

MINUTES – December 12, 2006

The meeting was called to order by Executive Vice President Art Brodsky. The September, October, and November 2006 minutes were approved with no corrections or additions. The agenda was accepted with a correction of the spelling of Councilmember Elrich's last name and no additions.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

- Ed Weisel commented that Georgia Avenue north of Norbeck Road did not seem like a rural entry way any longer. He asked if it was possible to ask the State Highway Administration (SHA) to remove the large, blue construction site sign by the Inter-County Connector (ICC) right-of-way.
- Brenda Egeland noted that a portion of Rte 108 has become very bumpy and needs to be resurfaced. It was suggested that she contact the SHA District 3 District Engineer or that she forward the information to Helene Rosenheim who would forward the information to both SHA and the County's Dept. of Public Works.

Danny Benn noted that the 2007 Relay for Life is set for June 9th & 10th. Teams are now forming and their Kick-Off event will be on January 17th at St. John's Episcopal Church. People should RSVP to Susie Iaguinta.

Paul Jarosinski suggested that now that the election is over and the County is reexamining the Annual Growth Policy, it seems like a good time to press our legislators to move up the improvements to the Rte. 28/97 intersection that the previous administration had put off until 2030, presumably, he felt, to create the traffic delays that would seem to justify the construction of the ICC. Art noted that this has been an issue of concern to GOCA for some time. Dave Eskenazi added that the issue was more at the State level than the County. However, there are several projects on the County's list ahead of this project, and the Brookeville By-pass is even lower; and County Executive Ike Leggett indicated at one of his town meetings that there was no money available for these kinds of road projects. Councilmember Mike Knapp noted that the Council is proposing to put \$160 million into the budget for these kinds of projects to "prime the pump" in order to get matching funds from the State. This is still in play and the Council is working with County Executive Leggett. He added that at the end of the January the Council will be reexamining the State road priority list and suggested that GOCA provide testimony on their priorities at that hearing.

- John Kramer noted that he has a scout in his troop who was diagnosed with thyroid cancer just after becoming an Eagle Scout. John asked for suggestions for a special way to recognize his accomplishment. The young man's Eagle Scout project was building a butterfly garden at the Brooke Grove Foundation.

OFFICERS/COMMITTEE REPORTS

Treasurer's Report – Roy Peck reported that the current balance is \$5,066.83.

Correspondence Report – Jackie Benn reported that there was no noteworthy correspondence this month.

Olney Chamber of Commerce Report – No report

Civic Federation Report– Jackie Benn reported that Mark Elrich, County Councilmember-At-Large, and Councilmember Valerie Ervin, District 5 both spoke at their meeting the evening before this meeting.

Membership Committee – Art noted that the website now reflects the current GOCA membership with 25-26 member associations.

Land Use Report – Barbara Falcigno reported that the County Council has asked the Planning Board to speed up its study of the Annual Growth Policy. She noted, too, that the Shady Grove Master Plan won an award and a Citizen Advisory Committee has been formed to implement that plan. Also, a draft of the Maryland-National Capitol Parks and Planning Commission's new rules is available on their website. A

cluster development sign was seen on Camp Bennett. Khalid Afzal noted that Camp Bennett will continue to operate. The development is being proposed for the rear portion of the camp grounds.

Transportation Report – Dave Eskenazi asked Councilmember Mike Knapp if the Metro shortfalls will impact Ride-On. Mr. Knapp did not expect it to. Ed Weisel noted that Ride-On was a County system and should not be affected by WMATA's budget situation. Danny Benn noted that ridership on the 52 bus has increased over the last year, but it does not run on the weekends. He thought weekend service would be helpful. Del. Karen Montgomery noted that she had just attended a 3-day Metro conference which took place before the cuts were announced where they indicated that they needed additional buses.

President's Report – No report.

OLD BUSINESS

Aunt Hattie's Place Special Exception – Barbara Falcigno noted that there is nothing new to report on this special exception appeal. The next hearing date is in March.

Troutner v. Planning Board – Art reported that the negotiated agreement was going to the Park and Planning Commission the following week for their review and consideration.

Olney Police Satellite Facility – Councilmember Mike Knapp noted that while it seemed appropriate for the County to take over ownership of satellite facility, with all the agreements between the Olney Chamber of Commerce, Sandy Spring Bank, Giant Food, etc. the Council concluded that it made more sense to leave its ownership with the Chamber. Instead, the upcoming budget for the Police Department will include \$10,000 that will be donate towards the cost of purchasing the trailer. Subsequently, the Chamber will be able to submit invoices for up to \$5,000 each year for the maintenance. Terri Hogan noted that Brookeville had voted the night before to donate \$1,500 towards the purchase of the trailer.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

Introduction to County Council Members

Councilmember Knapp, District 2, re-elected to a second term, noted that he will chair the Education Committee, and will serve on the Public Safety Committee. The Education Committee will be looking at the achievement gap of students in the County and a variety of other education issues such as better vetting of the MCPS program. The Council will somewhat accelerate the analysis of the Annual Growth Policy. The Planning Board made recommendations 4 years ago that the Council did not like, but they did not have any other options. By May 21st, the Council should have options for the Council to consider and they will take action in June or July. Councilmember Praisner has proposed a development moratorium, however, he thinks there are so many projects already in the pipeline, it is hard to say what real impact a moratorium will have. He noted that there are four new members on the Council: Valerie Irvin, Roger Berlinger, Duchy Tractenberg, and Marc Elrich. There has been a big shuffle in the make up of the committee. They are all learning their way and will really begin working in January. He offered to come back in February to give us a sense of how things are going.

Mr. Knapp noted that this is an off year in the CIP budget process, so they will just be acting on supplemental requests. They have seen a slowing down in revenues. They passed the spending affordability provisions and limited spending to the Charter limit. So, they will keep property taxes to the Charter limit.

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

- Mr. Knapp wants to conduct some focus groups with the community to get a sense of what the community is interested in seeing, and to create a more transparent process for communities to see how things are done and decisions are made.
- Chuck Young stressed the importance of GOCA taking an active role in the activities and outreach of the Council.
- Mr. Knapp thanked all those present for their civic involvement and wished all happy holidays.

Note: Special Presentation is continued below.

NEW BUSINESS

2006 GOCA Awards – Ron Berger noted that GOCA has been presenting awards to community members who have made significant contributions to the quality of life in Olney for over 25 years. Each year we look outside of our GOCA membership for nominees for these awards, as well as to our members. We look for youth, scouts, businesses, groups, associations, committees, and individuals who have done things during the past year to make Olney a better place to live and work. There is a lot happening in the community that we don't see, so we rely on others to let us know about people deserving of these awards. Awards are given for all kinds of contributions. We want to continue to recognize contributions and to encourage others to become involved. GOCA hosts a ceremony at Longwood Recreation Center in March where the awards are presented.

2007 GOCA Officers – Ron Berger noted that the GOCA officers are elected at the February meeting. And, according to the By-Laws, the slate must be presented at the January meeting. John Lyons is not eligible to run again since he is now completing his second term, and a few others cannot or are not interested in running again. Ron has begun talking to people about the various offices: Pres, Ex. Vice President, 1st and 2nd Vice President, Treasurer, Recording and Corresponding Secretaries. He encouraged anyone interested in taking on one of these positions to contact him. He noted, it would even be nice to have some competition for these offices. Serving as an officer generally adds 1 additional meeting each month, so it is not burdensome.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION Continued

Marc Elrich, Councilmember-At-Large, beginning first term. Councilmember Elrich noted that he had been in office for 1 week and 1 day, but he is still teaching till June, so it makes for a long day. His priorities are close to those of our new County Executive, Ike Leggett. He is interested in:

- Redoing the Annual Growth Policy making sure to have standards that reflect people's expectations of what is acceptable. He noted that there will be a hearing on January 16th on the idea of a pause in development approvals. They do not want to approve projects under existing rules if they are going to be changing them soon, letting projects come under the wire of the new requirements. The developers are already signed up for their 15 slots at the hearing. There are already 23,000 units approved, so this will not be stopping development.
- Education and the accountability of schools. Spending \$2 billion wisely is important to getting the outcomes we want for our children. He has strong feelings about testing and teaching to the test. Rather than spending 2-3 months preparing for a test, they should just have a strong curriculum so that the students are prepared for any test. He understands that the Council cannot dictate policy, but he assured Dr. Weast he will not be quiet.
- Affordable housing. Eighteen months ago there were 8,000 units up for conversion and it would take 40 years to replace those units. The question is preservation of existing units vs. new construction. He thinks they need to take a balance sheet approach and will look at whether it is more productive to focus dollars in preserving units or building new ones. At the end of the day, they want to do what it takes to get the most units. The real problem is that they lose units each year from the stock of affordable units. He is heartened by business people who are expressing concern about where their work force will come from when housing costs are driving people out of the County.

Mr. Elrich noted that the Council met with Mr. Firestein, the County's new Chief Administrative Officer. They asked him to look at how they can use existing employees to carry out new programs as they assess what the County is doing now and what they think they should be doing. Mr. Elrich is not sure what they can do to right wrongs of the previous administration, but he is willing to look at issues the community sees as previous decisions that were egregious. He encouraged people to let him know about such issues and he will see if they can be revisited.

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

- Ed Weisel noted that the current cost projections for the Inter-County Connector (ICC) were no longer realistic. Mr. Elrich agreed, and indicated he was opposed to the ICC and would ask Governor O'Malley to do a recost analysis of the ICC. It may be that the \$7 toll being proposed may not be enough, but a higher toll would discourage people from using the road, which would mean the road would fail. A corridor county transit way is a key priority of Mr. Elrich's. It would service the Germantown and Clarksburg area along with a rail system that would relieve traffic, but it is not funded for 30 years. He also plans to propose that the ICC not be used to support additional development capacity. The road was designed to provide relief for traffic from existing or already approved development, not to give capacity

for additional development. It was suggested that the land along the right-of-way be rezoned so it can be used as open space.

- Mr. Elrich will serve on the Planning, Housing, and Economic Development Committee and the Public Safety Committee. But he will sit in on the Education Committee meetings and will be able to ask questions.

- Mr. Elrich would reconsider the decision to put 700+ units on the northeast quadrant of the Norbeck Rd/Georgia Avenue intersection and he is willing to reopen the Olney Master Plan to do so. He is getting information now on what things the new Council can do with respect to actions by the previous Council. It was suggested that he work with Councilmember Praisner and let her know that he is willing to reopen that Master Plan.

- Mr. Elrich would like to reduce the current levels of critical lane volumes to their lower limits. And they need to define "adequate" better in relation to "adequate public facilities".

- Dave Eskenazi noted GOCA's interest in the Rte. 28/97 intersection improvements and the Brookeville Bypass project and having them moved higher on the County's list of priorities for State roads. Mr. Elrich indicated that he wants to look at the current list of road projects to see which are for additional development and which are to relieve existing congestion, wanting to prioritize those providing relief and not supporting those for new growth. Dave E. also noted a practice in other areas where roads like the ICC are funded privately and the Federal dollars a State receives are used for other projects. Mr. Elrich said he would look into that as a option.

- Joe Fritsch noted that the County continually overlooks pedestrian and biker safety, which is a problem in light of the rise in the number of pedestrian deaths in the County. He recommended a number of changes that could be made at intersections. Mr. Elrich suggested that Mr. Fritsch provide input to the Council on his suggestions at the upcoming public hearings.

- With respect to global warming, Mr. Elrich suggested that the County needs a study group to develop policy on global warming, especially since there is no policy at the State level. He is interested in looking at anything that will improve the situation. State Del. Karen Montgomery, Dist. 14, noted that the State is looking at the issue and will be voting on this during the upcoming session.

- With respect to future development, Mr. Elrich noted it was a question of when the new test of adequate public facilities can be created. He is also looking at shortening the life of a project approval, i.e., how long developers have to implement a plan before they need to get permission to extend the time frame of the approval. He is considering limiting it to 3-5 years. Developers should not be able to grab up capacity and wait years to a time when such a project would likely not be approved if it had to go through the Adequate Public Facility review process at the time they are actually building. He noted, too, that most of the debate over development projects seems to relate to the impact on roads, and does not really address other infrastructure deficits like schools, fire stations, etc. He added that it is important for a community to be aware of projects in other areas outside of your own planning area and community, to contact leaders in those areas, and to go and testify when you see things being done in another area that could be applied to your own area. It is important for communities to work together.

- Mr. Elrich concluded by noting that sees himself as a civic activist and will approach his job as a County Council member as a civic activist.

Following a few announcements, the meeting was adjourned

Respectfully Submitted,

Danny Benn

Danny Benn, Recording Secretary

People in attendance:

Khalid Afzal (MNCPPC), Gina Angiola (Olney), Bob Beard (Homeland Village), Jackie & Danny Benn (Fairhill Farm), Ron Berger (Norbeck Meadows), Art Brodsky (Cherrywood), Rick Coburn (Norbeck Grove), Steve Cohen (Oak Grove), Joe Corbett (Williamsburg Village), Dominique D'Anna (Olney Mill), Sharon Dooley, Brenda Egeland (Norbeck Grove), Marc Elrich (County Council, At-Large), Dave Eskenazi (Norbeck Meadows), Barbara Falcigno (Olney Oaks), Jay Feinberg (Olney Oaks), Joe Fritsch (Highlands/MCRAB/OTCAC), Arnold Gordon (Norbeck Meadows), Terri Hogan (Gazette), Paul Jarosinski (Cherrywood), Mike Knapp (County Council, Dist 2), Larry Konefal (Norbeck Grove), John Kramer (Small's Nursery), Walter Lee (Environ/OTCAC), Del. Karen Montgomery (Dist 14), Jon Morrison (Oak Grove), Roy Peck (Norbeck Meadows), Helene Rosenheim (Highlands/MCRSC), Robin Shea (Oatlands Farm), L. Anthony Watkins (Brooke Manor), Ed Weisel, (Norbeck Meadows), Josh Witt (Sherwood HS Student), and Chuck Young (Olney Acres)