



Greater Olney Civic Association

Post Office Box 212 Olney, Maryland 20830

www.goca.org

MINUTES – January 11, 2005

The meeting was called to order by President Stephen Smet. Following introductions, the November and December 2004 minutes were approved with no additions or corrections. The agenda was approved with 1 addition.

OFFICERS/COMMITTEE REPORTS

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Steve Smet briefly recapped the history of the master plan process regarding the town center area. And, noted that the community has been discussing this concept for several years, but we want to be sure that the language if the zoning text amendments creating the mixed use town center zone achieves the community's vision without causing unintended consequences.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Roy Peck reported that the current bank account balance is \$7,283.66. There has been \$130 deposited since the December report.

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE REPORT

Joe Buffington reported that on Tuesday, January 25th, at 9:00 am the Freeman Companies will be hosting a Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for the new ramp between the Olney Village Center and the Olney Town Shopping Center that is now open for use.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

- Arnie Gordon noted that: on January 20th, Norbeck Meadows Civic Association will hold a meeting at Cashell Elementary School on the Neighborhood Watch Program in response to a recent high incident; on January 22nd, there will be an Anti-ICC Rally at Blake High School beginning at 9:30 am during the Public Hearing being held by the State Highway Administration (SHA) on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Inter-County Connector (ICC). He also noted that the Montgomery County Civic Federation is campaigning for height limitations in feet, mandatory public spaces and minimum setbacks in the proposed mixed use town center zone.

- In response to a question about the sale of 3 small parcels on Morningwood Drive by HOC, Steve Smet speculated that it was a small wedge of land that had been left over from the HOC project built there years ago that HOC had agreed to sell if the property owner at the end of N. High St. ever wanted to develop.

- Brian Henry thanked GOCA and those present that had supported the efforts to oppose the building of the ICC,. He noted that they were down to the final efforts and encouraged people to attend the Anti-ICC Rally that is being held at Blake High School on January 22nd, outside of the State Highway Administration's public hearing on the ICC Draft Environmental Impact Statement. The key is that there are alternatives and we need to let people making the decisions know that the community supports the alternatives and not the ICC. He also encouraged delegates to get their neighbors and friends to attend since a good turnout is key to the success of the rally. People can also sign up to testify, noting that you do not need to be an expert, just express your feelings, or there will be a court reporter in an area near the gymnasium to record peoples comments who do not want to speak before the larger group, and written comments can be submitted. Chuck Young suggested to Brian that they identify places along the full length of the route where development is already being started to that the road will bring new development and new traffic which will get us right back to where we are before building the road. Ed Weisel noted that Graham Norton, the former head of Montgomery County's then Dept. of Transportation described the ICC as the main street of Montgomery County's edge city and that was the vision behind this road. He suggested that to get an idea of what an edge city looks like to look at Tysons Corners. Roy Peck noted that he had attended the January 4th hearing and most of the testimony was in support of the ICC, and that he had his testimony on a cd if anyone wanted a copy. It was also noted that Georgia Ave is the only interchange besides Rte. 29 and Rte. 95, that is being proposed as an overpass and that we should lobby for it to should not be an overpass for the same reasons we did not want an overpass at Rte. 28 and Georgia, because of the visual impact. Ellsworth Romer expressed his concern that the ICC will be obsolete by the time it is built because traffic will have doubled or more by then.

- Jackie Benn noted that February 1st will be Help the Hungry Day and

- Ingrid Romer noted that there had been a fire in a townhouse in Norbeck Hills that had dislocated 3 families. Cashell Elementary PTA is doing things to assist the family on the short term. But the families, especially the Peterson family whose

house was completely destroyed will need financial help replace all that they lost. She will get information on how people can help to Helene to place it on the GOCA website and to distribute it to the GOCA emailing list.

OLD BUSINESS

Update on the Olney Master Plan/New Town Center Zone Definition – John Lyons reported that the full County Council will begin their worksessions on the draft Olney Master Plan on January 18th. They will also hold a public hearing on the proposed mixed-use town center zoning text amendment. He then summarized the recommendations made by the Council's Planning, Housing and Economic Development (PHED) Committee:

(1) Rural Neighborhood Cluster (RNC) zone densities: the PHED Committee supported the staff recommendation. But there are still some efforts by developers to increase the density. GOCA is pressing to keep the base density as staff recommended because of the other land use policies that can increase the density about the master plan recommendation.

(2) 32-acre Bowie Mill Site: the PHED Committee recommended keeping the R-200 zone with a notation that the site is appropriate for affordable housing that is compatible with the surrounding development. He noted, however, a recent article in the Washington Post re: Action in Montgomery, a coalition of groups promoting affordable housing in the County and are looking at underused publicly-owned. This site is one they are very interested in developing with 176 units using the PD-3 overlay zone on the R-200 zone. At the same time, the OBGC has proposed a compromise solution that would address some of their needs. They would like to build a double gymnasium on the site and then put up to 70 units of "work force housing" that would have higher eligibility thresholds than moderately-priced dwelling units (MPDUs) or Section 8 subsidized housing. HE noted that this proposal is so new that GOCA has not had an opportunity to discuss it yet.

Chuck Young added that the Magruder HS PTSA meeting the previous night, they were told that there will be a need for another high school in this area, and that while it is hard to find a 30-acre site, MCPS is not considering taking back the Bowie Mill site because of the strong interest in putting affordable housing there.

(3) Silo Inn: Park & Planning (P&P) Staff and the Planning Board (PB) recommended limiting commercial development to the town center area. Even the 1980 Master Plan said it should be developed residentially if the grandfathered use of the Silo Inn went away. The PHED Committee recommended 2-1 (Steve Silverman and Nancy Floreen for it, Marilyn Praisner –opposed) to zone the entire three acres as C-1 which will give Mark Solomon of Finmark, Inc, the developer who recently purchased the site, the zoning he needs to do the full strip shopping center. John felt that this would be the beginning of a slippery slope with that type of commercial development that far outside of the town center. Other non-residential uses that might have been allowed as special exception uses of residentially zoned land there would be less intense and more consistent with the rural entryway.

(4) Town Center Zone: The vision for the town center area is contained in the master plan, but there needs to be a zone to implement that vision. Some concerns raised in discussing this at the Officers meeting were that it is difficult to tell from the existing language in the zoning text amendment for the mixed-use town center zone and the draft master plan to really get a sense of what the town center will look like. The draft calls for more residential and more commercial development, without adequate infrastructure. And, if not designed correctly, the parking structure that will likely be needed with the optional method could separate the structures in the shopping center from the surrounding development.

Khalid Afzal noted that overall the density of commercial development has been reduced from 1.5 to 1. Now there are 5 zones within the area included in the town center. Of those the C-1 zone has no limit on density. The new town center zone is a lower density than any of the current zones.

Some points made during the discussion were that:

- The plan needs an overarching statement that outlines the purpose of this use, this vision.
- There needs to be some proportionality to the mix of uses.
- There is a concern about the absence of height limitations in feet.
- The Kirby project was the guinea pig for ceiling height within the town center, but GOCA supported it because it included a 50 ft.

Khalid added that the zoning text does not stand by itself. The vision for an area grows out a combination of the description in the master plan, the zoning text for each project, and the development process before P&P and the Development Review Committee. There is no confusion among the P&P staff about what the vision is for this town center area. The difficulty in talking about in the Plan is that it is a 20 year plan and there is no way for them to know what properties will be assembled and brought. They tried to as specific about the appearance without tying it directly to current development styles which may change a lot over the life of the master plan. They tried to discuss the type of use in the area: high employment, residential, and mix use. He encouraged people to let them know if they had not described the vision properly.

The language of the zoning text amendment is technical, legal language. The language of the zone determines what zone will achieve the goals of the master plan. In the current zones, many can build without going to Park and Planning. Under the C-1 zone, if the use being proposed is one of the permitted uses, the developer can go directly to the Dept. of Permitting Services.

Their staff doesn't want every property to have to come to P&P, but want larger assemblages to go through some type of P&P review before going to Permitting Services.

Khalid also noted that the term street wall in the plan does not mean putting the building next to the curb. It is intended to avoid a situation like Georgia Ave where the sidewalk is immediately adjacent to the roadway. This calls for 5-6 ft of grass, then the sidewalk, then a setback for the building. This is designed to avoid strip malls. With respect to the definition of height, they wanted to leave some flexibility in the language. They felt that it was redundant to say 5 floors and 50 ft as the limit. Under current construction techniques. Ground floors for retail used to be 10-12', but now they are typically 15-20". Having the limits above 4 stories is based on structural limits. Garages are not feasible on most sites because you need about one acre just for the garage. Some of the current zones in the town center do permit residential development. They are proposing more residential and less commercial to meet the goal of addressing the vitality of the area by having people live there. He is will to add more language regarding connectivity.

Dave Gardner, speaking as the attorney for the Environ HOA noted that the PD-7 zone used in the Environ development was intended to achieve a lot of the same goals as the mixed use town center zone. It was intended to provide higher density in the town center area. He suggested that it seemed that now that the residential development in the town center area which used to include the Environ development is built out, this is a way of adding more residential. Environ is proposing a density of 5 units per acre under the standard development method, and 9 units per acre under the optional development. Tamarron is the most dense development in Olney at 20 units per acre. If 1/3 of the development is residential, that yields 30 units per acre. The Plan goes to 50 units for the same third which would impact schools. He suggested site plan not be approved under the optional plan if the yield would cause a redistricting of the local schools. He felt there needed to be a link between the optional method and school capacity, and that the Environ development still wants the height limit to be closer to their tallest buildings. Khalid noted that the town center zone and the master plan already steps down the height of development at the edges of the zone to make it compatible with surrounding development. Mike D'Andrea added that they are most concerned about density and traffic because it is difficult now to cross Spartan Road. They would like to see devices like the brick walkway. They are concerned to with the visual appearance from their development. John Lyons noted that many of their concerns related to the concept plan put together by the Freeman Company rather than with the master plan or the new zone.

Khalid noted that the language in the zone and the master plan is all the result of the work done by P&P staff and Council staff. They asked the Freemans to put together a concept plan simply as a way of testing the zone, and it is a very rudimentary plan. After the Master Plan is done, they may want to put together more detailed development plans that will address many of these issues, property by property. It would not be a requirement, but it would give people a more clear idea of what the town center should look like. Steve Smet agreed that there needed to be more specific language in the vision for the town center such as will the need for pedestrian-friendly connections to the community. Khalid noted that the language is there, but could be strengthened. A concern was also raised about the amount of light from the shopping centers; about the increased trash from the increased development since there are already problems in the lake in Environ from trash from the town center area; and about the potential for increases in crime. Khalid was asked if the zone included any restrictions based on the "green standards". He noted that there wasn't anything yet, but that the Planning Board is looking at this idea. In response to a question about whether the County would be adding density to address the affordable housing initiative, Khalid noted that the five stories included MPDU development. The provisions for adding height to buildings to incorporate affordable housing was envisioned for use more in areas like Bethesda where current building heights would not permit getting to the density allowed with affordable housing, but that is not the situation in Olney. It was also noted that Olney residents will not likely be the only shoppers to use this new retail development which will bring even more traffic into the town center area and add to already growing traffic congestion. It was also noted that the zone does not exclude the possibility of "big box" construction. A question was asked about where the capacity was coming from for the additional 300-500 residential units if the intersections in the town center area are already failing.

Khalid noted that this is a 20 year plan and some things like current garage construction techniques are such that it may not be feasible today, but it may become more cost-effective in the future. Others suggested that the building limits needed to be in feet because future construction techniques and materials may allow for greater heights than are now feasible. There was also a suggestion that language be included that would preclude one developer from using up all the residential density envisioned throughout the entire town center area. It was also suggested that the language needed to be tightened with respect to roads to avoid situations like the one at Spartan Rd and Georgia Ave where the lanes were changed and it is now difficult to make the right turn from northbound Georgia onto Spartan.

Olney Days 2005 – Helene Rosenheim noted that Olney Days will be May 20th – 22nd. One new event that will be added will be part of the Fun Fair where the food eating theme will be expanded. There will be a planning meeting on Thursday, Jan 27 and those interested in helping with planning were encouraged to contact Helene and to plan to attend.

2004 GOCA Awards – Ron Berger noted that this meeting was the deadline for submitting nominations for the 2004 GOCA Awards. Ballots will be mailed to the GOCA delegates and he asked that they be mailed back promptly or brought to the next GOCA meeting where the votes will be tallied and announced. The awards will be presented at the 27th Annual Awards Ceremony on Sunday, March 6th at Longwood Recreation Center. The Ceremonies begin at 2:00 pm with a reception and the awards presentation beginning at 3:00 pm.

NEW BUSINESS

2005 GOCA Officers Nominations – Ron Berger noted that Steve Smet is completing his second term as President and cannot serve as President again. Noting that candidates were still needed for some positions, Ron presented the following slate for 2005:

President: John Lyons
 Executive Vice President: Candidate needed
 1st Vice President: Candidate needed
 2nd Vice President: Jackie Benn
 Recording Secretary: Helene Rosenheim
 Corresponding Secretary: Candidate needed
 Treasurer: Roy Peck

The balloting for the new slate will take place at the February meeting and the new officers take over at the end of that meeting. Ron noted that candidates do not have to be delegates from our member associations. And, we want people taking on these positions to be active and willing to devote time to the activities GOCA is involved with. This is a good way to stay in touch with what is happening in Olney and for having an impact in how the community continues to develop and to maintaining the quality of life and sense of place Olney is known for.

Hospital Zoning Text Amendment – Joel Gallihue with P&P reported that several of the area hospitals have asked that a zone be created for hospitals because of the unique requirements for hospitals and to ensure that they are treated equitably. There will be an outreach meeting at the Olney Library on January 24th from 7-9 pm where the proposed zone will be discussed. The Planning Board will be discussing the zone at the end of February. The zoning text amendment has not been introduced by the Council, so it is early in the process.

Following New Business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Helene Rosenheim

Helene Rosenheim
 Recording Secretary

People in attendance: Khalid Afzal, Gina Angiola, Amy & Terry Athey, Theresa Barczy, Jackie and Danny Benn, Art Brodsky, Joe Buffington, Johane Celestra-Ogene, Michael D'Andrea, Sharon Kay Dooley, Brenda Egeland, Dave Eskenazi, Barbara Falcigno, Jay Feinberg, Joel Gallihue, David Gardner, Rebecca Gautieri, Arnold Gordon, Susan Gordon, Ioana Hance, Robert Hausman, Renee & Brian Henry, Sharon Herbert, Bruce Herzig, Terri Hogan (Gazette), Dirk Holger (Spere), Joannene Hudak, Christine Joy, John Kremer, Bob Lathrop, Walter Lee, John Lyons, Mary Moneymaker, Christopher Ogene, Roy Peck, Susan Petrocci, Steve Rappaport, Ellsworth & Ingrid Romer, Helene Rosenheim, Katherine Shore, Bob Sigillito, Steve Smet, Mike Sullivan, Carolyn Thompson, Denise Viau, Jim Wallace (MCCAB), Beth Walshe, Laura Weiner, Edward Weisel, Susan Woolrich, and Chuck Young