

April 13, 2010

President Matt Zaborsky called the meeting to order at 7:30, and after introductions Arnie Gordon approved the agenda and Ellen Bogage seconded the approval. Then Ellen approved the minutes with no corrections and Arnie seconded that approval.

SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

A. Mike Knapp, Montgomery County Councilmember, District 2

Mike Knapp explained the executive (operating) and capital (projects) budgets. The executive budget continues to worsen with a projected gap in the first week of January, 2011. Revenue, which is from property and income taxes, fluctuates from year to year but structural expenses remain. In January, 2010, the county's \$620 million negative gap and a drop in projected income tax resulted in a \$740 million gap. State data trends are similar with a gap of \$960 million predicted by July, 2011. The Montgomery County budget this year is \$4.2 billion minus \$100 million in savings, resulting in a budget of \$3.8-\$3.9 billion. Soon further cuts will occur in staff and services, and the council will likely take \$2 million - \$3 million out of the County Executive Ike Leggett's budget. The council and school system fortunately were granted the Maintenance of Effort waiver they sought from the state, and according to Ike Leggett, there will be money from the energy tax he has proposed.

The county's capital budget, however, is funded over a 20 year period and is stable because it is based on bonds, currently at a low interest rate. The school's capital budget looks fine too. The capital budget's category of public private partnerships has benefited both partners. Although the Georgia Avenue Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) has no county funding, officials from the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA), and the Montgomery County Department of Transportation indicate the BRT project will proceed with construction when money is available. Olney needs to look at its resources, identify a median or dedicated lane down Georgia Avenue, and consider where to construct a transit center in the town center. WMATA and SHA must first identify how to make buses run efficiently. Germantown has a central bus terminal with readouts, and Viers Mill Road has cue jumping.

The Olney, police substation involves the operating budget. The county now pays \$5,000 per year to keep it open and would rather pay for a police officer on the street. Mr. Knapp will meet in a few weeks with the 4th District Montgomery County Police Department and the county's budget team to discuss the police substation. Mr. Knapp invited members to ask questions. Because the substation is a public private partnership, Bob Beard asked if the \$5,000 is an actual number so he can determine how much Olney needs to raise. Mr. Knapp responded that figure was determined three years ago, and maintenance and utilities need to be added to that. Matt Zaborsky shared that Neal Shore, the police budget officer, had informed him utilities cost \$10,000 per year.

Sharon Dooley remarked that she had heard rumors of our counties bond rating was hurt by the economy. Mr. Knapp responded the snow removal cost \$75 million and Ike Leggett had removed \$100 million from reserves to address the shortfall caused by the combination of reduced cash flow and the snow. The reserves are comprised of the rainy day fund, which has never been touched, and a portion of the general fund. However, Ike Leggett has proposed taking \$100 million from the \$120 million rainy day fund to address the shortfall. As for the bond rating, the county kept its AAA rating but one regulator placed the county on a negative watch, giving it 90 days to adjust the budget to fiscal order. Charles Kuebler asked if a possible one drop in the county bond rating would affect the interest cost on the bonds, and Mr. Knapp replied the county's objective is to enact the correct changes, like it did in 1992, to maintain the high rating.

Charles Kuebler then asked about the status of the relocation of most the county departments to one site. Mr. Knapp responded two major developments have made the consolidation possible. First, the large General Electric facility of about 350,000 square feet will hold much of the public safety services: fire and rescue, police, homeland security, and transportation. The adjacent former Giant warehouse facility will hold the department of liquor control. Second, the maintenance facilities for both park and planning and the county and the Public Safety Training Academy will be moved to the Web Tract on the back end of Montgomery Village off Snouffer School Road. Another area will hold another maintenance facility. Charles expressed concern for the consolidation's cost. Mr. Knapp is also concerned because a new funding called interim and short-term debt has been used, and the council is close to its maximum expenses and needs to monitor the impact closely. Of eight criteria, three are close to the maximum and the others are good.

Arnie Gordon asked Mr. Knapp about the over 1,100 Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) positions, mostly in the central office, and Mr. Knapp explained that the county's progressive furlough system targets high wage earners more than low wage earners. In addition, the school system is combining two central offices. Another challenge is that students transferring from private to public schools have caused the number of students to surpass the number projected. Within the

past two years, as revenue has declined, 3,000 students have been added to MCPS, resulting in the highest population ever. The county saved \$30 – 32 million from MCPS that it can roll into next year's budget, but more reductions are coming.

Ellen Bogage asked about the Great Seneca Science Corridor, which is a large commercial corridor composed of the master plans of Germantown, White Flint, Twinbrook and Gaithersburg West. Mr. Knapp credited Royce Hanson, Park and Planning Board Chair, for leading the department back to a focus on land use after a three year period. The council is promoting mixed use environmental communities with carpooling, pedestrian access, and bicycle trails. Today the council voted 8:1 on Gaithersburg West and decided to increase densities to about 17.5 million square feet, specifically for life sciences. If the infrastructure is not there, commercial development will not proceed, but the county has addressed existing community concerns and tried to decrease the pressure on the agricultural reserve. Mr. Knapp said it is exciting for such a company to be in the same vicinity as Johns Hopkins and Maryland universities, Adventist and Montgomery General hospitals, the Food and Drug Administration, and the National Institutes of Health.

Paul Jarosinski expressed concern because the improvements voted 15 years ago for the 97/28 corridor had not been implemented. He noted the Inter County Connector will soon add 13,000 southbound cars on Georgia Avenue and said he learned the project is \$ 1 million short and has lost its priority status. He asked if the 97/28 project could be moved up the list because it had dropped from first place to fifth. Mr. Knapp said he could cycle it back up but a position on the list is irrelevant because the county needs money from the state to remove projects from the list and nothing has moved in eight years. Priorities shift because the transportation trust fund keeps declining as it pays for projects. Arnie Gordon said the reason we are in fifth now is because of the antiquated way the county measures critical lane funding, which is not the state's formula. Mr. Knapp responded the executive branch and park and planning are working together to change the formula. Three years ago many county officials tried to index the gas tax to generate \$100s of millions for transportation projects, but the assembly defeated the bill. The county has been spending at an unsustainable and unprecedented level on school and transportation projects, many with forward funding and needs to be reimbursed by the state. Mr. Jarosinski then asked if GOCA could be reimbursed for saving the state \$5 million by designing the spur road for the temporary interchange at Routes 28 and 97, and Mr. Knapp said that would be difficult. Ellen Bogage thanked Mr. Knapp for chairing the planning and housing and economic committees and shepherding through the White Flint and another significant master plan.

B. Janet Terry, President of Olney Farmers and Artists Market, Pat Choquette from the market's steering committee, and Alecia Cuervo from the Yin Yang Center

Ms. Terry shared they have a great season planned beginning with the May 9th Opening Day from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. All but one farmer returns, and there will now be a meat farmer. Warren Brown, the chef of Cake Love, will lead the first weekly chef demonstration. Live music, jewelers, artists, pastry vendors, door prizes, a Power of Positive Thinking tent led by Life Coach Susan Samakow, and a free massage for mothers from Blueberry Gardens promise to make it a memorable event. Other events during the season include: Planet Air Festival, Arts Festival, Farm to Table Dinner with wine on Flower Farm in Laytonsville, and on July 23rd the biggest fundraiser of the year with renowned chefs each preparing a different course. Children's Day will be back with a nutritionist who will take the children shopping for produce, give them recipes, and teach them how to make healthy lunches. Pat Choquette described Opening Day as having a European flair with the outdoor Artists' Café and Spring Arts Show where artists will be painting on easels live costume models. The entrance cost for the event is \$5.00, and many vendors will be offering discounts. The market is at 2801 Sandy Spring Road.

Alecia Cuervo explained how the Farmers' Market would take the lead for our area in fighting obesity. She will lead the Be Well program whose mission is to establish and maintain a community that encourages environmental and social support for permanently healthy lifestyles. The program will begin May 16th at noon and is a dedication to Montgomery General Hospital for permitting the market to use its grounds. Each week different health care providers will visit and a different yoga instructor will do a short demonstration. Project Change students have amazing ideas for each week, including a hula-hoop contest, pedometer wearing contests, healthy cooking, skin cancer screenings, massages, and kid's yoga.

Arnie Gordon, noting mothers were offered massages on May 9th, asked what was planned for Father's Day and was promised a surprise. Ms. Terry said there would be sign-in sheet online for people who would like to participate and volunteers. Ellen Bogage asked if there would be volunteer opportunities for high school students, and Ms. Terry recommended that students go to the website, www.olneyfarmersmarket.org for volunteer activities and to acquire their required Student Service Learning (SSL) hours through the SSL coordinator of Project Change.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Matt Zaborsky informed us of the Keeping It Safe Forum on April 28th at the Montgomery County Board of Education. He then announced that Ariana Patterson, Rocketeria owner, will be the banner coordinator as of May 1st, 2010 and has a thorough understanding of the banner policy posted on the GOCA website. Barry Fell thanked GOCA for recognizing the Big Band, of which he is a member, in its 2010 award ceremony and shared he is impressed by GOCA's work. Pam Saul, of Senator Rona Kramer's office, announced Congressman Van Hollen's Service Academy's Forum, featuring the U.S. Air Force and the Coast Guard, for 9th through 11th grade students on April 15th at 7:30 at the Montgomery County Executive Office Building. Johnie Roth, President of Sandy Spring Volunteer Fire Department, announced the Fire and Rescue Service

is opposed to the implementation of the new ambulance fees, and Matt stated that discussion will take place later. Arnie Gordon said the counter argument should also be presented and recommended the discussion be shifted to old business. Matt agreed. Arnie Gordon invited all to participate in Norbeck Meadows' April 17th cleaning up trash day on both sides of Cashell Road from Heinz Road to Emory Road beginning at 8:15.

OFFICERS/COMMITTEE/LIASON REPORTS

Treasurer: Roy Peck told us GOCA's balance after the bills of this evening is \$15,045.45. Because the Olney Days expenses are projected to be higher than ever, he proposed eliminating the rented stage to save \$2,700 – 3,500. In the event of rain, the bands would be cancelled. Matt Zaborsky suggested we discuss this issue under new business. He announced GOCA is extremely appreciative of the \$3,000 Olney Days donation from Fletchers Service Center.

Correspondence Secretary: Ruth Laughner shared her folder contained Matt Zaborsky's testimony about the Olney Police Satellite Station and an email regarding the 97/28 intersection.

Chamber of Commerce: Joe Buffington announced the scholarship application deadline is April 23rd. The three \$1,000 scholarships, which will be awarded in the June 3rd award ceremony, are open to students in Blake, Magruder, and Sherwood high schools and all who live in Olney and go to private schools in Olney. The scholarship was announced on the chamber's website, www.olneymd.org and schools had been contacted. Lori Wilen said schools need to publicize them, and Joe said the chamber should track the source of information for those who apply. He then gave us an update on the police substation, which costs \$5,500 per year for electricity and phones. The chamber, which has enough money for one more year, added a restroom and each year spends \$4,000 to \$6,000 for repairs. Tanterra recently donated \$500 for the station. Sharon Dooley asked for the response time from the Wheaton station during rush hour. Matt Zaborsky said he has been told the response time is between 4 to 15 minutes, a significant drop from the 35 minutes he was quoted for prior to the substation, but he will seek clarification. Walter Lee said that over three officers increase the response time because of zone operations. Joe pointed out the substation enables officers to write reports and avoid leaving guns in the car when using a public restroom.

Olney Town Center Advisory Committee (OTCAC): Bob Beard shared the committee is wrapping up its development guidelines for items such as landscaping and signage and would like to share them at a summer GOCA meeting. He recommended we go to www.fairhillshops.com and www.olneytowncenter.org to follow redevelopment progress. Demolition is well on its way for Harris Teeter. Freeman has been talking with Five Guys and Chipotle about the former Madisons Restaurant building. He showed Freeman's marketing postcard that had been mailed to Olney residents. Mr. Zaborsky reminded us Harris Teeter is coming and recommended we visit the new store in Park Potomac in Rockville off of Seven Locks Road because he had been told our store will be similar. Joe Buffington recommended that anyone interested in suggesting a restaurant or store to the developers should contact Freeman through the above Fair Hills website.

Membership: Jim Haddow informed us 25 homeowners associations had paid there dues and had contributed \$1,375 for Olney Days. Eight have not paid their dues. Member associations are listed on the website. Matt informed us Jim will also be providing GOCA with a list of delegates and alternates so we will know who is eligible to vote.

Transportation: Paul Jarosinski thanked Matt Zaborsky for writing a persuasive letter of support for funding the 97/28 project to county council members and state legislators. In January Maryland Representative Roger Manno's sent a letter requesting stimulus funds for 97/28 office to the governor, and was told that the office had received a response it will soon share. The county is responsible for the road improvements because the project is not high on the state's list. Arnie Gordon said the county is mired in a 40 year old traffic intersection assessment because the old assessment favors developers. Paul hopes to share the letter from Rep. Manno by next month's meeting or sooner. The first step in trying to qualify for stimulus funds is to try to get \$1.1 million. Roy Peck pointed out that Brian Young of SHA had said there would be no restrictions on hazardous cargo on the ICC, and spilled material would poison currently potable water in the Patuxent River.

Civic Federation: Arnie Gordon said they had heard the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) describe the current financial status. There is a 3.8 % decline in the county budget, which has been rising each year since 1968. Over the next four years, Ike Leggett says he will have closed shortfalls of \$1.97 billion gap by the end of fiscal 2011. Revenue has decreased 15 percent and property tax revenue 11 percent. For fiscal 2011 the county budget is down 6%, MCPS 3.9 %, Montgomery College 3.8%, and Park and Planning 14%. The total decline is 4.3% and includes the \$14 million the county hopes to collect annually from the ambulance fees.

President's Report (verbatim): Matt Zaborsky mentioned he gave testimony supporting the substation which he circulated around the room and said the Chamber of Commerce and GOCA had made convincing arguments. Mr. Knapp has given the impression we can keep the station although the county may not support it financially. The website is enhanced. There is a new page for correspondence which has Mr. Zaborsky's testimony and the letter about 97/28 he wrote to Montgomery County Council Chair Nancy Floreen, all the council members, and the state delegation. Only Senator Mike Lenett responded

and with not much encouragement. Minutes and agendas are now on the meetings page. The new banner policy is on the home page, as is a calendar for organizations that wish to appear on the banner. Mr. Zaborsky will testify April 22nd before the planning board on the zoning changes opposed by GOCA for the Bowie Mill Tract and will testify May 3rd before the hearing examiner. He has been working on a joint meeting before the next GOCA meeting with Leisure World and Sandy Spring Civic Association to possibly have a stronger voice. Commander Nancy Demme has asked him to serve on a citizen's advisory panel of 4th District civic associations that will meet every other month. Mr. Zaborsky then listed the speakers at upcoming meetings: Legislative Wrap-Up in May, Duchy Tractenburg in June, Brian Young from SHA is coming in July. Mr. Zaborsky asked members to suggest speakers they would like to hear for future agendas. Arnie Gordon said GOCA four years ago sponsored debates for all announced candidates, and Mr. Zaborsky suggested that go under new business. Mr. Zaborsky then shared Brenda Egeland had given Communication Committee members Ruth Laughner, Theresa Kyne Robinson, and him website training, and GOCA is very grateful for Ms. Egeland's tireless efforts on behalf of GOCA. Matt encouraged all attendees and delegates to serve on the committees, Community and Business Relations, Communications, Land Use, Transportation, Ways and Means.

Unfinished Business:

1. First Baptist Church: Chuck Graefe said in the past year the Baptist church from Wheaton has been attempting to build a 46,700 square foot church, the size of Giant Foods, with 300 parking spaces on Emory Church Grove Road, near Georgia Avenue. There is no commercial establishment there now. Park and Planning had rejected the plan the church submitted on 03/03/10 because it was incomplete, but Mr. Graefe said the plans had since been changed and would likely be approved. On April 22nd, at 7:00 p.m. the First Baptist Church will hold an informational meeting at Oakdale Emory Church. Large parcels of property, including Washington Christian Academy, Good Counsel, have been developed and Mr. Graefe warned that what happens on Emory Church Road will impact future land use decisions in Olney. Arnie Gordon said the Civic Federation had opposed it and Mr. Zaborsky said GOCA had opposed it also, but the county is reluctant to go against any church.

2. Ambulance Fees: In September of 2008, GOCA heard both sides of the debate and voted in October, 2008, to support the ambulance fee. Johnie Roth from the Sandy Spring Fire Department thinks insurance companies will not pay the fee or will raise premiums. Mr. Zaborsky said the county is facing almost a \$billion dollar shortfall and could acquire \$14 to \$16 million per year from the fees. Mr. Roth thinks the county should reduce its spending so it could avoid the ambulance fee. Arnie Gordon said GOCA is on record supporting the fee and will continue to support it. He explained because the county has catered to developers, four new fire stations had to be built and equipped, and citizens cannot keep asking for services necessitated by developers' need and greed. Mr. Gordon said communities are now arguing over how to split the insufficient money that would have been more if the impact fees requiring developers to pay for new infrastructures had been enacted.

New Business:

1. Olney Days: Roy Peck said we must rent a stage for \$3,700 this year to provide shelter for musicians in case of rain, but he is opposed to the large new expense. Sharon Dooley said Helen Rosenheim had told her the money would be raised by Joe's Ride, which contributed \$3,000 last year that helped cover the fireworks. Paul Jarosinsky said it would be illogical to just cover the band if people walked away from rain. Barry Fell of the Olney Big Band said the band did not play on a stage last year and does not need one. Steve Cohen thinks GOCA should support its largest event of the year, and Bob Beard stated he is uncomfortable discussing the stage without Helene present since she leads the Olney Days event each year.

2. Debates: Arnie Gordon pointed out the incumbent can be heard and seen, but the challenger has no such opportunity. He thinks GOCA should provide debates for the community and hold them soon. Four years ago Art Brodsky, Joe Buffington, Ron Berger, and he served on the debate committee, with Art Brodsky chairing. Matt Zaborsky would like more people and new people to serve on the committee. Bob Buffington said he would serve again and ask new people to help. Barry Fell and Theresa Kyne Robinson volunteered to serve also. Ron Berger endorsed the proposal. Sharon informed us July 7th was the deadline for filing. The last debate was in May, but Ellen Bogage recommended we hold the debates after the filing deadline to give all the candidates a chance to debate.

Arnie Gordon announced the Montgomery County Civic Federation's Awards Dinner on May 14th at the University of Maryland Shady Grove. The cost is \$35.

Bob Beard moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:35 and Arnie seconded the motion.

Respectfully submitted,
Theresa Kyne Robinson, Recording Secretary

People in attendance:

Barbara Barry (Perspective Woods), Bob Beard (Homeland Village), Ron Berger (Norbeck Meadows), Ellen Bogage (Victoria Springs), Bradley Branch (Olney Mill), Pam Buck (Tanterra), Joe Buffington (ReMax Realty), Pat Choquette (Olney Farmer's and Artists' Market), Steve Cohen (Oak Grove), Alecia Cuervo (James Creek/Yin Yang Yoga), Kathy Curtis (Lake Hallowell), Sharon Dooley, Veronica M. Everett (Victoria Springs), Barry Fell (Sandy Spring), Joe Fritsch (Highlands of Olney), Arnie Gordon (Norbeck Meadows), Chuck Graefe (Southeast Rural Olney (SEROCA)), Jim Haddow

(Hallowell), Terri Hogan (Gazette), Paul Jarosinski (Cherrywood), Dolly Kildee (Office of Montgomery County Councilmember Nancy Navarro), Carolyn Knight (Olney Oaks), Charlie Kuebler (James Creek), Ruth Laughner (Williamsburg Village), Walter Lee (Environ), Diana Littlefield (Olney Acres), Jon Morrison (Oak Grove), Barry Nix (Sandy Spring), Jenny Olkewiez (Spring Lawn Farm), Astrid Pages (James Creek), Ariana Patterson (Rocketeria), Roy Peck (Norbeck Meadows), Theresa Kyne Robinson (Olney Oaks), Johnie Roth (Sandy Spring Volunteer Fire Department), Pam Saul (Office of Senator Rona Kramer), Selina Singleton (Office of House Rep. Donna F. Edwards), Don Schmelter (Highlands), Lisa Stancik (Homeland Village), Anne Stretch (Cherrywood), Carol Sullivan (Cherrywood), Janet Terry (Olney Farmer's and Artists' Market), Joy Turner (Sandy Spring), Lori Wilen (Cherrywood), and Matt Zaborsky (Norbeck Meadows)