

Park Hills Civic Association General Meeting – Summary

The Park Hills Civic Association (PHCA) held a General Meeting on **Wednesday, June 19, 2013** at the Silver Spring Civic Building beginning at 7:30 pm.

Attendees:

Deanna Anderson; Jean Cavanaugh; Mary Clive; Anne Edwards; Robert Fair; Sandra Fair; Paul Guinnessy; Michele Habicht; Steve Habicht; Ben Lourie; Christine Arnold-Lourie; Matthew McClain; Lorin Obler; Karen Roper; Chris Richardson; Bruce Segal; Mary Margaret Stacy; Stephanie Subramanian, Aaron Weintraub.

Guests:

Valerie Ervin - Montgomery County Council Member.
Richard Romer – Policy Analyst for Council Member Ervin.
Joseph Eyong - Aide to Council Member Ervin.
Mike Madden - Maryland Transit Administration, Purple Line Project Manager.
Anne Root - Bikeshare Program Manager, Montgomery County Dept. of Transportation.
Paul DeMaio - Metro Bike Founder/Capital BikeShare Developer.

Secretary's Report.

= Chris Richardson reported that on March 13, 2013 the Park Hills Civic Association held a General Meeting at the Silver Spring International Middle School. Dan Sheridan, Senior Manager with the Montgomery County of Transportation, spoke to residents about the County's efforts to install a sidewalk on the north side of Dale Drive from Hartford Avenue to Mansfield Road and the unexpected hazards that have added time to this construction project. Jessica McFadden, mom/blogger/writer behind the popular website, A Parent in Silver Spring, generously shared her hard-earned knowledge, tricks and tips with respect to family-friendly resources in Silver Spring and throughout the DC area.

Treasurer's Report.

Alan Bowser, Treasurer, reported a balance of \$805.70 in the Civic Association's checking account.

Park Hills BBQ.

This year's big summer bash will take place on Sunday, September 1st at the Dale Drive Neighborhood Park.

Purple Line Update.

According to the Purple Line website, Fall 2013 saw the completion of Preliminary Engineering, Record of Decision & Begin Final Design. MTA will be working hard to meet this Summer's deadline for publication and review of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). Maryland's approval of the gas tax hike is good news for Purple Line funding, but Gary Erenrich of the County's DOT advised me that Purple Line watchers will want to see the outcome of this August's Consolidated Transportation Program, as there are many tough transportation-related decisions to make with limited funding available. In the wake of MTA's April 15th public meeting at the Silver Spring International Middle School, area residents finally learned where MTA wants to locate its Traction Power Substation – aboveground on Wayne at Greenbrier Drive. To that end, a group of long-time Purple Line watchers and residents from three adjacent civic associations along Wayne Avenue have assembled a solutions-oriented working group – The Residential Wayne Avenue Working Group for Purple Line Design – that is committed to working with MTA and elected officials on impacts, mitigations, and design issues with

the overall aim of making Wayne Avenue a showcase for MTA's pioneering work putting light rail in single-family residential community.

Upcoming Purple Line Meeting.

You are cordially invited to a public meeting held by the Residential Wayne Avenue Working Group for Purple Line Design to discuss Purple Line issues and concerns related to the Wayne Avenue corridor. Meeting details provided below:

Thursday, July 25, 2013
Silver Spring Civic Building
One Veteran's Place
Silver Spring, MD 20910
7:30 – 9:00 pm

Update and Q & A with Montgomery County Council Member, Valerie Ervin.

Montgomery County Council Member, Valerie Ervin, is in her fifth year of service to her District 5 constituents. Council Member Ervin acknowledged receiving a number of questions and concerns from Park Hills residents and decided to focus the first part of the meeting on an issue of particular concern to the community: transportation. Ervin explained that one of her first acts as a member of the County Council was to inquire with the County Executive as to why the county did not participate with Bike Share. Ervin then met with our then-congressional representative, Donna Edwards, serves on the federal Transportation Committee, who helped the county procure grant funds to help finance the program. Thus, Ervin is pleased to announce that the county is about ready to launch Bike Share. Additionally, 2015 is the anticipated date for completing Silver Spring's connection with the Metropolitan Branch Trail so that our county has a biking link with DC and Virginia. Since the county has too little by way of biking infrastructure, Ervin informed residents that money is now in the capital budget for striping the road and other formal considerations for keeping bicyclists and pedestrians safe.

Anne Root, BikeShare Program Manager, then explained that BikeShare receives its funding from the Maryland Department of Transportation, as well as the Federal Transit Administration, Montgomery County and a few developers. Root pointed out how impressive it is to launch a cutting-edge program in a time of recession that allows us to keep pace with BikeShare programs in DC (the first major US city to launch a commercial bike-sharing program) and Alexandria. Paul DeMaio, Metro Bike Founder and principal organizer behind Capital BikeShare, then discussed the methodology and criteria used by the county for picking the stations used to provide this biking service.

Council Member Ervin then took the floor to address constituent concerns and questions. With respect to the issue of sidewalks in the neighborhood – a complex issue, since even though many residential streets in the county do not have them and they are an important tool in addressing pedestrian safety issues, some neighborhoods are vehemently opposed to them – Ervin stated that the county has already invested a significant amount of money in sidewalk infrastructure and evidence of that investment is already visible in our part of Silver Spring and beyond. Ervin was happily surprised to discover that sidewalks installed on parts of Dale that had been negatively anticipated ended up being embraced by local residents. On a somewhat related note Ervin stated that, in response to a resident's concern, traffic calming measures on Dale Drive have been mapped out for the whole road by the County's Department of Transportation and are in a queue waiting to be implemented, adding that she is also working with the County Executive to make sure that funding will be there to execute these projects. With respect to a question about pedestrian safety on Wayne - in particular, trouble spots at Fenton Street and the

crosswalk front of the Springvale retirement facility that needs to be more prominently marked - Ervin instructed residents with pedestrian safety/traffic concerns to contact her office via Rich Romer (Richard.Romer@montgomerycountymd.gov), who will make formal note and communicate these concerns with Department of Transportation, who then prioritizes their response to county needs as a whole. Ervin acknowledged the considerable number of pedestrian trouble spots countywide, including some involving fatalities, while at the same time asserting that much money and effort has been exerted at the county level to address the vital issue (sometimes literally) of pedestrian safety. The introduction of BikeShare to the commuter traffic environment, Ervin pointed out, will bring with it related traffic safety issues – to which point, Paul DeMaio then highlighted the quality of front/rear lighting (and their ruggedness of construction) on BikeShare vehicles. Also with regard to public safety, Ervin reported that even though the county is enduring seven years of a sustained economic downturn, the council has been able to increase the size of its police force, having recently put money in the budget for police recruit classes.

Mike Madden, MTA’s Project Director for the Purple Line, then spoke to the public safety ramifications of MTA’s decision to take 2 of 6 lanes on University Boulevard and dedicate them to the Purple Line light rail. That is, by working within the road’s current width - and not adding more lanes to retain 3 lanes of car/bus traffic in each direction – a recent state highway study conducted over the course of a year showed that “University Boulevard itself could operate just as well with 2 lanes of traffic in each direction instead of 3 and the Purple Line, and a lot of that is because of pedestrian safety. Instead of people having three lanes of traffic and a light rail track to cross, they only have two lanes to travel and a light rail. Because of that reduced width, we were able to provide wider sidewalks, refuge areas and green space, especially around stations whereas we weren’t able to do that before.” This decision - which also eliminated the need for a significant number of property acquisitions and displacements (19 businesses or so) - was made after long and careful consideration – which has resulted in studies that have shown, interestingly, that over the past 20 years traffic on University Boulevard has actually been decreasing.

With respect to the Silver Spring Transit Center and its construction problems, Ervin distributed an April 11, 2013 memo to David Dise, Director of the County’s Department of General Services, asking him to follow up on several items such as (1) the reason why it took so long to discover the absence of post-tensioning in the concrete flooring; (2) identifying who is responsible for engineering review and why the failure to identify the absence of post-tensioning; (3) providing copies of inspector’s reports; (4) soliciting ideas to improve the quality of commuters while remediation efforts are occurring; (5) ascertaining process for adjudication of disputes between the County and its contractors; (6) assurance from DGS that that issues fundamental to the Silver Spring Transit Center project do not occur in other county projects. WMATA, having recently voiced their concern over the extent of cracking in the concrete foundation, has announced publicly their reluctance to assume responsibility for the maintenance of this facility until testing has confirmed the structural integrity and safety of the transit center. WMATA’s concern, which Ervin feels to be understandable, is how much money it will take to repair the transit center so that it can sustain a 50-year lifespan as originally promised. Furthermore, and of even greater concern, is WMATA’s current position that remediation does not deliver a building WMATA formally agreed to.

Ervin also distributed a January 7, 2013 memo to State Senator, Jamie Raskin, asking the state delegation to explore potential changes to the State’s stormwater management regulations governing development review and approval, primarily so as to provide developers an incentive to preserve mature trees. Currently, developers are not given credit for saving trees in the stormwater plan review process.

Additionally, Ervin distributed – in addition to an 8-page FAQ on zoning - an April 2, 2013 memo to Nancy Floreen, Committee Chair for PHED (Planning, Housing & Economic Development) that addressed the Zoning Ordinance Rewrite Process. Ervin’s memo urged the PHED Committee to consider the many complicated changes carefully to avoid rushed decisions, recommended that the Council agree on a set of core values based on the end state of the desired outcomes, and identified the following key issues for review:

- First and foremost, do no harm.
- Priorities should focus on zones and land uses that need improvement versus those that are already working.
- Recommendations need to be developed to accommodate interim uses.
- More focus needs to be placed on the history of the Council’s prior zoning decisions, which are embodied in the existing Zoning Ordinance, and the county’s land use planning culture.
- Regulatory structure should be consistent.
- The wholesale application of changes may be difficult.

With respect to the Purple Line, Ervin distributed copies of County Resolution #16-1470 - Approval of the Planning Board Draft for the Purple Line Functional Plan (from July 2010). The main thrust of this resolution is to approve the Planning Board Draft for the Purple Line Functional Master Plan, but with the following revisions including (among many other things):

- (1) on pg. 31 to add the following text under “Potential Dale Drive Station” = “There is no intent or desire to change the zoning in the single-family residential neighborhoods in and around the Wayne Avenue/Dale Drive intersection, if a station is established at this location in the future.”;
- (2) on pg. 31 change the text so that it reads, “Separate left turn lanes will be provided where warranted to accommodate turning traffic [at signalized intersections, except the westbound to southbound left at Dale Drive, if the Dale Drive station is built].;
- (3) in the Silver Spring Green Trail section, revise the text so that it reads, “The combined trail and buffer along this segment will be at least 13 feet wide [with a minimum eight-foot wide trail and a minimum five-foot wide buffer].”

With respect to the information circulated in April 2013 at the Purple Line Open House at the Silver Spring International Middle School that MTA intends to locate a traction power substation aboveground on Wayne Avenue near Cloverfield Road, Ervin expressed displeasure at being informed this late in the planning process - a legitimate and important point given that the FEIS indicates MTA to have finalized its location decisions for all the traction power substations back in September 2012.

Richard Romer, policy analyst for Council Member Ervin, added the following information (in an email the next day) with respect to certain discussion items from the meeting:

- Please attend Tuesday’s BikeShare community input meeting at the Silver Spring Fire Station: http://www6.montgomerycountymd.gov/apps/News/press/PR_details.asp?PrID=9548
- Valerie has been in touch with DOT about additional bike racks on Ellsworth and pedestrian safety measures on Wayne:
- Dale Drive sidewalk (Mansfield to Hartford) was recently completed at a cost of \$5.3 million: http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OMB/Resources/Files/omb/pdfs/fy13/cip_pdf/500904.pdf
- Dale Drive facility planning to begin in FY15 (after next summer) at a cost of \$1.1 million: http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OMB/Resources/Files/omb/pdfs/fy13/cip_pdf/509337.pdf

- Valerie will stay on top of the Purple Line traction substation issue with MTA.
- Valerie is looking into legislative practices from other jurisdictions regarding protecting neighborhoods from upzoning, such as Arlington County.
- FYI (in response to resident query) - State law dictates that the Council cannot make any land use decisions in an election year from Nov. 1 to when the next Council is reinstated; this prevents lame duck councilmembers from making lasting land use decisions.

Finally, residents may go to the following link to read Highlights of the Fiscal Year 2014 Budget that was passed in June 2013 and review the progress made by County Council during this recent period:
<http://archive.constantcontact.com/fs188/1101371614257/archive/1113527624731.html>

Adjournment.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 pm.

Respectively submitted.

Chris Richardson, PHCA Secretary.