

**Minutes
June 8, 2010**

President Matt Zaborsky called the meeting to order at 7:30, and after introductions Arnie Gordon approved the agenda and minutes and Ruth Laughner seconded both.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Joe Buffington reminded us of the Relay for Life on June 12 and 13, and Ruth Laughner described the prizes, a lunch at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Cambridge and a \$20 shopping spree, that would be awarded June 20, GOCA Day at the Farmer's Market. Other comments were political, beginning with Sharon Dooley stating Mike Knapp is not running for office. Arnie Gordon announced there will be a coffee for Ike Leggett on June 24, and Jay Hutchins announced his June 12 campaign kick-off. Salena Singleton informed us Representative Donna Edwards will hold a housing and foreclosure forum on June 26.

SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

A. The Renovation of Safeway

Attorney Robert Brewer, of Lerch, Early, and Brewer, introduced himself, his client Safeway's real estate manager, and CPH's architect and civil engineers. After encouraging us to sign and write our email addresses on the required sign-in sheets, he introduced his colleague, and a summer intern.

Renee Montgomery, Safeway's Eastern Division Area Real Estate Manager, showed us the map of Safeway and its surroundings while informing us Safeway is a national company with 1700 stores in the United States and owns Vaughan, Tom Thumb, Randalls, Carrs, and Dominick's. Ms. Montgomery is the eastern representative who oversees the 180 Safeway stores in Maryland, Washington, D.C., Virginia, Delaware, and Pennsylvania. There are 21 Safeways in Montgomery County, and 17 are brand new or completely remodeled. The Kensington store, opened 1.5 years ago, has covered parking and is similar to the plans for the new Safeway in Olney, but the larger area in Olney will be able to accommodate even more amenities and have a brighter parking lot with a higher ceiling. She showed us the new store in Damascus, and the artists' concepts of the about to be constructed stores in Bethesda and Wheaton. There will be natural light on all sides in the parking garages and more driving space for safety purposes. The Olney store will have the same Life Style décor (expanded organics and natural foods produce department, ambient lighting, more subdued natural colors, and natural wood floors) the new Georgetown Safeway has. There will be expanded floral and deli departments and full service meat and seafood departments. Ms. Montgomery showed us the plans, which included the realignment of Village Center Drive to meet the Master Plan. The new store will have 59,000 square feet with 55,000 on the main level and 4,000 below the store that includes the loading dock. There will be two entrances for the parking lot, one on-level from Spartan Road with 159 parking spaces and the other 95 parking spaces below the store and accessed from Buehler Road. Safeway has studied the Olney Master Plan and tried to incorporate all the plan envisioned. There is interconnectivity between the street and the store, and the street will be similar to a promenade with the landscaping and planters on both sides. Public spaces have been added. There will be bike racks and perhaps a covered bus stop. The visual appearance of all sides was considered in development. The building will be LEED certified and the impervious area will be reduced from 91% to 30%.

Ms. Montgomery, Robert Messer, Jeffrey Satfield, and Barton Eisner answered questions about:

1. How 20,000 square feet are gained – The brand new store will expand partially over the current rear parking lot.
2. Mixed use with residential above – The economic conditions and building height do not justify mixed use.
3. The high frontal appearance – The high front is for architectural articulation and will bring in light; the average height of the new building is 30 feet compared to the 22 feet of the current height.
4. The businesses inside – Starbucks and Bergmann's Cleaners
5. Purpose of tower – Aesthetics and signage visibility from Georgia Avenue
6. The park area in the back – The ¾ acre garden will function as a park amenity and environmental advantage. The concrete benching and floor surface will be pervious, and the swales will be aesthetically pleasing, microbiological with water tolerant plants, and will treat the storm water before it discharges.
7. Lighting for safety – Safeway will be well lit with security cameras.
8. Connections, including curb cuts, to surrounding lots – The front of the store will have bike racks and sidewalks, and the back will have safe crossing.
9. Chance of four grocery stores surviving in Olney – Olney is short on retail gross leasable areas (GLA), and if another shopping center was built today it would be quickly leased. The area is one of continued growth and is considered a super market because of the affluence, Montgomery General, Sherwood High School, and Good Council.
10. Safeway and improvements on the area roads – Improvements are not in the plan now, but Safeway will look at the condition of the roads, traffic reports, and the increase in truck traffic and talk about improvements if they are warranted.

11. Time table - The store will close after the winter holidays and open before the 2011 holiday.
12. Deconstruction materials – They will not be used in the new store, but they will be sorted and recycled.
13. Light efficiency - The lights in the parking lot will have dimmers and the lights in the store will be efficient.
14. Roof efficiency- The roof will be partially green and solar energy was being explored.
15. Drivers' access – The roads would not be blocked during construction.

Robert Messer shared Safeway will go through a site plan process at the planning commission in Silver Spring, and there will be many opportunities for citizen input before the October public hearing.

B. Councilwoman Duchy Trachtenberg - Fiscal Budget and Long Term Perspective

Ms. Trachtenberg chairs the Management and Fiscal Policy Committee (Finance Committee) and this year closed a \$1 billion deficit, a quarter of the average budget of \$4.3 billion. The growth in the county, the national downturn, and the decline at the state level have all contributed to the deficit. The unsustainable average rate of county growth when she began office was 14%. It was cut the first year by 7%, the second year by 3.5%, last year by 1.5%, and this year the government grew at negative 4.5%. (First time since 1968 the government grew at negative rate. Next year the deficit will be 400 -500 million.)

The following steps were taken to close the \$ 1 billion deficit:

1. No cost of living or step increases for county employees, including school employees, were funded.
2. The rainy day fund was drawn down from \$125 million to \$5 million, below the minimum. It will not be replaced by 2011 because rating agencies are monitoring the county's budget.
3. Pension obligations were not honored, but some must be paid in 2012.
4. Many prioritized cuts were made in public safety, libraries, recreation, transportation, and Health and Human Services. Public safety and services for the vulnerable were protected.
5. The ambulance fee passed.
6. The energy tax passed.
7. The cell phone tax passed.

The fiscal team is excellent.

Preview of 2011

1. Detailed new fiscal plan from executive does not call for county growth anytime soon. Ms. Trachtenberg recommends we watch her website.
2. A piece of legislation that enables county to change the reserve law so county can maintain a reserve greater than 6% may pass. Rating agencies expect us to increase our reserve in five years to 10% so government can be funded for two months.

2010 Successes

1. The county collaboratively worked on two master plans, White Flint and Gaithersburg West, which were developed in collaboration with community. The White Flint plan engaged the community much earlier than the Gaithersburg West plan. Economic vitality of the county can be uplifted through redevelopment.
2. The Wheaton church will go through the Montgomery County Council's Planning, Housing, and Economic Development Committee (PHED) and then to the council for a vote in July or September if it passes the PHED committee.
3. Money was reinstated for all the police substations.
4. Ms. Trachtenberg serves on the Health and Human Services Committee and served 25,000 who had no health insurance through Montgomery Cares.
5. She spearheaded The Family Justice Center, a one stop shop clearing house facility for adult and child victims of domestic violence which offers an emergency petition, counseling, and housing referral. This is funded by county and state and the county has raised \$800,000 in the last nine months. In the 12 months it has been open, the center served 1,500 families from 105 countries.

Ms. Trachtenberg noted the involvement of our community and opened it up for questions.

1. The referendum process for the ambulance fee – She warned we should expect a savings plan by the end of the year. She tracks state income and sees a slight increase in property taxes but not an increase in income tax. Looming on the state level is the Medicare reimbursement anticipated from the federal government that has not been funded. Probably by November or December the council will create a savings plan. The volunteers opposing the ambulance fee must collect signatures on petitions that match voter rolls. The ambulance fee is necessary in order to avoid great losses in services.
2. The technological advancements of ambulance – The triage approach of the fire department and emergency personnel will likely be altered eventually, but the council is still concerned about response times and may send three vehicles. However, most of the calls received on 911 are from individuals who are mentally ill or have substance abuse problems. Senior facilities rely on emergency vehicles rather than having a doctor come onsite. Sending these people to the emergency room is an abuse of the system, and many others who use the ambulances are not emergency cases either.
3. Transportation improvements – This cannot be done unless extreme cuts are made. Contributions from the state have greatly dropped and a late agreement to fend off the teacher pensions raided the state highway fund. Most of the potholes are on state roads. When Ms. Trachtenberg first started on the council, the gasoline tax was mentioned but has never been enacted.

4. Institutional changes are needed for spending because of 1. Collective bargaining, for example the county employees have superb health insurance, 2. Unnecessary expenses: a.) The department of environmental protection buys advertising space on WETA. b.) Montgomery College publishes a multi-colored catalog for inclusion in the Gazette. Because of the economy 1/3 of the county students enroll in Montgomery County, but it is not likely the college will continue to publish a paper catalog. As for the unions, years ago Ms. Trachtenberg and Councilmen Phil Andrews tried to reduce the 8% raises of county employees. She actually put compensation benefits on the agenda in Annapolis and has asked staff to analyze what has been promised in contracts in the near future. Much of what was bargained for over the years is unsustainable.

5. Reduction of income tax receipts and real estate – That is why there needs to be a restructuring of service delivery, such as consolidation of departments, and a major change in compensation benefits.

OFFICERS/COMMITTEE/LIASON REPORTS

Treasurer: Ruth Laughner stated the current balance is \$8,315.12 after paying all the Olney Day bills.

Correspondence Secretary: Ruth Laughner passed around the correspondence binder and showed us the blueprints for the Wheaton Baptist Church

Chamber of Commerce: Joe Buffington shared that Richard “Benny” Bienvenue from Our House won the Business Person of the Year award this year, and Pam Spears is the new president of the chamber. The debate committee, which started two years ago, is making plans for debates between state level candidates for the fall elections. John Salzberg from the Sandy Spring Association has planned a forum for the state candidates of District 14. The League of Women’s Voters of Montgomery County will co-sponsor the debates in which candidates will have a minute or less to respond to a question. Sandy Spring Friends School is providing the meeting space and will accommodate 100 people. WAMU reporter Matt Bush will serve as moderator. It will take place at the end of August. Mr. Salzberg would appreciate help from GOCA. Sharon Dooley mentioned that early voting is an option at all levels this year.

Olney Town Center Advisory Committee (OTCAC): Bob Beard said the OTCAC is soliciting feedback on the Safeway presentation before Safeway’s June 29th meeting with OTCAC. Officers were elected at the last meeting: Jim Haddow is the new secretary, Helene Rosenheim stays on as Vice Chair, and Bob Beard is now chair.

Civic Federation: Arnie Gordon – Because of the meeting times, there is no report now but a double report will be available in July.

Membership Committee: Jim Haddow said there are still five homeowners associations who owe dues. He will email the delegates and is updating the website so a home owners association with an active link to its website lights up in red underlining.

Transportation: Paul Jarosinski is not present. Matt Zaborsky will incorporate transportation into the president’s report.

President’s Report: Matt Zaborsky

Focused on the intersection of Maryland routes 97 and 28, Mr. Zaborsky and Jim Haddow recently met with Nancy Navarro’s Chief of Staff, Minny Figuereto and Aide Dolly Kildee, Mid County Service Director Natalie Cantor, and Glen Orlin, a transportation expert in Montgomery County. Mr. Zaborsky has a copy of a 2008 letter from Ike Leggett stating the 97/28 intersection was at priority level 5, and now since a project was removed from the list, we are theoretically at level 4. Mr. Zaborsky is hoping a new list will be compiled soon and wants to meet with Ike Leggett after the elections to try to move the intersection higher on the priority list.

5. Brian Young from State Highway Administration will present at the July Meeting, and Mr. Zaborsky is compiling a list of Olney priorities that includes the traffic light at Bowie Mill and Route 108. Mr. Young will not be discussing the ICC. Roy Peck said Norwood Road and Doctor Bird Road should be addressed. Barbara Falcigno reminded us that all numbered roads are state roads.

Unfinished Business – Olney Days

Helene Rosenheim said the Zambelli coordinator fortunately told the workers to hold off loading the fireworks shells because of the threatening sky, so Zambelli was able to give us a substantial credit for next year’s fireworks. The parade was cancelled by 2:00 p.m; in only three years of the parade’s 27 the parade did not occur. Mr. and Mrs. Olney was an enjoyable event, but there was not a large crowd. Next year to motivate more people to participate there will be a preliminary competition at each of the elementary schools for that event. Joe’s Ride had 680 walkers and riders. There was a broad range of activities at the park, but the crowds were down likely because of the weather. The rock concert went well, and after two thirds of the concert a double rainbow hung in the sky.

Matt Zaborsky said there was a rumor in emails about fireworks in the fall, and Ms. Rosenheim said there was a discussion about that at the park. They will not take place in the fall.

New Business

1. Chuck Graefe motioned that GOCA join the South East Rural Olney Civic Association (SEROCA) to support zoning text amendment (ZTA) 10-07 to limit parking to 50 vehicles unless the entrance to the parking is located within 500 feet of an arterial road or a road at least four lanes wide. The purpose of the amendment is to protect the rural character of rural zones in the rural neighbor cluster/transfer development right (RNC/TDR) zones in all Montgomery County. SEROCA is seeking GOCA's support to preserve the rural character, especially in the southeast corridor. Mr. Graefe warned that the decision on the church would set a precedent for future land use issues in the county. Arnie Gordon seconded the motion. Pam Long asked how the ZTA would affect a farmer with grassy customer parking, and Mr. Graefe said it would only affect impervious surfaces, not grass, soil, or gravel. Barbara Barry said the resolution sounds like it is directed only to Wheaton Baptist Church, but Barbara Falcigno pointed out several other RNC non-sewered properties in Olney and said development can take place on them, but it must be limited in size. Sharon Dooley asked how many co-sponsors are on the county council and was told council members Nancy Navarro and Marc Elrich introduced the ZTA to the council. Ellen Bogage noted that the resolution says nothing about impervious surfaces and is concerned that people may come forward to stop the resolution and asked if anyone present had an idea who would oppose it. David Reile said large institutions, such as churches, want to build in rural neighborhoods. However, he advised that we may have to ask for an exception to be included in the final ZTA to clearly exempt equestrian centers and agricultural operations. Mr. Reile said high intensity year round use is targeted in the ZTA. When asked if the Montgomery County Civic Federation (MCCF) would support the ZTA, Arnie Gordon promised he would ask Jim Humphrey, chairman of MCCF's Planning and Land Use Committee. Mr. Gordon then asked how far into the road the Wheaton Baptist Church is to built, and Mr. Graefe said 1,000 feet. Sharon Dooley asked how the ZTA would affect the possible expansion of Brooke Grove buildings, and Ms. Falcigno said it would depend on the zoning of the property. Roy Peck thinks Brook Grove owns all the property to the road, so 500 feet is not relevant. Walter Lee thought the ZTA would affect government use of parking spaces, but Mr. Graefe said it would not. Ellen Bogage asked Barbara Falcigno if Mike Knapp would support it and Ms. Falcigno said Mr. Knapp has not had a chance to look at it. Nineteen people voted in favor of the motion and one person voted against it.

2. Joe Fritsch, a bicyclist who lobbies Montgomery County to provide paths for cyclists, passed around a map which shows the southern portion of Lake Frank and the adjacent land upon which three bike trails are outlined. He said the Upper Rock Creek Trail Corridor Plan was approved in 2008, and this Thursday the planning board will vote on an alternative trail to link the Rock Creek trail to the network of Lake Frank trails. He came to seek GOCA's support. First he detailed the three stages of the trail, giving us location, timelines, and the percent of trees that would be removed. He then explained that the State Highway Administration and Montgomery Parks had determined that the removal of old parking lots was insufficient for stormwater management for Lake Frank and decided a project, the bike path, was needed to provide for citizens within and outside of the local community. Montgomery Parks realized they needed to use the old parking lots while building the two sections of the bike trail. The issue is that the Lake Manor homeowners association is trying to switch the funding back to just removing the parking lots, and they do not approve of the county's preferred bike path, Alignment B, which according to Mr. Frisch appears to be part of an old road, which means fewer trees would need to be removed. The two other proposals each require cutting into undisturbed woodlands and have steep inclines that would require switchbacks to comply with the American Disabilities Act. One of these non-preferred trail options is a people's choice trail (meaning people have been using it although it is not paved), and the other non-preferred trail goes over the top of a small ridge and involves 90° turns and rocks that may require dynamite. Alignment B is closer to the community than the other two options, but between the trail and community are trees and a berm that is high at most points. The trail goes no closer than 120 feet to the homes.

Arnie Gordon listed reasons to hold consideration of this bike path: concern for Lake Manor, the impervious surface, the lack of more detailed information about the trail connections, and concern for Norbeck Meadow. However, Helene Rosenheim said the path on Emory Lane is already approved, and Roy Peck said it was part of the Intercounty Connector's plans. Mr. Peck also shared that the ICC on-ramps should have lights for pedestrians and bicyclists and we must be vigilant in ensuring the ICC includes them. Ellen Bogage asked if it was within GOCA's purview to make a decision on this path. Louis Wilen informed us that detailed information about the trail is on Montgomery Park's website. He passed around the lengthy document he had printed out and a petition countering the Lake Frank petition that he suggested we sign if we would like. Helene Rosenheim said although the trail is not in Olney, having the trail will benefit all in Olney and if the trail does not get approved now, it may never be approved and that would be a disservice to the wider community. Arnie Gordon showed a concern about the number of bikes riding on the trail said the people who walk on the trail would be negatively affected. Joe Morrison motioned that GOCA support Park and Planning's Bike trail Alternative B and Bob Beard seconded the motion. Ed Weisel moved that we table the motion, and Ellen Bogage seconded the tabling. Mr. Gordon said tabling has precedence over the motion on the floor. Ellen Bogage expressed sympathy for the local neighborhoods and asked Mr. Fritsch what happens after the hearing on June 10th. He replied that a decision will be made that evening and it was unfortunate the Olney Gazette had no information about the path. Joe Morrison said the Park and Planning approved the path a year ago, and when Lake Manor said they were not properly notified Park and Planning requested politicians to hold additional hearings around the community seeking input from the local communities. Ellen Bogage reminded Mr. Zorborsky we had a motion on the floor to table the discussion, and five people voted to table the motion. Eleven people voted against the tabling motion. Mr. Zorborsky then asked all in favor of the Alternative B bike trail and ten people raised their hands. The motion passed, and Mr. Zorborsky said he would generate a letter in support of the trail.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:58.

Respectfully submitted,
Theresa Kyne Robinson, Recording Secretary

People in attendance:

Sam Arora (Delegate Candidate for District 19), Barbara Barry (Perspective Woods), Bob Beard (Homeland Village), April Birnbaum (Lerch, Early, and Brewer Law Firm), Ellen Bogage (Victoria Springs), Bradley Branch (Olney Mill), Alan Bowser (Office of Councilwoman Duchy Tractenburg), Robby Brewer (Lerch, Early, and Brewer Law Firm), Betty Buffington (Buffington Enterprises, LLC), Dr. Joe Buffington (Buffington Enterprises), Joe Buffington (ReMax Realty), Joe Corbett (Williamsburg Village), Maris Corbin (Sandy Spring), Buff Cour (Tanterra), Kathy Curtis (Lake Hallowell), Sharon Dooley (James Creek), Barton Eisner (Principal of shopping center with CVS), (Veronica M. Everett (Victoria Springs), Victoria Everett (Victoria Springs), Marc Feinroth (Williamsburg Village), Jodi Finkelstein (Delegate Candidate for District 14), Bobby Fletcher (Fletcher's Service Center), Sandy Fletcher (Fletcher's Service Center), Joe Fritsch (Highlands of Olney), Arnie Gordon (Norbeck Meadows), Chuck Graefe (South East Rural Olney Civic Association (SEROCA)), Jim Haddow (Hallowell), Jay Hutchins (Delegate Candidate for District 19), Claire Iseli (Office of Montgomery County Councilmember Marc Elrich), Paula Kahla (Olney Town Center Advisory Committee (OTCAC)), Matthew Keller (Lerch, Early, and Brewer Law Firm), Dolly Kildee (Office of Montgomery County Councilmember Nancy Navarro), Charlie Kuebler (James Creek), Larry Lauer (Olney Mill), Ruth Laughner (Williamsburg Village), Walter Lee (Townes at Environ),), Diana Littlefield (Olney Acres), Pam Long (Campaign for Jay Hutchins), Robert Messer (Safeway Design and Construction Dept.), Renee Montgomery (Safeway Real Estate Attorney), (Jon Morrison (Oak Groves), Margaret Newchurch (Olney Oaks), Barry Newton (Sandy Spring - Ashton Rural Preservation Consortium), Bertha Padams (Victoria Springs), Jim Padams (Victoria Springs), Buck Parr (Tanterra), Roy Peck (Norbeck Meadows), Lydia Rapphold (Camelback Village), David Reile (South East Rural Olney Civic Association), Theresa Kyne Robinson (Olney Oaks), Helene Rosenheim (Mid-County RSC), Jeffrey M. Satfield (CPH Engineers), Darlene Salisbury (Olney Mills), John Salzberg (Sandy Spring), Pam Saul (Office of Senator Rona Kramer), Jason Sherman (CPH Engineers), Serena Singleton (Office of Representative Donna Edwards), Jim Smith (Oatland Farm, OTCAC), Debbie Spielberg (Office of Councilmember Marc Elrich), Carol Sullivan (Cherrywood), (Norbeck Meadows), Duchy Trachtenberg (Councilwoman of Montgomery County), Jackie Waters (Marketing Manager of shopping center with CVS), Ed Weisel (Norbeck Meadows), Lori Wilen (Cherrywood), Louis Wilen (Cherrywood), Steve Wolf (Norbeck Hills), Matt Zaborsky (Norbeck Meadows)

Note: Others were present and stated their names and neighborhoods, but the spelling of their names could not be determined since they were not on roster.