



Greater Olney Civic Association

Post Office Box 212 Olney , Maryland 20830

www.goca.org

MINUTES – March 8, 2005

The meeting was called to order by President John Lyons. Following introductions, the February 2005 minutes were approved with one correction (pg. 1, Public Comment In 12 will be should be are)and no additions. The agenda was approved with 2 additions.

OFFICERS/COMMITTEE REPORTS

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

John Lyons stated that he hopes to keep the meetings on task and on focus, and added that everyone needs to respect each others time, make their points, and move on. John noted that comments have been submitted on the ICC Draft Environmental Impact Statement; the Winchester School Special Exception Application, the draft Olney Master Plan emphasizing points GOCA made earlier. The officers have discussed several options for updating the GOCA website, and have decided to accept a proposal from Brenda Egeland for redesigning the site.

TREASURER'S REPORT

John Lyons reported for Roy Peck that the current bank account balance is \$4,487.20. Half the costs of the fireworks has been paid.

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

John Lyons reported that dues letters have gone out, and he asked delegates to act on them when they are received.

CIVIC FEDERATION REPORT

Jackie Benn reported that there was nothing discussed at the last meeting relevant to the Olney area specifically.

CORRESPONDENCE REPORT

Jay Feinberg noted that Susan Phillips sent an email requesting a contact name for Camelback to talk to them about plans at St. Peter's Catholic Church to do some clean-up in the area.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

Initial Development Plans for the Freeman Shopping Centers – John Lyons began by thanking Mike Reilly, the Freeman Retail Vice President for the Freeman Shopping Centers, for putting in the connection between the shopping centers. Mike indicated that Khalid Afzal had asked them to put together a concept plan for their centers because they did not really know how the mixed-use town center zone would work. He also noted that this is the second master plan he has been involved with. There are 23 planning areas and every 15-20 years the master plans are reviewed. The review is not undertaken from a thrust by developers. The Park & Planning puts groups together to discuss the issues such as housing, transportation, schools, recreation, environment, etc. The solutions for addressing the issues identified may lead to the creation of new zones. The Planning Board sends their recommendations to the County Council where the plan is enacted through an open process.

They began talking with Khalid about a year ago about the town center area. It consists of about 100 acres with 800,000 sq. ft. of commercial space. The objectives of the 1980 Plan are still the objectives today. Some aspects of the 1980 Plan have not happened because of the need for assemblages of small properties. With their purchase of the two shopping centers, they now control about 30 acres which is about 1/3 of the town center area. Some of the things needed are a hardware store, clothing store, and a junior department store, and TJ Maxx does some of that, but there are still retail needs. They looked at the old plan and analyzed future growth, and then they looked for a zone. But, none of the existing zones were appropriate. The closest was a mixed-use zone for a regional use. They needed something with more flexibility. The C-2 zone was also not right. The Council had a good discussion of the Plan earlier that day .He felt that the theoretical density resulting from the application of the mixed-use town center zone (MXTC) in the plan does not represent an aggressive rate of growth, even if all 100 acres were developed with the optional method, but it is not likely that the maximum density in the town center will ever be achieved.

They do not have a plan. If the master plan were not being reviewed, they would not be out looking for a zoning change. However, they are delighted with this opportunity. Theirs is an open organization based in Olney. Their owner, Josh Freeman, lives in Laytonsville, and is around for the long term. Josh is very supportive of the town center advisory committee. The scope

of what will be happening in the town center is hard to do without community input. Some of that was done with the redevelopment of the Olney Village Center. What they have put together so far is just a concept plan. It is just illustrative of what could be done. They do not have a site plan, and they cannot do anything for some time because of several long-term leases with the movie theatre (7 years), the craft store (6 years). In addition, they do not own the land the Olney Shopping Center is on, but have a ground lease until 2078. This is an aspect they also need to resolve. In addition, they have just invested \$17 million to redevelop the Olney Village Center, so it is difficult to imagine any further redevelopment within the next ten years. They tried a design that incorporated the need for a town commons, the Library, the police satellite office and other facilities and uses identified by the Olney Community Center task force several years ago. Their concept plan includes residential space, retail space, a pedestrian commons, and civic space. It includes 600 parking spaces, at grade; and 2,000 in a parking structure. The zone allows for building heights up to 56' at the edges, and 70' in the interior.

Mike noted that, even if they started as soon as the Plan is finalized, it will take at least 3 years to redevelop the lower center, in large part because the process is driven by tenants and they have not even begun to look for tenants. So, it will be 3-5 years before the community will see any real change. Several companies, such as Borders, Whole Foods, Harris and Teeter's have contacted them expressing an interest in center. They expect most of the retail will be on the first floor of their buildings, but some may be on the second floor. For example, a store like Dick's Sports wants 40,000 – 60,000 sq. ft and they expect their stores to cover 20,000-30,000 sq. ft. So, this store might be on 2 stories. The MXTC zone now calls for 20 residential units per acre. The Olney Town Shopping Center is 12 acres so, at maximum build-out would yield 240 units. The Olney Village Center is 18 acres and could yield 360 units. Congressional Village on Rockville Pike would be a good example of what this multi-story construction would look like. Their center would likely be high-end specialty retail.

Some Lessons Learned from Wheaton's Redevelopment –John introduced Natalie Cantor, Director, Mid-County Regional Services Center. Ms. Cantor noted how delighted she was to learn that Olney would get the true town center it needs as a result of the current master plan changes, and that there could be a permanent Regional Services Center Satellite Office. Her service area is centered around Georgia Avenue from the Beltway to the Howard County line. Several years ago, she effectively became the city manager for Wheaton and has been involved in its redevelopment for the past 3 years. So, she has had some experience with maintenance that she wants to share with the Olney community.

A question people need to think about as they design the town center is who is going to maintain it after its created. The 90-100 acres in the town center is significantly larger than the Wheaton Central Business District (CBD) which is 69 acres. About 10 years ago the County realized that it had to begin to provide enhanced services such as maintenance, security, and promotion. So the central business district was created and a parking district was created to provide the funding. Olney will never be an urban area in the sense that Wheaton is, but it will have more urbanized aspects and people will need to think about ways to begin providing the enhanced services, not just in Olney, but in other areas as well. Initially there were standards for different areas. The Department of Housing and Community Areas developed a streetscape effects such as paving, lighting, street furniture, and landscaping. But, they made some serious mistakes:

- First, when they were making the decision about what to put in, they did not have the people at the table who would be doing the maintenance.
- They ordered pavers from a single-source manufacturer and picked a color that was just a little different than one of their standard colors. So, now when they need to replace 1 or 2 pavers, they cannot because they have to wait until they have a critical mass of numbers of pavers before the company will make the non-standard pavers. It is a special order rather than an off-the-shelf order.
- They selected a lovely globe light fixture for use throughout the CBD. But, now 50% of them are out because the company went out of business, so they cannot be replaced.
- They had high standards for the arterial roads like University Blvd. But they did not consider the secondary streets, so they are trying to do that now. The designs for the secondary roads do not need to be as intensive as the arterials, but should be complimentary.

Ms. Cantor added that the County is looking at emerging communities, such as Olney, with the idea of creating some special district to meet the needs of these areas as they grow.

The following are some of the points made in discussing these two presentations

- It was suggested that Freeman Retail will likely take care of the maintenance of their center.
- The wide and design of Rtes. 97 & 108 impedes pedestrian accessibility.
- There is concern that even 56' will tower over the Environ units adjacent to the centers and it was hoped that the Freeman staff will work with the community as they develop their plans.
- The Draft Master Plan documents and working documents used by the County Council as they reviewed the plan are available on the County's website, www.montgomerycountymd.gov and the Olney Coalition website, www.olneycoalition.com has versions of the concept plan.
- Questions regarding the Freeman concept plan and the redevelopment of their centers can be emailed to mreilly@cfma.com.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

- John Lyons thanked Stephen Smet for the great job he did during the past two years.
- Stephen Smet thanked Helene Rosenheim for her many years of service as GOCA Recording Secretary
- Barbara Falcigno noted that there will be a Mansionization Conference on April 2nd in Washington Grove that will be addressing the phenomenon of going into established neighborhoods and substantially enlarging existing homes.
- GOCA will be getting involved with other issues now that the master plan process is nearly complete such as crime and safety.
- Muncaster Mill will be closing between Rte. 28 and Emory Ln for 8-10 weeks beginning the day after schools close in June to raise the level of the road in an area where it floods regularly.

OLD BUSINESS

Update on the Draft Olney Master Plan – John Lyons reported that the County Council has completed its work on the Mixed-Use Town Center Zone and the recommendations for the Town Center portion of the master plan. The new zone will not just be applied to Olney, but will be used in areas such as Damascus and Clarksburg. The zone calls for 20 residential units per acre which is up from the Park and Planning (P&P) recommendation of 15 units per acre. Retail spaces have a maximum of 40,000 sq. ft. per level. John noted that Mike had mentioned that Home Depot has a smaller, local store that they have developed and would like to put in Olney. Building height limits under the standard development scheme is 42', but is 70' in the interior of a site under the Optional development plan. There is no specific percentage for the mix of uses. The public use spaces can be both indoors and outdoors. Once the master plan is completed, staff will go back to identify any CIP projects that need to be introduced to implement the plan. The Council has recommended that an advisory committee be formed with representatives from various segments of the community to develop a more detailed vision and some design standards for the town center and to work with future developers to ensure that their plans are consistent with the vision. Once the decisions were made on the MXTC zone and the town center, Ms. Praisner wanted the Council to go back and reconsider earlier decisions on sites outside of the town center such as the Bowie Mill and Golden Bear sites in terms of the densities of the sites versus overall goals for the whole plan and the goal of rings of decreasing density as you move away from the town center area. However, the Council chose to go with their earlier decisions. Once the final densities were decided on, Glen Oland, a Council staff member realized that the Plan was now out of balance with respect to the Average Congestion Index. To keep the plan in balance, a cap was placed at 15,235 residential units. The final theoretical density if the entire 100 acres of the town center were developed in the optional method will be approximately 250 units. Once the cap is reached, a traffic study will need to be done to confirm that the infrastructure exists to support the additional units.

Winchester School Special Exception – John Lyons reported that the owner of the Winchester School has been talking about building an additional school on the 2 acre site on Georgia Avenue just north of Rock Hill Road. The abutting property owners and GOCA have opposed the application because the school being proposed is much too large for the site and would present serious traffic concerns. P&P has recommended denial of the application. The applicant has put together another plan that is less intense, but still seems to be too large for the site. P&P also recommends denial of this proposal as well. There will be a hearing on the second plan before the Board of Appeals on March 11th at 9:30 am. Emmitt Dodge, one of the adjacent property owners announced that he has a website, www.stopwinchesterschool.org, with information about the proposal. He has written to the Board of Appeals objecting to the hearing since the Planning Board has recommended denial of this second plan as well as the original one. Khalid Afzal noted that the Planning Board's recommendation is just advisory to the Board of Appeals which actually makes the decision on the application. In addition to the Special Exception Application, the P&P staff makes a determination about the adequacy of the Forest Conservation Plan for the proposal. P&P has also denied approval of that Plan, so even if the Special Exception is approved, they will need to come back to P&P to get a modified forest conservation plan approved. Emmitt indicated that he had heard their attorneys talking about just paying a fine or doing reforestation offsite for the amount they cannot do on site. John noted that it would be hard for GOCA to testify because as a group, we need to be represented by an attorney and we do not have anyone available to do that. But, we will submit written testimony restating our opposition. It was noted that presentations to the Board of Appeals need to provide evidence that makes it impossible for the Board to find in favor of the applicant. Not liking a proposal is not good enough. P&P's recommendation walks through the elements that the applicant must meet.

2004 GOCA Awards Ceremony – Ron Berger reported that the 2004 GOCA Awards Ceremony had been held on the previous Sunday. There was an excellent turnout. The presentations went well, but did go a little longer than normal. He thanked the GOCA officers who had helped with the set up and the clean up. Jackie Benn thanked Ron and Helene for all their work in putting the ceremony together.

Olney Days 2005 – Helene Rosenheim noted that Olney Days will take place from May 20th – May 22nd. The Schedule of Events includes The Olney Community Band Concert and Mr. & Ms. Olney Contest on Friday at 7:00 pm, Joe's Ride Saturday morning starting at 7:30 am, 8:30 am, and 9:30 am. The Fun Fair at Olney Manor Park begins at 4:00 pm. It includes a puppet show sponsored by the Friends of the Olney Library and the Library staff, carnival games, fire engine rides, etc by the Sandy Spring Vol. Fire Dept., the Homerun Derby, and the Ice Cream Eating Contest. This year we are adding a Lacross Shot Out and Watermelon Eating and Watermelon Seed Spitting Contest. And, the evening will end with firework. Sunday begins with the Fish 4 the Cure Tournament. Fletcher Service Center will then hold their Car and Truck Show from 10 am -1 pm which is followed by the Parade at 2 and the Picnic at the Buffington RE/MAX Bldg. from 3:30 – 7:30 pm. We will be looking for volunteers shortly.

Following a few announcements, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Danny Benn

Danny Benn
Recording Secretary

People in attendance: Khalid Afzal, Jason Alexander, Ken Barnhart, Jackie and Danny Benn, Ron Berger, Emmett Black, Natalie Cantor, Chris Chirigos, Bill Cottrell, Ryan Deputy, Brenda Egeland, Alex Evans, Barbara Falcigno, Jay Feinberg, Arnold Gordon, Robert Hausman, Terri Hogan (Gazette), Zack Hopkins, John Lyons, Roy Peck, Susan Petrocci, Mike Reilly, Helene Rosenheim, Don Schmelter, Robin Shea, Bob Sigillito, Stephen Smet, Bob Twonkowski, Patrick Vaughn, Susan Wyman, and Chris Zervas