

Executive Board Meeting Minutes
November 10, 2015

CALL TO ORDER

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

Webster asked for a motion to approve the October 13, 2015 minutes. A motion was made and seconded, and the minutes were approved unanimously.

Webster asked for a motion to approve the November meeting agenda. Barbara Falcigno motioned to change the order of the agenda and place the Transit Update at the end of the agenda after New Business because one of the speakers would be late. A motion was made to approve the agenda as amended. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Sharon Dooley reported that an interfaith dinner would be held on November 24, the Tuesday night before Thanksgiving, at the Shaare Tefil Temple on Georgia Avenue in Olney.

Barbara Falcigno reported that John Sarbanes has scheduled a workshop for seniors focusing on Social Security and Medicare. Contact Barbara for details.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAM (CIP) UPDATE

Greg Intoccia summarized the CIP process, in which GOCA has not historically gotten involved. He said this program is important and can have a significant impact on the community. The CIP has an operating budget. The capital side of the budget is responsible for tangible infrastructure in the County such as buildings and pathways etc. It does not involve spending with respect to services provided by the County. It is very specific and local. GOCA has become involved in the past with projects that affect Olney as a community. It is a biennial (two-year) process and law requires that in even years the County Executive will recommend programs to the County Council (typically six-year projects) regarding long term plans and costs. The scope involves all County agencies and levels of spending. The Council can amend or approve a CIP project at any time. If the project is large by cost, it is separated out and individually authorized by legislation, with the exception of emergency situations and if more than one jurisdiction is involved. The County website has a list of projects designated as approved. It is forward looking for six years with an annual budget requirement, which authorizes the spending for that year. So, there is essentially a 15-month cycle and the County Executive will make his recommendations in 2015. In the late spring, interested parties come

together with hearings as advocates. Intoccia recommended that GOCA get involved earlier in the process - the earlier, the better. Historically, GOCA has not been involved in this process. The County Executive collects information on projects from citizens' advisory boards. Since we have a good sense of what Olney wants, Intoccia believes that, with coordination and a routine process in the odd years, GOCA should have its own list of projects early in the odd year. The next step is to weigh in with the Citizens Advisory Board to get a sense of what Olney wants and then validate the project priorities from that group. A greater awareness is appropriate with respect to the County Executive and County Council members. Intoccia said his vision for GOCA is consistent with a focus of discussing specific things impacting Olney at GOCA meetings. He then asked for discussion and ideas on Olney priorities.

Joe Corbett asked how input from the Olney community would be obtained. Intoccia said a formal process is needed and he would discuss this with the GOCA officers. He noted that some members of the Mid County Advisory Committee represent all parts of the County and not only Olney. There is a need for a more formal process.

Sharon Dooley suggested coordinating with the Olney Town Center Advisory Committee (OTCAC) on this. Intoccia agreed with this and suggested funding a study for that. Helene Rosenheim said that the OTCAC had done that routinely in the 1980s and 1990s, but the Olney Master Plan update took precedence. She felt that a new study would be very useful.

Barbara Falcigno asked if there could be funding for a new commuter service for Olney and whether this type of service would qualify as a CIP. Intoccia said that, historically, tangible projects like the bike trails have been funded and he did not think that the type of service being suggested would be funded under CIP.

OFFICERS/COMMITTEE/LIAISON REPORTS

Mid-County Citizen's Advisory Board (MCCAB)

Greg Intoccia reported that about a third of the MCCAB membership is new, and that during a report by the MCCAB liaison to the Olney Town Center Advisory Committee, members requested more information on Olney Town Center vision. Jim Smith agreed to present the Olney Town Center Concept to the MCCAB at its upcoming meeting.

Public Policy & Community Affairs Committee

Matt Quinn reported that he has spoken to the owner of the abandoned house on Hillcrest Avenue about cleaning up the site. He also said there is a proposal to use a Montgomery County property on Cashell Road as a solar farm. A meeting is scheduled at Cashell School to discuss this. He said he will meet with State representative Morales and Ann Kaiser. Ed Weisel said that it appears as though the solar project is already a done deal.

Quinn also reported that PEPCO has not ground up the debris and unsightly stumps left from their tree trimming program along Bowie Mill Road. PEPCO has responded that they are not responsible for a cleanup. Quinn suggested that GOCA draw up a resolution regarding this issue. Barbara Falcigno suggested that it would be best if GOCA write a resolution and sends it to the Public Service Commission (PSC).

Olney Town Center Advisory Committee

Kathy Curtis reported that the Committee met with groups to talk about the Olney Town Center Concept Plan for a civic center. She referred to the website, Olneytowncenter.org, for information on this. The next meeting is Dec 1 with a case study to be presented in January by MNPPC.

Chamber of Commerce Report

Joe Buffington was not present and no report was made.

Officer and Award Nominations

Matt Zaborsky reported that there are four officer openings and recommendations are being taken to fill the open positions. Descriptions of all positions are on the GOCA website. He also said that the 2015 Awards Ceremony is scheduled for Sunday, March 13, 2016 from 2:00 to 4:00 pm. Details are on the GOCA website. Barbara Falcigno asked attendees to disseminate this information to their HOAs or property managers and ask them to suggest nominees for awards.

NEW BUSINESS

Approval of Batchelors Forest HOA as a new GOCA member

John Webster said that according to GOCA bylaws, new member HOAs must be approved by the GOCA Board. They must have paid their dues and have submitted two delegates to the Board. He asked for a motion to approve Batchelors Forest HOA as a new GOCA member. Barbara Falcigno made a motion to accept Batchelors Forest HOA as a member of GOCA. Matt Zaborsky seconded the motion. John Webster asked for discussion from the Board.

Meg Pease-Fye (SEROCA) asked Alden English (SEROCA) to show a map with the location of the SEROCA community in the Olney area. The boundaries of SEROCA originally were from Route 108 and almost to Route 28. He questioned whether the Batchelors Forest HOA rep should come through SEROCA instead of becoming a new and separate GOCA member. He was concerned that, with more development, there would be additional HOAs. He said GOCA should think about the long term picture and wondered whether civic associations have as much in common as HOAs. He said that SEROCA was hoping to stay cohesive and speak for one area. The last three pieces of Olney are being developed now and could possibly result in more HOAs. He thought the leadership should consider whether we are working together or are we at odds with each other. He noted that SEROCA was by itself for so long that they fell asleep on this issue.

Meg Pease-Fye said that on the Olney Master Plan boundaries SEROCA borders on the south with the ICC, Norbeck/Ednor Road, Norwood/Dr Bird and 108/Georgia Avenue on the north, which she felt is a pretty massive area. Most of the houses built are on two acres. The new developments coming in are the neighborhood clusters and the subdivisions going in on Batchelors Forest Road are going to be similar to the houses that have been there for 50+ years. She said they are having an issue with whether Batchelors Forest Road will remain a rustic road because there may be some disagreement with some of the new subdivisions as to whether Batchelors Forest Road will maintain its rustic status. It will depend on whether Olney considers Batchelors Forest Road a treasure or whether we need to make changes. She felt another major concern for GOCA is how to define membership. SEROCA has two votes, but if there are three new subdivisions that come in and they each get two votes, that would be six votes, which could potentially overrule SEROCA on issues. She asked whether they could vote twice, as SEROCA members and also as members of their own HOA. She felt there are many issues in the SEROCA region and possible disagreements within the community and not being able to address them as one community.

Joe Corbett asked whether Batchelors Forest HOA was present to address this issue and whether the GOCA bylaws address this. Barbara Falcigno noted that Batchelors Forest HOA was present at the October meeting. John Webster said that the agenda is published before each GOCA meeting and every delegate has an opportunity to address agenda issues. Corbett said not everyone reads the agenda and asked what GOCA has done in the past and what the bylaws say on this. Webster said that GOCA has not voted on new members in the past and that perhaps this was an oversight. He said this issue has been communicated and is now on tonight's agenda.

Sharon Dooley asked whether HOA boundaries could overlap. Matt Zaborsky said that GOCA has supported SEROCA issues in the past and noted that SEROCA is a civic organization and that membership is voluntary, but HOA membership is mandatory and Batchelors Forest HOA already encompasses 28 homes with 70 more planned. He asked whether SEROCA members are obligated to be a member of SEROCA? That is a key question. The SEROCA website indicates its members are houses as well as individuals. Zaborsky asked English to explain his objection to Batchelors Forest HOA becoming a member of GOCA. English said he is concerned that SEROCA may be outvoted on future issues if Batchelors Forest is a separate GOCA member. Jon Morrison asked whether there is a minimum size for an HOA. Webster said that there is not because each HOA is a legal entity unto itself. Barbara Falcigno noted that there are differing viewpoints and that historically GOCA has taken a holistic approach. She said that SEROCA is already divided and said that one option could be to have Batchelors Forest separate and add their vote to SEROCA's, but she felt the best plan would be to allow Batchelors Forest to become a GOCA member separately. Lee Loftus asked whether Batchelors Forest is seceding from SEROCA. Webster said no, that that they are a new organization. SEROCA represents 220 households. Howard Greif asked why GOCA is voting on this issue. John Webster said that the requirement is in the GOCA bylaws.

Helene Rubenstein asked whether Batchelors Forest has been invited to join SEROCA. Meg Pease-Fye said that SEROCA has always been very inclusive and considers Batchelors Forest as part of the community.

Webster asked for a vote to approve Batchelors Forest HOA as a new member of GOCA.

18 were in favor

2 were opposed

1 abstention

The motion carried.

TRANSPORTATION UPDATE & AMENDED ITA RESOLUTION

Barbara Falcigno, Transportation Committee Chair, said that since the County Executive has now tabled the Independent Transit Authority (ITA) proposal, she would summarize the history of the Olney transportation situation starting with the 1980 Olney Master Plan and the vision for a future bus way on the Georgia Avenue median. She noted that later in the meeting Julian Martin would present his concept for a regional express bus service, which was envisioned in the 1980 Olney Master Plan. She said that master plans are updated every 20 to 25 years. There was a very extensive study with recommendations for a two lane directional bus-only road way plan connecting Metro and Spartan Road/108. The concerns included where commuters would park and how would they board the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). Various parking locations were considered, including the Longwood Rec parking lot, park and ride at Norbeck, and Montgomery General campus with a potential park and ride center. There would be no commuter parking at Montgomery General, just a turn-around. A Ride-on bus would have brought riders to this center. In July 2012, GOCA resolved to support the Rapid Transit System (the BRT) concept. In November 2013, the County Council approved and adopted the County Corridor Functional Master Plan because, unlike Olney, most areas did not have a transit plan. There were four recommended priority Transit Corridors. The Georgia Avenue corridor is no longer a priority, but Routes 355, 29 and Veirs Mill are now the top priorities. The larger plan is to put BRT throughout the County to connect all roadways. Then, in May 2014, the State Highway Administration (SHA) submitted five different plans for a Georgia Avenue BRT, ranging from do nothing to bi-directional two full lanes. This was the plan that Olney was most concerned about because it would have taken a lot of land and businesses in the heart of the business district of Olney if the BRT went all the way up Georgia Avenue to Route 108. Another issue concerned plans beyond Route 108. In January 2015 the County Executive suspended the BRT study for Olney. The study has not been completed, so we don't know what a potential BRT in Olney would look like. The rationale was Olney is not an ideal location for the BRT because it does not currently have nor planned for a high number of jobs, development does not go north of Olney, and because of greater needs in other areas. The County now plans to implement the Rapid Transit System (RTS) with several other priority corridor routes. Many other Master Plans now have the RTS/BRT as part of their plans because

transit is essential to meeting their economic development goals. The County is focused on implementing the rapid transit system. The question is, what is the design and how will this be funded. For funding, the Transit Task Force has reviewed several ideas such as real property tax, excise tax, and local sales tax. Some options like the sales tax option would require state legislation. There are also options for federal as well as state funding, with pros and cons for each. The special corridor-based tax assessment has been ruled out. The final conclusion was that an independent transit authority is the best funding option and least burdensome to any single group of taxpayers.

In March 2015, a GOCA Resolution opposed the ITA as proposed. GOCA opposed the unlimited check writing ability, the lack of accountability by the County Executive and County Council and unelected Board members, and lack of proof that the concept works before bringing it to Olney. The Task Force proposed recommendations including upper limits on spending, approved annually, and eminent domain decisions. They increased the number of Board members to seven and required its employees to remain county employees.

Initial recommendations regarding GOCA initial concerns were addressed. Concerns include pass through traffic in Olney, the need for a regional solution to congestion. The transit system is large - over 100 miles. There are other alternatives but analysis has not been done on these with options and cost/benefits. Also lack of accountability of ITA performance is a concern.

Falcigno said there remains the need to address congestion and the funding mechanism and that, even without a structured ITA, we will likely pay for transit one way or another. The Transportation Committee felt an ITA could be a way to raise funds inexpensively but it would need to be limited in its mission. Also, BRTs in other areas like US29 or 355 may divert traffic from passing through Olney.

Express Bus Service Concept

Falcigno introduced Julian Martin, owner of Martins Sedan and Limo Service, who has proposed a concept for a commuter express bus/van service from Olney to Rockville, Shady Grove and other locations depending on commuter needs. Falcigno said that information on the service and a short survey on interest in this type of service are on the GOCA website (GOCA.org). This would be a subscription service to take commuters from Olney to a destination at the times that are currently needed. She asked GOCA delegates to put this information in their newsletters. The survey will help design routes to match the interest and demand of subscribers. Howard Greif asked whether this would be a non-profit service. Martins Sedan and Limo is not a non-profit company and the estimated cost will likely be between \$120 and \$150/month, depending on the route taken.

Matt Quinn asked whether Falcigno was asking GOCA to support this concept. Falcigno said she was just sharing the information and not asking for GOCA support. Quinn noted that the ITA does not resolve the Montgomery County transit problem with traffic coming from other job centers and commuting through Olney. He said that 25% of the

State's revenue comes from Montgomery County, so the State is required to fix the traffic issue, not Montgomery County. He felt that WMATA should support this. He said our County representatives must ask the State to handle this, not Montgomery County. The ITA will not resolve the pass-through traffic in Olney. Falcigno noted that this subscription service would be only for Olney residents and is a service the 1980 master plan indicated WMATA should have done. Howard Greif felt the concept is a good idea, especially for senior citizens and recommended getting involved with Olney Home for Life with this concept. Alden English suggested one of the stops could be at the ICC park and ride. Falcigno said the goal is to get commuters away from Georgia Avenue to reduce congestion. She also said that it would not work for senior citizens because it will be a monthly subscription whether or not you use it. The service proposed by Martins Sedan is designed for commuters. Since it is an express service, there will not be stops – just a single pick up and single destination.

Rapid Transit in Montgomery County

Joy Nurmi, special assistant to County Executive Isaiah Leggett, gave a summary of the County Executive's views on the Independent Transit Authority (ITA). Legislation was introduced in the State General Assembly to enable the Montgomery County Council to create an independent transit authority. There was a hearing in Rockville and GOCA was represented. There was a lot of support for an ITA as well as many concerns, including transparency, accountability, and eminent domain issues. Because of these concerns, the legislation was withdrawn. Leggett asked the Transit Taskforce to reconvene, which they did, including many citizens in their meetings. The Taskforce has met over the past six to eight months to address all the concerns. Final recommendations have addressed many community concerns including County Council oversight of budgets, independent audits and standards.

Prior to the Taskforce reconvening, the County Executive held two hearings and determined that, although many concerns have been addressed, many still remain. For this reason, the County Executive felt it was premature to introduce legislation this year. There is also the concern that the State dollars would not stay in the County and Montgomery County would not have the money for its projects. He will look again at what was said at the latest public hearing and especially at the minority report regarding concerns on this regional issue. He has listened to the concerns on taking it slowly.

Since Olney was concerned with the BRT coming into Olney Town Center, the County Executive has now repurposed the money for the Georgia Avenue BRT study to other corridors in the transit way, i.e. Route 29, Veirs Mill Road, and Route 355. She said that the Montgomery County Council and the County Executive are very committed to BRT in the County because it is the only way to unlock the economic development potential for the County. (<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/transit-task-force-2015/report.html>) An ITA was envisioned as a way to leverage and fund the debt for the transit system as well as all other competing projects.

The Bus Rapid Transit Program

Falcigno introduced Al Roshdieh, Acting Director of Montgomery County Department of Transportation, who gave the background of the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). There would be dedicated lanes but there could also be managed lanes, which could include a dedicated lane or HOV lane or a combination. He gave an example of a business access lane in Ocean City on the right lane of the road. He said a feasibility study was done in 2011 that identified 16 corridors throughout the County that could meet the federal requirements for funding for ridership in 2040. The Transit Task Force did a study in 2012 and the County Park and Planning did a Master Plan in 2011. As a result, we have 11 corridors, seven of which are under active study including Route 355, Route 29, and Route 586. He said that the Georgia Avenue route, which was under study in the early stage, is off the table now.

The Council mandate is to create an advisory committee for each one of these corridors to provide feedback on progress. Important things to consider are that County population will increase by 20% in 2040. Job growth will be 21%. Staging of the Master Plan is dependent on the BRT, e.g. the staging of the Great Seneca is tied to the CCT funding. There are aggressive goals in terms of the auto driver totals that have to be met. He described Route 355 and 29 travel patterns. The State has completed 35% of the design, e.g. Route 355 is projected to have the highest ridership in 2040.

He said they are in the planning stage now. The State has allocated \$6 million for this project led by the MTA. No funding other than that has been identified. There is funding for design and Right of Way, but no construction funding. Funding for planning is \$3.5 million allocated by the State. He briefly described the status of other corridor projects.

He summarized saying that CCT has 100% funding currently and funds for ROW acquisition. No funds have been allocated for construction.

Questions were then taken.

Barbara Falcigno asked why a BRT is planned for Route 355 when there is already the Metro Redline? Also, is it a good sign that the State has paid for a study for the 355 corridor? Roshdieh said the county is talking with them and discussing funding. The Redline is not used for short trips – too expensive and too far off 355. He said that sometimes the Shady Grove metro is full and passes by Rockville. People are taking Metro to go downtown, not Bethesda. The cost is a major issue also. The key is the Metro will never go further than Shady Grove and will not go any further than Glenmont. He also said that Montgomery County is working with Howard County on transit because there is a good advantage to this. The same thing applies to Frederick County because a lot of commuters come from Frederick.

Lee Loftus asked of the two” proof of concept” areas - Route 355 and Route 29 - if everything goes right, when would the first one be up and running. By “proof of concept” he meant “built and being used”. Al said three years for design phase, and four years for design/construction are needed, so 2020 to 2021 under the current State approach and longer with dedicated lanes. Loftus supports some solution for rapid transit

but he hopes the County would maximize other options like smart signals or syncing the traffic lights. He supports looking for a solution and perhaps doing a pilot on “adaptive signals”. Roshdiah said we have state of the art signaling but are looking at “adaptive signaling” to coordinate with current road conditions. They are also considering improving intersections. We must start thinking about 2040 now.

Joe Corbett asked why the consideration was being given to rail with all its accidents. What about driverless vehicles as in Copenhagen?

Barbara Falcigno introduced Richard Parsons, of the Transit Task Force. Parsons said that “heavy rail”/Metro transit would never be constructed further than Glenmont or Shady Grove stations because there is no federal funding. This is 19th century technology. It will not be cost effective. Options are light rail, bus rapid transit and cutting edge technology e.g. low-speed driverless and other technologies like magnetized rail. We must look at new technology; BRT is just one solution. The area is heavily congested, under built, unsafe and falling apart. It is not aligned with today’s travel patterns. We have not put enough resources on transportation. Congestion is the number one issue for voters. There have been years of underinvestment and this situation is not sustainable. He said that even if we build everything we have currently planned by 2040, congestion will become 63% worse than today. We need to think outside the box.

There are two key questions:

1. Is a local bus rapid transit (BRT) is the best solution to lower congestion, what should we build and how fast.
2. Is ITA is the correct funding vehicle for this.

There has been no formal alternative analysis done and no data relative to a positive impact on congestion. The data we have does not support a BRT as the best use of \$2 billion in transportation funds. It would only serve a small percentage of commuters. The key is looking at regional traffic flows. There is an intense regional traffic flow each day in the DC Metro area from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. There are 200,000 drivers per day through Montgomery County. He felt that the ITA proposal is focused on the wrong priorities. We should do real alternatives analysis and think outside the box on funding. There are many projects that could be beneficial like fixing existing roads. He suggested using Route 270 for BRT and use tolls in two lanes. He said that local BRT is off the mark. He also suggested looking at other alternatives for funding, e.g. a regional transit authority for funding because the funds would stay in the region. Finally, we need to do a solid alternatives analysis to fix our transportation situation. He also suggested that we stop taking road projects out of our Master Plans. Everything that is in there is because it is needed.

For more information, he suggested going to: MDtransportation.org.

All presentations will be on the GOCA website at GOCA.org.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting. All were in favor, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:50 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; Judy Broseker, Recording Secretary - Brookeville Knolls; Kathy Curtis, Treasurer – Lake Hallowell; Barbara Falcigno, Immediate Past President - Olney Oaks

Helene Rosenheim, (Highlands of Olney) Perry Buckberg (Manor Oaks), Matt Zaborsky (Norbeck Meadows), Jon Morrison (Oak Grove), Lee Loftus (Oatland Farm), Carolyn Knight (Olney Oaks), Jay Feinberg (Olney Oaks), Meg Pease-Fye (SEROCA), Alden English (SEROCA), Bob Reel (Victoria Springs), Sharon Dooley (Village of James Creek), Ruth Laughner (Williamsburg Village), Joe Corbett (Williamsburg Village), Ed Weisel (Norbeck Meadows), Howard Greif (Lake Hallowell)

Invited Guests

Tom Street (Montgomery County Government), Joy Nurmi (County Executive Office), Richard Parsons (Transit Task Force)

Public

Terri Hogan (Lake Hallowell/ Greater Olney News), Bob Hambrecht (Cohn Reznick LLP), Kevin Mell (Medstar Montgomery Medical Center), Joe Fritsch (Highlands of Olney), Stanley Elswick (Olney Mill), Gary Evenrich (Montgomery County DOT), Kim McCary (Cherrywood)