

Park Hills Civic Association General Meeting – Summary

The Park Hills Civic Association held a General Meeting on **Thursday, May 15, 2008** at the Silver Spring International Middle School Library beginning at 7:00 pm. Attending: Bob Bor, Judy Bor, Alan Bowser, Martine Brizius, Robert Fair, Sandra Fair, Evelyn Foley, Anne Gavin, Andrea Hewchuck, Gary Klauber, Chris Richardson, Billy Rose, Carolyn Schick, Nancy Schwiesow, Don Slater, and Dwight Wilson.

Treasurer's Report. Sandra Fair, PHCA Treasurer, reported a balance of \$1,276 in the Civic Association's bank account. Approximately 60 households are paid members of the Park Hills Civic Association. A reminder notice will be sent to former PHCA members who are not current with their 2008 dues.

Secretary's Report. Chris Richardson, PHCA Secretary, reported that the previous PHCA General Meeting took place on February 28, 2008, while the Executive Committee recently met on May 1, 2008. Richardson also noted that membership on the Park Hills Civic Association listserv currently stands at 168. The Park Hills community includes approximately 325 residential households, including two apartment buildings.

Old Business

527 Dale Drive.

Barbara Galloway, Regional Manager for Housing from the Housing Opportunities Commission of Montgomery County, and Julie Maltzman, Deputy Director of Programs for the Montgomery Coalition for the Homeless, reported to Park Hills residents about the status of the 527 Dale Drive apartments that have begun serving in April as permanent supportive housing for single disabled adults who are exiting homelessness.

Ms. Maltzman reported that, as of May 15th, four residents were located in 527 Dale Drive. A fifth resident was expected next week.

Ms. Maltzman expressed deep thanks to the Park Hills resident who created a welcome quilt, as well as the other Park Hills individual who paid membership dues for the Civic Association on behalf of all residents. A total of eight residents, who are referred and must pass a selection process, will reside in eight efficiency apartments. The ninth unit will be used as an apartment for a residential live-in counselor, Jennifer Blackwell, who is to be paid to be on-call nights and weekends and has been recruited from the "graduates" of the County's homeless system. The tenth unit will be used as an office for a social worker/case manager, who will be on-site during business hours, as well as a case aide. Residents will also be able to take advantage of a range of off-site services, all of which would be coordinated by the case manager, including psychiatric, medical, substance abuse and job readiness programs. In addition, a psychiatric rehabilitation counselor will work with residents, if appropriate, and will be visiting them in their apartments at least 6 times a month.

All residents will pay 30% of their monthly income for rent; federal grant funds will be used to cover the remaining costs associated with the property, which would include building expenses like property taxes, insurance, maintenance and repairs, as well as the

cost of staff who are delivering services to residents. Some residents may be receiving disability (SSI) and be unable to work, while others may be off-site during the day in education or job readiness programs, or in treatment programs related to their disability. The project's case managers will work with all residents to identify meaningful activities for them to be engaged in during the day, and will continually monitor their progress in participating in those activities. All resident leases will be based on the Montgomery County model lease agreement, and residents will be able to stay as long as they want, so long as they honor the terms of their lease; for instance, sleep-over guests cannot exceed two weeks per year and residents would be subject to eviction if they do not pay their rent on time, engage in criminal activity, or continually disturb their neighbors.

Security measures for the apartment complex includes video cameras plus central access panel or "key fob" system for entry into the building. Ms. Maltzman and Ms. Galloway did acknowledge community concerns about the close proximity of a convenience store that sells beer and wine as it relates to some residents' struggles with substance abuse issues but stated that staff will continuously monitor the situation. It is worth pointing out that "falling off the wagon" once – or even more – does not necessarily remove a resident from the program; the situation depends on the severity of relapse, and intervention is possible if attempts to intercede fail.

Contact information for 527 Dale Apartments:

= Jennifer Blackwell: (phone) 301-495-0282 (email) Jennifer@mcch.net

= Emergency answering service: 800-274-1131

Neighborhood Watch.

Alan Bowser reported that Neighborhood Watch signs have now been installed throughout the Park Hills area. The PHCA Neighborhood Watch program, however, needs volunteers, and neighbors are urged to contact Alan Bowser by phone (301-608-3932) or by email (abowser@starpower.net).

Purple Line Developments.

Chris Richardson reported on Purple Line developments since the last PHCA General meeting. He said that, since the February 2008 meeting, there have been several MTA meetings with the community: at the Park & Planning Headquarters, a community forum at the Roundhouse Theatre, and an Open House at the East Silver Spring Middle School. At these meetings, MTA provided new estimates of Purple Line ridership and travel times between key route locations. MTA also exhibited artistic renderings of the Purple Line vehicles on Wayne Avenue as well as animations which depicted how Purple Line transit vehicles would move and cross intersections on Wayne Avenue at Dale Drive and Fenton Street.

An above-ground Wayne Avenue light rail alignment continues to receive the most attention in these discussions, although no route or mode decisions have been made. The next key event in the Purple Line planning schedule is the public release of the Detailed Environmental Impact Statement and Alternatives Analysis late in the summer, to be followed by public meetings, and ultimately a recommendation by the State Secretary of Transportation and decision by Maryland Governor O'Malley.

Mr. Richardson said that the PHCA continued to study various Purple Line issues as they relate to the neighborhood and the possible Wayne Avenue and Silver Spring Thayer routes. These issues include: street widening along Wayne Avenue, increased local traffic, impact on the Sligo Creek Elementary School and Silver Spring International Middle School, access to the Whole Food parking lot, the possible location of a light rail stop at the corner of Wayne and Dale, and possible increased congestion at the intersections of Wayne Avenue and Dale Drive and Georgia Avenue and Bonifant Street.

New Business

Gang Activity in Silver Spring.

Officers Dylan Morris and Scott Webster of the Montgomery County Police Department gave a presentation about the presence of gangs in Silver Spring and throughout the County. Officer Morris, one of two Gang Investigators in the Silver Spring/Wheaton area, first defined a gang as (1) a formal or informal organization, (2) engaged in criminal activity, (3) and identified by a common name, identifying symbol, and/or set of colors. There are an estimated 40 gangs in Montgomery County with approximately 1160 members, although it is important to note that membership is fluid and the ability to validate these numbers is extremely difficult. Some of the more prominent gangs in this area are local – Maple Avenue Crew (in Takoma Park) and 88 Crush Mob (centered around Piney Branch & Carroll Avenue) – while others are national (Vacos Locos, or VL) and even trans-national in scope (Mara Salvatrucha, or MS-13).

Officer Morris informed residents about incidents of graffiti in and around the campus of Sligo Creek Elementary & Silver Spring International Middle Schools. Some of these incidents simply involve individuals spray painting their street name – or “tagging” – versus marking property with gang graffiti.

In either case, Officer Morris urged residents to notify police whenever they encounter graffiti; residents may also take the extra step of notifying GRaffiti ABatement Partners, Inc. (or GRAB) in order to have graffiti removed but should also keep the Police Department informed so that efforts can be coordinated with maximum efficiency. Residents who observe gang activity in Sligo Creek Park, however, should contact United States Park Police, since they have jurisdiction over this area.

Officer Morris also emphasized that residents should immediately call 911 anytime they suspect criminal activity or sense an imminent threat and not feel they are “burdening the system” – these are your tax dollars at work. Park Hills residents who live near Sligo Creek Elementary & SSIMS did request that Montgomery County Police patrol the school parking lot given the number of instances of loud, disruptive, and quite possibly illegal activity in this area.

Contact information for Park Hills residents

- = Police emergency number: 911
- = Police non-emergency number: 301-279-8000
- = United States Park Police: 202-619-7300
- = GRaffiti ABatement Partners: 301-607-4733 [website: www.graffitifree.org]

Absentee Voting.

In response to concerns by those who were unable to attend the big Purple Line vote at the February 28th General Meeting, Anne Gavin, PHCA Vice-President, distributed a suggested revision to Civic Association Bylaws regarding absentee voting. The original Membership section in the PHCA Bylaws includes language about Voting. Ms. Gavin then broke out this text about Voting into its own section and created a new section specifically about Absentee Voting with draft language that reads as follows:

“A member may cast an absentee ballot only in exceptional circumstances: Absentee voting is permitted if no person in a member household can attend the meeting at which the vote is taken because of physical limitations or the need to care for a member of the household with physical limitations. A member can receive an absentee ballot by submitting, no later than 7 calendar days before the scheduled vote, a signed statement to the Association Secretary verifying the inability to cast a vote in person due to such physical limitations. An absentee ballot is valid only if (a) the member’s dues are current and the Association Treasurer certifies that the household is a member in good standing; and, (b) the completed absentee ballot is received by the Association Secretary or other Association officer before the call to order of the meeting at which the vote is scheduled.”

The reasons for such limited circumstances for absentee voting include (1) the administrative hassle of monitoring and enforcing absentee voting in an all-volunteer organization, and more importantly (2) to prevent residents from engaging in absentia on hot-button issues, especially given that the primary goal of a civic association is to engender communication and active participation among members living in the same community. PHCA officers acknowledge work-related reasons (travel, late hours) that prevent others from attending Civic Association meetings and simply recommend that members articulate these issues persuasively at the next Civic Association General Meeting, when this suggested Bylaw change goes up for a vote. Ms. Gavin will circulate this proposed amendment on the listserv prior to the next meeting.

Election of PHCA Officers

The Park Hills Civic Association re-elected its officers for the 2008-2010 term.

Alan Bowser - President
Anne Gavin - Vice President
Sandra Fair - Treasurer
Secretary - Chris Richardson

Thanks to Nancy Schwiesow for serving as our Chair of our Association's Nominating Committee.

Park Hills BBQ.

After discussion, Association members agreed to hold the Annual Park Hills BBQ on the weekend following the Labor Day holiday: Saturday, September 8, 2008 in Sligo Creek Park. Details to follow.

Adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 pm.

Respectively submitted.

Chris Richardson, PHCA Secretary.