

## MINUTES – October 11, 2005

The meeting was called to order by President John Lyons. The July 2005 minutes were approved with 2 corrections (Pg 4, changing Danny Been to Danny Benn, adding Delegate Karen Montgomery to list of People in Attendance) and the September 2005 minutes were approved with 3 corrections (Pg 4, ¶ 3 changing “in The Preserve” to “adjacent to The Preserve”, Pg 5, changing Danny Been to Danny Benn, adding Delegate Karen Montgomery to list of People in Attendance).. The agenda was approved with 2 additions (Special Presentation: Councilmember Nancy Floreen on Clarksburg situation, Old Business: Candidate Debates)

### PUBLIC COMMENTS

- Susie Iaquina spoke about the Relay for Life fundraising program she is coordinating in the Olney area for the American Cancer Society – the leading fundraiser for cancer research, education, and support. The Relay for Life will take place in June at Sherwood High School, but there will fundraising efforts throughout the year. Of the money raised, 90% goes to research and only 6% goes to cover administrative and fundraising costs. The Relay for Life is a 20-hour event in which relay teams walk around the school’s track continuously, with at least 1 team member walking at all times to symbolize a day in the life of a cancer victim who must face whatever comes each day. There will also be a day of activities for children. John Lyons noted that GOCA can help publicize the events by listing them on future agendas, sending information to the GOCA email list, and posting it and any relevant links on the GOCA website.
- Arnie Gordon noted that the County Executive had nominated Norman Dreyfuss to chair the Housing Opportunities Commission. The Civic Federation is opposing his appointment because all throughout Mr. Dreyfuss’ career as a developer he seemed to avoid putting affordable housing in his developments as much as possible. Arnie also noted an article in the Washington Post that day on mansionization in the down-county area.
- Chuck Keyserling noted that with the rise in fuel costs, there are several things people can do to reduce heating costs in their homes. For example, they can put more insulation in their roofs, especially in older homes where insulation has gotten matted down. Also, on October 26<sup>th</sup> the Norbeck Meadows Civic Association will be holding a Deer Prevention Workshop at Cashell Elementary School at 7:15 pm conducted by the Park and Planning (P&P) specialist who had spoken at a GOCA meeting several months ago.

### SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

**Update on Olney Area Policing Issues** – John Lyons noted that Captain Walker from the District 4 Police Station, had been scheduled to speak at the meeting but was ill. So Lt. Parker-Loan and Sgt Sakala were there from the District.. Lt. Parker-Loan noted that he had talked with John DeSulis, the District’s crime statistics analyst, who indicated that crime in Olney was low, and there is no significant crime pattern in this area. Under the new deployment plan, each sergeant is responsible for a smaller number of officers working regular shifts, as follows: Daytime shifts: Sgt. Raleigh – 6 officers and Sgt. Hudson – 6 officers; Evening shifts: St. Cecall – 6 officers and Sgt. Curry – 7 officers; Midnight shift: Sgt. DeVito -11 officers and Sgt. Z – 12 officers. The sergeants stay in this area so they become familiar with people in the area and they become familiar with the sergeants and their officers. The deployment seems to be working well, but there are some problems when officers have to make court appearances during the day. This situation will improve once they add more officers to the shifts.

With respect to the recent stabbing incident at Blake High School, Lt. Parker-Loan noted that it had nothing to do with the game and 99% of the people there. This could have happened anywhere these girls got together. There were police at the game, but there is a large area between the school football field and the parking lot which makes it difficult to patrol. Having more police there would not have prevented the incident, but they are able to make a quick arrest. Lt. Parker-Loan also noted that once the new satellite station trailer expansion is completed they will begin to hold some roll calls there on days the shifts overlap. The overlap day is Tuesdays through December and then Fridays after December. There will be 16-20 volunteers staffing the trailer Mondays – Fridays, normally during early daytime hours.

The following points were made during questions and answers:

- John Lyons agreed on some level that there is not a lot of crime in Olney, but there have been a significant number of incidents of vandalism and property crimes. So, he questioned what the statistics reflect. Lt. Parker-Loan explained that the crime statistics relate to violent crimes such as thefts, burglaries, rape, and murder. Nuisance crimes such as vandalism only show up in a report if there is a pattern of crimes. The shift sergeants may be aware of repeated incidents and they should be making reports of these incidents.
- John also noted that response time to the vandalism and property crimes seems to be an issue. Lt. Parker-Loan indicated that it is and it is not. Crimes in process take precedent over incidents such as these. Also, the number of officers working on a shift and the level of activity at a given time also impact response time.
- Susan Petrocci noted that there had been a series of about 50 burglaries in a small geographic area the previous winter and she had spoken to an officer who indicated that there had not been enough money in their budget to assign a detective to investigate the situation. She expressed a concern that as a result of being an area with a lower crime rate than adjacent areas such as Wheaton, results in Olney getting less attention. Lt. Parker-Loan indicated that the information she had received was not correct and that there were sufficient numbers of detectives in the District. And, in connection with this series of burglaries, police did surveillance, sometimes undercover. There were several suspects they followed, but none committed any crimes while under surveillance and the detectives were not able to connect most of them to the previous incidents. However, he did believe that there had been an arrest that closed the case.
- Art Brodsky expressed concerns about the situation at Sherwood with fights with New Orleans evacuees attending the school and the shortage in the security detail assigned to the school because of the security officer being on extended sick leave since the beginning of the school year. Lt. Parker-Loan noted that he was not certain about the security shortage, but was aware of the emails that had been circulated regarding increased gang activity related to a murder in Pennsylvania. They had investigated the situation and found that there was no evidence that there was any truth to the information in the email. He did not know if there had been any increase in fights at the school over last year, but he would check on that and report back to John Lyons. John noted that the EFO from the previous year had been reassigned to Blake and the replacement EFO had been on sick leave since the beginning of the school year which was a concern. Lt. Parker-Loan noted that a temporary EFO had been assigned to Sherwood until the permanent EFO is able to return. He noted, too, that officers had been stopping by the school each day in his absence. The temporary sergeant had not gotten any calls of incidents since he was assigned.
- Arnie Gordon noted that he had reported the presence of a bowman in the Norbeck Meadows Park to District 4 and was told it was a park police matter. They did send a police officer who identified a shooter, but let him go. He asked why it was necessary to have two separate police forces. The Lt. noted that he did not really feel separate organizations was not a real problem, as long as situations were being responded to. He did not think 911 should not bounce a caller around, but should get the information to the Park Police who deal with situations in the Parks. The question about 2 separate police forces was a policy matter that is decided well above his organization level.
- Dave Eskenazi noted the article in Gazette about the many accidents on Rte. 108 at the entrance to the Olney Shopping Center, especially in the am rush hours; but that the State Highway Administration did not consider this a problem because there were no accident reports concerning this area. Lt. Parker-Loan noted that it is the officers; discretion whether an accident report is completed and often if there is only minor damage, none is completed. However, there are records of the call coming in reporting the accident. Officers can also complete an accident report if the parties involved insist. Dave asked how long the call reports were kept and how the public could access them. The Lt. noted that the information can be obtained from their data system at the station. He was not certain how long the information was in their computers, but would find out and how it can be accessed.
- Ron Berger noted that there had been concerns at the time the new deployment was initiated about the sense that response times in the area were too long. It was suggested that the deployment would improve that situation, but that doesn't appear to be the case. Lt. Parker-Loan couldn't say that response times would always be better under the deployment plan, but officers become more familiar with the area which might help. Having the trailer should also improve the situation since officers would be responding from Olney rather than having to come from Glenmont. However, court appearances, crimes in progress, and the other priorities he mentioned earlier will still impact response times. The deployment plan may not necessarily improve response times, but does provide other improvements to the policing of the area.

**Community concerns about the planning process since Clarksburg** - John Lyons indicated that Councilmember Nancy Floreen had asked to be put on the agenda to discuss the community's thoughts about the planning process in the County. In light of the situation in Clarksburg, the question is whether this is the time to rethink how Park and Planning (P&P) operates. She asked to come to the meeting because there are a lot of people in Olney with a lot of planning experience and she was interested any insights the community might have for improving the process. She noted also that the situation in Clarksburg is confusing, and not necessarily as

reported by the press. She asked if we trust the process, can we envision development proceeding in the way we envision. People have lots of expectation, implementation is tricky, and can we count on them being met. She sees 3 basis questions: how to ensure better accountability, how to ensure predictability while retaining flexibility needed as circumstance change, and how to better improve coordination between agencies involved in planning and implementation of plans. Now planning is done in one agency which has some enforcement responsibilities, while Permitting Services have some of the enforcement responsibilities. The independence of the planning process has been a good thing. There will be a forum on December 10<sup>th</sup> at the John Hopkins University facility at Shady Grove that will not be managed by either P&P or the County Council. It is an opportunity to think about the big picture and for the public to give comments and discuss how to improve the planning process. There is a question about whether they are trying to do too much or whether they are talking about this too much and not taking enough action. There is a question about whether Clarksburg is an anomaly or whether it has just brought issues to a head that have been brewing for a while. If so, they need to be faced. She has worked on all sides of the system, and knows confidence in the system has been shaken and wants to hear suggestions for how to improve things.

Some of the points made were that:

- John Lyons noted that the Planning Review staff needs to begin to acknowledge that there is a perception that existing development does not matter as much as new development. It is not clear what the underlying principle is behind planning decisions. There has been 30 years of decisions made as if there were unlimited resources in the County, but that as the County has matured, the existing population feels it is being put upon. Growth is a choice, a policy to be managed and it starts with the County Council. P&P processes may need to be adjusted, but first the policies of the Council need to be clear and well-known to the public. Maintaining the quality of life for the existing residents should be the first priority before consideration of the needs of new residents.
- Ron Berger indicated that he was not surprised by the situation in Clarksburg. He had seen in situations with developers in years past that GOCA had monitored situations, found errors in the implementation of development plans, went to the Planning Board who listened and controlled the developers. What surprised him wasn't that errors occurred, but the roadblocks faced by the community when they brought the errors to the attention of County agency officials. He realizes that there is not enough staff to be watch dogs, so the agencies must rely on citizens to do this. As we rethink this, there needs to be more resources for "officialdom" to oversee enforcement, so there does not need to be so much reliance on citizens to do that. Ms. Floreen agreed that the Council needed to prioritize enforcement in a way it has not done in the past. Arlington, which is a smaller area, has substantially more enforcement staff. The question is how much money needs to be put towards enforcement, but it is important and they need to make a commitment to it.
- Arnie Gordon felt citizens get short-shrift with the Council and the Planning Board with the short notice they get about development proposals and the limited time they get to present testimony. Developers drive the calendar and citizens are repeatedly asked to provide information developers and staff should be developing. He felt, too, that the Council should represent the existing taxpayers. But, the message the Planning Board seems to be getting from the Council is that developers should get what they want. Civic Federation is finding more information about sites where infractions have occurred. Also, developers have free access to Park and Planning files with no records being maintained of who is accessing the files, when and how often they are doing so. Citizens have to make appointments to see things and meet with staff. John Lyons added that the public is not invited to the Development Review Committee meetings. If they learn about the meetings, they can attend, but cannot speak or ask questions.
- Lee Spencer that he had recently moved here and it was the first time he had moved to a mature area where he couldn't determine what the controlling documents for the area were. Even citizen review documents, it is difficult to know what they are checking against or who to report discrepancies to.
- Susan Petrocci noted that she agreed that tighter enforcement was needed, but there is confusion on the goal of the County regarding growth and how it is being managed. Job growth is so far apace of development that we have created a situation where we can not possibly provide enough housing for all the people working in the County. The Council has gutted the annual growth polices that control growth. Citizens are viewed as nimbies regarding growth and are viewed wearily by the Council and the Planning Board. Lawyers walk the halls of Park and Planning at will all day and citizens have to be babysat. Citizens are not part of the planning process, even if they go the Development Review Committee meetings. By the time development proposals get to that stage, developers have already been interacting with planning staff for a year to a year or more. She is also not surprised the infractions are occurring, but is surprised that the Council is surprised.
- Art Brodsky added that he was surprised by Mr. Silverman's surprise. He agreed that citizens do not feel welcome in the process. The question the people making the decision seem to be asking is not should a project go forward, but how do we make the project go forward. This may not be the appropriate attitude.
- Dave Eskenazi noted that there will always be a need for new housing, because as housing becomes limited, it drives the housing prices up. He hoped that there would be opportunities for all stakeholders to have input.

He also suggested that the process be made more transparent and that they take advantage of technology. Preliminary and site plans could be posted online. Agencies should use the Federal version of administrative procedures by posting what the contents of files are and who is looking at records.

- Ms. Floreen noted that the master plan process is the beginning of a discussion that goes on through the site plan process in which there are opportunities to change what actually occurs at the sites.
- Stephen Smet noted that there is a climate that puts developers vs. citizens. Now developers proceed as a group to get around citizens rather than seeing citizens as partners in creating the best possible plan for all without putting communities against communities.
- Ed Weisel suggested that a simple solution to eliminating the infractions is to make developers accountable and to make them correct infractions, even if that impacts their profits. For example, in Clarksburg, the debate seems to be that infractions did occur in the way the developers implemented the site plans, but its done now and we cannot go back. Make them take something down if it is built incorrectly, and pay for it. If developers were made to abate the nuisances they have created, they would be more careful.
- John Kramer noted that at The Preserve they did not some experience with a developer who came to them for input, they found some problems that were addressed. But they had found with various inspectors they dealt with did not seem to respond well to their input. Robin Shea noted a similar problem in their development. In their case, the developer was still an active member of their association board, and their views had been excluded by the developer, for example with reforestation. Citizens were excluded by all the agency inspectors involved in their development.

Ms. Floreen noted that public testimony is good, but all that really matters is that people get their thoughts through to them in whatever way they can. She encouraged everyone to continue to think about this issue and share their thoughts with her and the other Council members. The Council will be getting reports every 2 weeks from P&P on the implementation measures they will be putting into place. But, this may be an opportunity to take a step back and look at the whole planning process.

John Lyons noted that the Private Institutional Facilities (PIF) issue is a concern and that the Georgia Ave/Norbeck Rd interchange needs to be a priority regardless of the development plans for the Inter-County Connector. Ms. Floreen noted that there will be a hearing on November 8<sup>th</sup> on the PIFs and it will be discussed by the Council on November 10<sup>th</sup> by the T&E and PHED Committees and then by the full Council. John added that with respect to PIFs in the Agricultural Reserve may require a change in a 30 year old policy of reviewing requests to extend sewer and water on a case by case basis and making a decision to not extent sewer and water into the Agricultural Reserve. Ms. Floreen suggested that it is likely that this policy may change with respect to the Agricultural Reserve, but she is not sure about other large lot zones. The issue is how to deal with the faith community. She is not sure if they will impose more rules on religious institutions, and she is not sure if they will resolve all the land use issues. Many are master plan issues and the Olney Master Plan has just been reviewed. Another decision is whether to make exceptions for pending applications.

## **OFFICERS/COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Treasurer's Report** – John Lyons reported for Roy Peck that the current balance is \$4,374.53.

**Correspondence Report** – Jay Feinberg reported that we had received a site plan for the Bowie Mill Estates development behind Magruder High School.

**Olney Chamber of Commerce Report** – There was no Chamber report, but John Lyons reminded everyone that the Chamber's Annual Community Night was to take place on October 20<sup>th</sup> in St. John's Episcopal Parish School's Gymnasium.

**Civic Federation Report** – Arnie Gordon reported that Civic Federation is presenting the Clarksburg residents with their Community Hero Award. And, their membership is picking up, largely due to the Clarksburg situation. He noted an editorial in The Examiner that commended their organization for its efforts on this issue. He also noted that the Planning Board had expressed concerns about the plans for the Peary High School sale.

**Membership Committee** – Art Brodsky reported that the Olney Oaks Single-Family HOA had rejoined, and he was still awaiting response from the Highlands of Olney.

**Land Use Committee** – John Lyons noted that there was going to be a meeting on 10/12 to discuss the Ashton Meeting Place development proposal. The site is on the southeast corner of the Rte. 108/New Hampshire Ave intersection. He also noted that the Sectional Map Amendment implementing the Olney Master Plan had been approved by the County Council which means that the development plans in the planning area can move forward,

including for the properties in the southeast quadrant of Olney. With large schools at each end of Batchellors Forest Rd, the southeast quadrant will change substantially. And, he noted that the Planning Board had recommended denial of the special exception for the Winchester School. He believed the Board of Appeals had considered the application, but had not seen a report of their decision.

Susan Petrocci noted that P&P's Development Review Committee had discussed the Bowie Mill Estates site plan which is the Oxbridge development that day. The project is for 187 units. There are 34 MPDUs and half are being proposed as duplexes. The other half are townhouses facing the rear boundary of Magruder High School. There are several storm water management ponds proposed along Bowie Mill Rd that do not provide much of a scenic vista along that roadway. There is also an issue about a main entrance onto Bowie Mill about 600' from Muncaster Mill Rd that GOCA may want to address. Sharon Dooley noted that we also need to be watchful to ensure that the MPDUs are built as some developers seem to not be building them as promised in their site plans.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

**Private Institution Facilities Update** – John Lyons noted that there will be a hearing on November 8<sup>th</sup>. He agreed with Ms. Floreen that it is likely that sewer and water will not be extended into the Agricultural Reserve, but that will not prevent the proposal in Laytonsville from moving forward since they are planning on using multi-use septic fields. Helene Rosenheim suggested that they may want to coordinate with the Mid-County Citizens Advisory Board which is formulating a position on PIFs in the Agricultural Reserve along with the UpCounty Citizens Advisory Board.

**Olney Town Center** – Susan Petrocci reported that Khalid Afzal presented his initial proposal for the formation of Olney Town Center Advisory Committee at the September 2005 meeting. It was discussed at that meeting and at the next officers' meeting. She will be drafting comments to send to P&P incorporating the points made in the discussions at those meetings. Khalid noted that he had only received 1 nomination for the Committee from Walter Lee from the Environ community, plus 2 other comments. He had hoped that the discussion at the GOCA meetings and the article in the Gazette would generate enough comments and nominations. However, he will be sending notices to each of the HOA's to solicit comments and nominations for membership on the Advisory Committee. He also noted that he had a good conversation with Freeman Associates.

**Candidates Debates** - Arnie Gordon noted that he had suggested at the last meeting that GOCA consider sponsoring or co-sponsoring a series of debates with one each for the County Executive and County Council District 2, District 4 and at-large seats. He feels that GOCA would be delinquent in carrying out their responsibility if it does not use its mechanisms to help educate the residents in the area about the candidates for those positions. Arnie Gordon moved that:

**WHEREAS, GOCA SEEKS TO ACQUAINT AS MANY PEOPLE WITH THE POLITICAL PROCESS, AND THE CANDIDATES FOR OFFICES AFFECTING OUR COMMUNITY MOST DIRECTLY – THE CANDIDATES COUNTY EXECUTIVE, COUNTY COUNCIL (DISTRICTS 2 AND 4) AND COUNTY COUNCIL AT-LARGE.**

**WHEREAS IT IS IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE OLNEY COMMUNITY TO EDUCATE OUR VOTERS CONCERNING THE CANDIDATES AND THEIR POSITION AND RECORDS ON ISSUES ESPECIALLY THOSE INVOLVING PLANNING, ZONING, HOUSING, TRANSPORTATION, AND PUBLIC SAFETY, AND**

**WHEREAS, THERE IS A PUACITY OF PUBLIC FOR A WHICH ARE DESIGNED TO ALLOW FOR FULL DEBATE AND DISCUSSION AND AN OPPORTUNITY FOR CITIZENS TO ASK QUESTIONS OF, AND INSIST ON DIRECT ANSWERS ON THESE ISSUES FROM THE CANDIDATES;**

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT;**

- 1. GOCA ESTABLISH A TEMPORARY COMMITTEE TO ARRANGE A DEBATE BY CANDIDATES FOR EACH OF THESE OFFICES EACH TO BE HELD IN THE SPRING 2006 TIME FRAME; AND**
- 2. MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS BE ENLISTED TO SUPPORT AT LEAST ONE EACH OF THESE DEBATES AT A LOCATION CLOSEST OR MOST CONVENIENT TO THEIR AREA; AND**
- 3. GOCA UNDERWRITE THE COST INVOLVED IN ARRANGING FOR FACILITIES AND IN PUBLICIZING THESE EVENTS IN ADDITION TO WHAT INDIVIDUAL LOCAL HOMEOWNER AND CIVIC ASSOCIATIONS MAY CHOOSE TO CONTRIBUTE AND APPLY FOR SUCH PURPOSES, AND ATTEMPT TO OBTAIN OTHER SPONSORS.; AND**

**4. NOTHING IN THIS RESOLUTION SHOULD BE INTERPRETED AS PREVENTING OR DISCOURAGING OTHER LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS FROM SPONSORING SIMILAR EVENTS EXCEPT AS THEY MAY CONFLICT AS TO TIME OR PLACE WITH THE EVENTS CONTEMPLATED BY THIS RESOLUTION.**

The motion was seconded by Ron Berger and, following a brief discussion, passed overwhelmingly with 2 opposed. A committee chaired by Art Brodsky was formed to set the format, make the arrangements, and issue invitations to the candidates. Ron Berger and Arnie Gordon offered to serve on the committee and others were encouraged to join the committee.

**NEW BUSINESS - None**

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, Robert Boras, Art Brodsky, Leslie Cronin, Sharon Dooley, Brenda Egeland, Dave Eskenazi, Jay Feinberg, Councilmember Nancy Floreen, Tom Gallagher, Arnie Gordon, Robert Hausman, Terri Hogan (Gazette), Susan Hudson, Susan L. Iaquina, Susan M. Iaquina, Chuck Keyserling, Dean Kimmel, John Kramer, John Lyons, Del Karen Montgomery (Dist 14), Willie Parker-Loan (MCPD), Susan Petrocci, Helene Rosenheim, Chris Sakala (MCPD), Robin Shea, Robert Sigillito, Stephen Smet, Lee Spencer, Bob Tworkowski, and Ed Weisel.