



GREATER OLNEY CIVIC ASSOCIATION, INC.

2023-7-11 Representatives Meeting

- Minutes –

The 2023-7-11 Representatives Meeting of the Greater Olney Civic Association (GOCA) was held online via Zoom and called to order at 7:30PM EST by President Helene Rosenheim, with Recording Secretary John Seng present. A quorum was present. All participants were introduced. Voting members denoted (*) as indicated. Those attending:

Officers

- Helene Rosenheim, President (Highlands of Olney)
- Curtis Chappell, First Vice President (Olney Square)
- Matt Quinn, Second Vice President (Cherrywood)
- Jeff Duce, Treasurer (Norbeck Grove)
- Jamie Goad, Corresponding Secretary (Norbeck Meadows)
- John Seng, Recording Secretary (Transportation Committee) (Brooke Manor Estates)

Members

- Judy Broseker (Brookeville Knolls)*
- Alden English, South East Rural Olney Civic Assn. (SEROCA)*
- Barbara Falcigno (Olney Oaks)*
- Lee Kidd (Cherrywood)*

- Diana Littlefield (Olney Acres)*
- Juris Mohseni (Village of James Creek)*
- Dave Rada (Brooke Manor Estates)
- Laura Sherman (Briars Acres)*
- Jim Smith (Oatland Farm)*
- Kelly Wasik (Tanterra)*
- Ed Weisel (Norbeck Meadows)*
- Louis Wilen (Cherrywood)*

Guests

- Will Jawando, Montgomery County Councilmember At-Large
- Judy Hruz, *Greater Olney News*
- Aaron Kraut (Chief of Staff, Montgomery County Councilmember Dawn Luedtke, District 7)
- Marisa Van Saanen (Senior Legislative Aide, Montgomery County Councilmember At-Large Will Jawando)

Approval of Agenda for July 11, 2023 Meeting

. The agenda was approved with one change that Helene would present for Irina Norell on the social event.

Approval of Minutes from June 13, 2023 Meeting

The minutes will be amended to indicate community voting members attending. The minutes were approved as amended.

Announcements

Helene discussed conducting a volunteer recruitment event at the Lone Oak Farm Brewing Company, scheduled for August 30. Details are still being worked out. GOCA will invite HOA presidents and announce via the *Greater Olney News*. Goal is to involve more of the public in community activities and expose them to opportunities to be engaged in and give back to the community. GOCA will continue to work on the details and share information as soon as possible.

Helene opened up the subject of reviewing what time the GOCA monthly meetings should begin in the future. Discussed proposal to start meetings at 7pm instead of 7:30. Curtis Chappell added that part of the intent is to resume in-person meetings, with a 7pm hybrid (in-person/virtual) starting time. Edward Weisel commented on the possible difficulty of a 7pm start for people who work in downtown DC. Helene indicated no decision would be made tonight and possibly sending a notice out to members.

Helene also raised the question of whether member HOAs/communities could host a GOCA meeting in the future, within our community. It's a consideration for the future.

Treasurer's Report Jeff Duce, Treasurer

GOCA is paid up with all the dues. No significant activity on the Treasurers' side. Also, Jeff shared that he's stepping down from the Treasurer's position at the end of his term.

Matt Quinn added that new officers would start in March. Jeff would like to meet with the new person soon.

Helene also reported that Irina Norell will not be able to continue as a GOCA officer following the end of her term.

Transportation Committee Report, John Seng

The GOCA Transportation Committee followed-up on two community member road safety requests. We referred the requests to Committee member Kathleen Donodeo to leverage her professional transportation experience. Kathleen followed up accordingly.

- Request for speed calming on Gelding Lane between Route 108 and Bowie Mill Road. We replied to the inquiring party recommending how to proceed with a continued request for a study and to keep GOCA apprised for further support.
- Request to install traffic light at Route 108 and Headwaters Drive. Reached out to MDDOT, and received a response directing GOCA to speak with two team members, including a new community relations contact: Mr. Joseph Moges, our Assistant District Engineer – Traffic for Montgomery County and Ms. Tiffany Boulware, our new Community Relations Manager for Montgomery County.
- Request by Transportation Committee member Mindy Badin for repainting of roadway safety markings near the Shady Grove Metro station after exiting the ICC. Awaiting a response from WMATA.

Helene raised the matter of restriping the hash marks on Route 108, indicating that Mindy Badin follow-up with MDOT, who then completed that work. Some of the storm drains may still require cleaning.

Helene also mentioned that we had written to Montgomery County Park and Planning Commission in support of the Pedestrian Master Plan proposal. The Master Plan is now before the County Council. Helene will send a follow-up letter of support to County Council. John Seng asked Aaron Kraut whether there was any opposition to the Master Plan from any County Council members. Aaron replied that with a plan of this size there will be some debate and some changes, and that questions will arise related to implementation.

Diana Littlefield reported that trees have been cut down near properties next to Magruder High School on Bowie Mill on side of Sequoia out to Muncaster Mill. Why were these trees cut down when they were just planted not long ago in following the site plan? Aaron Kraut indicated that he would follow-up with the authorities.

Louis Wilen received a letter from Sen. Craig Zucker announcing \$1 million in funding for the Olney Theater Center from the State, but that Lieutenant Governor Aruna Miller had subsequently tweeted that the funding was \$11 million. Matt replied that he would check with Sen. Zucker.

Laura Sherman communicated her community's concerns for trees and how to determine which government entity is responsible for tree maintenance. Jim Smith recommended the County resource MC Atlas (<https://mcatlas.org/viewer/>). Aaron Kraut offered to help as well.

Olney Chamber of Commerce Report, Matt Quinn

Matt Quinn (also an Olney Chamber of Commerce board member) reported that National Night Out (NNO) is scheduled for August 1, 5pm. NNO Olney was ranked 18th in the world. Chamber Executive Director Terri Hogan and team are working hard to improve that ranking as well as support the Officer Noah Leotta Police substation reconstruction. Also, the Salt and Vine restaurant opened with a ribbon cutting in early June. The Olney Chamber of Commerce is thriving with more than 300 members.

Guest Speaker - Montgomery County Councilmember At-Large Will Jawando, speaking on behalf of the STEP Act.

Prior to Mr. Jawando's appearance, Louis Wilen asked Senior Legislative Aide (to Mr. Jawando) Marisa Van Saanen about the Montgomery County Office of the Internal Audit and why their last audit occurred in October 2022, noting that the office usually releases audits at more frequent intervals than the elapsed nine months. Marissa requested for Louis to send her an email regarding the matter and that she would get in touch. Aaron Kraut also volunteered to help.

Mr. Jawando arrived and was introduced by Helene. His stated goals were to share why he introduced the Safety and Traffic Equity in Policing (STEP) Act. He said the goal is twofold:

1. Reduce disparities in low level traffic enforcement stops. Montgomery County Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) reported at his request that showed "deep and persistent and, actually in some cases, growing racial disparities in being pulled over on roadways." Some of the highest disparities were for these low level offenses such as a tail light out, expired registration on license plate, air freshener in a rear view mirror, tinted windows, head lamp that's out and these kinds of things that under the bill would become secondary offenses. Drivers could not be pulled over for these reasons alone. He said that for a highly diverse, large community of 1.1

million in Montgomery County, we experience things differently, particularly in law enforcement.

2. Ensure that law enforcement officers can focus more on urgent law enforcement needs. Montgomery County had double as many pedestrian and roadway fatalities as homicides. He believes the County needs more enforcement for things like speeding, driving under the influence and reckless driving. He mentioned opportunity lost when focusing on low level stops. For many members of community, the stops for many members produce trauma, danger, fear and mistrust of law enforcement.

He outlined that the STEP Act if passed

- Would not allow officers to pull drivers over for low-level infractions. Drivers could still be cited for more serious violations.
- Provides for more robust data collection to gain more clarity.
- Would limit consent searches that are now disproportionately experienced by different populations.
- Would prohibit jaywalking from being a primary offense.

He cited two organizations supporting the bill: Washington Area Bicyclists Association and the National Vision Zero Network for Road Safety. He named six other municipalities across the US that have implemented similar legislation including some that experienced a reduction in traffic fatalities and racial disparities.

Helene introduced Curtis Chappell to moderate and share questions for Mr. Jawando submitted by GOCA members.

1. What about children who are not properly restrained in vehicles, and windows that are too dark?
 - a. Mr. Jawando feels that seat belt laws should be enforced. If an officer observes an unrestrained child, then the vehicle should be pulled over.
 - b. On tinted windows, Mr. Jawando didn't necessarily correlate between overly tinted windows and criminal behavior. He doesn't see illegally tinted windows as a road safety factor. He appreciated that window tinting may be related to distracted driving. Is open to potential amendments.
2. Is there ever a time that disparity statistics could line up with the County's population? When do we look past the numbers?
 - a. Mr. Jawando said that one may believe that African American and Latino drivers hang items from rear view mirrors more so than other populations, or that there's some other reasons they're being pulled over more than other drivers. Why are there disparities for a tail light? The goal instead is to remove the racial disparities. Try and address these issues from multiple angles. Unfortunately, there are conscious and unconscious biases at play which can create serious trauma and stressful situations.

3. What is the time frame and how to adjust for the future?
 - a. Bill would require an annual review by the Council, the County Executive and the Police. If something's not working, we would adjust. It may not pass – we'll see what will happen.
 - b. Mr. Jawando said that he's always open to compromise. Doesn't think there's any opposition from Council colleagues on data collection.
 - c. (Note to John: I think it is the County Attorney who is looking at this) The Attorney General will be advising on the legality of Montgomery County government contradicting State law with regard to allowable road stops.

Matt Quinn spoke to his opinion of the integrity of the Montgomery County Police Department, and cited Chief Marcus Jones as visibly strong related to MCPD integrity. He questioned Mr. Jawando whether Chief Jones had provided a report on racial disparities of people pulled over. Mr. Jawando replied that the OLO report analyzed the MCPD data. He feels "we ask law enforcement to do too much." Wants the department to collect better data and improve performance. Is not to say that the vast majority or even a large number of police officers are biased against certain people. But one must ask the questions. Goal is to build community trust. Matt added that he would like Montgomery County to become a model for the rest of the country for what should be done. Also has a particular concern for pedestrian safety. How to resolve that? But allowing people to drive without headlights or taillights, he would not support. Happy to hear that Mr. Jawando is willing to compromise.

Curtis referred to recent Baltimore block party violence and unsafe roadway behavior. But considering continuous behavior, a pattern over time, how do we ensure that we don't miss warning signs?

Mr. Jawando said that he's not aware that the low level stops are indicative of criminal activity, plus the negative reaction in the community from disparities. Cited the positive example of Fayetteville, North Carolina.

Laura Sherman asked how people would know that their headlights or taillights are out, but agreed that tail lights or head lights out should not be an offense for which someone could be primarily stopped. She described being terrified when she was been pulled over. She asked whether there were automated mechanisms to detect vehicle lights that are out. Mr. Jawando replied that other government or municipal employees could follow up to send the vehicle owner a notice of deficiency based on a license tag. At some point, he said there may be technologies that can detect tail lights out. The low level issues can still be secondary citations to the more serious primary reasons.

Helene thanked Mr. Jawando for his attendance.

New Business

The Olney Art Association will be celebrating its 50th anniversary next year and has asked for GOCA's support.

Adjournment

Helen Rosenheim adjourned the meeting at 9:03pm.

Calendar Items

No meeting in August. Next General Membership Meeting – Tuesday, September 12, 2023, at 7:30 PM

Please send suggested agenda items for future GOCA meetings to goca.president@goca.org for review at monthly Officers' meetings.