

DRAFT MINUTES – February 20, 2007
(February 13th meeting postponed due to snow)

The meeting was called to order by Executive Vice President Barbara Falcigno, who later turned over conducting of the meeting to First Vice President Jay Feinberg. The January 2007 minutes were approved with no corrections or additions. The agenda was accepted with one addition and one deletion -deferring introduction of Marc Lilley to March meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

It was announced that the Freeman Foundation is putting together a Memory Book for his family and anyone with memories they would like to have included should forward them to Cheryl Kagan, the Executive Director of the Foundation.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

Introduction of new Olney Library Manager – Barbara Falcigno introduced Joseph Eagan, the new Olney Library Manager. Mr. Eagan noted that he has been a librarian for about 31 years and is coming from the Baltimore City Library system. He came to the Olney Library in October 2006 and is excited to be working in the Montgomery County Library system. He noted that there have been 4 managers at the Library in four years, but he anticipates being here for a long time. He explained that the Library hoped to do a lot more outreach to the community and planned to increase programming for seniors, adults, and teens in the upcoming year. Some of the programs and services offered by the libraries are not funded by the County, but are paid for from funds raised by the Friends of the Library groups associated with each library. This is a group he hopes to energize and he invited people to attend their annual meeting on March 4th, and he distributed brochures about the Friends.

Mr. Eagan noted several other upcoming events including the Lunar New Year celebration on Saturday, February 24th. Also, beginning Wed., April 25th, they will be offering a series of grant writing workshops for the many non-profit organizations in the community. They will be taught by a grants specialist from the Pratt Library in Baltimore who provides this training all over the State, but has never been to Montgomery County before. Effective the following Friday, the Library will be fully staffed for the first time in about a year and, so, will be able to do more programming. Another area he will be focusing on is getting the County to direct more funding to maintaining the Library and addressing some long-standing needs such as improving the parking lot and he will need support from the community to do that.

In response to questions, Mr. Eagan noted that the Friends conduct book sales which raise approximately \$400-\$500 a month. The Library is slated for an expansion in FY2009. The County is looking at the possibility of expanding hours which will require additional funding to cover personnel costs. Mr. Eagan would like to see the library move to new site, but felt the Library needed to stay in the center of town. It was noted that the Olney Master Plan addresses the relocation of the Library and Olney Town Center Advisory Committee has discussed the relocation of the library to one of the areas being redeveloped in the town center area under the new Mixed-Use Town Center Zone which requires a developer to provide 22% of their acreage for public purpose uses such as the library. This would address the difficulties with access to the current Library site and the limited space for expansion. He suggested that a library the size of the new library in Germantown would probably be appropriate for a community the size of Olney. Also extending the hours at a smaller facility would address some of the need as well. It was also noted that there are a number of problems with behavior issues in the rear of the building that occur because it is a secluded area. Mr. Eagan also noted that placing the book drop in the rear of the building was also a poor design and was something they hoped to correct with the 2009 renovation.

A Brief History of the Olney Coalition – Barbara Falcigno, the former President of the Olney Coalition presented a brief history of the Coalition. She noted that:

At the end of July 2003 the staff draft of the Olney Master Plan was published. It contained several recommendations that had not been discussed during the master plan advisory committee sessions. Some of these recommendations surprised the community:

- The 32-acre county owned property on Bowie Mill Road (that everyone including the planning team lead thought was a school site as recently as June 2003) was recommended for affordable housing.
- Maximum densities on developable land in the SEQ were in question with the introduction of a ZTA 03-09 to extend the MPDU program to the RNC zone.
- Height limits (which will determine both the visual character and the density of town center) were changed from a maximum of 50 feet to 5 stories

GOCA called a special meeting in August 2003 to discuss the staff draft and to prepare for the Planning Board Hearing in September. At the time Olney was still under a development moratorium because the intense development of the 90's produced demand for public services that exceeded the capacity of our infrastructure. The TDR program that was supposed to be density neutral within the Olney master planning area proved to be anything but neutral when the program was opened up to the whole county. Since Olney had the most TDR receiving areas, density was transferred from other planning areas to the Olney planning area. All of this additional density, often 4 to 8 times the prior zoning, was concentrated in southern Olney. MPDU bonus densities up to 22% were piled on top of the TDR increases. The cumulative effect put Olney into a development moratorium.

During this same period there were issues in the Upper Rock Creek Master Plan related to the density of RNC zoned properties and Pulte proposed an active adult community of 718 dwelling units on the Freeman Property that was zoned for 110 dwelling units. Residents of the neighborhoods most directly affected by these threats of overdevelopment began to meet and to explore how we could preserve our quality of life. We found common ground in our concerns about the RNC zone, the density increases associated with the TDR and MPDU programs, and the resulting impact on our roads, schools and the fragile headwaters that flowed through our neighborhoods. This common ground transcended the boundaries of master planning areas. This presented a new challenge because GOCA, the umbrella civic association that has served Olney well for decades, is not set up to work across multiple master planning areas. Clearly there was a new need and the Olney Coalition came into being to fill that need.

The Olney Coalition is an independent umbrella organization with eight member associations (Briars Acres, Norbeck Grove, Norbeck Meadows, Oatland Farms, Olney Acres, Olney Square, Olney Oaks, and SEROCA.) representing over 2,000 households. Our members reside in either the Olney or the Upper Rock Creek master planning areas. Their mission is to preserve the semi-rural residential character of our community and the qualities of life we value – fine schools, excellent roads, and a healthy environment. They carry out this mission by:

- Monitoring development, land use and zoning activity that affects community character or qualities of life.
- Keeping members informed on issues so they may effectively express their opinions in the voting booth, at public hearings, and by providing written comment to public officials. (Their web site www.olneycoalition.org is a key resource for carrying out this aspect of our mission.)
- Working with other civic associations, coalitions and environmental groups that share their goals.

Their primary civic association partners include GOCA, Upper Rock Creek Civic Association, and Sandy Spring Civic Association. They share information and collaborate on research with each of these groups. A leadership team of three officers and a Board of 18 Delegates governs the Olney Coalition. A majority of the Delegates must vote for a position before the Coalition takes action or delivers testimony based on the position.

A major concern of its members is the threat of overdevelopment and the risk it represents to our infrastructure. This is consistent with the Citizen Survey done by MNCPPC in 2002 that rated the top three issues facing our neighborhoods as traffic congestion, speeding and overdevelopment. With respect to the environmental problems facing Olney, 81% of the 923 survey respondents cited overdevelopment as the biggest threat.

To put this in perspective she noted that the other fundamental principle that guides their work is the principle that the processes of land use planning and decision making should be transparent with ample opportunities for citizens to participate in shaping recommendations rather than reacting to them after the fact. They recognize this principle carries with it the responsibility of citizens to stay informed on planning issues. Their volunteers invest many hours to make this happen because they love Olney and they want to preserve what sets it apart for all current and future residents. Even though everyone's lives are busy, the desire to preserve the quality of life here in Olney is a priority for the residents.

Some examples of their contributions and successes to date include:

- They conducted over 3 dozen interviews across 3 planning areas to learn what the community thinks is working or not working with the RNC zone. They shared this feedback with the Council and the Planning Board.
- Their research team worked with planning staff to reconcile inconsistencies in population numbers and other statistics.
- They worked with their civic partners to provide community input on proposed legislation to adjust the MPDU program to address the differences between hi-rise development and suburban development
- They mobilized the community for the Upper Rock Creek Master Plan public hearing and there was standing room only. The County Council heard the residents and voted to keep the densities as recommended by the Planning Board for the Freeman/Pulte property.
- They brought out over 200 people for the Disposition Hearing regarding the four county-owned properties including the 32-acre site on Bowie Mill Road. 27 people testified requesting that the disposition process be suspended until the Olney Master Plan is complete. It has been suspended.
- Brenda Egeland did a great job researching records from the 1980 master plan and other records to put together projections of schools and traffic impacts if the area was built out to the full density the master plan provided for, Sandy Embler did a great job researching Census data. They did a lot of studies of the town center area and form-based design and were instrumental in getting the Olney Town Center Advisory Committee formed to come up with a comprehensive design for the town center that will provide good connectivity between properties, provide space for uses such as the Library, and create a town green for community activities, etc.
- They learned a lot about how determinations are made about where parks go, got involved in the effort to address some of the problems identified as the Rural Neighborhood Cluster Zone was implemented in Sandy Spring, became experts on affordable housing and environmental issues such as storm water management. Some of the text they proposed for the master plan was literally cut and pasted in to the plan and they were told by Council members and aides that the master plan would have been very different without their involvement. So they feel they made a valuable contribution to the process.

Barbara noted that she would like to see GOCA continuing to look outside of our boundaries. Other parts of the county are dealing with very similar issues. The Civic Federation looks at issues on a county-wide basis, but we need to look at issues that impact all parts of the county from a local perspective to see how they will impact us, such as with the annual growth policy. The Coalition was primarily concerned with overseeing the development of the master plan, as was the case with the Upper Rock Coalition. Now that those plans are in place, GOCA is a great organization to oversee the implementation of the approved plan, as they did with the last master plan. So, the Olney Coalition has now come together within GOCA so that Olney can speak with one voice. Their website is being terminated and the information will likely be moved over to the GOCA website.

In response to a question about the status of the Bowie Mill site, Barbara noted that 5 applicants responded to the original RFP. However, just prior to a selection being made the RFP was pulled in response to a complaint from the Olney Boys and Girls Community Sports Assn (OBGC) that the RFP was biased towards one developer. It is now up to County Executive Ike Leggett to direct the Dept. of Housing and Community Affairs to reissue the RFP. Barbara noted that she did not believe it was biased because it had followed the language in the Master Plan relating to that site that recommended a land swap for the affordable housing units to an area that was closer to public transportation and other services that would be more readily accessible to the housing. Arnie Gordon noted that the Norbeck Meadows Civic Assn. had voted to send a letter to Mr. Leggett supporting the development proposal submitting in conjunction with OBGC stating that the affordable housing and the gymnasiums included in that proposal would be dual benefit for the community. Arnie encouraged other associations to do the same and offered their letter as a sample.

OFFICERS/COMMITTEE REPORTS

Treasurer's Report – Roy Peck was not present, but had submitted a written report electronically that indicated that the current balance is \$2,160.82.

Correspondence Report – Jackie Benn reported that the correspondence included notification that: (1) there are 2 upcoming vacancies on the Montgomery County Planning Board effective June 14th and she offered to provide any one interested with more information, (2) the Hallowell HOA has received approval for a second playground. We also received a preliminary plan for a section of townhouses on the Small's Nursery site.

Olney Chamber of Commerce Report – Joe Buffington reported that they held their first open Board meeting in quite a while on February 7th, however there was a pretty low turn out. They do plan to try to have them more often, and will let GOCA now about any future dates. Some areas of interest they identified at that meeting was land use, transportation, crime, and youth involvement, and Joe noted that the similarity in the positions both the Chamber and GOCA have on most of these issues and their agreement on ways to solve these problems..

Civic Federation Report– Jay Feinberg thanked Jackie Benn for attending the Civic Federation meetings which was really his role, but their meetings conflicted with another meeting he had to attend. Arnie Gordon reported that at their next meeting Civic Federation would be discussing the naming of the new Rockville Library which was to be named for the County Executive, an action which the city of Rockville is opposing. They also passed a resolution to send a letter to the Montgomery County State Delegation recommending that whatever solution is arrived at on voting machines for the State should include a paper trail. Some of the options include using optical scanning machines or having a printer attached to the existing machines that prints out each person's vote and the printed copy would then be placed in a container similar to the old ballot boxes. It was noted that the State Legislature would have to take some action this session in order for a paper trail system to be in place for the 2008 elections and it appears that the District 19 delegate, Roger Manno is introducing legislation related to this.

Membership Committee – No report.

Land Use Report – Barbara Falcigno reported that:

- A main land use issue considered by the County Council during the past month was the development moratorium proposed by Councilmember Praisner while the Annual Growth Policy is being reviewed. The Council stepped back from having a 6-9 month moratorium on accepting building application. Instead, they decided to put everyone on notice that as of January 1st the new Annual Growth Policy rules will apply to all plans being reviewed after that date, regardless of when they were submitted. GOCA will be discussing the Annual Growth Policy at the next several upcoming GOCA meetings.
- The Agricultural Reserve Task Force that met through December 2006 has released its recommendations on Transfer of Development Rights development, child lots, and sand mound stormwater management technology. Some groups don't feel they went far enough and others think their recommendations will help to preserve the Agricultural Reserve. The idea is that if you want to preserve open space and environmental protection goals that is more likely to happen by sustaining the health of agricultural uses on that land. Their recommendations are aimed at not fragmenting the land uses in the Reserve.

Transportation Report – Dave Eskenazi reported that the State Highway Administration should be posting no parking signs within 60-90 days once the weather improves. Jay noted we had not received any further response from Jeff Kirby concerning the issue with the lighting. Barbara Falcigno noted that, with respect to the County Council's consideration of transportation priorities in the County, the Planning Board had kept the Rte. 28/97 intersection improvement low on their priority list because they felt that if it was to alleviate traffic caused by the ICC, and even if it was moved to the top of the list it would still be so far down the line before it would be built that the rest of the ICC would be built before it got done therefore negating the need for the overpass/underpass solution at that intersection.

President's Report – No report.

OLD BUSINESS

2006 GOCA Awards Balloting – Ron Berger noted that we had received more ballots this year that we have for some time and he thanked everyone because it does make the vote more meaningful. The selection of the recipient for the Citizen of the Year was clear cut and the voting for the Contribution to Community was close. The recipients for the 2006 GOCA Awards are as follows:

Howard J. Garber Memorial Citizen of the Year Award: Paula Kahla
Contribution to Community Award: Robyn Glass, Susie Iaquina, and Hank Lieberman
GOCA Worker of the Year Award: Nora Blau
Olney Heritage Award: Carolyn Snowden

Ron noted that the Awards will be presented at the Annual Awards Ceremony on Sunday, March 11th at Longwood Recreation Center. He encourage everyone to attend to express our appreciation to the recipients for their work on behalf of the community and added that many of our elected officials will be attendance. Ron also

noted that it had been suggested by several people that GOCA make a donation to the Freeman Foundation in memory of Josh Freeman and that be announced at the Awards Ceremony. The amount of \$500 had been suggested, but since the Treasurer was not there and Ron was not certain what amount GOCA could afford, Ron Berger moved that:

THE GOCA OFFICERS BE AUTHORIZED TO DETERMINE AN APPROPRIATE AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$500.

Barbara Falcigno seconded the motion, and following a brief discussion the motion passed.

NEW BUSINESS - None

ELECTION OF 2007 GOCA OFFICERS

Ron Berger noted that the terms of the 2006 GOCA officers was to have ended the previous Tuesday, but the weather had extended their terms for one extra week and before presenting the slate of new officers he noted the outstanding job the outgoing officers, John Lyons, Art Brodsky, Barbara Falcigno, Jay Feinberg, Jackie and Danny Benn, and Roy Peck had done and thanked them for their service to the organization and the community. He then presented the slate of officers for 2007 that had been introduced at the January meeting, noting that for the past several years we have only had one person nominated for each position, as was the case this year: The slate included:

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

Ron moved that:

THE 2007 SLATE OF GOCA OFFICERS BE VOTED IN BY ACCLAMATION.

The motion passed and Ron congratulated the new officers who would begin to serve their terms at the conclusion of this meeting. Barbara Falcigno thanked John Lyons for all his work and indicated that she hoped to continue to run the meetings as efficiently and timely as he had done. She has some idea for some things to do to try to get greater participation from our member associations and for more community outreach that she will present at future meetings where she hoped to see more new faces.

Following the election, 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), Art Brodsky (Cherrywood), Joe Buffington (Olney Chamber of Commerce Liaison), Steve Cohen (Oak Grove), Sharon Dooley (James Creek), Joseph Eagan (Olney Library), Brenda Egeland (Norbeck Grove), Dave Eskenazi (Norbeck Meadows), Barbara Falcigno (Olney Oaks), Jay Feinberg (Olney Oaks), Arnold Gordon (Norbeck Meadows), Terri Hogan (Gazette), John Kramer (Small's Nursery), Walter Lee (Environ/OTCAC), Robin Shea (Oatland Farms), Marc Smith (Olney Oaks), and Anne Stretch (Cherrywood)