

## Park Hills Civic Association General Meeting – Summary

The Park Hills Civic Association (PHCA) held a General Meeting on **Wednesday, October 10, 2012** at the Silver Spring International Middle School Library/Media Center beginning at 7:30 pm.

### Attendees:

Deanna Anderson; James Anderson; Melissa Bannett; Elizabeth Conklin; Jim Conklin; Leslie Downey; Sandra Fair; Michele Habicht; Steve Habicht; Lorin Obler; Joseph Pranio; Chris Richardson; Carolyn Schick; Don Slater; Stephanie Subramanian.

### Guests:

David Hauck – Independent Environmental Services Professional & Former Chair, Montgomery County Sierra Club;  
Michael Goldfarb – Program Manager – Montgomery County Office of Emergency Management & Homeland Security;  
Anne Vorce & Kathleen Samiy – Members – Friends of Sligo Creek.

### President's Report.

= **Sligo Creek Sweep:** Friends of Sligo Creek (FOSC) held a Sweep-the-Creek event on Sunday, September 30<sup>th</sup>. 62 people participated in our part of the creek between Wayne and Piney Branch – Section 4 – collecting 35 bags of trash along the creek, as well as PHCA's "adopted" road, Piney Branch Parkway. Thanks to FOSC section 4 leader, Chris Richardson, along with Anne Kaiser, Cub Scouts Pack 478, and everyone else who took the time to join the clean-up effort.

= **Congratulations to Alan Bowser:** Alan is the winner of this year's Montgomery County Executive's Excellence in the Arts and Humanities Volunteer Award, which goes to an individual who has made a major contribution to the arts or humanities in Montgomery County as a volunteer. This award is in recognition for his work with the Silver Spring Town Center, Inc. organizing events, such as Plaza Performances, The Town Center Arts Salons, Veterans Concerts & the Silver Spring Blues Festivals. Award ceremony to be held Oct. 22<sup>nd</sup> at Montgomery College's Cultural Arts Center.

= **Chelsea School Update:** June 12<sup>th</sup> – at the Hearing Examiner's recommendation – the County Council approved the RT 12.5 zoning change. Site to be divided into 2 parcels: 63 townhouses on one, preserved Riggs-Thompson house on the other. Project is now in site plan/preliminary subdivision stage. The Seven Oaks-Evanswood Citizens Association (SOECA) continues to advocate for changes to the plan to ensure adequate stormwater measures, preservation of slopes against erosion, and tree preservation.

= **Zoning Code Rewrite Update:** Montgomery County Planning Board will be reviewing the proposed changes to the current code over the next few months. Planning Board staff will present a consolidated draft of the Zoning Rewrite in sections to the Board from September through the end of the year, with opportunities for public input along the way. Next opportunities for public input take place November 1<sup>st</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> – use this web link for planning board schedule/calendar info:

<http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/development/zoning/interact.shtm#Planning>

= **Accessory Apartment Zoning Text Amendment Update:**

County Council is considering a change in the approval process for accessory apartments (rental units) in single-family homes called Registered Living Units (RLU). The county's planning board supports such a change since these new accessory apartments would (a) increase housing affordability; (b) provide a greater range of housing options; (c) help combat sprawl; and (d) facilitate the ability for seniors to age in place through added income/space for caregivers. Presently, to build an RLU, the homeowner goes through a Special Exemption process that includes a public hearing (rent-free RLUs

for family/caregivers are exempted, however). The proposed amendment would enable RLUs by right (thus allowing homeowners to sidestep the Special Exemption process) up to a certain size and over 300 feet from a similar unit. Many local civic associations support streamlining the process to shorten approval time but keep the public hearing to give neighbors the right to comment. Here is a link to the zoning text amendment itself:

[http://www6.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/council/pdf/zta/2012/zta\\_12-11.pdf](http://www6.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/council/pdf/zta/2012/zta_12-11.pdf)

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

Chris Richardson reported that on June 6, 2012 the Park Hills Civic Association held a General Meeting at the Silver Spring International Middle School Library/Media Center that primarily addressed services for the aging and featured speakers from Holy Cross Hospital, Jewish Council for the Aging, and Downtown Silver Spring Senior Village. The Civic Association's Executive Committee previously met on August 30, 2012 to discuss preparations for (1) the annual Park Hills BBQ on September 9<sup>th</sup> and (2) the agenda for the October 10<sup>th</sup> PHCA quarterly meeting.

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

Alan Bowser, Treasurer, reported a balance of \$545.81 in the Civic Association's checking account.

### **New Business.**

#### **WaterWatchDog Program.**

Friends of Sligo Creek members, Anne Vorce and Kathleen Samiy, introduced a new way for area residents to notify county water experts quickly anytime they spot water pollution in Sligo Creek: the Water WatchDog Program. The Program is a simple email system - anyone spotting water pollution in our neighborhood can just send an email and our county's water experts will come to investigate. The county can fine the polluter if they track them down. The quicker the report, the better.

So, if you are outside - walking, biking, walking the dog, eating in the park - and you see or smell pollution, just send an email or text:

[ReportSligoPollution@fosc.org](mailto:ReportSligoPollution@fosc.org)

Keep the email simple: say what you see and/or smell; the location of the pollution; the date and time of day; and your name and contact number. This can take 20 seconds. If you can take a picture or two and send them, even better. The email or text will be relayed automatically to the MoCo Department of Environmental Protection, via a system set up by the Friends of Sligo Creek. DEP will come - often immediately.

The program builds on the simple model of a longstanding partnership between the FoSC and DEP that has worked. As a result of reporting and investigation, Sligo Creek is better off - but we still have so far to go. We must be vigilant every day: our neighborhood is where downtown Silver Spring first drains.

What sorts of things can you stop as a Water WatchDog? Over the past few years, in response to neighborhood emails, DEP has stopped and fines have been issued for sewage spills, bad commercial practices by the Peterson Company, laundry room overflow in a nearby apartment building, and (most recently) sediment discharge in pipe replacement work, all of which showed up in our tributary and creek. Feel free to email Kathleen or Anne at [SligoWaterWatchDog@gmail.com](mailto:SligoWaterWatchDog@gmail.com).

## **Energy Conservation.**

David Hauck, who has taken several steps at his home in Takoma Park over the past few years to reduce its energy use by 25%, informed Park Hills residents who they can do the same in their homes and lives. Hauck, former Chair of the Montgomery County Sierra Club, currently serves on the Executive Committee of the Maryland Sierra Club. In 2010, he was named as one of the “40 Environmentalists Who Made a Difference in 40 Years” by the Montgomery County Council. He worked on the Sierra Club's ‘Cool Cities/Cool Counties’ campaign, which seeks to address climate change by encouraging local governments to commit to substantial reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

Hauck’s presentation centered on the Montgomery County Sierra Club’s Energy Efficiency Project – a comprehensive approach to saving energy at home via these “Top Ten Energy Saving Tips for Your Home”:

### **1. Turn off lights, electronics and use smart power strips.**

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, 75% of the electricity used to power home electronics is consumed while the products are turned off. VCRs, televisions, stereos, computers, and kitchen appliances draw electricity even when they are turned off and they are energy vampires. To stop the energy flow, we either have to unplug the appliance or use a smart power strip. Smart power strips are designed so that you can use one switch to turn off some electronics, like televisions and computers, but leave on other electronics like computer routers.

([http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=power\\_mgt.pr\\_power\\_mgt\\_more\\_tips](http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=power_mgt.pr_power_mgt_more_tips))

### **2. Use compact fluorescent and other high efficiency light bulbs.**

An ENERGY STAR qualified compact fluorescent light bulb uses 75% less energy than an incandescent bulb and CFL’s will save about \$30 over the lifetime of the bulb and pay for itself in about 6 months. Also, PEPCO and BG&E have lower cost purchasing programs and rebates to help you purchase CFL’s. Consider using LED bulbs, although they cost more than CFL’s they last even longer.

([http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?fuseaction=find\\_a\\_product.showProductGroup&pgw\\_code=LB](http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?fuseaction=find_a_product.showProductGroup&pgw_code=LB))

(<http://www.bgesmartenergy.com/residential/lighting-appliances/lighting-discounts>)

(<http://www.pepco.com/home/education/cfl>)

(<http://montgomerycountymd.mygreenmontgomery.org/project/use-energy-star-qualified-cfls/>)

### **3. Use a programmable thermostat.**

In a typical home, 40% of all energy is used for space heating and cooling. The average household spends more than \$2,350 a year on energy bills – so the typical household spends nearly \$1,000 a year for heating and cooling. You can save about 2% of the energy you use to heat and cool your home if you lower the thermostat setting one degree in the cold months and raise it one degree in the hot months. When you’re asleep or out of the house, if you turn your thermostat back 10 degrees for eight hours in the winter and raise it 10 degrees in the summer, you can save up to 20% a year on your heating and cooling bills. The key to using programmable thermostats is to establish a schedule that is comfortable for your family so that you automatically reduce heating and cooling in your home when you don't need as much.

([http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?fuseaction=find\\_a\\_product.showProductGroup&pgw\\_code=TH](http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?fuseaction=find_a_product.showProductGroup&pgw_code=TH))

### **4. Regularly maintain your heating and air conditioning systems and change your filters.**

Although it’s tough to quantify the benefits, it’s clear that checking your system’s air filter once a month and replacing them at least every 3 months can save energy and help your equipment run better and longer. Get a pre-season check-up of your system by a licensed contractor in the spring and fall, to ensure all parts are working properly to avoid early system failure. If your furnace is more than 15 years

old, or your A/C unit is more than 12 years old, consider replacing it with a more efficient and properly sized unit. Replacing old equipment with more efficient equipment is one way to save.

([http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=heat\\_cool.pr\\_hvac](http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=heat_cool.pr_hvac))

(Demonstration videos at this link: <http://montgomerycountymd.mygreenmontgomery.org/project/clean-your-coils-ducts-filters/>)

### **5. If you need new appliances, electronic equipment or even windows, try to buy ENERGY STAR products.**

Appliances and electronic equipment account for 25% of the average household's energy use. A package of ENERGY STAR qualified appliances can save \$80 to \$250 a year on utility bills. Additionally there are more benefits; energy efficient appliances often include higher quality components than standard appliances which can result in fewer mechanical problems and longer equipment life. Some ENERGY STAR appliances also have other beneficial features such as lower operating noise.

([http://www.energystar.gov/ia/new\\_homes/features/Appliances\\_062906.pdf](http://www.energystar.gov/ia/new_homes/features/Appliances_062906.pdf))

(Additional incentives at this link:

<http://montgomerycountymd.mygreenmontgomery.org/project/choose-energy-efficient-products/>)

### **6. Install low-flow showerheads and low-flow aerators for faucets.**

Reducing hot water use saves energy because your hot water heater has less work to do. Heating water uses about 12% of all the energy consumed in a home. Inexpensive and simple to install, low-flow showerheads and faucet aerators can reduce home water consumption and water heating costs by as much as 50%. In addition, cutting down on water use, saves energy since water purification plants use energy to clean our water supply. (For videos on how to install devices and to estimate how much you can save, go to <http://montgomerycountymd.mygreenmontgomery.org/project/install-low-volume-water-fixtures-2/>)

### **7. Plug air leaks in your home.**

Many air leaks and drafts are easy to find because they are easy to feel — like those around windows and doors. Many houses have air leaks around utility cut-throughs for pipes, gaps around chimneys and recessed lights in insulated ceilings. You can add caulk, spray foam or weather stripping to seal air leaks around leaky doors and windows. Also seal your air ducts so the air circulating through your house doesn't leak out. Sealing air leaks is the quickest and cheapest energy improvement you can make and it also makes your home more comfortable by evening out living space temperatures.

Remember, an energy audit can provide you with the best information on where your home has air leaks and a professional can seal them properly, so you get the best results. (For information on the common air leaks in the home, go to:

[http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=home\\_sealing.hm\\_improvement\\_sealing](http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=home_sealing.hm_improvement_sealing) )

(Additional resources, a guide to types of weather stripping and sealers can be found at:

<http://montgomerycountymd.mygreenmontgomery.org/project/caulk-and-weatherstrip-everything/>)

### **8. Check your insulation and improve it if it needs it.**

To get the biggest energy savings, the easiest place to add insulation is usually in the attic. A quick way to see if you need more insulation is to look across your uncovered attic floor. If your insulation is level with or below the attic floor joists, you probably need to add more insulation. R-38 insulation is equal to about 12–15 inches of insulation, depending on the insulation type. Insulation works best when air is not moving through or around it. So while it's very important to make sure you have adequate insulation, it's also very important to seal air leaks. Remember, an energy audit can provide you with the best information on the insulation you may need and where you need it and a professional can install it properly, so you get the best results.

([http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=home\\_sealing.hm\\_improvement\\_sealing](http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=home_sealing.hm_improvement_sealing))

### **9. Do an energy audit.**

Seriously consider having a home energy audit, as the first step in making your home more efficient. An audit can assess how much energy your home uses and help you prioritize what measures you need to take to reduce energy use. Thorough audits often use equipment such as blower doors, which measure the extent of building air leaks, and infrared cameras, which reveal hard-to-detect areas of where air is coming in and where insulation is needed. A major benefit of an audit is that it can help you discover the most cost-effective ways to reduce your home's energy use and reduce your utility bills. For example, if you think you need new energy efficient windows to lower your energy costs, an energy audit can help you decide whether this costly improvement is the best thing to do first, because sealing air leaks or adding insulation might actually be a less expensive way to save on your energy costs. Energy audits can also help make sure you get properly sized heating and cooling systems if you decide to replace them.

And if you do decide to get an energy audit, make sure you hire a home energy professional, such as a certified Home Performance with Energy Star trained auditor and contractor. If you want to assess the energy efficiency of your home, you can also use a variety of tools available online. Even if you do your own assessment, the only way you can be sure that you have found all the air leaks and insulation needs, is by having a professional do an energy audit and the work. Check with your utility provider for a list of certified auditors and contractors, your utility may also offer incentive programs to help pay for audits and work. PEPCO currently provides qualified customers with \$100 audits and up to \$2,000 in energy efficiency improvement rebates. (For information on, how to find an auditor, contractor, loans and rebate programs, go to: <http://montgomerycountymd.mygreenmontgomery.org/project/home-energy-audit-2/>)

### **10. Go to “MyGreenMontgomery.org” for more information and money saving programs!**

The website, <http://www.mygreenmontgomery.org> is offered by the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection and is supported by several County departments and agencies. This new site helps County residents find local programs, services, resources and answers to environmental questions all in one place. It has information on a variety of “green” living tips, such as energy and water saving, locations of farmer's markets, bike routes, “do it yourself” videos, and more! Check it out and find out how you can link into our local networks of support to get your “green” projects done today!

### **Emergency Preparedness.**

Michael Goldfarb, Project Manager for the Montgomery County Office of Emergency Management & Homeland Security, works on planning, community outreach and continuity plans. Goldfarb discussed various preparedness tips and techniques with Park Hills residents while emphasizing four basic steps:

1. Stay informed. Montgomery County has an emergency notification system called Alert Montgomery that is free and easy to use:

<https://alert.montgomerycountymd.gov/index.php?CCheck=1>

2. Make a plan. Be sure to have out-of-town contacts who can help serve as additional eyes and ears, as well as evacuation relocation spot.

3. Emergency kit = in your home and/or car. If your family includes children, include amusements for young ones. If your family includes pets, include pet items.

4. Prepare communities for emergencies. Institute neighborhood watch program; establish block captains for each street.

Other emergency preparedness tips:

= It is important to call Pepco daily when power is down on your block - Pepco relies on calls to determine problems even though they track outages in other ways.

= County suggests that you identify an out-of-area location (friend, family, motel, etc.) that you can go to as a safe haven in the event of an emergency that requires evacuation or extended power loss. County also suggests that you identify an out-of-town contact for all family members to call in the event of an emergency.

= Emergency kits: for adults, kids, pets, elderly – should be something one can grab easily if need to evacuate home quickly, basically, 3-day food/water/meds/clothes & personal grooming supplies plus first-aid kit. Also, consider two kits – in one, put everything you will need to stay where you are and make it on your own, and in the other, a lightweight, smaller version you can take with you if you have to get away.

= Water: For extended periods without power in your household, plan for one gallon of water per person per day.

= Food: Store food that won't go bad and does not have to be heated or cooked. Choose foods that your family will eat, including protein or fruit bars, dry cereal or granola, canned foods and juices, peanut butter, dried fruit, nuts, crackers, and baby foods. Remember to pack a manual can opener, cups and eating utensils.

= Basic supplies: flashlight, battery powered radio, extra batteries, first aid kit, utility knife, local maps, toilet paper, feminine hygiene products, soap, garbage bags, moist towelettes, whistle, plastic sheeting, wrench/pliers to turn off utilities, duct tape, extra cash, and identification.

### **Adjournment.**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 pm.

Respectively submitted.

Chris Richardson, PHCA Secretary.