

MINUTES – January 9, 2007

The meeting was called to order by President John Lyons. The December 2006 minutes were approved with no corrections or additions. The agenda was accepted with the addition of one item of New Business, the Brookeville Bypass.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

- Rick Allan, President, Brookeville Commissioners, asked for GOCA's support for having the County partially fund the Georgia Avenue/Brookeville Bypass. He noted that the County Council is holding a public hearing on January 25 to learn more about what people's transportation priorities are. The Council will consider the Brookeville Bypass among a number of other State road projects. Completing this project would end an unsafe situation and eliminate backups at the T-intersection of Georgia Ave and Market St in Brookeville. Georgia Avenue is one of 14 evacuation corridors under Homeland Security plans and this would eliminate a bottleneck for this traffic. It would end the degradation of a nationally-recognized historic district that has played a part in America's history. Rick asked GOCA and GOCA's individual member associations to send letters of support to the County Council. They are trying to round up as many residents as possible to attend the hearing when he testifies, but noted that the impacts of this project go well beyond the town limits of Brookeville. Rick concluded by noting that the project was at the final design stage and will require acquisition of a small amount of land. Further discussion of the request was tabled till New Business.
- Jackie Benn noted that the Olney Lions and the Knights of Columbus are holding their annual Pancake and Sausage Breakfast at St. John's Episcopal Church on February 24th from 8:00 am – 2:00 pm.
- Danny Benn noted that the Kick-Off event for the 2007 Relay for Life will take place on January 17th. Those interested in attending were told to RSVP to Susie laquinta. This will take place in St. John's gym.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

An Overview of the Montgomery County Operating Budget Process – John Lyons introduced Beryl Feinberg from the Montgomery County Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Ms. Feinberg noted that County Executive Leggett is holding several budget forums around the County over the next few weeks and referred people to the County's website, www.montgomerycountymd.gov, for information on the dates, times, and locations. She noted that the County's fiscal year goes from July 1st to June 30th. The operating budget cycle generally begins in September when the County Council sets annual budget priorities. A County resolution passed in 2005 established a process to affirm the "Annual Budget Priorities and Performance Measures" by October 1st of each year for the following fiscal year. Also in September, the OMB briefs the County Executive on the financial outlook for the upcoming year and provides Executive Departments with target budget ceilings. During October and November, Executive Branch departments solicit input from the public on their priorities prior to them submitting operating budget requests to OMB; the Departments get updated revenue estimates and OMB presents a fiscal and economic outlook to the County Council. During December, the County Council, following a public hearing, sets the Spending Affordability Guidelines which means specifying a ceiling on funding from property tax revenues and on the aggregate operating budget; and OMB reviews and develops recommendations for departments and agency budgets for the County Executive; and Montgomery County Public School's Superintendent transmits his budget to the Board of Education.

In January, the Board of Education holds public hearings on the Superintendent's operating budget and reviews it. Other agencies such as Montgomery College and Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission submit their budget request to the County Executive. In February, other agencies submit their budget requests to the County Executive, the Dept of Finance provides updated revenue estimates, and the Board of Education transmits its MCPS operating budget recommendations to the County Council. By March 15th, the County Executive transmits his final recommendations to the Council

During April, the County Council holds public hearings, no earlier than 21 days after receipt of the budget from the County Executive. Then the Council committees review all of the budgets. Following the adjournment of the State General Assembly, the County Executive may submit budget amendments and

the Council may amend the Spending Affordability Guidelines (SAG) in response to actions taken by the State. However, any increase in the aggregate operating budget must not exceed the projected net increase in available resources since the guidelines were adopted, and applying the tax rates were assumed when SAG was adopted in the Fall. During May and June, the full Council reviews all of the committee recommendations, followed by approval of the operating budget by June 1st.

Ms. Feinberg noted that the community has a number of ways to participate in this process. Within the Executive Branch that includes letters and emails to the County Executive; through Boards, Commissions and Advisory Boards such as the regional services center citizen advisory boards; meetings of the County Executive with business leaders, directors of non-profits and other advocacy groups; County Executive Town Hall Forums; and through the County's website. Within the Legislative Branch input can be provided through letters and emails to the Councilmembers, Council public forums, and Councilmanic town meetings. People can also write letters to the press and participate in citizen groups such as the Taxpayer's League and the League of Women Voters. A resolution approved by the County Council in the fall of 2006 identified the following priorities for FY08, in alphabetical order: affordable housing, education, the environment, health and human services, infrastructure, public safety, and tax relief and fairness.

The following are some of the points made during the questions and answers:

- The goal of the County Executive is a Charter limit budget, but they have not gotten the tax revenues yet to see what the gap is. But, they expect a gap they have seen before.
- Revenues are not tracked by zip code or other regional boundaries.
- Creating a Charter limit budget is the County Executive options.
- The vast majority of the operating budget is for salaries – 63%. And, they now have to budget for future retirement for current employees. For FY08 that is \$31 million, and the amount will increase each year. So, there is very little available for discretionary spending.
- The budget is available on the OMB's website.
- The State Board of Elections purchased the voting machines and electronic poll books, but did not provide funding for maintenance. The County Board of Elections staff are all County funded and the County sets the rates of pay, including for the election judges.
- There are programs that have been terminated in the past, but they are generally small ones. They are looking more at efficiencies and effectiveness of programs. Ms. Feinberg referred people to the website, Montgomery Measures Up.

OFFICERS/COMMITTEE REPORTS

Treasurer's Report – John Lyons reported for Roy Peck that the current balance is \$5,061.88.

Correspondence Report – Jackie Benn reported that the correspondence included notification that the special exception application for Aunt Hattie's Place has been withdraw because she has reduced the number of residents to 6 boys which she can do by right.

Olney Chamber of Commerce Report – Joe Buffington reported that on February 7th, the Chamber will be holding a special open Board meeting. The public is invited to attend to ask questions and learn more about the Chamber.

Civic Federation Report– Jackie Benn reported that State Delegate Anne Kaiser, District 14 and State Senator Rich Mandelano spoke at the last Civic Federation meeting. She also distributed information on the pros and cons of touch screen voting machines vs. optical scanning machines.

Membership Committee – John distributed 2007 GOCA dues forms and asked delegates to take them to their associations. They will also be sent out electronically or by mail for those associations they do not have email addresses for.

Land Use Report – Barbara Falcigno reported that:

- The Planning Board discussed transportation priorities last week and put the Rte. 28/97 intersection back on the priority list along with 7 other projects.
- This week the Planning Board will be looking at the preliminary plan for the Casey property between Sequoyah Elementary and Magruder High School, and the preliminary water plan. It is in the RNC zone so there is a question of who will control the rural open space area.

- County Councilmember Marilyn Praisner introduced resolution, SRA 0603, on her first day as County Council President, calling for a suspension of the approval of preliminary and site plans for developments until the Annual Growth Policy has been reviewed.
- County Councilmember Mike Knapp has introduced a zoning text amendment to allow planned retirement communities on smaller tracts than now permitted. This is designed for use for the Webb property in Shady Grove.
- The Park and Planning Commission is trying to create a manual for the process for approval of development plans. A task force will meet 4-5 times to try to put this together. It will include aspects that involve other agencies and will try to involve citizen input earlier in the process.
- Olney Theatre wants to expand their building to the west to add a 6,000 sq. ft., 125-seat restaurant and 60-seat pub, and possibly an inn with as many as 30 sleeping rooms. In addition to there being a lack of hotel or motel space in the area, they need rooms for visiting actors. They are about to put out a request for interest to a number of restaurateurs and developers. They expect to make a selection of a developer by mid-summer. They realize that there will be issues relating to the hours of operations, security, and lighting. The arrangement with the restaurateur that is selected will be a source of revenue for the Theatre. There will be a berm about 200 ft. from the property line separating the building from the adjacent homes in Arden Woods. The Theatre has made an agreement with Good Counsel High School to use the Theatre's Historic Stage till their auditorium is complete and the Theatre can use their parking lot for overflow parking.

Transportation Report – Dave Eskenazi reported that the State Highway Administration has agreed that there should not be any parking on Georgia Avenue in front of the Willow Manor development. They will post no parking signs within 60-90 days. Jeff Kirby will have to address the problem of staff needing to park on their lot rather than on Georgia Avenue. John Lyons noted that GOCA had raised the issue of insufficient parking all through the development process and Kirby had convince Park and Planning that many of his tenants would not have cars because they will not drive.

President's Report – John Lyons sadly reported the tragic death of Josh Freeman in a helicopter crash. John noted that Josh had made so many contributions, not just to our community, but to the whole area and had been the GOCA Citizen of the Year in 2003. His death is a real loss for the community. The officers are considering some other way to recognize his contributions.

John also noted that the Washington Christian Academy had moved a construction trailer onto their site and will begin construction within the next few months. Also, the developer of the Hyde property must discuss their proposal with Park and Planning; but John doesn't have any other information yet.

OLD BUSINESS

Troutner v. Planning Board – John Lyons reported that it appears that there will be a settlement in the Fair Hill Reserve case. John noted that he felt it was a livable outcome, but some still have some concerns.

2006 GOCA Awards Nominations – Ron Berger noted that this meeting was the deadline for submitting nominations. The nominations we received will be reviewed over the next few days and a ballot will be put together. The two delegates for each member association will receive ballots. If Associations are not sure we have the most current delegate names, They will vote at the February meeting and the Awards will be presented at the Annual Awards Ceremony on Sunday, March 11th at Longwood Recreation Center.

Olney Town Center Advisory Committee – John Lyons noted that because of Federal holidays the next two months, the January and February meetings will be moved to the 4th Mondays of each month. So, the meetings will be on January 22nd, and February 26th. The public is welcome to come to the meetings.

2007 GOCA Officers – Ron Berger noted that the GOCA officers for 2007 will be voted on at the end of the February meeting. The By-Laws require that the slate of officers be presented at the January meeting.

The 2007 GOCA Officer slate that will be voted on in February includes:

President – Barbara Falcigno (Olney Oaks)
Executive Vice President – Bob Beard (Homeland Village)
First Vice President – Sharon Dooley
Second Vice President – Ginia Agiola (Norbeck Hills)
Treasurer – Roy Peck (Norbeck Meadows)
Corresponding Secretary – Jackie Benn (Fair Hill Farms)
Recording Secretary – Danny Benn (Fair Hill Farms)

NEW BUSINESS

Brookeville Bypass Project – John Lyons noted the request from Rick Allan for GOCA's support of the State Highway Administration project to build the Brookeville Bypass in the County Council and County Executive's review of the current priority list of State road projects in the County and for determining which projects the County will consider providing partial funding for to get the selected projects underway. John recommended that GOCA write a letter of support and/or testifying for the Bypass. It was noted that GOCA has already been pressing the State and the County to move up the construction date for the Rte 28/97 intersection improvement from 2030 either to a date prior to or along with the construction of the Inter-County Connector. So, it was felt that any letter of support should include a reference to both projects, so that the two projects are not competing against each other. It was also noted that at the recent town meeting that then, Governor-Elect Martin O'Malley's proposed Secretary of Transportation noted that all of the old State priorities are out and the State will be establishing a new list of priorities.

Barbara Falcigno moved that:

GOCA SUPPORT THE FUNDING OF THE STATE ROAD PROJECTS FOR THE BROOKEVILLE BY-PASS AND THE RTE 28/97 INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENT.

The motion was seconded by Arnold Gordon and, following a brief discussion, passed unanimously.

Proposed Moratorium on New Development – John Lyons noted the information Barbara Falcigno had mentioned earlier about the resolution introduced by Councilmember Marilyn Praisner to place a moratorium on new development until the new Annual Growth Policy is reviewed and revised.

Ron Berger moved that:

GOCA support County Council resolution SRA 0630 calling for a moratorium on the approval of preliminary and site plans.

The motion was seconded by Steve Cohen and passed unanimously.

Civic Federation Consideration of Touch-screen Voting Machines vs Optical Scanning Voting Systems – Ginia Agiola noted Jackie Benn's request for guidance on how GOCA would like her to vote in the upcoming discussion the Civic Federation will have in formulating their position on whether to support the State moving to the use of optical-scanning machines for future elections. Optical-scanning machines are being considered as a way of addressing the concerns of the ability for the touch-screen machines to be tampered with and the lack of the ability to provide a paper-verification of a person's vote.

Gina noted that Maryland is one of the only 2 states with no vote verifiability. The State is considering 3 options to correct this situation. They are: (1) adding a printer to the Diebold machines the State currently owns, (2) swapping out the current Diebold machines with another Diebold machine that has a printer, or (3) going to an optical-scanning machine that would scan paper ballots completed by the voters. Areas that tried adding printers experienced a lot of difficulties. Swapping out the machines would be very expensive. The State will take some action next year for the 2008 election. While it is still possible to have computer problems with the scanners, you would still have a durable paper ballot that can be counted later, if necessary. Brenda Egeland noted that she is uncomfortable at this point saying that the optical scanners is the best solution, but clearly there needs to be something done to make our voting system more reliable. To give Jackie some guidance on GOCA's position in the upcoming discussion Civic Federation will have of the 3 options being considered by the State Board of Elections:

Gina Agiola moved that

GOCA SUPPORT THE CIVIC FEDERATION'S EFFORT TO IMPROVE THE STATE'S VOTING SYSTEM THROUGH THE USE OF OPTICAL SCANNERS OR OTHER SOLUTION THAT WILL RESULT IN A DURABLE, VERIFIABLE VOTING SYSTEM.

The motion was seconded by Barbara Falcigno and passed unanimously.

Olney Youth: Issues, Needs, Wants, and Resources - John Lyons noted that the GOCA officers and Committee Chairs have been discussing issues and areas of concern that GOCA would likely be called on in the near future to take positions on. One area they identified was issues and needs relating to the youth in the Olney area. They felt it would be useful to take some time to look at what resources currently exist in the area for youth and some of the proposals relating to youth needs that might be included in the future plans for the town center. Periodically issues have come before GOCA such as with PROJECT CHANGE and the Olney Skate Park that we might not have a lot of knowledge or background information. They felt it would be useful and valuable to familiarize ourselves more about some of these issues and would like to engage in a systematic discussion of these issues with not specific goal in mind other than being more knowledgeable in these areas. That way GOCA can make more informed decisions in the future. This might be done with a town meeting or panel discussions at separate meetings from the regular GOCA meetings. They will continue to consider what would be the most effective way to explore these issues and make some recommendations for how to pursue this.

Following an announcement that the Olney Skate Park opened that day, 1/9, and that the Park was busy all day long, the meeting was adjourned

Respectfully Submitted,

Danny Benn

Danny Benn, Recording Secretary

People in attendance:

Gina Angiola (Norbeck Hills), Bob Beard (Homeland Village), Jackie & Danny Benn (Fairhill Farm), Ron Berger (Norbeck Meadows), Joe Buffington (Olney Chamber of Commerce Liaison), Rick Coburn (Norbeck Grove), Steve Cohen (Oak Grove), Joe Corbett (Williamsburg Village), Dominique D'Anna (Olney Mill), Freei & Kathleen Donedeo (Hallowell), Brenda Egeland (Norbeck Grove), Dave Eskenazi (Norbeck Meadows), Barbara Falcigno (Olney Oaks), Beryl Feinberg (MC OMB), Jay Feinberg (Olney Oaks), Joe Fritsch (Highlands/MCRAB/OTCAC), Arnold Gordon (Norbeck Meadows), Terri Hogan (Gazette), Walter Lee (Environ/OTCAC), Jon Morrison (Oak Grove), Buck Parr (Tanterra), Helene Rosenheim (Highlands/MCRSC), Anne O. Stretch (Cherrywood), and Ed Weisel,(Norbeck Meadows)