

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

The Park Hills Civic Association (PHCA) held a General Meeting on **Wednesday, March 7, 2012** at the Silver Spring International Middle School Media Center beginning at 7:30 pm.

### **Attendees:**

### **Guests:**

Martine Brizius & Roberta Gosier - Co-Chairs - Downtown Silver Spring Senior Village.

Nancy Schwiesow - Real Estate Agent - Long & Foster Real Estate.

Don Grove - Arborist - Don Grove of Trees.

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

Sandra Fair presented information on several issues of importance to our community:

1. **Chelsea School Project:** Current R-60 zoning would allow for 32 townhouses on the site with no rezoning. EYA's original proposal to rezone to allow for 76 townhouses was rejected by the County Council for "too much massing/tightness" and to "resolve the size of the historic setting" (presently designated as 1.4 acres, EYA wants to reduce to .85 acres). EYA has presented a revised plan for 63 townhouses, with changes to road traffic that would open up the streets to drive-through traffic from the CBD. Seven Oaks-Evanswood Citizens' Association (SOECA) and many residents of the surrounding neighborhood feels this is still too far off from what they find acceptable and continues efforts to scale back the scope of the project.
2. **Purple Line on Wayne Avenue:** Presidents of four adjoining civic associations – Park Hills, SOECA, East Silver Spring Civic Association (ESSCA) and Sligo-Branview – discussed whether to hold a joint meeting with the Maryland Transit Administration in response to the January 25, 2012 Washington Post article that listed properties along the proposed Purple Line route, particularly the Wayne Avenue corridor, that state transit planners say might be needed to build the light rail project. This list was obtained by Post reporter, Katherine Shaver, as a result of a Freedom of Information Request. These four civic association presidents agreed that it is important to verify which properties will be condemned temporarily during construction before being restored and returned to the owner, as well as obtain clarity around eminent domain laws and due process so that affected residents along the Wayne Avenue corridor can make necessary arrangements well in advance. On March 20, 2012, Ms. Fair sent a letter to Purple Line Project Manager, Mike Madden, on behalf of the boards of the four affected civic associations requesting (1) verification of all properties to be taken whole or in part, as well as (2) staking of properties along Wayne Avenue to show the extent to which the road will be widened.
3. **Sligo Police Station Proposal:** The East Silver Spring Civic Association (ESSCA) has a proposal for a community arts center with affordable studio space for local artists on the site of the Sligo Avenue police station that would also include an outdoor community garden. This property is located at the intersection of the Central Business District (CBD) and the residential zones with most of the building and grounds in the R-60 (single-family houses) zone. The nearby Georgia Avenue corridor is a state-designated arts district. With studio space virtually non-existent, ESSCA is concerned that artists are being priced out of the area and worried about the potential for a townhouse or condo proposal, even though 1,000 housing units are already planned for Fenton Street between Wayne and Silver Spring Avenue. The county's Parks Department has expressed interest in using the fenced-in back portion of the property for community gardens with existing water source and fencing that would save the Parks Dept. \$10,000. The Silver Spring Citizen's Advisory Board voted unanimously to support the Police

Station Arts Center Proposal at its March 12<sup>th</sup> meeting. The Presidents' Council of Silver Spring Civic Associations (Prezco) has also voted to support this proposal. More detailed information is available in this article published in the April 6, 2012 edition of the Silver Spring/Takoma Voice: <http://tpssvoice.com/2012/04/06/at-home-in-silver-spring-a-community-arts-center-for-east-silver-spring>

4. PHCA Officers Election & Term of Service: According to the PHCA Bylaws, the President and Vice-President cannot serve a term that exceeds 24 months, nor can these officers serve more than two successive terms. The first term for our current President and Vice-President will be at 24 months in May 2012, so we need to hold an election at our next civic association meeting. Nancy Schwiesow has generously agreed again to serve as the Nominating Committee – Park Hills residents are encouraged to speak to her about candidates.

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

Chris Richardson reported that on October 26, 2011 the Park Hills Civic Association held a General Meeting at the Silver Spring International Middle School Cafeteria:

- I.J. Hudson, Public Affairs Coordinator for the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission, presented a slide show overview of the water authority's services to our community.
- Michael J. Sullivan, Vice-President of Operations for Pepco, presented a slide show overview of the power company's electrical services to our community.
- Marc Elrich, At-Large Member of the Montgomery County Council, led an informal discussion with residents about issues facing the community, county, and metropolitan region.

Richardson also reported that the officers of the Park Hills Civic Association sent a letter on January 20, 2012 to the Planning Board in support of Seven Oaks-Evanswood Citizens' Association's request to modify developer EYA's proposed redesign for the Chelsea School property.

Finally, the Civic Association's Executive Committee met on February 20, 2012 to discuss preparations for tonight's meeting.

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

Alan Bowser, PHCA Treasurer, reported a balance of \$782.90 in the Park Hills Civic Association's checking account.

### **Silver Spring Public Library Update.**

Construction on the new Silver Spring Public Library is expected to begin July 2012 with the anticipated completion date approximately Fall 2014.

### **Dale & Colesville Road Improvement Project.**

The county has now begun construction on a road improvement project that is designed to improve traffic flow on Dale Drive at the intersection with Colesville Road (US 29), lying within the Thirteenth Election District.

### **New Business.**

#### **Downtown Silver Spring Senior Village.**

Co-Chairs, Martine Brizius & Roberta Gosier - with assistance from local residents Gary Klauber, Anne Gavin, and Mildred Dickerson - gave a presentation about Downtown Silver Spring Senior Village, a cooperative venture that will allow individuals to remain in their own homes as their advancing age poses challenges to their independence. Aging in Place is a growing national movement, and work to establish Downtown Silver Spring Senior Village (DSSSV) has been ongoing since late 2010. DSSSV

will be centered in the 20910 zip code, and this nonprofit membership organization hopes to enroll members and start providing services and programs in 2013. DSSSV is in the process of incorporating as a 501(c)3 nonprofit. Transportation and social activities have been identified as two of the organization's biggest needs.

Individuals who are potentially interested in joining this effort are encouraged to fill out an online survey that can be accessed on the home page of DSSSV's website at the following web link: <http://www.dsssvillage.org>

Park Hills resident, Leslie Downey, expressed concern about the potential global warming impacts of individuals "aging in place" in 3-bedroom homes that, according to some researchers, are an important source of greenhouse gases. Downey also expressed concern that the proposed senior village might push out families who desire such homes in an increasingly expensive residential area.

**Local Real Estate Update.**

Nancy Schwiesow, local resident and veteran real estate agent with Long & Foster, gave a presentation on the real estate market in the 20910 zip code area. Schwiesow distributed and discussed documents that addressed a number of key points:

- = Interest rates for housing loans are unbelievably low – now is the time to refinance (30-year fixed APR between 4.18-4.71%; 15-year fixed APR around 3.4%; 5-year adjustable rate mortgage APR between 2.99-3.07%).
- = Local housing market seemed to finally turn a corner around November 2011 based on Schwiesow's observations. This would appear to be confirmed by comparing market statistical reports showing average sale prices in December 2011 down 5% (compared to the previous December) versus average sale prices in January 2012 up 6% (compared to the previous January).
- = Cost recouped/resale value on home improvement projects for 2011-2012 have decreased compared to 2010-2011 across the board in all categories except, curiously enough, one: attic bedroom additions.
- = Schwiesow also compiled a chart of "What's Going on in Our Neighborhood" showing sales volume and unit sales both before and after the 2008 housing market crash:

Year	Sales Volume	# of Units Sold
2006	\$176,000,000	294 units
2007	\$212,000,000	328 units
2010	\$101,000,000	200 units
2011	\$145,000,000	280 units

**The Importance of Trees.**

Don Grove, ISA certified arborist, Maryland licensed tree expert and local resident, gave a presentation on the importance of trees.

Trees are an important natural resource and improve our quality of life by

- providing oxygen;
- cleansing the air by removing pollutants;
- providing shade and cooling in summer;
- providing privacy and a visual screen that blocks the view of tall buildings.

Trees absorb copious amounts of rainwater and thus

- prevent soil erosion and surface runoff;
- help prevent flooding;
- hold rainwater in place as part of the local landscape.

The stately, mature trees in our community are an important part of why we chose to live here.

Trees make people feel good, as they (1) improve property values and (2) reduce crime and domestic violence, as research shows.

Preservation is an important issue in our area, as Montgomery County has lost many of its large trees:

- Mature trees take a long time to replace.
- Slow growing, long lived trees include Oaks and American Beech.
- Faster growing trees include Tulip Poplar and Maple; unfortunately, these often prove to have weaker wood and shorter life spans.

Tree roots don't grow straight down like a carrot – trees' roots extend well beyond the canopy.

Large structural roots branch into tiny feeder roots that absorb water and nutrients near the surface.

Beware the dangers of cramped roots:

- Sidewalk upheavals
- Buckling asphalt
- Trunks oozing over curbs like candle wax

Mulching is an important part of tree care:

- 2-3" deep, but not piled around trunks in "mulch volcanoes"
- protects trunks from mechanical damage
- keeps soil temperature even
- helps hold moisture
- decomposes naturally to feed trees

Pruning is another important aspect of tree maintenance:

- not much, pruning reduces tree's food factory
- remove deadwood
- remove crowded or conflicting limbs
- may be necessary to make room for people
- may be necessary when trees get too big for location
- choose trees that are the right size for location to reduce pruning

Soil is alive:

- mycorrhizae is fungus in symbiotic association with the roots of trees and other plants
- mycorrhizae makes nutrients in soil available to trees' roots
- mulch helps make a suitable environment for mycorrhizae

Photosynthesis is where it's at:

- leaves are trees' food factory.
- leaves convert water and nutrients from the soil to sugars.
- light is food.

**Adjournment.**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 pm.

Respectively submitted.

Chris Richardson, PHCA Secretary.