



# Greater Olney Civic Association

Post Office Box 212 Olney, Maryland 20830

[www.goca.org](http://www.goca.org)

## MINUTES – October 8, 2002

The meeting was called to order by Executive Vice President Steve Smet who welcomed everyone to our second meeting in the new Buffington RE/MAX Community Room.

### GOCA Website Demonstration

Using the audio-visual equipment and internet access provided by the Buffingtons, Alex Rosenheim, the GOCA webmaster, briefly outlined the major changes he has made to the GOCA website, [www.goca.org](http://www.goca.org). After discussing the basic structure of the website, he presented the new Issues Forum he recently added to the website. The purpose of the Forum is to provide the community with an opportunity to post comments and concerns on issues of interest to the community. The forum is divided into a series of topics that GOCA focuses on, such as transportation, land use, public safety, etc. A special topic area has been set up for issues relating to the current study of the Greater Olney Master Plan being conducted by the Maryland-National Capital Parks and Planning Commission (P&P). In addition to providing a brief introduction to the study and description of the process to date, the text of the Staff Draft Concept Outline presented by P&P staff in June 2002 has been divided up into a series of Forum topics. He will be adding the handout information presented by the staff at a series of meeting held between Sept 5<sup>th</sup> and Oct 1st. These represent the refinements the staff has made to date to the concept presented in June in response to comments made at the June meeting when the outline was first presented. The staff is continuing to refine the draft concept which they anticipate presenting to the P&P Planning Board in mid-December.

Alex explained that people visiting the website can view the comments made by other visitors to the website. They can also post comments to the various topics, but to do that they must complete a fairly simple forum registration. He explained that the GOCA Forum is part of a web service through which a number of groups and individuals can set up forums. When registering, an individual can choose between a local or a global registration. The local registration only allows the individual to view and post comments to the GOCA Forum. However, the global registration allows them to view and post comments both to the GOCA Forum and the other Forums maintained through this service. They can also add topics of concern or interest or post information they believe would be of interest to the community. The GOCA officers will moderate the Forum.

At the completion of the website demonstration, President Art Brodsky began to preside over the meeting. Following introductions, the minutes were approved with no corrections and no additions. The agenda was also approved with no corrections or additions.

### PUBLIC COMMENTS

- Roy Peck noted that the Civic Federation newsletter reported that Civic Federation supported Option 3 of the western parkway alternatives. They also supported Emergency Bill 32-2 that would allow developers of smaller properties that do not currently meet the threshold for requiring the inclusion of moderately-priced dwelling units (MPDUs) to add MPDUs to their density beyond what their acreage would normally permit. Art added that he had received information on a legislative proposal that would reduce the number of acres needed to apply for rezoning to the PRC zone as a floating zone. They would no longer need to apply to use this through the special exception process. While they would still be subject to a public hearing process, the criteria they would be assessed under would change.

- Jackie Benn expressed some concern that GOCA had not advocated hard enough against opening Appomattox Way. Although she had not yet seen the sign herself, she had been told by another Fair Hill Farm resident that there was a variance sign at the dead-end of the road and they thought meant the County was moving ahead to open the road. Art responded by indicating that he felt GOCA had spoken up strongly at the master plan meetings about the fact that the immediately affected developments did not want the road opened. Art also doubted that the sign had anything to do with the road being cut through. Dave E. noted that the proposal to open Appomattox was still in the materials that have been presented so far at the master plan meetings, but the staff has not made any final decisions on their recommendation in connection with this issue. Art indicated that we would check into the matter.

- Karen Montgomery asked if anyone in GOCA had heard anything about development plans for the Nash property, 1,000 acres northwest of Georgia Ave and north of Brookeville Road. No one at the meeting was aware of any activity on that property.

- Joe Hess suggested that we need to get the County more tuned into the deer problem in this area. Earlier that day he had seen 25-30 deer on his property in an area with 2-3 acre lots. He has observed a dramatic increase in the numbers of deer in their area over the past 2 years, and felt that the mild winter last year had contributed to that. Studies have shown that deer seldom wonder more than 2-3 miles and at the moment there are no deer hunts planned for this area. Ed Weisel noted that he had attended a meeting last year on a deer hunt the County was proposing. He had gone intended to speak on behalf of the deer, but after listening to the other testimony about the damage they do and other problems related to the overpopulation, he was convinced of the value of the deer hunts.

## **SPECIAL PRESENTATION**

**Proposed Convenience Center on the Silo Inn/Mr. T's Property** – Art B. introduced Harold Maizel, the developer proposing to build a retail/convenience center on the Silo Inn/Mr. T's property adjacent to Victoria Springs. This area, which had been grandfathered in the C-1 zone in the 1980 Olney Master Plan, was purchased by the developer of Victoria Springs, but was set aside and reserved for commercial development later on. Mr. Maizel indicated that he had been meeting with P&P and has met with the Victoria Springs Homeowners Association (HOA). He also introduced 2 representatives of the KLN Realty company who are working on this project with him, both of whom live in Olney; Phil Ruxton, a resident of the Preserve, and Kristy Schuman-Inman, a resident of Olney Mill. Mr. Maizel noted that they began with the concept of a traditional strip center, but evolved with their architect and engineer to more of a community center that is more people/pedestrian friendly and good circulation. Their proposal calls for using the residential property on the south end of the site for parking. The historic home on the site, Higgins Tavern, would be rehabilitated. The end of the property near the Victoria Springs sign would be a community area. There will be a berm behind the center that was part of the original plan to separate the commercial and residential development, but there will be accessibility by foot from Victoria Springs. The signage and lighting can be oriented towards the street and away from the houses.

They have had a lot of interest from several different merchants. One is an organic grocery store called Roots. This is a strong business in Howard County that likes the demographics in Montgomery County, and they plan an even bigger store than in their Clarksville store. Some of the others include a coffee shop, a video store, a restaurant, and a bank. Mr. Maizel noted that the cheapest, fastest thing he could do would be to build a typical strip shopping center. However, he has gone further by designing a cluster development. He noted as well that when they met with the residents of Victoria Springs, there were several concerns that they noted which he has tried to address. He has removed a rear entrance into Victoria Springs, and has provided a permanent easement for their development's sign. They will develop a lush landscape plan.

The following points were made during questions and answers and in discussion later in the meeting:

- The plan was approved 12 years ago for 32,000 sq. ft. of commercial space with the parking on the residential portion on the southern end of the site. They must obtain a variance from Montgomery County's Permitting Service so they can provide a loading area behind the stores not included in the original plan. In addition to the berm that was always planned to separate the commercial development on this site from the homes in Victoria Springs, they plan to put up a retaining wall in front of the berm to provide additional buffering between the loading area and the homes to address concerns that the placement of the loading area puts trucks closer to the houses. Mr. Maizel believes that the 12 year old plan is still in force, so all he needs to obtain is the variance for the loading area and building permits. The site consists of 2 acres of commercially zoned land and 1 acre of residentially zoned land. There will be 10,000 sq. ft of parking. The buildings they are proposing will involve about 29,000 sq. ft, but the total amount will depend on the tenants they end up with.

- There is a stream on the site near Emory Church Rd, but it is on the PEPCO property, not this site.

- P&P staff did notify the developer that they were recommending that this entire property be rezoned residential in the revision of the Greater Olney Master Plan that is currently under review, as an effort to focus all the commercial development in the center of town as envisioned in this 1980 Plan. Khalid Afzal is trying to determine if, in fact, the 12 year old plan for this site is still in force because he did not think it was. If it is not, P&P can defer a decision on this proposal until the staff draft of the Master Plan is out. Mr. Maizel noted that the site had been empty for a long time and that he did not think it lent itself

- Mr. Maizel has a long-term option on the property with the owners, Dave Burka.

- There was some concerns expressed about having a bank on the site because of the amount of traffic it would generate in light of the difficulties with access to the site. The project is feasible without the bank, but Mr. Maizel indicated it can be there by right. Mr. Maizel feels the bank is a use that complements the Roots. They do not know what the trip generations for the site will be yet.

- The restaurant they are proposing would be 16,000 sq. ft. The bank would be 2,000-4,200 sq. ft. The retail area would be small and the existing house is 1,000 sq. ft. Except for the historic house, all the buildings would be 1-story that is 14 ft. tall. The amount of parking proposed is in keeping with County standards.

- Mr. Maizel is talking with State Highway Administration (SHA) to come up with an access across from Emory Church Rd. Their preliminary study shows that the access will not impact the stream. There were concerns expressed about problems for cars heading north from the site. The developer felt that the full intersection at Emory Church would address that.

- There were concerns expressed about moving forward now on the basis of decisions made on data from 12 years ago.

- It was noted that the Silo Inn site was not meant to be C-1. That zoning had been grandfathered in because the Silo Inn was already there when the 1980 plan was done, so it was suggested that it should be returned to a residential zone compatible with the surrounding community. Chuck Young also suggested that residential zoning would make it easier to retain the rural entryway, so it would be better to continue to press to keep the commercial development in the center of town.

## OFFICER/COMMITTEE REPORTS

### **President's Report** – Art reported that:

- He had received a package from Jeff Kirby in connection with his application to rezone the site on Georgia Ave where he is proposing to put an elderly housing facility from R-200 to PD-9. Khalid A. noted that while he thought this might be an appropriate use for this site, he did not believe the PD-9 zone was the correct mechanism to use to achieve their goal. Also, P&P staff had asked him to delay his filing until they were further into the master plan review process, but Mr. Kirby has decided not to wait.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Roy Peck reported that the current balance is \$4,682.56 with \$250 in bills for the month.

### **Chamber of Commerce Report**

Joe Buffington reported that the Chamber's Community Night was a great success. Also, John Ferguson, their President, met with Chief Moose and the Police Department will take a more active role in keeping the substation here in Olney.

### **Land Use Report**

John Lyons reported that a proposal was raised during the master plan review process to turn Trotter's Glen Golf Course 300-acre site into a retirement community. They are proposing to rezone the property to the planned retirement community (PRC). A zoning text amendment related to this zone was passed recently that allows this zone to be used on smaller sites. This zone permits 10 units per acre, but they would only be asking for 9 units per acre. They are also looking at the rural neighborhood cluster zone developed as a part of the Sandy Spring Master Plan study. They are also trying to acquire the Gandel property to cede it to P&P, possibly. Khalid noted that this developer came to P&P: a few days before the master plan meeting they had on Land Use issues. The PRC zone is not really consistent with what P&P is envisioning for this area. Khalid noted as well that the Gandel site, which is adjacent to the Kimble property near Olney Manor Park, is one that they hope to preserve as a forest stand.

Art Brodsky noted that there is a zoning text amendment to stop exemptions for existing schools if the land is sold for non-education institutional uses. The special exception for the educational use should not go forward with the property.

### **Transportation Report**

Dave Eskenazi reported that:

- There have not been any Brookeville Bypass or Rte. 28/97 intersection meetings. He did note, however, that the Council is looking at the modified Option 7 alignment that was realigned slightly to avoid the archeological ruins of a mill found in the area.

## OLD BUSINESS

**Winchester Homes Proposal** – John Lyons reported that Winchester Homes has acquired conditional contracts on the Mid-Atlantic golf driving range on Norbeck Rd. and several other nearby properties for a total of 40 acres. They started with a plan for 440 units. They are now participating in the master plan process because they need a zoning change to accomplish this. The Norbeck Homeowners Association would like to see some redevelopment in this area, but on all 80 acres south of the ICC right-of-way. P&P staff is now proposing the RE-2/TDR-2 zone in this area which yields 2 units per acre instead of 1 unit per 2 acres. This would yield a much smaller number of units than the 440 initially proposed. John spoke with Jim Long of Winchester Homes at the Master Plan Action Group meeting and expressed SEROCA's desire to have a restriction put on the site with some kind of condition to keep this density of development south of the ICC right-of-way. Mr. Long's reaction was kind of aggressive in terms of Winchester being a large company that would be able to make this happen, regardless of how long it took. John felt that it would take a long time to resolve this matter and that it will probably be resolved by the County Council. Dave Eskenazi noted that if the ICC does go through, this land will be kind of isolated. But, having such dense development there will undo whatever relief the ICC might provide. Joe Hess noted that this and the Maizel proposal significantly impact the rural entryway into Olney that the community has been working for years to preserve.

**Greater Olney Master Plan Review** – Khalid Afzal reported that the P&P staff is continuing to refine the master plan revisions. There will be a meeting on November 13<sup>th</sup> from 4-9 pm at which the staff will set up displays of the concepts developed to that point. The public is invited to come in and view the displays and talk one-on-one with staff about their comments, concerns, and questions. The meeting will be in Yarnall Hall at Sandy Spring Friends School where the other meetings have been.

Khalid noted that the 1980 plan had been successful in many ways, but not as much with the town center. The community wants a little more than what is there now. There has been some interest in a need for a civic center for functions such as the library and the police substation. One solution proposed is to take a piece of one of the shopping centers. But, the staff does not think this is a realistic solution. What they are looking at instead, is moving Olney Elementary to the unused high school site on Bowie Mill Rd. Both sites are owned by the County already. The Bowie Mill site is still within the existing boundaries for Olney Elementary. The

existing building and site which is approximately 10 acres would provide plenty of space for all the proposed uses for a government center and for a common area for community events. The building would be opposite the Sandy Spring Bank, so would be a use that would be complementary with the Bank and would clearly mark the beginning of the commercial core of the town center area.

Dave E. noted that since the Montessori School already exists south of there, this would not constitute any kind of commercial creep further down Georgia Avenue. Steve Smet speculated that it could cost about \$50,000 to acquire a piece of a shopping center. However, Khalid noted that it would be their hope that the shopping center would donate the land, perhaps in exchange for some additional density that would necessitate the use of a parking garage or the kind of multiple-story buildings similar to the King Farm/Kentlands kind of construction. The consensus was that this was a creative solution, particularly since the land involved is already in public hands and it would only involve dealing with the County rather than a private property-owner.

A concern was raised about the use of the Library site, if it is relocated to a government center, for additional residential development. However, Khalid noted that the site was such a small acreage that it would only yield 15-20 units. It was noted that if the plans for the Olney Elementary School site includes a teen center that planners need to be sensitive to the fact that youth from the HOC development behind the school now roam through the Homeland Village development which has a high incidence of vandalism. This type of use would need to be well controlled.

**Upper Rock Creek Master Plan Study** – Art Brodsky reported that he testified at the P&P hearing on the staff draft master plan for the Upper Rock Creek area. Some of the developers or their representatives who also testified included Winchester Homes, Sammy Tota, and Steve Kaufman. The Autobon Society testified that there should be special protection area established in this area. The points made in GOCA's testimony were: (1) GOCA disagrees with the proposal to dump traffic on Georgia Avenue regardless of whether there is a ramp or not; (2) there was not enough information in the plan to support the land use recommendations since it was difficult to analyze the actual yield with septic and well (i.e., the number of lots that would perc.) vs. cluster development with sewer and water; and (3) the environmental analysis was not linked to roads and their impact.

Art also noted that the Planning Board should have more clearly defined the role of citizens on the advisory group versus the role of the P&P staff. This was more of an issue with the Upper Rock Creek study than with the Olney Master Plan study. The expectations for the Olney study were set out much better at the beginning of the process.

**Olney Days Festival 2003** – Helene Rosenheim reported that the Olney Days Festival Planning Committee has held its first planning meeting. The Festival is planned for Friday, May 16 – Sunday, May 18<sup>th</sup>. One new thing being planned is a tongue-in-cheek Mr. & Mrs. Olney Contest. The Mom's Club of Olney has agreed to organize this event that will be incorporated with the Olney Community Band Concert on Friday evening. We still need to identify a site for this since the amphitheater used last year at the Sandy Spring Friends School is not suitable for this new event. Bette Buffington has also agreed to host the Bull Roast following the Olney Days Parade. The Committee also decided to change the name of that event to the Olney Days Bar-B-Q. The next meeting will be on October 17<sup>th</sup>. Helene invited anyone interested in helping with the planning to attend or contact her.

Following a few announcements, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

**Helene Rosenheim**

Helene Rosenheim'  
Recording Secretary

**People in attendance:** Khalid Afzal, Jackie and Danny Benn, Art Brodsky, Joe Buffington, Dave Eskenazi, Jim Goldberg, Joe Hess, Terri Hogan (Gazette), Kristy Schuman Inman, Anne Kaiser, Lee Kidd, Mike Knapp, Polly Knight, John Lyons, Harvey Maizel, Karen Montgomery, Roy Peck, Alex Rosenheim, Helene Rosenheim, Phil Ruxton, Don Schmelter, Larry and Sandy Shulman, Steve Smet, Clara Smith, Lisa Stancik, Ed Weisel, Michael Weiser, and Chuck Young.