain the quality of life in Olney. The deadline for nominations is the January 11<sup>th</sup> meeting. Helene noted that the nomination forms are available at the Olney Library (on the check-out desk) and at GOCA's website, [www.goca.org](http://www.goca.org).

## NEW BUSINESS

**Disposal of Surplused Board of Education School Sites** – Arnold Gordon expressed concern about the process used by the Board of Education for disposing of school sites and asked GOCA to consider passing a motion similar to one passed by the Montgomery County Civic Federation. This was in response to the situation that included the disposal of the 32-acre school site on Bowie Mill which was done behind closed doors by the Board of Education. Arnie moved that

**GOCA RESOLVE THAT THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION (BOE) SHOULD ADOPT THE FOLLOWING POLICY: BEFORE THE BOE DECLARES PROPERTIES OWNED BY THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM AS “UNNEEDED”, A SERIES OF PUBLIC HEARINGS SHALL BE HELD TO ALLOW AMPLE TIME FOR COMMUNITY INPUT ON THE PROPOSED ACTION.**

The motion was seconded by Jackie Benn. The Federation motion had gone on to provide detailed suggestions for the process as follows: “1. There shall be several hearings on the matter, one in each of the MCPS districts. The hearings shall be widely publicized, well in advance, to encourage broad citizen participation. 2. At each such hearing there shall be a brief presentation by the BOE explaining the main arguments for/against declaring the site unneeded. Public testimony shall follow, to bring into consideration the full range of purposes to which the site might be put, as well as to develop consensus as to the priority that the community assigns to each such possible uses. 3. The BOE shall then evaluate the opinions expressed by the community and shall announce its decision as to the disposition of the site in question by means of a statement (posted to the BOE website). Including its reasons for accepting and/or rejecting recommendations made at the hearings. While there was agreement that this is an issue relevant to the Olney community, the consensus was that the motion did not need to include this much detail. Chuck Young noted the relevance for Olney because of the situation with the Bowie Mill site. Barbara Falcigno noted that the Council may be asking MCPS to look at subdividing its existing school sites will the idea that unused portions of sites with schools on them might be used for affordable housing. Following this discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

### Announcements

Dave Eskenazi noted that elections for GOCA’s 2005 officers will take place in February. So, he encouraged people to think about taking on more responsibilities and consider becoming an officer.

Following this announcement, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Helene Rosenheim

Helene Rosenheim  
Recording Secretary

**People in attendance:** Khalid Afzal, Jackie and Danny Benn, Art Brodsky, Joe Buffington, Rick Coburn, Brenda Egeland, Dave Eskenazi, Barbara Falcigno, Jay Feinberg, Dylan & Randy Frey, Arnold Gordon, Robert Hausman, Terri Hogan (Gazette), Jason Ildite, Chuck Keyserling, Tony Laing, John Lyons, Roger Manno, Roy Peck, Ron Pendleton, Ellsworth & Ingrid Romer, Helene Rosenheim, Victor Santos, Robin Shea, Bob Sigillito, Steve Smet, Michael Sullivan, Edward Weisel, and Nancy Wendt