

## **Park Hills Civic Association General Meeting – Summary**

The Park Hills Civic Association held a General Meeting on **Thursday, October 8, 2009** at the Silver Spring International Middle School Library/Media Center beginning at 7:30 pm. The following persons were in attendance: Bob Bor; Alan Bowser; Mary Clive; Ken DeHart; Mildred Dickerson; Leslie Downey; Sandra Fair; Anne Gavin; Jeanne Ireland; Jennifer Kefer; Gary Klauber; Elsie Klumpner; Greg Lewis; Susan McCauley; Stacey Palosky; Jim Preston; Chris Richardson; Jim Riley; Reemberto Rodriguez; Nancy Schwiesow; Paul Seltman; Thomas Senico; Don Slater; Jessie Slater; Tina Slater; Stephanie Subramanian; Michael Ussery.

### **Secretary's Report.**

Chris Richardson, PHCA Secretary, reported that the previous PHCA General Meeting took place on May 27, 2009; guest speakers at that meeting included Jennifer Nettles, Manger for Downtown Silver Spring, and Diane Cameron, Conservation Program Director for the Audobon Naturalist Society. The Park Hills community includes approximately 328 residential households, plus two small apartment buildings on Dale Drive between Schuyler and Dartmouth.

### **Treasurer's Report.**

Sandra Fair, PHCA Treasurer, reported a balance of \$524.62 in the Civic Association's checking account.

### **President's Report.**

Alan Bowser reported on Park Hills activities since the last May's General Meeting:

- **Rain Garden Tour** – Diane Cameron of the Audubon Naturalist Society and Friends of Sligo Creek conducted a rain garden tour through the Park Hills neighborhood on June 20 and June 27<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Cameron and company were satisfied that landscaping and plantings by local area residents were doing a sufficient job of keeping rainwater from contributing to the stormwater problems experienced by Sligo Creek and that certain public spaces - particularly the bottom of Schuyler Road and areas adjacent to the Silver Spring International Middle School - needed special attention to keep stormwater from pouring into the creek unabated.
- **Deerfield Avenue's 4<sup>th</sup> of July Watermelon Social** – The 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Independence Day Watermelon Social in Honor of Jim Foley was a fun and festive time for residents of Deerfield Avenue. Pictures of the event can be viewed at the following web link: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/alanbowser/sets/72157605990666823/show>
- **Armed Robbery at Ertters & Number One Cleaners July 29<sup>th</sup>** – No suspects have been arrested yet in connection with this robbery.
- **Purple Line Announcement by Governor O'Malley** – Governor Martin O'Malley announced on August 4<sup>th</sup> that the locally preferred alternative (LPA) for the Purple Line will consist of a light rail line operating along a 16-mile east-west corridor from Bethesda in Montgomery County to New Carrollton in Prince George's County. The project will now be submitted to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) under its "New Starts" process as the State seeks the approval to begin preliminary engineering and competes for federal funding for the \$1.5 billion project.

- **Adopt A Road** – The Civic Association was informed by the County’s Dept. of Transportation that our Adopt-a-Road application for Sligo Creek Parkway between Wayne Avenue and Piney Branch Road had been approved.
- **Sligo Creek Parkway Adopt-a-Road Clean Up** – On September 6, 2009 the Civic Association conducted its first Adopt a Road program prior to the start of the annual Park Hills BBQ.
- **Park Hills BBQ** – The September 6<sup>th</sup> annual Park Hills BBQ was attended by County Executive Leggett and Councilmember Elrich, among others. A big tip of the hat to Ghar e Kabab for providing food and working magic on the grill.
- **Sligo Creek Sweep** – On Sunday September 27<sup>th</sup>, Jennifer Kefer and Friends of Sligo Creek conducted yet another sweep of Sligo Creek - special thanks to Jim Anderson.
- **Sligo Creek Golf Course Extension** – County Council voted to support the continuation of operations until the end of the fiscal year, June 30, 2009. In the meantime an advisory group made up of Council staff, Executive Branch staff, Revenue Authority staff, veterans groups, and civic organizations will plan next steps.
- **Old Blair Auditorium** – On October 5<sup>th</sup>, following a series of stakeholder meetings, the MCPS-contracted architects have evaluated options for the Old Blair Auditorium, and have recommended alternative options for future consideration. To obtain a PDF copy of the Old Blair Renovation Design Feasibility Study (9MB file size), go to the following web link: <http://xlxpress.gparch.com/RetrieveEmail.aspx?ID=8a5b4542-c015-4619-b4b4-1d5c1c3aff37>  
When prompted, use the following authentication key: **shortumbrella882**
- **Washington Revels** have moved into their handsome new headquarters at the corner of Dale Drive and Dartmouth Street. Welcome, new neighbor!
- **Walk to School Observance** This year, Walk to School Day is Wednesday, October 7, 2009. Communities can choose to celebrate for a day, a week, once a week or the entire month as part of International Walk to School Month. In the USA, the focus will remain on Walk to School Day with support for communities that choose to celebrate for the timeframe that is right for their interests and resources.
- **Community Service Day** – Saturday, October 24, 2009 - contact the Silver Spring Regional Center or [www.montgomerycountymd.gov](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov)

**Guest Speaker, Reemberto Rodriquez – Director, Silver Spring Regional Services Center.**

Reemberto Rodriguez, the new Director of the Silver Spring Regional Services Center, is an East Silver Springer who has worked for NeighborWorks for 20 years, the last five developing training programs for community organizers. Rodriguez first explained there are five regional services centers in the County – Upcounty; Mid-County; East County; Silver Spring; and Bethesda-Chevy Chase – and that the serving area for Silver Spring Regional Services Center is “under the Beltway” (plus Four Corners) and encompasses such areas as Georgia Avenue, Montgomery Hills, East County Line, parts of Langley Park, Piney Branch, and Broad Acres, and Takoma Park. The Silver Spring Regional Services Center’s primary role is to represent the County in our Center area by providing effective and timely liaison between Montgomery County government and our residents and businesses. The Silver Spring RSC serving area’s population, Rodriguez explained, is approximately 120,000 during the daytime and 80,000 at nighttime. Rodriguez, whose work with NeighborWorks has taken him all over the country, had strong praise for the cultural vitality of the neighborhoods and the Central Business District area.

Regarding the new public library in downtown Silver Spring, Rodriguez addressed the planning challenges with respect to access for those with impaired mobility, as well as parents with children. Rodriguez acknowledged concerns of the Fenton Street-area business owners who are hoping to attract foot traffic, but advocated for a pedestrian bridge across Wayne given the combined traffic volume and complexity of a light rail transforming the Wayne & Fenton intersection and pointed out that County Executive Leggett has requested that library designs include pedestrian bridge option. Rodriguez expressed excitement about the progress on the new Civic Center and solicited ideas from the community for the best utilization of the skating rink when not in use.

The new Regional Services Center Director then took questions from the audience:

Q: The County Executive says that the dispute with the main contractor for the Silver Spring Transit Center has been supposedly resolved – can you provide a status report on this project?

A: There was a small problem with homeless persons living in and around the metro station, but the larger problem is that the economic downturn has forced planning readjustments. A fuller status report will be provided to Alan for posting on the listserv.

Q: Will the County Health Dept. be supplying the H1N1 vaccine?

A: Yes – the Dennis Avenue facility will provide the vaccine, however in limited amounts to targeted population groups. Stay tuned for more information.

Q: How about creating a community bulletin board kiosk, say near the Ellsworth fountain in Downtown Silver Spring, that could be under lock and key?

A: Great idea!

Q: What is the estimated construction time for the new downtown library?

A: I can only estimate 1-3 years, but really I need to check and get back to the community.

Rodriguez welcomes your comments and questions:

[reemberto.rodriguez@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:reemberto.rodriguez@montgomerycountymd.gov)

### **New Business.**

#### **Sligo Creek Elementary School Boundary Change - Guest Speaker, Christopher Lage.**

Lage, a resident who lives in the area equally served by the Park Hills and Seven Oaks-Evanswood's respective civic associations, wanted to bring to the community's attention a very important issue that will imminently affect our community. As many might already know, the geographical boundaries for our community elementary school, Sligo Creek E.S., are about to be changed. Next month, the Montgomery County school superintendent will make his recommendation to the Board of Education on how to realign the school boundaries to reduce over-crowding at Sligo Creek E.S. The Board will made its final decision in November 2009. After the new boundaries are phased in, beginning next school year, the Academy (English-speaking) program at the school will lose around 35-40% of its students, who will be reassigned to Takoma Park E.S. or Piney Branch E.S. The French immersion program at the school will not lose any students as a result of the boundary change. While a decision

on new boundaries has not yet been made, it appears likely that the neighborhood that will be reassigned is a section of Takoma Park that is currently assigned to Sligo Creek E.S. No child from within the SOECA boundaries stands to be reassigned to another school. But, serious questions have been raised concerning what will be left of our neighborhood school after losing so many students.

A neighborhood is defined, in part, by the quality of its schools. Thus, this change will affect us all, regardless of whether we have children in the school or which program they attend at the school. One important issue that concerns all families who live in our community is whether the Academy program will become so small that it will be unable to provide a quality education to our children. Specifically, many parents are concerned that we will end up with only one, large class (30 students) per grade in the Academy. This would make it nearly impossible to provide individualized attention to kids, differentiate by ability level, or provide math acceleration, among other problems. It would also harm the French immersion students, who share resources with the Academy and who now rely on Academy teachers to provide English language instruction in the upper grades.

The Sligo Creek E.S. PTA submitted a position paper to the superintendent setting out these concerns and more, and dozens of concerned parents and neighbors have written letters to the superintendent to show their support. I am attaching the PTA position paper, along with a 3-page executive summary of the entire boundary process to date. I am also attaching a model letter to the superintendent, which many parents have already signed and sent to the superintendent. Please join your neighbors in voicing your support for the continued vitality of our neighborhood school. Feel free to cut and paste, or make whatever edits you want to personalize the letter, and email it to the Superintendent and Board of Education, at [Suzanne.Peang-Meth@mcpsmd.org](mailto:Suzanne.Peang-Meth@mcpsmd.org) (for the Superintendent) and [boe@mcpsmd.org](mailto:boe@mcpsmd.org) (for the Board).

On October 15, 2009, the superintendent will release his recommendation. I will provide an update at that time, and may enlist your further support depending on his recommendation.

Please consult this link on the MCPS website for an explanation of the process and the full report of the boundary advisory committee:

[http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/planning/CommunityInfo\\_Boundary2.shtml](http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/planning/CommunityInfo_Boundary2.shtml)

### **Pedestrian Safety in the Community.**

One resident made a request for police to monitor the dangerous driving darting onto Dale from Dartmouth around drop-off time at the school each morning. Resident helpfully suggests the County could potentially bring in a fair amount of needed revenue from ticketing these drivers, who clearly are in a hurry.

Another resident had a question about what many in the community feel to be a longstanding need for a “control signal” at Mansfield & Dale. The response from the county, unfortunately, has been that this intersection does not warrant additional safety measures, much less a four-way stop. However, the civic association feels it would be helpful to have a community dialogue with someone from the County’s Dept. of Transportation at one of our upcoming general meetings.

### **Purple Line Update.**

Richardson, Purple Line Task Force Chair, reported that since last May's General Meeting, Governor O'Malley announced on August 4<sup>th</sup> that the locally preferred alternative (LPA) for the Purple Line will consist of a light rail line operating along a 16-mile east-west corridor from Bethesda in Montgomery County to New Carrollton in Prince George's County. The Purple Line LPA will largely run on the surface with one short tunnel section, one aerial section, and several underpasses and overpasses of busy roadways. Here in Silver Spring, the LPA stays on the south side of the CXS corridor until just past Spring Street, when it will cross over the tracks to enter the Silver Spring Transit Center on an aerial structure one level above the existing tracks, providing connections to the Metrorail Red Line and the MARC Brunswick Line, and many bus routes. From there it will exit the Silver Spring Transit Center across Georgia Avenue at street level to follow Bonifant Street into a station integrated into the new Silver Spring Library, thus adding a new stream of traffic into the intersection at Fenton and Wayne. From there the light rail continues on Wayne Avenue at grade, in shared lanes with added left turn lanes. Just past Manchester Road it enters a ¼-mile long tunnel under Plymouth Avenue, due to the steep grades, returning to the surface on Arliss Street just before turning left onto Piney Branch Road. The Purple Line will operate mainly in dedicated or exclusive lanes. The project will now be submitted to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) under its "New Starts" process as the State seeks the approval to begin preliminary engineering and competes for federal funding for the \$1.5 billion project.

In mid-September Park Hills Civic Association was surprised to discover that MTA had just put together a brief "white paper" arguing the importance of the proposed Dale Drive station and was beginning to present this information publicly, for instance, at the Montgomery County Planning Board's Purple Line Functional Master Plan Advisory Group. MTA has posted this white paper on its Purple Line website at the following address:

[http://www.purplelinemd.com/images/stories/purpleline\\_documents/Dale%20Drive%20and%20Wayne%20Avenue%209-14-09.pdf](http://www.purplelinemd.com/images/stories/purpleline_documents/Dale%20Drive%20and%20Wayne%20Avenue%209-14-09.pdf)

**On Monday, November 23rd at the Silver Spring International Middle School Library/Media Center there will be a special community meeting on the Purple Line beginning at 7:30 PM.** Representatives from Montgomery County Council, the Montgomery County Planning Board, the Maryland State Delegation, Sligo Creek Elementary School, and the MTA Purple Line Planning Team will be in attendance. Park Hills residents are welcome and encouraged to attend and ask questions about the proposed Dale Drive station and any other issues related to the Purple Line.

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

Respectively submitted.

Chris Richardson, PHCA Secretary.