

MINUTES – September 13, 2005

The meeting was called to order by President John Lyons. The approval of the July 2005 minutes was tabled. The agenda was approved with the order of items changed.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

- Roy Peck noted that his family which owns the land Norman's Farm Market is on had received a letter from the State Highway Administration (SHA) outlining the rights they have as property owners in the ICC right-of-way.
- Barbara Falcigno noted that there will be a Public Forum on 9/17 sponsored by the County Charter Commission. The Commission is seeking comments on the make up of the Council and how it is operating.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

Montgomery General Hospital – Current and Future Plans – John Lyons introduced Peter Monge, President, Montgomery General Hospital (MGH) who introduced Lynn Myers, MGH Vice President for Planning, and Harold Pickett, MGH Vice President for Facilities. As an aside, he noted that an Olney resident had offered \$5,000 to cover traveling expenses for any hospital employees going to assist after Hurricane Katrina. Three nurses went to the LSU field house, then to the New Orleans Airport, and then to the Omni Hotel where they were taking care of the NO Police. Mr. Monge noted that MGH was the smallest hospital in the County, with 171 beds. MGH is a \$100 million corporation, with a \$40 million payroll and 1,200 employees. MGH has been graded in the top 5 hospitals in the US for their care of Medicare patients. There are a number of websites that provide comparative information about hospitals and their ratings by different health grading organizations.

MGH has been certified as a stroke center. Certified stroke centers soon will be the only place ambulances will be able to take stroke patients. Certification of chest pain centers will likely be the next step. MGH is working on meeting certification standards for both types of centers. They have been in a strategic planning process for approximately nine months that began with a retreat of the hospital Board in May. Two basic issues they are focusing on are the clinical services they want to offer and physician recruitment. The Board has additional retreats planned in September and November. Even though their Emergency Room is relatively new, they need to enlarge that department and a major expansion of their footprint is planned. Additional outpatient space and physician office space are needed as well. In recent months the Hospital has lost 1 surgeon and 2 obstetricians because of rising malpractice insurance costs. So, they have been doing some recruitment and 9 new doctors have joined the Hospital. Ten areas of the Hospital are currently undergoing construction and renovation.

The following points were made during the question and answer period:

- Doctors are frustrated with the impacts of the cost of insurance coverage. Doctors must see substantially higher numbers of patients now to make the same incomes they did 5-10 years ago. So, the Board is concerned many of their existing doctors will retire early and they want to get their staff up now.
- They are trying to keep all their current expansion on the east side of Prince Philip Dr, including more parking. They can expand the parking deck. They are planning a new office building and can include parking with that.
- Their doctors do a lot of work with Project Access which allows doctors to provide services to lower income families. They are working with other hospitals to develop clinics for lower income families. Montgomery Cares is a County funding source for groups like the Primary Care Coalition and for clinics and hospitals.
- MGH holds a blood drive every other month, but not at a standard time. However, from the discussion, it sounds as if they are not getting the word out well enough about the blood drives.
- There are no plans to use the houses the hospital owns adjacent to their facility for the short term. They are currently leasing the houses. They were purchased with the expectation that they will use them, but no current plans to use them.
- They will come back to GOCA when they have plans for expanding their buildings.
- There are no current plans for the property west of Prince Philip Dr., and do not want to use it until they have to, so they are looking at capacity on the east side. The property on the west side is very desirable and they get frequent offers to purchase it, but they are not interested in selling it.

- Their physicians go to the State Legislature for relief from malpractice insurance. They did so last year and did get some relief. California and Texas are two states that are more attractive with respect to malpractice insurance. Maryland has caps on payments. The insurance issue is not an impediment to healthcare, but that and housing costs in this area makes the recruitment a challenge.

OFFICERS/COMMITTEE REPORTS

Treasurer's Report – Roy Peck reported a current balance of \$4,349.53.

Correspondence Report – Jay Feinberg reported that the correspondence included a letter from the County Council indicating that they want to stop sending paper agendas and that those interested can subscribe online at the Council's website for the agenda as well as a wide range of other documents. Montgomery College sent a list of speakers from the school faculty that covers a wide range of topics and subject areas.

Olney Chamber of Commerce Report – Joe Buffington thanked the Gazette for their coverage of the change in date and location for Community Night. This year Community Night will be on Thursday, October 20th in the gym at St. John's Episcopal Parish School on Rte. 108 from 5:00-8:30 pm. The event which normally occurs on the first Wednesday in October was changed because it conflicted with Rosh Hashanna and Ramadan. Joe also thanked all those who had attended National Night Out which had been a great success in August. He also noted that at their last business meeting they discussed the issue of the ICC interchange at Georgia Avenue. Their members were interested in looking at examples of other intersections similar to this one. It was suggested that they look at the interchange on Old Georgetown Pike where the I-270 spur goes under it.

Civic Federation Report – Jackie Benn reported that the Maryland State House Ways and Means Committee Chair spoke at the last Civic Federation meeting. Key issues the House will be considering are charter schools, voters' rights act, and charitable gaming. He suggested that when people contact a committee on an issue that they contact all members of the committee regardless of the members' positions on that issue, that you be persistent, and that you reach out to other counties besides your own. The Civic Federation discussed concerns about a group of 3 homes for troubled youth in the County. There have been problems with the operation of homes by this same organization in Prince Georges County. The Federation would like legislation that would provide more control over the operation of such homes. Dave Eskenazi suggested that there needed to be requirements for stronger management of all group homes, not just those for troubled youth. The Federation is also opposed to the sale of Peary High School to the Berman Academy for an amount significantly lower than the market value rate of the facility.

Membership Committee – Art Brodsky reported that the latest associations to join include Lake Hallowell and the town of Brookeville. This brings the total number of member associations to 28, an increase of 5 or 6 over the previous year, which represents approximately 90% of the greater Olney area.

President's Report - John Lyons reported that

- The Clarksburg situation has spurred a lot of activism throughout the County. He spoke with Councilmember Knapp who had called John to get his reaction. John indicated that people have lost confidence in the system and will loss confidence in the dialogue until the Council admits there is a systemic problem. Now people feel a system has been created where developers have co-opted the process and others are treated as people trying to interfere. There were no particular sites in Olney where people felt P&P had dropped the ball as in Clarksburg to date. Arnie Gordon asked anyone who thought of examples in Olney of violations of subdivision plans to forward the information to Civic Federation via Jim Humphrey at TheHlms518@earthlink.net. There will be a hearing on October 10th before the P&P Planning Board on possible fines in Clarksburg.

- Mr. Knapp had also expressed an interest in setting up a discussion of public safety issues. John offered a GOCA meeting as a forum, but indicated that Mr. Knapp would have to handle the organizational aspects of such a forum.

- The latest proposal for the Winchester School on Georgia Avenue near Rock Hill Rd was to be heard before the Board of Appeals the previous Friday. He was not certain if it had been held, but If it were held there should be a Board of Appeals decision within about a month. The Planning Board recently determined that the applicant's conservation plan was acceptable, but they still opposed approval of their special exception application for a school on this site.

- Construction of Good Counsel High School on the southwest corner of the intersection of Rte. 108 and Dr. Bird Drive is underway and is moving ahead quickly.

- Preliminary and pre-preliminary site plans have been filed for several other properties in the southeast quadrant of Olney, but not for the Trotter's Glen golf course. The plans cannot move forward until the new sectional map amendment implementing the recently approved Olney Master Plan is approved by the County Council. The sectional map amendment will be discussed by the Planning, Housing, and Economic Development Committee of the County Council on Sept 19th and then will go to the full Council within a few weeks of that.
- The Dept. of Housing and Community Affairs has not taken control of the Bowie Mill site. However, they are currently working on disposing of other sites. They do not anticipate working on the Bowie Mill site before late December or early January. They will issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) with a 60-day deadline for response. So it will be Spring 2006 before they will be assessing the proposals submitted to them.
- A big issue with the Washington Christian Academy site on Batchellors Forest Road has been the ICC alignment. With the selection of the alignment, they can now move forward with their planning and John expects they are moving ahead.

OLD BUSINESS

Town Center Advisory Committee – Khalid Afzal gave an overview of the advisory committee the County Council directed the Park and Planning Commission (P&P) staff to form as a part of their discussion and decision-making in connection with the recently revised Olney Master Plan. The proposal included suggestions for groups to include on the Advisory Committee and outlined some questions to consider as decisions are being made on the structure, role, and operation of the Committee. He noted that the document he had distributed was just a preliminary proposal and he was very interested in comments and suggestions and ideas concerning which groups should be included on the advisory committee. When the Council debated the Olney Master Plan, there was a request from the public for a more detailed concept plan of what the town center would look like, but P&P staff did not want to put pictures or that level of detail in the plan because so much can change and they did not want to limit possibilities and thinking by presenting a specific image. The Council decided, instead, to establish the Town Center Advisory Committee. The language creating the Advisory Committee is very broad and does not give any specific indication of the size of the Advisory Committee, its purpose or structure. The questions he is trying to answer is the size, and make up of the Advisory Committee, how it will work, and when it will meet. If the Freeman Company is ready to redevelop its shopping centers, they could do a mini master plan for their 30 acres that could be part of the plan for the whole town center 90 acres. With respect to the idea of a civic center, the questions are how big it needs to be, what uses it needs to include, and what open space should it include.

The following points were made during the question and answer period.

- Khalid would like to have the structure established and the Advisory Committee set up by the end of October because by mid-October the sectional map amendment implementing the Master Plan should be completed. However, the timing for establishment of the Committee really depends on the pace of development.
- The County Council and Planning Board do not have to sign off on the plans for establishing and administering the Advisory Committee. It is up to the P&P staff, but Khalid plans to present the proposal for the Advisory Committee to the Planning Board before moving ahead with it.
- With respect to whether this should be a permanent or ad hoc committee, Dave Eskenazi thought it should start as an ad hoc committee and as it develops, the issue of making it a permanent committee could be revisited.
- It was suggested that the Committee should include representatives from some homeowners and civic associations further from the center of town, in addition to those immediately adjacent to the town center area. Other groups such as PROJECT CHANGE and the Olney Library should be represented as well. And it might be useful to have someone outside of the P&P staff with architectural, urban design, and engineering expertise. Khalid indicated that he had included GOCA as representative of the larger community and the individual associations he suggested be included were those he felt would be most directly impacted by this development. He also would welcome having professional experts on the Committee. He had suggested a 10-member committee, but would be glad to have 15 or so members. Khalid asked for suggestions for criteria for determining who to include on the Advisory Committee.
- The Advisory Committee shapes the growth of the town center area by developing a concept plan that is consistent with the Olney Master Plan, but is more detailed and has the concurrence of the community. As development proposals come to P&P, the proposals will be measured against this more detailed plan.
- There was some concern about the Freeman Company driving the concept plan, but Khalid noted that the basic concept is already there and Freeman is one of the largest property-owners in the town center area, so it is best if their company and the Committee develop their concept plan together.
- It was suggested that the meetings be open to the public, and that information being developed and considered by the Committee be available on a website and/or in the Olney Library so the public has ready access to it.
- It was stressed that we need to get input from the public entities such as the Library and the Police Substation on how much space they need. Khalid indicated this would be part of the work plan of the Advisory Committee. They would be looking at each part of the whole town center area in detail. The time frame for a civic center is

uncertain because there is no funding allocated for it right now and it takes some time to get these kinds of projects into the budget. Once a work plan is developed and if Freeman does much of the design work, it would make getting funding easier.

- People with suggestions for modifications to his proposal and for the make up of the committee should forward that information to Khalid at khalid.afzal@mncppc-mc.org.

Private Institutional Facilities Update – John Lyons reported that he had attended the public hearing held by the County Council's Work Group on private institutional facilities (PIFs) in large lot zones as the President of GOCA. In October the Council will get a report from the Work Group to review. Ninety percent of the institutions involved are churches and there is a concern that restructuring the regulations relating to PIFs might be imposing on the freedom of expression. John suggested that churches saying that they can only find cheap land in Agricultural Reserve is a circular argument because the land is cheap because it is not suppose to be used for other types of uses than agricultural. He feels GOCA needs to take a balanced view and should be watchful of the Olney areas in the agricultural zone and in the Patuxent Watershed. If the Agricultural Reserve is used for PIFs, it fragments the Reserve and thereafter, an argument could be made for changing the zoning because of a change in the use of the land. John noted that the Work Group Report is available on the Council's website; and GOCA should play an active role in this effort.

Sharon Dooley noted that she had attended the same hearing John attended and she commended him on his testimony which she felt presented some compelling arguments for not approving the PIFs in the Agricultural Reserve. She also noted that the original instructions to the Work Group to look at large lot zones did not include the Rural Neighborhood Cluster zone. However, Councilmember Marilyn Praisner added that zone to those being looked at.

Inter-County Connector (ICC) Update - John Lyons reported that several representatives from Olney met with staff from the State Highway Administration (SHA) including Neil Petersen, SHA Administrator on July 29th. The ICC intersection with Georgia Avenue is funded for detailed design. There is a connection with the intersection of Georgia Avenue with Rte. 28, but no one had raised the issue of timing with SHA before. While the SHA staff seemed interested in the issues the Olney representatives were raising, but the bottom line is that the staff is instructed to look at the issue of the underpass vs. overpass with respect to issues such as watershed drainage. Anthony Watkins thanked Delegates Anne Kaiser and Karen Montgomery for attending the meeting. He did not think that SHA seemed overly concerned with the impact of an overpass on the rural entryway into Olney. SHA is arguing that the cost of moving the fill material to another location is the biggest impediment to doing an underpass at this intersection. In addition, with the overpass plan, this intersection is also planned to receive fill dirt from other intersections, and this may be an even bigger issue than the disposal of the additional fill from the Georgia Avenue interchange itself. Finding a place to put this fill without too much expense will increase the viability of an underpass. Anthony noted that SHA had asked John Kramer if they could put some fill on land adjacent to The Preserve and that he has observed that SHA has been taking some measurements on Georgia Avenue near the site of the interchange.

Delegate Kaiser had reasked SHA a question from John Kramer regarding the watershed boundaries, but had no response yet. Delegate Montgomery is not as pessimistic on what SHA's response will be regarding this interchange because the project must be brought in at or under budget and this is a real issue with this project. If the staff can find a way to work out the economics, she feels they will respond favorably to the proposal for an underpass. She agreed that Mr. Petersen was not impressed with the rural entryway argument because he does not feel the area is rural any longer. Anthony suggested that it would be helpful for individual civic and homeowner associations to write to the SHA stating their support of the underpass proposal with cc's to the County Council and Nancy Floreen, as chair of the transportation committee.

John suggested that while the Rte. 97/28 intersection is not in the top 10 priority list of State road projects, priorities need to be reassessed because of the ICC alignment being so close to this intersection. Currently the I-270, Rte. 29, and Brookeville Bypass projects are higher priorities than the Rte. 97/28 intersection

NEW BUSINESS

Providing CA/HOA Contact Information on the Greater Olney Civic Association Website – Art Brodsky noted that he had gotten a call from a new Olney resident who had a problem at her home and did not know who to contact in her homeowners association and he gave her the name of a contact in her association. This made him think about the value of publishing contact information for our member associations on the GOCA website, www.goca.org. There could be a range of information available this way, depending on how much each association wants to provide this way. Brenda Egeland, the GOCA webmaster, noted that the website already

has links to some of the associations that have their own websites and we could create web pages for those without websites. We may also want to try to create a map that shows where the various developments are located. The consensus was that this was a good idea, although there were some concerns about making people subject to spam. Brenda felt that could be addressed and Art noted it would be up to each association to decide what information they want to post. Art will be contacting each association, via email, but any association can provide their contact information to him at art.brodsky@goca.org.

2006 Campaign Debates – Arnie Gordon asked that GOCA consider sponsoring or co-sponsoring a series of debates for the upcoming 2006 elections for County Executive, and the County Council Districts 2 and 4 and At-Large seats in the Spring. The debates could be held in different parts of Olney. He suggested doing the Democratic candidates prior to the Primary and the Republicans post Primary. He feels there had not been enough information available about the candidates in the 2002 election and since this is a critical elections with issues like Clarksburg and the Agricultural Reserve being considered now. He will distribute a draft motion concerning the debates for consideration at the next GOCA meeting.

Following a few announcements, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Danny Benn

Danny Benn
Recording Secretary

People in attendance:

Khalid Afzal, Barbara Barry, Danny & Jackie Benn, Ron Berger, Art Brodsky, Joe Buffington, Tom DeGonia, Sharon Dooley, Brenda Egeland, Dave Eskenazi, Barbara Falcigno, Jay Feinberg, Arnie Gordon, Terri Hogan (Gazette), Delegate Anne Kaiser (Dist.14), Chuck Keyserling, Dean Kimmel, John Lyons, Peter Monge, Delegate Karen Montgomery (Dist 14), Lynne Myers, Susan Nerlinger, Astrid Pages, Roy Peck, Susan Petrocci, Harold Pickett, Keith Robinson, Ingrid Romer, Helene Rosenheim, Robin Shea, Robert Sigillito, Michael Sullivan, L. Anthony Waktins, Anne Weiss, and Chuck Young.