

March 9, 2010

President Matt Zaborsky called the meeting to order at 7:30, and after introductions members quickly approved the minutes and agenda with no corrections.

SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

A. Police Update by Commander Nancy Demme and Captain Patty Walker

1. Patty Walker, Director of Major Crimes, described the impact of sentence reduction and the bills to counteract it. In 1988 Shawn Henderson, with a history of robberies and vicious homicide, killed a 25 year old woman. Prior to that, the court consolidated twelve of his charges into four and although a judge had given him 20 years in confinement, they were quickly reduced to ten. In 2005 he was released ten months after being denied parole. By Maryland law a judge can decrease but not increase a sentence. After serving 50% of the sentence, a prisoner can make a motion to decrease the sentence.

Last year Patty Walker and Captain Mitch Cunningham requested a “truth in sentencing” bill to prevent prisoners from serving less than 80% of their sentence, but the bill did not make it out of the Senate or House and therefore was set aside without a vote. On February 12, 2010 Delegate Ben Kramer submitted House Bill 790 which maintains 66% of the original sentence by allowing no more than 10 days/month credit instead of the previous 15 days/month credit. Ms. Walker requested GOCA consider supporting that bill and sending a letter to our legislators. She passed around a sample letter, and Mr. Zaborsky stressed the importance of the bill.

Ms. Walker explained that the killing of 11 year old Sarah Foxwell in the Eastern Shore prompted a rash of new bills but said HB 790 would not have prevented Shawn Henderson from committing his homicides. She does not know how many people the bill will affect and can obtain no statistics from the state. When out on parole, there is some supervision, but when given a life sentence all but 30 years is suspended. The Department of Corrections therefore treats a life sentence as a 30 year sentence and requires probation.

When asked if the purpose of reducing a sentence is related to the overcrowding of Maryland prisons, Ms. Walker agreed that was partly the reason and described how other states handle prison overcrowding. Louisiana has a rehabilitation program and California and Maricopa County in Arizona put prisoners to work. Ms. Walker stated the parole commission is required to maintain records of prisoners’ efforts to reform themselves, but the Diminution of Credits has no human involvement. She reminded us the legislative session ends the second week of April.

2. Commander Nancy Demme detailed the recent burglaries.

Last year between October 28th and December 27th there were a few burglaries along Georgia Avenue, and police caught the burglarer through DNA analysis. However the police have ruled out many suspects for the Cheever and Ritz Camera robberies. Cdr. Demme shared that crime went down to zero in some categories during the February snow storm, but on March 5th someone stole a Remington shotgun in Brightwood. The police recovered it in a warranted search but do not know the owner.

Cdr. Demme stated auto theft is Olney’s main crime. On College View Drive there were 50 auto thefts. The police department has found huge leaf bags full of stolen cell phones and IPODs and have arrested four individuals for thefts on Skymist Terrace and Bilney Drive. She advised us to know the serial numbers of our electronic equipment and said commercial establishments should video surveillance.

She then answered questions. When asked how the community can protect the closed property that was BJ Pumpnickel’s Restaurant, Cdr. Demme directed us to board it up and if graffiti is done, paint over it. In response to Roy Peck’s concern about the potentially frequent painting over of graffiti, Cdr. Demme told us about Graffiti Abatement Partners, Inc. (GRAB), a non-profit private-public partnership in Montgomery County. She advised us to document it, photograph it, and inform the property owner. She also shared that some surfaces and colors are targets for graffiti artists, and police officers have roughed up some surfaces to dissuade them. The Pumpnickel property will be demolished with a month, and Cdr. Demme will ask an officer to monitor it and contact Mr. Zaborsky if there is any problem.

Capt. Demme reminded us garage door openers are attractive and recommended they are not visible in cars.

When Ellen Bogage asked about gang activity, Cdr. Demme said there is little gang activity in Olney, and police officers know the gang members. A boy scout asked if police hire child informers and Cdr. Demme responded they did not but they do encourage students to talk with officers.

B. Update of Montgomery General Hospital Construction by Todd Cohen, Director of Special Services

Mr. Cohen, who runs the building program, was excited to share the progress. The first phase began in the back of the hospital and includes a helicopter pad for outbound patients who need the higher level services offered at places that include Georgetown Hospital and the Washington Hospital Center. This will be used about 25 times per month. The second phase will open next month after 18 months of construction. March 18 is the date of occupancy and on March 31 patients will begin transitioning over to the new building.

All 41 rooms in the emergency department will be private and will contain a computer. Six fast track rooms will have heart monitors. The pediatric unit is now a department integrated with the emergency room and contains eight rooms, two of which are inpatient/outpatient rooms. The uniqueness of the department is that it is based on the Disney theory of care with an emphasis on movement. The lobby will have a volunteer and a nurse and a patient will be in the emergency room within 16 minutes of arrival.

The 24,000 square foot emergency department has a horseshoe design. There will be 90 parking spaces in the emergency area, and a total of 116 new parking spaces will be available.

Mr. Cohen stated behavioral health is the true strength of the hospital. He also noted the new rooms are great for teaching and although the hospital is not a teaching hospital, it has partnerships with Medstar Health and Georgetown Hospital.

There will be a new cafeteria. The cardio-pulmonary division has been moved to the front and the third floor shell has 25 orthopedic and neuroscience beds. Patient number will not increase due to the private rooms. The infusion center has space for expansion as the oncology line with Georgetown grows.

On March 25th all are invited to an open house between 11:30 and 1:30. Mr. Cohen shared Montgomery General now sees 36, 000 patients per year but have room now for 75, 000.

OFFICERS/COMMITTEE/LIASON REPORTS

Treasurer: Roy Peck told us GOCA's balance after the bills of this evening is \$11, 900.45.

Corresponding Secretary: Ruth Laughner said she will be passing out all correspondence she receives for us to view, and she proceeded to pass a binder with the correspondence around the room.

Olney Town Center Advisory Committee (OTCAC): Bob Beard announced that there's a new opening on the committee to replace departing HOA member, Mark Fienroth. He then explained that since the Freeman concept just presented was not a "mixed use" plan, it did not represent what OTCAC is looking for in a redevelopment project in the town center, particularly on that large lot. But due to current economic conditions, OTCAC supports the proposed plan because they would rather see a stable and growing center than the current declining condition. Third, Bob stated the committee's support for the Farmer's Market and finding a workable location for this year while Freeman needs their parking lot for construction. Lastly, Bob expressed a concern that because he assisted Chris Garland with his presentation, people might conclude that OTCAC has too cozy a relationship with the company. As Outreach Chair committed to hearing community feedback, he hopes no such misperception will hold anyone back from talking to him or anyone on the committee. The next OTCAC meeting will be on March 23rd in the Olney Community Room of the Buffington RE/MAX Realty building.

Civic Federation: Arnie Gordon is not present, but Matt Zaborsky shared the federation has joined forces with GOCA to oppose the relocation of The First Baptist Church of Wheaton to Emory Church Road. Maryland representatives are passing HB 410 to get a waiver of the school systems maintenance of effort in order to lift the fine of \$20 million the state levied on Montgomery County Public Schools for not being able to spend more this year than last.

Executive Vice President: Jim Haddow asked about the cost of the fireworks for the Olney Days events. Roy Peck shared that the cost, which includes fire marshals, is between \$7, 000 and \$8,000.

Transportation: Paul Jarowsinski said we should draw from other members of homeowners associations. He recommended we often check the website: www.montgomeryplanning.org.

Chamber of Commerce: Joe Buffington suggested GOCA use Twitter instead of or in addition to Facebook because Twitter has information about Olney and is growing in membership. Matt Zorborsky said we will consider using both.

President's Report (verbatim): Matt Zaborsky

First of all, I'd like everyone to know that we've got a great leadership team in place and they're all raring to go! At our initial Officers Meeting we discussed updates to the webpage. We've already changed the homepage and added a page. I'm happy to report that Ruth Laughner has agreed to serve as our "administrator" for the website and will be getting "up to speed" as soon as possible. This leads me to ask, "Do we want to have a Facebook page?" Call for volunteers.

Next, we discussed goals. We've heard from many of you in this room that you want shorter meetings. We have listened and we need your help in accomplishing this. We have formed committees and will look for them to address issues and come to our meetings with recommendations for the membership to vote on. It is our firm belief that having the committees do the bulk of the work can lead to quicker discussions and resolutions. The following committees are looking for membership:

Land Use Committee – Matt Zaborsky, Barbara Falcigno

Ways & Means Committee – Ruth Laughner, Lori Wilen, Roy Peck

Membership Committee – Jim Haddow, Matt Zaborsky

Transportation Committee – Paul Jarosinski, Dave Eskenazi

Community/Business Relations Committee – Ellen Bogage

Communications Committee – Matt Zaborsky

We have sign up sheets here – please see Ruth Laughner.

I'd like for you all to know that I have a particular interest in Land Use and Zoning and that while I may concentrate some effort in this area, I will certainly not lose focus on other important issues. As I've already said, we're a team here and we all need to work together for Olney. I believe that we need to work to develop solutions and suggestions as well as identify issues and concerns.

Speaking of zoning for those of you who may be unaware, Montgomery County is in the process of updating its Zoning Ordinance and trying to bring it forward into these times. I'd like to share this quote from Zoning Discovery (which is available at Montgomeryplanning.org and then click on zoning ordinance) with you: "Communities across the country have recently completed or embarked on zoning change to simplify, rationalize, and more importantly establish a framework for the evolution of their zoning ordinances." As an FYI the county Zoning Code has gone from 5 zones and 15 pages in 1928 to 119 zones and 1000 pages in 2008. Proposed changes could have a profound effect on Olney as well of course the whole county.

I look forward to working with all of you this year and please do not hesitate to contact myself or any member of our Leadership Team with any ideas, questions, suggestions or concerns you may have!

Unfinished Business: Matt Zaborzky

1. A developer has shown interest in Emory Church Grove Road, but Matt has not heard any more from him.
2. There will be a May 3rd hearing before the zoning board on the 32 acre tract off Bowie Mill Road and recommended we send emails to our homeowners associations. Delegates should let their communities know about these happenings.

Paul Jarosinski discussed his concerns about the intersection of Routes 97 and 28. For the past 15 years they have been going through steps to get it done. He thinks a letter should be written to Beverly Swanes Daly, who controls the stimulus money, to have the state fund the \$1.1 million so that the intersection improvement would qualify for stimulus money. Roy Peck pointed out that a delay would increase the cost and members discussed what GOCA should do to convince the state to pay the \$1.1 million needed to get the project shovel ready to qualify for stimulus money. Navarro's rep was asked if Navarro would support the efforts to get the state funding of the \$1.1 million and she said that Navarro would give the support. Ellen Bogage motioned that GOCA send a letter to the senators and representatives of Maryland Legislative Districts 14 and 19 asking them to encourage the state to take the necessary steps to have the state fund the money needed to make the intersection project shovel ready. Lori W seconded the motion and members voted unanimously for it. Estimates say there will be 13,000 cars going south of the ICC entrance but there is also a concern about the 20,000 cars going north. There are four lanes; one is a left turning lane, one a right turning lane, and two continuing north. The impact of these cars needs to be studied as this is going to be the next major problem to be addressed. This concern was referred to the Transportation Committee.

New Business: There was a motion to start the meetings earlier at 7:15. Vote showed 3 for and 7 opposed and the motion was denied. Meetings will continue to start at 7:30.

Capt. Walker left a letter for GOCA to consider. After discussion Bob made a motion which was seconded that GOCA send the letter to Annapolis. The vote was five in favor, six opposed, with two abstentions and the motion failed. More discussion followed about sending the letter to the communities without GOCA taking an official position. The Communication Committee should work on this letter.

Helene reported about Olney Days. She said Montgomery County said the closing of Hillcrest for the concert will be approved. Those working on the Olney Days activities are trying to find more activities for younger children. A stage will be rented, the biggest part of the budgeted \$3700 increase. There will be increased fundraising. All of the HOAs will be contacted for Olney Day volunteers including the use of high school students who could earn service hours. Anyone could email Helene if they want to volunteer or know of others who might also want to help.

An announcement was made for COCA members to sign up for committees.
Ellen made a motion which was seconded to adjourn the meeting at 9:32 and the motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,
Theresa Kyne Robinson, Recording Secretary

People in attendance:

Curt Barrett (Tanterra), Bob Beard (Homeland Village), Ron Berger (Norbeck Meadows), Ellen Bogage (Victoria Springs), Bradley Branch (Olney Mill), Joe Buffington (ReMax Realty), Todd Cohen (Montgomery General Hospital), Nancy Demme (Montgomery County Police Department), Veronica M. Everett (Montgomery General Hospital), Jim Haddow (Hallowell), Terri Hogan (Gazette), Paul Jarosinski (Cherrywood), Dolly Kildee (Office of Montgomery County Councilmember Nancy Navarro), Charlie Kuebler (James Creek), Ruth Laughner (Williamsburg Village), Kevin J. Mahoney, Roy Peck (GOCA), Theresa Kyne Robinson (Olney Oaks), Helene Rosenheim (Mid-County RSC), Selina Singleton (Office of House Rep. Donna F. Edwards), Carol Sullivan (Cherrywood), Patty Walker (Montgomery County Police Department), John Webster (Manor Oaks), Lori Wilen (Cherrywood), and Matt Zaborsky (Norbeck Meadows)