

Park Hills Civic Association General Meeting – Summary

The Park Hills Civic Association (PHCA) held a General Meeting on **Wednesday, June 6, 2012** at the Silver Spring International Middle School Library/Media Center beginning at 7:30 pm.

Attendees:

Jim Anderson; Deanna Anderson; Alan Bowser; Mary Clive; Sandra Fair; Paul Guinnessy; Gary Klauber; Jenny McCartney; Chris Richardson; Nancy Schwiesow; Stephanie Subramanian; Karen Warburton (for Ruth Marchwicki).

Guests:

Marcy Smith – Geriatric Social Worker – Holy Cross Hospital;
Ellen Greenberg – Director, Center for Information & Education – Jewish Council for the Aging;
Roberta Gosier & Martine Brizius – Co-Chairs – Downtown Silver Spring Senior Village.

Secretary’s Report.

Chris Richardson reported that on March 7, 2012 the Park Hills Civic Association held a General Meeting at the Silver Spring International Middle School Library/Media Center. The Civic Association’s Executive Committee previously met on April 29, 2012 to discuss preparations for tonight’s meeting.

On April 22, 2012 Richardson also helped organize, in conjunction with the Friends of Sligo Creek’s “Sweep the Creek” event, clean-up efforts for the stretch of Sligo Creek Parkway that has been ‘adopted’ by the Park Hills Civic Association. Richardson has also agreed to take over as Section 4 Leader for future Sweep the Creek events.

Treasurer’s Report.

Alan Bowser, Treasurer, reported a balance of \$1,020.34 in the civic association’s checking account.

Update on the Montgomery County Zoning Code Rewrite Process: Accessory Apartments.

According to the Montgomery County Planning Board website:

“As Montgomery County housing costs continue to increase, the rental market is becoming increasingly attractive to people who cannot afford to buy a home or don’t want to maintain one. Among their housing choices: accessory apartments built within homes or on single-family properties. Planners have proposed new regulations for accessory apartments. Homeowners who want to add an accessory apartment apply for a special exception from the county Board of Appeals. In most cases, special exceptions for accessory apartments are granted. The proposed regulations, a Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) to be considered by the Planning Board and the County Council, would allow a small, attached accessory apartment to be licensed and approved without the time or expense required by the special exception process. Planners propose to better define the units, allow them by right in some zones, and limit accessory apartments of a certain size or to avoid overcrowding neighborhoods.”

The County’s website provides additional clarity as to what exactly constitutes an accessory apartment, as well as a “registered living unit”:

“An accessory apartment is a completely independent living facility with separate cooking, eating, sanitation and sleeping facilities that is either in or added to an existing single-family dwelling or in a separate accessory structure on the same lot as an existing dwelling. There is a separate application

process for accessory apartments, commonly referred to as "mother-in-law" apartments. There are zoning and code enforcement requirements that must be met before renting an Accessory Apartment. These units may only be located in owner-occupied single family detached homes and the property owner must be granted a special exception by the Board of Appeals. Registered Living Units are similar to accessory apartments, except that the units are occupied rent-free by either a relative or household employee of the owner occupant."

At the June 6th PHCA meeting, Stephanie Subramanian presented the following pros and cons on the proposed accessory apartment ZTA based on information gathered at a recent meeting of Prezco (Presidents' Council of Silver Spring Civic Associations):

- = ZTA would potentially streamline permitting process - although the current backlog appears to be at the inspection end not bureaucratic. Thus, the county would need many more inspectors - is this an "unfunded mandate"?
- = Accessory apartments would provide additional income for seniors or others with financial hardship.
- = Neighbors will no longer have input into what goes on in someone else's private property, as all public comment will be cut out.
- = There will still be restrictions on lot size, square footage of accessory apartments, attached vs. detached, and proximity to other dwellings; many areas of the county have caps on accessory apartments.
- = Would they cluster in certain areas of county? Homeowner association covenants are prevalent in northern and western areas of the county and Rockville/Gaithersburg/Takoma Park have their own zoning rules.
- = With respect to concerns about parking, there could be restrictions; mandatory provision of two off-street parking spots, no accessory apartment if property has a shared driveway.
- = ZTA does not address major county-wide problem of illegal accessory apartments; assessment study? asylum period?

On June 25th, Sandra Fair posted the following update on the PHCA website with respect to the Planning Board's hearing and vote on the accessory apartment ZTA:

"Below is a summary from Woody Brosnan of PREZCO regarding the recent Planning Board hearing and vote concerning the proposed Zoning Text Amendment to the zoning code to allow for accessory apartments by right, rather than through a special exception process. It is important to note that this is not a final decision, but rather a recommendation by the Board to the County Council (which may or may not approve the Amendment). It is unlikely that the Council will vote on this issue until the Fall, and there will be opportunity for public comment before then. According to Woody Brosnan:

'After a hearing that lasted nearly three hours, the Planning Board voted 4-1 to send to the Council the proposed Zoning Text Amendment allowing accessory apartments by right instead of through the special exception process. The Board added one provision to the staff's latest draft: a county-wide cap of 2,000 accessory apartments. Testifying for myself, I had proposed a cap of 1800, equal to 1 per cent of the county's stock of single-family homes, but Board members said my figures were probably outdated, so they went with 2000.

'Jean Cavanaugh, Marilyn Piety, and Kathleen Samiy testified and, I thought, made valuable contributions to the discussion. Tony Hausner submitted his testimony in writing. I think we need to continue to stress, either as individuals or perhaps as a group, the importance of improving the county's enforcement of the housing codes. Perhaps we should invite someone from Housing Inspection to a meeting, although for our July meeting, I like the idea of discussing tree canopy and green space issues.

‘And while I don't expect people to stop arguing for continuing to require special exception hearings for zonings, I think we could consider alternatives that would still allow for notice to the neighborhood for new accessory apartments and some opportunity to request a hearing. Board Chair, Francoise Carrier, at one point seemed open to adding a notice (by signage) requirement, but member Norman Dreyfus objected. (Dreyfus took the curious position that nothing would satisfy community objections anyway so why bother making more changes to the staff proposal.) Board Member, Amy Presley, who was active in the fight over Clarksburg development, said she vehemently objected to dropping special exceptions, but she was the lone no-vote. Carrier and Casey Anderson injected the idea of the cap. Anderson said he doesn't believe the county will reach the 2,000 cap. Dreyfus and Marye Wells-Harley went along.

‘All the civic associations who testified formally opposed the change. The City of Takoma Park, the Montgomery Council on Aging, the Montgomery League of Women Voters and some individuals said they favored the ZTA change.’”

Summary of Issues Discussed at Prezco Meeting with County Councilmember Valerie Ervin on May 3, 2012 at the Silver Spring Civic Center.

a. Impending budget issues discussed:

- Prezco thanks Councilmember Ervin for intervening on issues related to Sligo Creek golf course roof.
- Prezco priorities of public safety, roads, sidewalks, trees, extended library hours, open space.
- Proposed energy tax and \$114M hit if Council ‘sunssets.’
- Whether or not to go to charter limit on property tax rate.
- Schools budget frozen, not cut; MCPS top ranked public schools in country for 4th year.
- Cost of School Resource Officers; Ervin thinks schools should split cost, as officers are pulled off beat to be in schools.

b. Parking fees:

- No Saturday parking fees for downtown.
- Proposal for billboard ads to help raise revenue.
- Parking rates for condo/apt dwellers in downtown an issue and a 21-month study is in progress to address adding \$.05 to lot parking and \$.25 to short term parking.

c. Access issues:

- Civic Center too expensive for local groups.
- Fillmore supposed to provide access to local groups, but too expensive.

d. 6th floor to new Silver Spring library:

- The original plan to have a 6th floor in the new library is, unfortunately, now a dead issue: Ervin supports, but colleagues do not, and the 5 votes needed are not there.

e. County properties for sale (a) current Silver Spring library; (2) HSUS building; (3) Sligo Avenue police station:

- County Executive makes decisions, Council weighs in. It is early in the de-accessioning process, but the County Executive is open to hearing suggestions from the community. Supporters of the community center should send letters to County Executive Leggett.

f. Park & Planning Building on Georgia Avenue:

- The National Capital Park and Planning Commission building on Georgia Avenue (at Spring Street) is moving to Wheaton. Gedelsky family owns current building and has to renovate - open to hearing ideas, such as child care center.

g. Transit Center:

- The Silver Spring Transit Center is not going to open for a long while – in closed sessions with attorneys to try to figure out what happened.

h. Trees:

- Loss of old trees a concern due to falling, cutting by Pepco and residents. Pepco will not remove stumps and there's a bill on the table to address. County Arborist concerned that residents replace old trees with ornamental trees. Proposed partnership arrangement with Conservation Montgomery.

i. Road maintenance:

- Road maintenance has been cut in capital budget, but maintenance up 20% since last budget.

j. Sidewalks:

- Franklin sidewalk budgeted and coming in 2013. Dale Drive, 16th Street & Seminary Road sidewalks in progress.

k. Zoning code rewrite & accessory apartments:

- Planning Department has separated accessory apartment issue from the zoning code rewrite and asked County Council to consider separately. Various concerns from Prezco members expressed; Ervin fears issue may be causing more alarm than is warranted. Council is evaluating, and Ervin is open to hearing all ideas - constructive feedback, in particular, is appreciated.

l. Commercial real estate glut:

- Brief discussion of concerns about glut of commercial real estate taking over vacant properties in Silver Spring because of lack of money for other development.

Purple Line Update: MTA Purple Line Community Meeting at SSIMS on May 3, 2012.

On May 3, 2012 the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) held a community meeting at the Silver Spring International Middle School (SSIMS) in order to present an overview of the current plans for the Wayne Avenue and lead discussions about issues of concern to area residents. Chris Richardson and Stephanie Subramanian both attended – Subramanian provided the following highlights from this meeting:

= Lower Ridership Numbers for the Proposed Dale Station: Mike Madden pointed out that the total projections for the stretch of Wayne between Fenton and Dale remained the same - fewer riders at Dale but more at the new library than previously determined. Madden feels that there is still benefit because the market is not end-to-end but is focused on connecting to Metro. Madden is clearly in favor of building a Dale Station whether the numbers support it or not. He knows that the community is divided and says that MTA will continue to work with the county but that he personally has seen more "pro" emails from residents. "Don't get too hung up on the lower numbers - what the community wants is more important."

= Property Impacts on Wayne: According to Madden, the January 25th Washington Post article that listed properties along Wayne Avenue (et al.) that would be potentially impacted by construction of the

Purple Line is two years out of date. Madden says there will be no full displacements - only slivers of property/temporary easements for left-turn accommodation - and that overall design will be an improvement over today's situation. Nevertheless, MTA does not maintain an updated list regarding property impacts. MTA may be able to stake during a latter phase of the final design process, but that is not always required.

= Property Values: MTA anticipates property values will rise but, if not, transportation projects do not compensate.

= Sligo Creek Elementary & Silver Spring International Middle Schools: Meetings are ongoing and parking will need to be reconfigured. MTA is going to schedule a meeting with SSIMS to address specifics.

= Trees: Number of trees along Wayne cut down and effect unknown - cannot be approximated, as MTA will not have final right-of-way requirements until spring 2013. The Wayne Avenue Green Trail is still in place on the north side of Wayne.

= Purple Line Construction: MTA will spend no more than 2 construction seasons in any one place. No starting location determined, no funds yet. MTA has no plan to divert traffic - work will be done on one lane each way in segments - and will be conscious of effect on parking.

= Purple Line Funding: According to Madden, funding of the Purple Line has been approved through Final Engineering only.

= Record of Decision: Made by Federal Transit Administration (FTA) after the Final EIS – likely Summer 2013 – full funding grant agreement.

= Proposed Purple Line Construction Schedule:

Fall 2012: Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) completed.

Spring 2013: Preliminary Engineering completed and Final EIS submitted to FTA.

Summer 2013: Begin final design process.

2015: Construction begins.

2020: Purple Line operational.

Dale & Colesville Road Improvement Project.

The county's road improvement project to improve traffic flow on Dale Drive at the intersection with Colesville Road (US 29) has been completed. Residents turning right from Dale Drive onto Colesville Road at Mrs. K's Restaurant can now do so with impunity.

New Business.

Ageing Services – Marcella Smith – Holy Cross Hospital.

Marcella Smith, Geriatric Social Worker for Holy Cross Hospital, discussed the many services and programs for seniors offered by Holy Cross Hospital:

= Seniors Emergency Center (geriatric ER unit): Holy Cross Hospital is the first hospital in the nation to create an emergency room specifically tailored to serve a growing senior population. Opened in November 2008, the six-bay Seniors Emergency Center is a separate, enclosed area of the main Emergency Center that provides safe, efficient emergency services designed to meet the complex, uncertain needs of non-acute elderly patients and those who care for them. Special features include

Special senior-friendly lighting, soft colors and noise abatement features; hand rails; special flooring that reflects light in a way that makes missteps less likely; thicker mattresses to reduce pressure; blanket warmers; telephones with larger buttons; and special pillow speakers to make listening to music or watching television more comfortable. Tours are offered every day.

= Acute Care of the Elderly (ACE): The ACE unit is directed at those in longer term care with the goal of moving into outpatient and hospital care.

= Medical Adult Day Care: By allowing seniors to maintain the independence of living at home, yet getting away during the day to a structured, senior-focused activity center, the Medical Adult Day Center is a cost-effective alternative to relocating seniors to residential care. Adult day care activities include daily exercise program, group discussions, entertainment, guest speakers from community organizations, health awareness talks, and organized games. Nursing services include administering of medications, laboratory and podiatry services, health counseling, and blood pressure/weight/diet monitoring,

= Caregiver Support Services: Caregiver Resource Center includes caregiver support groups; a resource library with books, audiotapes and videotapes on caregiving issues and health-related topics; brochures from local service providers; pamphlets, AARP publications, reprints of health-related articles and information on upcoming seminars and lectures; free caregiver newsletter.

= Senior Fit: Free 45-minute multi-component, evidence-based exercise program designed for adults ages 55 and older. The program focuses on increasing flexibility, strength, muscle endurance and cardio fitness.

= Falls Prevention Program: Includes measures for fall-proofing your home and better balance exercise class.

Aging Services – Ellen Greenberg – Jewish Council for the Aging.

Ellen Greenberg, Director of Information & Education at the Jewish Council for the Aging (JCA), stressed that JCA is open to everyone of ALL faiths. Underlying premise: transportation for seniors is KEY. Therefore, JCA helps build transportation links. Programs offered by the JCA include—

= Connect-a-Ride: a county-funded program and free service that serves the entire metro area helping seniors and disabled adults of all ages find the transportation they need. Certified Information & Mobility Specialists help with schedules, benefits and eligibility requirements.

= Ride Smart: Connect-a-Ride also offers Ride Smart Workshops to help small groups of older adults learn to use public transportation options and otherwise navigate the National Capital Region.

= Smooth Riding: Connect-a-Ride also offers Smooth Riding, an innovative program that coordinates and confirms local transportation arrangements for older adults in Montgomery County.

= Employment Assistance: The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) provides on-the-job training for low-income men and women age 55 and older who live in Montgomery and Frederick counties, Maryland. Trainees receive minimum wage while working at charities and government agencies to build their skills and resumes while delivering valuable community service.

= Career Gateway: Career Gateway offers intensive training, take-home materials, a long-term mentor and individual attention to computer-savvy jobseekers age 50+.

= Intergenerational Connections: Through the JCA Heyman Interages Center, more than 200 volunteers deliver programs in Montgomery County, Maryland that enable children and older adults to collaborate and become friends. Among the many programs are GrandReaders,” a literacy program for children in second grade; Intergenerational Bridges, which pairs older mentors with newly arrived immigrant children in ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) programs; and Project SHARE, which links children of all ages to participants in adult day programs and residents of assisted living facilities. The Intergenerational Resource Center helps professionals and organizations learn from Interages' success.

= Caregiver Support Services: The Misler Adult Day Center in Rockville provides stimulating activities, socialization and nursing supervision for older adults with physical, cognitive or emotional challenges. Services include door-to-door transportation and hot kosher lunches. Grants and special funds cover a portion of the daily fees.

Aging in Place – Roberta Gosier & Martine Brizius – Downtown Silver Spring Senior Village.

Roberta Gosier, Planning Group, Downtown Senior Spring Senior Village (DSSSV), a supportive community of neighbors – “small” guys coordinating locally with “big” guys, like Holy Cross & JCA – to help neighbors remain in their own homes as they age (expecting to be operational 2013). Using a combination of volunteer and professional services and referrals, the Village aims to provide seniors with a variety of supportive services and opportunities for social engagement. Participation by a diverse mix of residents within DSSSV’s geographic area will enhance quality of life for our community. DSSV’s Planning Group is seeking assistance through active participation in planning and outreach, feedback on services/activities needed, and sponsorship.

What is a Senior Village?

Beacon Hill, in Boston, is the first.

Senior villages are a growing movement.

DC area has the biggest cluster of senior villages in the US

Primary goal is to help older residents to stay at home as they age.

Social engagement for aging in place is the greatest challenge.

Wide mix of paid and volunteer labor help senior villages, thus help coordinate discounted prices.

Downtown Silver Spring Senior Village:

“Too big” to be all-volunteer, though the number of paid staff will be very small.

Looking for student-age volunteers in the community to assist.

Service area: 20910

Accomplishments since October 2010:

- Formed a dedicated planning group.
- Formed a monthly meeting planning group.
- Information session prior to meetings.
- Website.
- Survey tool.
- Strong ties with the Downtown Silver Spring Regional Center, Silver Spring Town Center, JCA, et al.
- 501(c)(3) status = tax-deductible.

PHCA Election of Officers.

Nancy Schwiesow, Chair of the Nominating Committee, conducted the vote for the election of the PHCA Officers. Fair, by unanimous vote, was re-elected as President, Subramanian as Vice-President, Bowser as Treasurer and Richardson as Secretary. Many thanks to Nancy Schwiesow, Chair of the Nominating Committee, for her work.

Adjournment.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:25 pm.

Respectively submitted.

Chris Richardson, PHCA Secretary.