

Executive Board Meeting Minutes
April 14th, 2015

CALL TO ORDER

President John Webster called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. GOCA representatives, alternates, and members of the public introduced themselves.

A motion was made by Barbara Falcigno to approve the March 2015 minutes. The motion was seconded, and the minutes were approved unanimously.

A motion was made by Jackie Benn to approve the April agenda as stated. The motion was seconded, and the agenda was approved unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Barbara Falcigno reported that Montgomery County Law Enforcement agencies are conducting a Drug Take Back Day scheduled for Saturday, May 2 between 10:00 am and 2:00 pm. County residents can safely dispose of unused, unwanted or expired prescription drugs. The closest drop-off site for Olney is the 4th District Police Station in Wheaton at 2300 Randolph Road. Drugs should not be thrown in the trash unless safety precautions are followed.

Joe Corbett noted that WSSC is in the process of rehabilitating sewer lines within Olney where the sewer lines cross the stream. Work in his neighborhood has been completed and they did an excellent job compared with 35 years when they extended the sewer lines. WSSC had many contractors working on the project, and they all did a good job. He is pleased with the end result.

Helene Rosenheim updated the group on Olney Days. She said that many HOAs have contributed to Olney Days in the past and encouraged any association that has not yet contributed to make a donation. She said donations from HOAs are down. She said we also need volunteers for the event and sign-up sheets would be online.

AAA PERSPECTIVE ON COUNTY TRANSPORTATION ISSUES

Lon Anderson, Managing Director, Public and Government Affairs for AAA Mid-Atlantic, began with discussing the Metro area perspective and plans on traffic improvements on each major corridor in the Washington metro area which he considered “stupid” compared to what is obvious.

He attended a panel discussion sponsored by the Greater Washington Board of Trade which included Jim Smith, then Secretary of Transportation from the State of Maryland and Aubrey Lane, Secretary of Transportation from state of Virginia and also a transportation rep from DC. The Virginia Secretary of Transportation discussed Virginia’s ideas and plans for express lanes on the Beltway, adding express lanes on Route 95 and public/private proposals for improvements on I66 and the Route 50 corridor.

Anderson said that the Secretary of Transportation for Maryland stated that his office is mainly concerned with express lanes on the Beltway, working on the Corridors City Transit Way on Route 270 project in Montgomery County and improvement to the Greenbelt exchange on the Beltway. Anderson believes that the State of Maryland is in a transportation “slumber”. He believes we have a “panacea” in the “one size fits all” Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) concept. He said that AAA likes the BRT idea if it’s done correctly in the DC metro area which has the worst traffic congestion in the United States. But he does not like Montgomery County’s plan of taking existing lanes and making them “bus only”. He asked why add another lane to Georgia Avenue, Route 29 or Veirs Mill Road for the BRT when it will take away a traffic lane. He said he had testified on that and discovered that there is only one corridor that has enough density where the experts indicate BRT would really work well – the 355 Corridor. He does not believe it’s a good idea to take a lane from Route 29 or Georgia Avenue that are full at rush hour and prohibit cars from using that lane in order to “fix the congestion” with buses. He said AAA does not support this formula. But, if done right by widening the road to add capacity and then adding the BRT, AAA would support this. However, he does not feel the County is working on this concept right now. He also felt that motorists would fund the current concept and be stuck in worse traffic as well. He noted that motorists are the major funders of mass transit, which in Maryland is around 35% which means that 65% of the funds needed for current operating expenses have to come from somewhere else. So, in Maryland, motorists will have to pay for the BRT, which will cause them even more delay in their commute.

Joe Corbett asked whether AAA is concerned with air pollution or global warming and whether air pollution only affects transit riders or does it affect motorists or people who live in the area as well. Anderson said that the automotive industry has cleaned up emissions within the past decade and there is cleaner air now. The auto manufacturers complying with CAFE regulations and standards have cleaned up emission growth by producing hybrids, electric cars and lighter weight aluminum cars.

A question arose on whether the State of Maryland is looking at how future technology, i.e. smart cars, would change things. Anderson said that since 1990 the auto industry has reduced tailpipe emissions by 90% with catalytic converters. More cars are driving more miles and we have cleaner air than we’ve had in decades. This is one area where government regulation has worked extremely well, i.e. when government required car manufacturers to cut emissions by complying with CAFE standards. So going forward, Anderson sees a growth in electric cars and hybrids as well as innovations in larger vehicles by converting to aluminum, thus making larger vehicles lighter and more economical to drive.

A question arose on how Montgomery County is looking at future technology and working environments and whether we would even be driving cars in 50 years. Are the County and State looking at how technology will affect transit? Anderson noted that the “automated car” is almost here, but the infrastructure is not there yet for driverless cars and zip cars. Looking at what can be done with mass transit in the future, it would be a very different world. Another question arose on whether the County is even looking forward by 30 years. If the County is still talking about adding another lane in 30 years, that would be useless, and a lot of money is at stake. Anderson said he is optimistic and is impressed with the new Secretary of Transportation, Pete Rahn, who has a lot of experience and is forward looking. He hopes he will begin to transform Maryland. Anderson does not feel that Maryland is as far along as Virginia, which has applied for a federal grant and asked AAA to partner with them. It’s (*the grant*) about “connected” highways, which is a vehicle-to-vehicle (VtoV) and vehicle-to-infrastructure (VtoI) communication system. With federal grant money they will begin to make their intersections

“intelligent”. This way they can fight the congestion without adding any more roads. He felt that we may be able to control congestion in the future without adding roads by using avoidance technology. He saw a demonstration of how this would work at a conference in California with buses going 60 mph only a few feet from each other and all computer-controlled. That’s what’s possible in the future and how we can solve our congestion problems without having to add roads. However, he does not see Maryland as a leader in the new technology right now.

Lee Lofthus noted how DC makes use of existing capacity by reversing lanes during rush times. He felt that AAA should champion these ideas. Currently, Montgomery County does not use these concepts. Lights are mistimed; turn signals are misconfigured, etc. There is dismal use of current capacity. He felt that AAA should champion these concepts. Anderson agreed that signal optimization and switching lanes are things we should do and said that we are currently using old technology. He noted that Montgomery County is currently placing permanent median strips where there used to be reversible lanes.

John Webster asked whether AAA has a position on telecommuting. Anderson said that AAA supports telecommuting and added that he has worked with Frank Wolf in Virginia and the federal government to promote telecommuting. Webster asked why the participation rate in telecommuting is so low to which Anderson said the federal government is the laggard on this and managers demand “face time”. Joe Corbett asked whether there is a study that shows the telecommuting rates. Anderson noted that the COG survey has studied this concept and suggested going to the COG website for this information since they track this closely. Webster noted that data on the Olney telecommuting rate show the participation rate is low.

A question arose on whether AAA feels that if the BRT were built, business would follow. Anderson said that Montgomery County is not doing BRT “right” and passed out some information referencing how Canada has developed a BRT. They had dedicated lanes for the BRT and separated lanes. They did not take away general purpose traffic lanes. He felt that if Montgomery County did this, the BRT could be successful. However, he repeated his concerns with the plan to cut out a lane of traffic. In response to a question on where commuters would park in order to ride the BRT, he said he had no ideas on that.

Greg Intoccia asked what the focus should be regarding traffic in Olney, disregarding the BRT. Anderson recommended signal optimization to help alleviate gridlock but he noted that this is not a priority in Montgomery County except possibly on Route 355. He said traffic does not move well on the major corridors. There is gridlock and there are things that could be done to improve this, but this is not a priority for Montgomery County. Fixing the Beltway and Route 270 are far down on the list, but some plans for Route 355 could point the way for the future. He thinks signal prioritization is the best way for improvement.

Joe Corbett asked whether Governor Hogan is opposed to the Purple Line on the Metro since the public at large in Prince Georges and Montgomery Counties have demonstrated overwhelmingly that they want the Purple Line. Anderson said he has no insight on the Purple Line, but Secretary Rahn is wondering what to do about the Purple Line.

Anderson likes that GOCA has opposed the Independent Transit Authority (ITA), which he also feels is a bad idea. GOCA got it right that the ITA is a way around the tax cap and eminent domain. A question arose

on whether there is concern about people returning to driving cars because of problems with Metro and because ridership on Metro is down. Will this create more congestion on the roads? Anderson said that maybe the new Metro cars will get riders back. Metro has been starved for funds, and he hopes that funds for Metro in the future will be more generous because it would benefit transit in the area.

Anderson is disappointed with the ICC because the speed limit is artificially low and is over-enforced and the ICC is underutilized. He compared the ICC with a similar road in Virginia which has had the opposite effect and a very positive experience for motorists. He said the ICC in Maryland is not a good experience for motorists, and he hopes the speed limit will be increased in the future. Currently the ICC is underutilized but is improving. It could relieve congestion on the Beltway.

He believes that transportation funding in Maryland is not good. There have been no gas tax increases since 1992, and the Maryland transportation system has been starved. AAA has worked to get an amendment on the ballot to protect the transportation trust fund which was passed by 80% of voters. He said that \$1 billion has been misspent from the transportation trust fund on things other than transportation, and it has not been paid back.

He said that AAA supports speed cameras but believes they are a racket. He thinks Olney is the speed capital of the County. He then spoke about right turn on red laws and drivers getting tickets for not coming to a complete stop at 2:00 am. Joe Corbett noted that drivers know to stop at right turn on red lights for public safety reasons. Anderson said that NTSHA says that right turns on red are not a safety problem and he feels that people are getting tricked into getting tickets. He says a lot of these tickets occur at 2:00 am when there is not a safety issue.

Barbara Falcigno asked whether these positions were Anderson's personal positions or AAA's. Anderson said that all the positions and policies he has spoken about were all AAA's.

Anderson asked how AAA can help improve Olney safety. A suggestion was made to have a right turn on red but with a full stop at red light on Georgia Avenue and Route 108 because it is a blind spot for many pedestrians. A question was presented to Anderson on whether he would submit to AAA any of the Board's suggestions. Anderson agreed to submit all suggestions.

A suggestion was made that since safety is a priority there should be a physical distraction to slow cars down, e.g. a rumble strip, for example, at Olney Elementary School. It was asked whether AAA has advocated for that. Anderson said AAA has and also noted that the use of large signs are an even more effective deterrent, instead of traffic cameras, that warn drivers they may be ticketed for running a red light. He likes the construction speed signs and says they are very effective at ticketing.

Ed Weisel felt that noise abatement on the ICC is an issue. Anderson advocates a 65 mph speed limit on the ICC.

OFFICERS/COMMITTEE/LIAISON REPORTS

Transportation Committee

Bowie Mill Bikeway

Barbara Falcigno reported that there is a Montgomery Parks and Department of Recreation CIP public forum on April 23, 2015 and the Bowie Mill Bikeway is currently not on the list of projects. She noted that Olney lacks a bike connection, which will not get funded without GOCA's focus. She said a survey

would be done on biking habits to allow Olney residents to bike to the Shady Grove Metro station. The goal is to make key connections with the Bowie Mill Bikeway plan and move up the funding schedule. She described the class 1, 2, and 3 bike lanes and said GOCA is advocating a class 2 bike lane, which is a separated lane with stripes.

She said that the Transportation Committee has already developed a resolution which is open for discussion.

- *Whereas GOCA has identified that Olney lacks substantive bicycle connections to other areas within Montgomery County and the region as a whole,*
- *Whereas GOCA's Transportation Committee has determined that bike lanes along Bowie Mill Road represent a unique and viable opportunity for regional connectivity to schools and mass transit,*
- *Whereas Bowie Mill Road currently lacks the necessary infrastructure to ensure bicycle safety, but is designated for such improvement in the Montgomery County Bikeways Master Plan ("B-20"), and*

GOCA hereby resolves to endorse the recommendation of its Transportation Committee and request inclusion of the Bowie Mill Road bike lanes in the County's Capital Improvement Plan.

Discussion ensued. Bowie Mill Road has no sidewalks and is very dangerous to walk on, so widening the road would be helpful. A question arose about what happens after you get to Muncaster Road and how to get through the new Stanley Martin development and to the Lake Needwood trail. Falcigno said that the goal is to have this connection meet the Northwest Branch connection. She said the connection probably wouldn't be complete for several years. Falcigno called for a vote to approve the resolution.

There were **24 votes to approve; 1 abstention and 0 opposed**. The motion carried.

High Street/Morningwood Drive Project

Falcigno then presented a map of a potential connection of the alley behind Goddard to Morningwood Drive. The project will cost \$70,000, and MCDOT wants some input on this. GOCA would recommend some kind of fencing to protect the Goddard School children from the traffic on Morningwood Drive and channel everyone to a raised crosswalk. She said there is no action required right now but asked for comments from the group. The County is only in the design phase now. Helene Rosenheim said that the County is working with the Olney Town Center Advisory Committee (OTCAC) on this and is looking to notify residents who would be impacted and get their feedback. The engineering is complete but they want to make sure that homeowners don't vehemently oppose this connection – it's already a driveway/alley. This was a Master Plan project, and Goddard was supposed to pave the road. Howard Greif said that Goddard knew about this connection and noted that this section of road would not be "lightly" used but probably very heavily used as an alternate route. There are many cars going into McDonald's. The connection makes sense from a transit sense, but not for safety. It will become an alternate route if we don't block it. We should be smart about this. OTCAC is still working to get the County to pay for the connection. There was a suggestion for a flashing walk sign there. The sign could be motion sensitive.

USDOT (Beyond Traffic Project)

Falcigno also summarized a meeting she attended regarding the USDOT (Beyond Traffic Project) which questioned how we will look at traffic in 30 years. We need to look at the future of drones for example for delivery, 3D printers and other new technology regarding implications for future planning. We should not be using old technology. She said the group could share their comments on the USDOT site at ITSA.org and www.dot.gov/BeyondTraffic.

Mid-County Citizen's Advisory Board

Greg Intoccia reported that the County Executive has rolled out his operating budget and has scheduled hearings on it. Intoccia welcomed comments from the group on the budget and will get a copy to anyone who wants to review it. The thinking is to give targeted comments on school funding that the School Board has proposed especially with regard to support services, counseling and psychological help for students and also to support a 5% increase in the library and affordable housing programs. He also reemphasized that the Board would like more funds for before and after-school care. There is also talk about providing training in that area for providers. He said that comments are welcome and are needed a week from today.

Public Policy & Community Affairs Committee

Matt Quinn reported that the Committee now has eight members.

Land Use Subcommittee: Matt Zaborsky and Mark Hill are working with Fred Boyd, County manager for Zoning with Park and Planning on this.

Legislative Subcommittee: At the County level, the team has met with Nancy Floreen, George Leventhal and Hans Riemer. They will meet on April 23 with Mark Elrich and are rescheduling a meeting with Nancy Navarro. Nancy Floreen is a pragmatic administrator and feels that transportation issues should be resolved via Metro WMATA. Council President Leventhal is focused on health issues in the County and said the pesticide bill would pass. Councilmember Riemer is looking to support business issues such as reducing regulations on taxis and getting Uber into the County. He is looking to support local breweries and wineries and go directly to consumers, by-passing the County liquor distribution system. He is also looking to improve the County's digital infrastructure.

At the State level, Matt Quinn reported that the legislative session has just ended and we plan on having our State representatives there at next month's meeting. Jonathan Arias is a new member of our Committee, and he is going to reach out to local school principals to get a better understanding of their needs and report to GOCA. Arias spoke about the importance of public schools to our quality of life and economics of Olney. He has already contacted the 12 principals in Olney schools about GOCA's involvement in advocating for their needs. They were all enthusiastic about GOCA's involvement. They will see what their needs are and see how GOCA can help them. He will also join with other groups on this effort.

Linda Silverstein has met with Jim Smith of the OTCAC and will be involved with them. Quinn will meet with local Clergy to get insights into their needs.

Other Updates:

M-NCPPC has issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) to lease the recently restored Darby Store, which is located in the Beallsville Historic District at 19801 Darnestown Road, Beallsville, MD 20839.

M-CPPC intends to lease the store to a qualified end-user to reinvigorate the building while keeping in mind its historic character.

Barbara Falcigno told the group, regarding land use, the buffer zone on Olney Springs is not protected and trees could be cut down. She said that regarding buffer trees, unless there is an easement, builders cannot take down trees, but homeowners can cut them if they are on their own property. There is no legislation being pursued on this issue. Falcigno will contact legislators so this doesn't happen to other communities. This will likely lead to new legislation.

Olney Town Center Advisory Committee

Kathy Curtis reported that at the last meeting of OTCAC, the manager of the Shoppers shopping center responded to questions that would be put to other large land owners in the search for Town Commons space.

2015 Membership Renewals

Greg Intoccia reported that currently dues have been received from 29 GOCA member communities for a total of \$2,005. Three have not yet paid their dues. When all dues are received the total will be \$2,275. There are a total of 32 HOAs. There are two new members- Champlain and Homeland Village. He noted that donations to the Police substation were \$192, down from \$342. Olney Days contributions were \$1089 currently. Contributions are down in both areas. He asked delegates to ask their HOAs to contribute to the Police substation and Olney Days event. A question arose regarding an increase in dues. Intoccia said that it had been considered but the decision was not to increase dues.

Correspondence Report

Jackie Benn reported that new correspondence was being distributed to the Executive Board members present.

Chamber of Commerce Report

Joe Buffington reported that the Police Substation has deteriorated, and repairs have been made to the roof and siding and a new HVAC/heating system has been put in. There are still repairs to be made estimated at between \$5,000 and \$6,000. The roof needs to be replaced. The biggest issue is how to make the trailer look more like a police station. A suggestion was made to get a bond with match funding but we need to get to \$5000-\$6000 before we get matching funds. Other suggestions were to replace the Maryland flag; build a brick building. A question arose about what would happen if Giant ever moved since the police station is leasing space from them. A comment was made that since the space is leased, improvements would have to be torn down if Giant moved. Helene Rosenheim said that ultimately the police station could move into the Town Center Building when it is built.

NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting. All were in favor, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Judy Broseker, Recording Secretary

In attendance:

GOCA Executive Board

John Webster, President - Manor Oaks; Greg Intoccia, Executive Vice President - Ashley Hollow; Matt Quinn, 1st Vice President – Cherrywood; Bill Calomeris, 2nd Vice President – Olney Mill; Judy Broseker, Recording Secretary – Brookeville Knolls; Jackie Benn, Corresponding Secretary - Fair Hill Farm; Kathy Curtis, Treasurer - Lake Hollowell; Barbara Falcigno, Immediate Past President - Olney Oaks

John Blachere (Ashley Hollow), Greg Panicter (Briar Acres), Danny Benn, (Fair Hill Farm), Jonathan Arias (Hallowell), Helene Rosenheim (Highlands of Olney), Ed Weisel (Norbeck Meadows), Lee Lofthus (Oatland Farm), Diana Littlefield (Olney Acres), Carolyn Knight (Olney Oaks), Jay Feinberg (Olney Oaks), Meg Pease-Fye (SEROCA), Alden English (SEROCA), Louis Saporito (James Creek), Ann Marie Saporito (James Creek), Ruth Laughner (Williamsburg Village), Joe Corbett (Williamsburg Village), Howard Greif (Homeland Village)

Invited Guests

Lon Anderson, AAA Mid Atlantic

Public

Chris Gosselm (SEROCA), Natalie Gosselm (SEROCA), Kim McCrary (Cherrywood), Tim Stemann (Williamsburg Village), Benny Bienvenue (Our House), Joe Buffington, Chamber of Commerce