



GREATER OLNEY CIVIC ASSOCIATION, INC.

2023-12-12 Representatives Meeting

- Minutes -

The 2023-12-12 Representatives Meeting of the Greater Olney Civic Association (GOCA) was held online via Zoom Web Teleconference. President Helene Rosenheim called the meeting to order at 7:30pm EST, with recording Secretary John Seng present online.

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

Officers

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

Members

- Mindy Badin (GOCA Transportation Committee) (Olney Mill)
- Maria Bender (Brookeville Knolls)*
- Barbara Falcigno (Olney Oaks)*
- Paul Jarosinski (Cherrywood)*
- Lee Kidd (Cherrywood)*
- Diana Littlefield (Olney Acres Civic Assn.)*

- Juris Mohseni (Village of James Creek)*
- Jim Smith (Oatland Farm HOA)*
- Carol Sullivan (Cherrywood)
- Edward Weisel (Norbeck Meadows Civic Assn.)*

Guests

- Matt Dowling, Brinklow
- Staff, Montgomery County Councilmember Dawn Luedtke, District 7)
- Kate and Craig Thornton (Brighton Knolls)
- John Lippincott, Brighton Knolls
- Valerie Smith, Brighton Knolls
- Kathryn "Kate" Dadourian, Founder & Director, Camp Rippling Brook
- Molly Bradtke
- Mimi Frank
- Sandra Loughlin, EPAM
- Alan Sachs
- Allison Thomson

Approval of Agenda for December 12, 2023 Meeting

No objections were made to approving the agenda as presented. Helene approved the agenda.

Approval of Minutes from November 14, 2023 Meeting

Helene requested tabling a vote to approve the minutes.

Announcements

Olney Civic Fund event: Barbara Falcigno, representing the Olney Civic Fund, reported that OCF is hosting a "Barrel Aged Beer Event, Saturday, February 3, 5pm at the Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd. The beneficiary is the

Olney Help non-profit organization. There will be music, a silent auction. They will also sell designated driver tickets. Jim Smith also showed a display ad for the event in The Greater Olney News. For advance tickets, visit <https://www.olneycivicfund.org/barrel-aged-beer.html>.

Greater Olney Awards:

Helene Rosenheim shared that GOCA is seeking nominations for the annual GOCA or Greater Olney Awards. Please visit the GOCA website for further information, including how to nominate candidates deserving of the honor. Potential honorees are individuals who make big or small but meaningful differences in Greater Olney, or right in their own communities. An awards ceremony will be scheduled sometime in March.

Camp Rippling Brook Proposal – A Resident’s Perspective, Matt Dowling, Brinklow Resident

Helene indicated GOCA’s intention to continue learning about and discussing the development plans for the proposed Camp Rippling Brook. Following the presentation from the developer Kate Dadourian at the November meeting, GOCA received a letter from Brinklow residents. In the interest of learning about all sides of the issues raised by the proposal, Brinklow resident Matt Dowling was invited to speak at the December meeting. GOCA did not intend to adopt any position at this meeting.

Matt shared that he owns property near the proposed camp site. He is also a member of the Brighton Knolls neighbor community group. In his opinion, his community hasn’t seen or heard anything in terms of business plan or a source of funding for the camp. They are generally concerned by what they estimate the cost will be of further development of the property. Adjoining area residents are concerned that “CRB” could become property developed for commercial use but if the business fails, it leaves behind empty property. They were shocked to find out that developers were actually trying to become a summer camp. They’ve never gotten confirmation regarding funding sources or any of the other business-related credentials that won’t be considered by the Planning department. But as an interested party and a stakeholder, Matt feels that area residents should at least have some confidence. Some residents are concerned also about potential for increased traffic and environmental impact.

A major concern with this property is the increased traffic going to and from the location. Also of concern are traffic and construction noise, environmental impact, well/septic sustainability and the business plan

For further details, access the Camp Rippling Brook slide presentation and Matt Dowling slide presentation here – JAMIE, PLEASE SEE ATTACHED SLIDE SETS AND LINK IF POSSIBLE TO GOCA WEB PAGE?

Q&A:

Valerie Smith (Brighton Knolls) related her security concerns around the property after hours. Barbara Falcigno asked about the nearest water and sewer lines and the proximity to current water and sewer line to this property. Unclear answers offered. She indicated that a private institutional facility has the right to back into an adjacent water, sewer line, and cited other area examples.

Jim Smith asked whether it’s known what the developer needs to do in order to start there. Was there a request to the planning board? Do they have to rezone or request anything else? Helene responded that they didn’t have to rezone. John Lippincott (Brighton Knolls) explained that the Camp developer initially tried to apply with an agricultural exception. But the County Planning staff turned them down since there was no planned agriculture. Ultimately, the Camp planners applied as a private educational institution to operate a preschool during the year.

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And have the summer camp as part of the preschool and rent the facilities for other purposes. Mr. Lippincott continued that they have no idea what those third-party rentals would entail, which concerns residents in the area.

Kate Thornton, the chair of the Brighton Knolls Neighbors thanked GOCA for inviting Kate Dadourian last month, having Matt speak this month regarding the proposal. They continue to be very concerned about the impact of this project, and gave an example of how teenagers already come into their closed neighborhood for parties in open fields. She cited the Planning Board meeting for January 18. The hearing examiner hearing is scheduled for February the 12th at this point.

The hearing in February would be for the final proposal review. They could recommend in favor of or denial of the proposal. Barbara Falcigno clarified that the hearing examiner relates to approve the zoning, not the actual plan, because it's the Planning Board that approves the plan. The hearing examiner is going to say whether or not a conditional use for a school is appropriate here. Barbara added that the noise issue isn't going to get you very far." It's the zoning, the forest, conservation, and the failure to perk that could make the strongest arguments against the approval. If they can't perk, they can't build. Barbara said it sounds like a great camp and a great preschool.

John Seng asked what the total number of residences or households in Brighton Knolls, and whether the community is 100% opposed to Camp Rippling Brook. Kate shared it's definitely the majority of the 83 households she knows who have said this is not a proposal which is compatible with Brinklow, but that there was no formal poll or study. Valerie Smith added that, early on the project, when they did the traffic survey, they had 25 percent participation in a traffic study. Jim Smith asked about the current use of the property. Kate answered that there was one small house built on undeveloped property. Kate shared that they are trying to schedule a meeting with the planning staff.

Craig Thornton added about the relatively crash-free experience in the last several years on New Hampshire Avenue in the relevant area. He is very concerned about the effect of 350 commuters each day on potential crashes. Barbara Falcigno gave an example of the Trotters Glen golf course, and related traffic studies. Her opinion is that they have "no basis in reality." The planning staff will look at the traffic and projections and just stick to their process. Barbara offered that the new school could hire a police or traffic control officer at key times for the school, and reiterated that traffic is not the strongest argument vs. creating the Camp at the site.

Helene wrapped up, indicating that when GOCA learns of a date for the community meeting, they will publish it. Kate Dadourian is expected to schedule a meeting before January 18, 2024.

Maryland State Legislative Update

Helene provided an overview of three bills being considered as the Maryland General Assembly legislative process will commence in January:

- MC 8-24 Restrictions on Use of Real Property – Limitation
<https://www.montgomerycountydelegation.com/2024/MC8-24.html>
- PC/MC 112-24 MNCPPC -People's Counsel for Land Use Planning
<https://www.montgomerycountydelegation.com/2024/PGMC112-24.html>
- MC 11-24 Speed Monitoring Systems – MD 200 – ICC
<https://www.montgomerycountydelegation.com/2024/MC11-24.html>

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On November 27th, the Montgomery County Delegation of the State legislature held a virtual meeting; and again on December 4th, an in-person hearing.

The first bill is MC-824, calling to restrict the use of real property, a limitation. Was spurred by an action the DC government has taken in Chevy Chase stemming from practices from the 1920s to maybe the 1940s in which restrictions were placed on developments by then-property owners who intended to limit certain populations, or certain types of development. Through current Montgomery County code these kind of covenants would be restricted in this new bill. The bill would establish in code that an HOA's covenants can't restrict the use of that kind of development. Bill sponsor Delegate Moon stated at the hearing that they knew that the language that the bill was written in was too broad, but it was really just a placeholder for now and that, they anticipated having work sessions to clarify the language and that the real target is HOA covenants. Helene would like to invite some people to come and talk about the bill, both opponents and supporters, at either the January or February meeting. GOCA will let Delegate Moon know our concerns about the bill's language.

Maria Bender asked that when GOCA was considering all the THRIVE issues, the understanding with Montgomery County was that if HOAs wanted to change their covenants, they could make covenants stricter but not more loose. But now, the new bill totally says something else. Helene replied with her understanding that the new bill isn't driven by THRIVE.

Paul Jarosinski shared perspective from the legislative committee of the Montgomery County Civic Federation. that this bill was written with respect to allow the implementation of THRIVE, for example, allowing quadruplexes and apartments in existing neighborhoods, regardless of what an HOA document said. And the way the bill is written "terribly broadly," they could basically invalidate any restrictions that were having any of our communities that were in place when everybody bought their house. It's not a small thing and it's only for Montgomery County. Paul didn't want to postpone review until February, requesting that GOCA should have a discussion and put it to vote. Helene indicated that her target would be January.

Helene continued that the second bill, PC MC 112-24, called for incorporating funding for a people's counsel for land use planning in Montgomery County. The bill would fund an advisory position that is available to residents, to help them level the playing field with developers that can afford to high-powered attorneys. Homeowners associations, civic associations and individuals could seek guidance through the new people's counsel regarding a development proposal. Over the last 13 years, the Montgomery County Council has not funded the position, although the position still exists in the County Executive's organizational structure.

Senator Ben Kramer introduced this bill that would include funding for this position in Park and Planning's annual budget, so the position could be filled. There are comparable positions in Prince George's County and possibly, Ann Arundel County.

Paul Jarosinski shared that he attended the recent Olney Civic Fund meeting during which was explained that Prince George's County maintains an office of the people's counsel that is funded, actually from state money. The state money goes to Maryland National Capital Park and Planning, and they put that money in for the people's counsel and the PG County Council can't stop the funding. He believes that the current Montgomery County Council is very developer-centric, because they don't want the individual people to know how to fight the developers. So Kramer is doing this on behalf of the residents after finding out that Prince George's County is funded by the state.

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(Later in the meeting) Paul shared that the bill for the office of the people's counsel is going to have a hearing as soon as January, and that the bill is currently being opposed by the Montgomery County Council and the Planning Board. He urged everybody who's involved to contact their delegates and members of the Economic Development Committee of the Maryland General Assembly to support this bill, PC/MC 112-24.

Paul offered a motion that GOCA supports passage of bill, PC/MC 112-24. Barbara Falcigno seconded the motion. And requested a vote to be put on the agenda.

The third bill reviewed by Helene was MC 11-24 which proposes speed cameras on the MD 200 Intercounty Connector. The bill is very similar to the bill that Mr. Kramer introduced in 2023 that failed. Mr. Kramer has worked to address problematic issues for the Maryland Transit Authority since then. Previously, MDTA didn't have an objection to the idea of the cameras. However, the Authority wanted the revenue from the cameras and control over where to place them.

Helene understood the new bill calls for four cameras, two in each direction. There are requirements to post notices for a certain amount of time prior to activation. She described one of the biggest issues with the ICC is the noise and the danger of these motorcycle drivers that speed 100-120 miles now on this nice straight-away road. While the cameras are not a panacea, speeding is generally a concern on this road and the technology is one more step towards making the road safer. GOCA testified in support of the legislation at this hearing, with additional witnesses including Mindy Badin, John Seng, Robert Zimmerman from Brooke Manor Estates, and several other people.

John Seng communicated that a group he led including residents of Brooke Manor Estates and other communities along the ICC met with MDTA leadership (October 16, 2023).

He said that the group heard all this "chapter and verse" from their staff about everything that they were doing and numbers of law enforcement on the road. But he relayed that the community still has this problem with the excessively speeding and loud bikers. MDTA agreed to come back to us with what their plan would be. We asked them to get creative, as law enforcement managed in Ocean City to eliminate "H2oi." (Ocean City was tormented by these out of town, racing vehicle operators taking over intersections.) So the community team asked MDTA to devise the right kind of solution for the ICC to make these bikers go away. MDTA promised to get back to the coalition of homeowners. However, they suffered a setback with the tragedy of the MDTA administrator passing away. But the community coalition will plan to circle back around.

Helene summarized that GOCA will continue to support that that bill.

John added a request that for HOA and community association leadership on this call, to please pass along to their respective boards and communities the value of GOCA by keeping the public apprised to issues, and weighing in to protect and advance Greater Olney.

Reports

Treasurer's Report Jeff Duce, Treasurer

GOCA has found a treasurer to replace Jeff. Tina Craun volunteered for the position. Jeff will work with Tina now to transition the books to her for a period of 1-2 months. Also, Jeff and Helene will be sending out member renewal forms here in December. He encouraged meeting participants to contact their associations' management firms to

pay the GOCA dues sooner rather than later. Also, GOCA rented the banner space twice in the past month, to Good Counsel High School as well as to the Olney Good Shepherd Church.

Transportation Committee Report, John Seng, Chair

John thanked Helene Rosenheim and Mindy Baden for personally testifying at the Montgomery County Delegation hearing; and joined by Mark Friedman from Hallowell, as well as Brooke Manor Estates President Robert Zimmerman.

Mindy Badin reported that Montgomery County passed the Safe Streets Act several months ago. There are several provisions. First, forbidding right turns on red in urban areas. The Act would also give pedestrians ample lead time to get into the intersection once they get the signal to go. But the bill only applied to county streets. MC 7-24, a State bill would apply to State roads. So the new bill would apply to the intersection of Route 97 and 108 for example. The State bill would more or less complete the picture to make things safer for pedestrians and bicyclists. Mindy expressed hope that the bill passes.

John also shared that the GOCA Transportation Committee had created *RoadReport*, a page for addition to the GOCA website where HOA and community association members and residents could directly access a means to report whenever they notice roadway safety defects such as potholes, vegetation covering a stop sign or poorly painted crossing marks. Accessing *RoadReport* will make it easy for community members to determine whether a road is a State or County managed. The new page will provide residents a way to report issues, follow-up and get the appropriate, the commensurate party to take some type of action for their neighborhood. The next step is to publish *RoadReport* on the GOCA website which GOCA will announce and share with community members.

Olney Chamber of Commerce, Matt Quinn, Chamber Member

Helene reported that Matt could not attend the meeting, but noted that the Chamber will be participating in the Olney awards program and presenting two or three of their own awards. GOCA will expand its awards ceremony to attract broader community appeal.

President's Report Helene Rosenheim, President

GOCA Corresponding Secretary Jamie Goad gave notice of her departure, since she and her family will be moving away from Olney in January. Helene shared that GOCA was very disappointed at losing her, since she's been doing such a terrific job as corresponding secretary and maintaining the website functioning, running GOCA meetings and more.

The GOCA board has new vacancies, and would appreciate qualified persons volunteering or referring someone as Corresponding Secretary. Jamie will continue to serve until a replacement is found.

New Business

No new business. Maria Bender thanked Helene Rosenheim and John Seng for recently providing her Brookeville Knolls HOA meeting with an update on GOCA's role in Olney.

Adjournment

Edward Weisel moved to adjourn the meeting. Seconded unanimously. Meeting adjourned by Helene at 8:55pm.