



GREATER OLNEY CIVIC ASSOCIATION, INC.

2023-10-10 Representatives Meeting

- Minutes -

The 2023-10-10 Representatives Meeting of the Greater Olney Civic Association (GOCA) was held in-person at Cadence at Olney and online via Zoom Web Teleconference. President Helene Rosenheim called the meeting to order at 7:40PM EST. Recording Secretary John Seng was absent, but GOCA officers shared their notes and video recording of the meeting to enable him to compile the minutes.

A quorum was present. All participants were introduced. Voting members denoted (*) as indicated. Those attending:

Officers

- Helene Rosenheim, President (Highlands of Olney)
- Irina Norell, Executive Vice President (Norbeck Meadows)
- Curtis Chappell, First Vice President (Olney Square)
- Matt Quinn, Second Vice President (Cherrywood)
- Jeff Duce, Treasurer (Norbeck Grove)
- Jamie Goad, Corresponding Secretary (Norbeck Meadows)

Members

- Mindy Badin (GOCA Transportation Committee) (Olney Mill)
- Mike Dickerson (Olney Oaks)*
- Alden English, South East Rural Olney Civic Assn. (SEROCA)*
- Brandy Heckman-Stoddard (Lake Hollowell)
- Lee Kidd (Cherrywood)*

- Joe Krempasky (Brookeville Knolls HOA)*
- Diana Littlefield (Olney Acres Civic Assn.)*
- Juris Mohseni (Village of James Creek)*
- Dave Rada (Brooke Manor Estates)
- Jim Smith (Oatland Farm HOA)*
- Carol Sullivan (Cherrywood)
- Kelly Wasik (Tanterra)*
- Av Wofsey (Norbeck Hills HOA)
- Robert Zimmerman (Brooke Manor Estates)*

Guests

- Tiffany Boulware, Community Relations, MDOT State Highway Administration
- Jay Desai
- Lauren Hockaday
- Judy Hruz, *Greater Olney News*
- Aaron Kraut (Chief of Staff, Montgomery County Councilmember Dawn Luedtke, District 7)
- Yasmin Sheikh
- Capt. David Smith, Montgomery County Police Department, District 4 Commander

Approval of Agenda for October 10, 2023 Meeting

The agenda was approved, excepting a change in the order of guest presentations, with Capt. Smith instead speaking first due to his schedule, and Ms. Boulware following.

Update from Montgomery County Police District 4 Commander, Capt. David Smith

Captain Smith's presentation opened with a discussion of panhandling at the Route 97/108 intersection with MDOT State Highway Administration (SHA) Community Relations Manager Tiffany Boulware commenting.

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Capt. Smith noted panhandling is not a crime, but that aggressive panhandling is a crime. People should call the non-emergency police number (301-279-8000) if they see aggressive behavior.

Ms. Boulware will check with SHA District 3 engineers about State policy on signage to discourage panhandling, and will reply to GOCA.

Capt. Smith next mentioned that the Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD) is working with the Olney Chamber of Commerce to address concerns about increased crime. He shared news that 50% of overall arrests involve youth. He also talked about the "DCAT" (District Community Action Team) which addresses special problems relating to drug use, noting that Police have recovered thousands of fentanyl pills.

He also talked about MCPD recruitment efforts, commenting that MCPD is currently understaffed – he described the situation as a "crisis" – and are forced adjust resources, be more creative and improve use of technology. He noted that they are offering \$20,000 signing bonuses for officers and a \$5,000 signing bonus for dispatcher positions.

He noted a new pilot program using drones to surveil situations more quickly, which facilitates how police address situations. Capt. Smith cited an example of a case where Police had received a report of someone holding a weapon, but with the view from their drone, Police determined it was not a weapon. The proper identification completely altered how they approached the situation in a de-escalated way.

Robert Zimmerman asked about traffic safety and enforcement. Capt. Smith spoke about a Central Traffic Team, that uses a data-driven approach, including crash statistics. MCPD needs to be fluid in moving resources and they will shift as much as possible, following a triage that favors life safety.

Another participant asked about the root causes of the shortfall in police headcount. Capt. Smith discussed that short-staffed police departments are a nationwide trend, a follow-on to the impact of the George Floyd killing in Minneapolis. A primary concern of candidates is work-life balance. It's important for MCPD to maintain community trust. When people see bad acts by police officers, it can go globally in a matter of hours. They will continue to put out solid information about MCPD to recruit the best personnel. MCPD is trying to recruit people with a heart for service.

Av Wofsey complained about many abandoned automobiles on Hines Road, but when his community places calls, the mailboxes are full. Capt. Smith shared follow-up contact information and that anyone concerned can always call the non-emergency line, 301-279-8000.

State Highway Administration District 3 Update, Tiffany Boulware, Community Relations Manager, Montgomery County, District 3

Ms. Boulware outlined her general responsibilities as the MDOT State Highway Administration liaison for Montgomery County communities. She addresses and follows-up to concerns about issues ranging from crosswalks requiring repainting to signs that have fallen down to requests for timing changes in traffic lights, grass-cutting, potholes and much more.

Update on MD 97/108 – mostly done, but there will be a forthcoming paving project from spring/summer 2024 from Golf View Drive to Olney Mill Road.

Helene asked about a way to say thanks for the road resurfacing, and Tiffany suggested that we could send an email.

Mindy Badin asked about signs that are covered with vegetation and whether there is an ongoing effort to manage the vegetation. Tiffany responded that the responsible SHA office covers a lot of land. Keeping SHA informed is important. She cited that Aaron Kraut contacts her with requests.

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Tiffany requested that items be sent to GOCA and then forwarded to her, so that there's one point of contact.

Mindy Badin asked who is responsible for roads around Shady Grove Metro Station, mentioning that it's impossible to know where the lanes are, causing a clear risk to safety. The County says Metro, Metro says the County. Aaron Kraut indicated that it is a Metro road. Tiffany will find out further information.

Av Wofsey commented that Georgia Avenue southbound experiences traffic back-ups waiting to turn right and into Dunkin Donuts. Tiffany will check on the jurisdiction. Curtis suggested that GOCA Transportation Committee check into and follow-up.

Dave Rada asked whether Tiffany was aware of a proposal to expand the left turn lane from Georgia Avenue northbound side onto Emory Lane, from a single lane turn to a double-lane. Tiffany was not aware of the proposal.

Helene suggested assembling a list of intersections and issue-spots – and send those all to Tiffany.

Mindy asked whether a similar conversation at this level could take place with the Montgomery County Department of Transportation. Tiffany does know the individuals. She's willing to connect the County and State. GOCA Transportation Committee will work with Tiffany to coordinate.

Approval of Minutes from September 12, 2023 Meeting

The minutes were approved as presented.

Announcements

None.

Treasurer's Report, Jeff Duce, Treasurer

GOCA rented the banner space twice this month. Also, Jeff reminded everyone that an upcoming Treasurer position vacancy will need to be filled.

Transportation Committee Report, Mindy Badin

Montgomery County Sidewalk Repair in Olney and Hazard to Schoolchildren Pedestrians

Mindy Badin reviewed a serious pedestrian safety concern submitted to GOCA online that related to Hines Road sidewalk closure and repair. After being forwarded the submission, the next day, Mindy, together with fellow Transportation Committee members Kathleen Donodeo and John Seng, visited the Hines Road at Sandy Knoll Drive intersection, where a crossing guard was on duty.

They learned that the construction on Hines Road originally scheduled for work in the summer had been pushed back to begin instead approximately one week after school started, ripping up sidewalks. The closed sidewalks created a very dangerous situation for the schoolchildren who walk down Hines Road to reach Cashell Elementary School.

The Committee members learned from residents who made multiple phone calls to the police unit that manages the crossing guards and heard that they couldn't get any help for several days. The crossing guard they met had not received advance notice of the sidewalks closure and construction. Only after Councilmember Dawn Luedtke's office (Aaron Kraut) got involved was something finally done

Mindy and other area residents are trying to learn why families received no notice. The Montgomery County traffic department said they sent a postcard to the Cashell school. Either the school did not receive the notice or they did, but did not notify parents.

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The Committee is trying to find out where the failures were and work with authorities to prevent this kind of hazard. When Montgomery County does road work, there is something called a maintenance of traffic plan where they're supposed to have a plan to route the traffic around. There's also supposed to be a plan for pedestrians.

Safe Streets Act of 2023 (Bill 11-23)

Mindy also reported that The Safe Streets Act, sponsored by Council President Evan Glass and co-sponsored by District 7 Councilmember Luedtke, as well as other Councilmembers, was passed into law, following the unanimous support of the County Council. Mindy provided testimony in support of the bill several months ago.

Project: Local Roads Repair Contact Portal

The Transportation Committee has conceived of an Olney road repair request portal to build on the GOCA website. In the near future, Olney residents could visit this "Olney Roads Portal" when they see, for example: road signs covered by vegetation, signs knocked down, potholes, roadkill, want to petition for speed humps and more. Olney residents could visit this portal for reporting guidance. The site will clearly delineate the unique processes for County roads versus State roads. Please stand by for the Committee's progress.

Olney Chamber of Commerce, Matt Quinn (also an officer of the Olney Chamber of Commerce)

Matt reported that the Chamber is working on reviewing recently introduced legislation, Montgomery County Bill 35-23 that, if passed, will change the way tipped workers get paid.

The legislation will be very impactful in the way restaurants get paid as well. Matt has spoken with lots of restaurants in Olney, and they've got employees who make 35-40 dollars an hour. If the bill is approved, then those restaurants will be paying those workers approximately 11 dollars an hour. The bill will be phased in over two years. But the result is that they will be paying 11 dollars an hour more to their tipped workers and the impact could be fewer workers. A lot of the restaurants are talking about possibly installing a QR code or tablet system on the table, and then have employees both bring the food out and bring the food in. But customers would do all of their ordering from some kind of a device, and not through wait staff.

Matt continued that it's also possible that the costs to go up because the restaurant loses profits as well. The Chamber doesn't understand what problem this is fixing? What's the biggest concern? Where is the cry for any kind of change for the tipped workers? They don't hear it.

Aaron Kraut reported that the bill will have a public hearing. He indicated that it is always helpful to send in written testimony. Matt further shared that the Bill is sponsored by Councilmember Jawando and co-sponsored by Councilmember Mink.

President's Report – Helene Rosenheim, President

Regarding the STEP Act that was introduced in the County Council earlier in 2023, the Council received a decision from the State's attorney that most of the Act is not legal. The remaining elements of the bill relate to data collection and voluntary searching of vehicles. Most of the parts that concerned GOCA have been removed. GOCA had already taken the position of opposing the bill.

The next GOCA meeting is scheduled for November 14, 2023.

Adjournment

Helen Rosenheim adjourned the meeting at 8:57pm.