Town Council Notes

An unusually icy night kept turnout low at the January 8 Town Council Meeting. In attendance were three of the four Council Members, the Mayor, the outgoing Town Clerk Stacey Malmgren, and the incoming Town Clerk Susan Ladani. Only a handful of residents braved the ice; Council Member Long wisely did not.

Town Business
First up on the docket: to swear in the new Town Clerk Susan Ladani. She started at the beginning of the year overlapping with Stacey Malmgren’s final weeks. The Council and attendees thanked Ms. Malmgren and her family for their service to the Town.

Nancy Cohen, one of the owners of 31 Wellesley Circle, came to the Council with plans for construction of a new 5,000+ square foot house on the lot. She was requesting approval to use right-of-way land for cutting a new driveway. The house will have a Cornell Avenue address as its entrance will be on that street. Ms. Cohen’s husband Alex Boyar, a developer, expects to begin excavation and tree removal around the beginning of March and building in April. Ms. Cohen says that they plan to live in the home. The Council took no action but intends to review the plans.

Each year, the Town makes a contribution to GEPPAC, the Glen Echo Park Partnership for Arts and Culture, which manages the cultural programming at the Park. This year, Mayor Polak proposed that there not be an official Town gift. Instead, Council Members could donate personally if they chose. There was debate on this topic, with Council Member Stiglitz arguing that the Town has always given and that it was budgeted for this year. He and Council Member Costello said that we should make the gift again this year, but that it could be up for debate for next year. Council Member Spealman said it could be wise to maintain the gift to keep our voice being heard on Park matters. Mayor Polak is now on the GEPPAC board and said that he will report back regularly on whether the Town is getting enough bang for its buck, or rather 2,000 bucks, which the Council approved.

Money matters contin-
ued with discussion of the purchase of a new laptop for the Town Clerk. Mr. Stiglitz and Ms. Costello felt strongly that the $700 requested by the Mayor needed to come from somewhere in the budget. While the Council seemed to agree that a new laptop should be purchased, it wasn’t ready to give approval until those funds had been found.

Glen Echo Park Report
National Park Service representative Aaron La Rocca sent in a written update for the Council, which it reviewed. The NPS has identified large rocks that will line the field along Oxford Road, replacing the posts and chains that were removed last fall after several people complained about tripping over them. A barrier is needed there to keep cars parked in the field during large Park events from driving straight off onto Oxford. The rocks will be coming from Spout Run Parkway, which is experiencing a rock slide. Also mentioned: The upgrades to the roof and fire suppression system at the Clara Barton House are scheduled to be completed in late February; And no update on the Glen Echo Park Partnership Agreement between the Park and the County, but once it is in place there will be “little to no change” in Park operations.

Committee Progress
The Liveable Town group has launched a survey to gauge resident interest in various improvements and activities, and its first family movie night is January 27 with the movie *Babe*. Ms. Costello noted that the rental fee for use of the Town Hall should be waived for Town events like this one. This led to a lengthy discussion about just what type of use falls under this umbrella. The example used as a type of event that might warrant a waived or discounted fee was a once-a-month Daisy troop meet-
ing, led by Town resident Angela Hirsch. Mr. Speelman noted that the Council is allowed to simply vote to waive the fee on a case by case basis and proposed doing just that for the Daisy troop. Mayor Polak countered that the Town needs a formal policy that considers elevator issues and cleaning fees, and protects against claims of bias or unfairness. This topic was punted to the February meeting.

Holly Shimizu, a member of the Town’s Environmental group, introduced a draft of a resolution to begin the process for Sustainable Maryland Certification, which she wrote about in the January Echo. The Council asked Ms. Shimizu to be the leader of our Town’s Green Team, and she accepted. The team already includes Ms. Costello, Ms. Long, and Tim Bragan, but Ms. Shimizu will be looking for other interested residents to join. Once the team is in place, they will create an action plan. That plan must include at least two of the following: community gardens; municipal energy audits; municipal carbon footprint; evaluation of current purchasing practices; green purchasing policy; vendor preference statement; stormwater management program; or creation of a watershed plan. Ms. Shimizu plans to line up a speaker on sustainable gardens later this winter at Town Hall.

The Land Advisory Committee will be conducting a charrette at Town Hall open to all in order to get resident input to the report regarding the development of Vassar Circle specifically and Town land usage in general that the group submitted to the Council in November. The report is available at GlenEcho.org under the Town Government tab. The charrette will be on the morning of February 10.

**Town Expenses**

The updated Town expenses for December are as follows: $13,108 to Katchmark Construction (roofer for Town Hall); $6,200 to Elegant Recycling & Refuse Services; $5,625 to Lee’s Tree Service; $4,513 to Bolt Legal; $4,107 to Sun Trust Bankcard; $2,017 to A.B. Viens (paving Town streets); $1,283 to Chapel Valley Landscaping; and $1,050 to G & H Welding (repairing the wrought iron fence at Town Hall after a vehicle drove into it). — EMILY PARSONS

**NEW TO TOWN**

As for Susan, she moved to the area over 35 years ago and has lived with her husband Mel in various homes around Bethesda, including 11 years in Bannockburn. Her two children attended Bannockburn ES, Pyle, and Whitman. Her son Austin studies mechanical engineering at the University of Alabama, and her daughter Ashley is a junior at Whitman. Susan had a long career in sales—Gucci and Hewlett Packard—and then worked at Verizon in infrastructure and network planning. She left her job there in 2011 to be a completely engaged and present parent in her kids’ lives during those often-bumpy teen years.

In addition to the clerk position, Susan volunteers at Whitman and donates time as an interior design consultant for seniors looking to downsize. Susan also loves hiking the Billy Goat Trail with her family and is an avid cook. — EMILY PARSONS

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*A charrette is an intensive planning session where citizens, designers and others collaborate on a vision for development.*
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This month, rather than sharing the happy news of newcomers to Glen Echo, we’re saying goodbye to two long-time Glen Echo families.

**Joci and Karim Khalifa**, beloved by Town children for their gigantic annual Halloween spiderweb, are moving to New York over the coming months. After 18 years with Bethesda-based Marriott Corporation, Karim has taken a job with Sidewalk Labs and will start in February. Located in the Hudson Yards area of Manhattan, Sidewalk is the “urban innovation division” of Alphabet, Google’s parent company, Karim will join Karim after finishing the school year at St. John’s Episcopal Preschool, where she has taught for 18 years. She has also taught children’s yoga classes at Simon Says Yoga.

While they haven’t decided where to live in New York, the Khalifas are excited to be close to their adult children, twins Zack and Aleya, who live in the city. Joci and Karim both grew up near New York, and Joci’s parents still live in Connecticut, so moving there feels natural.

The Khalifas came to Glen Echo in 2000 when their kids were finishing elementary school. Apart from a stint in Germany—during which they completed a full renovation of their home—they’ve been here ever since.

The Khalifas will be renting their home in Glen Echo, starting over the summer. Their tenants, Nina and Fargo Thompson are no strangers to town—daughter Holly Sheldon lives around the corner on Yale Avenue, and Nina’s sister and brother-in-law are Holly and Osamu Shimizu.

The Khalifas will miss Glen Echo’s close-knit community, the impromptu mid-street gatherings that happen on warm days, and the easy access to nature. We’ll miss Karim’s quirky machines-cum-artwork, seeing Joci and goldendoodle Lola race around the field, and of course, those spiders. Visit us often—maybe Glen Echo can be a small-town testing ground for Sidewalk’s innovations!

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**Angie and Peter Zeidenberg** came to Glen Echo in 1996 as newlyweds, spending the months leading up to their wedding pouring sweat equity into the then-two-bedroom, one-bath Sears house on Wellesley Circle. Since then, their family grew to include Zach, now a freshman at Clark University in Worcester, Mass., and Rachel, a junior at Whitman. Angie is the director of Bannockburn Nursery School, and as such is a veritable celebrity to the many BNS alumni in town. Peter is an attorney and a frequent, thoughtful voice on radio and television news on legal matters ranging from the Mueller investigation to Chinese espionage.

Many of Angie’s fondest memories of Glen Echo center around raising kids here. When Zach and Rachel were babies, she’d meet up for coffee with fellow new moms Julia Wilson, Dia Costello, and Michelle Brafman, among others. As the kids grew up, playdates moved to the park. With increasing independence, her kids raced around Town on bikes, explored the creek, got slurpees at the 7-Eleven, and now can take the bus independently to Bethesda and beyond. Angie has loved watching that progression to independence, while enjoying the warm community and friends she made along the way.

The Zeidenbergs aren’t going far—just to Bradley Boulevard in Bethesda. The move to a larger home, at a time in life when others might have considered downsizing, was prompted by family changes. Peter’s mother, who always hosted their large and growing extended family for holidays, passed away recently. Angie and Peter wanted a home that could help maintain the tradition and accommodate future family gatherings.

Hosting in Glen Echo was full of spirit, but required taking over the Feringa-Johnsons’ home to house everyone!

Angie, who thought she would never leave Glen Echo, assures us that she’ll be back for walks, visits, and Town parties. “We’ll crash everything there is to crash,” she promises.

—ANGELA HIRSCH
Yes, a winter garden can be beautiful! The key is to plant the right trees, shrubs, and perennials for year-round viewing pleasure. Varieties of winterberry holly (Ilex verticillata) have firepower, with their brilliant red berries always adding excitement to a winter garden, and they also bring birds. Our unpredictable weather has resulted in confusion for plants—they have to be flexible in order to survive. The following are a few of my favorite winter stars.

A bright feature for a winter garden is the southern magnolia tree (Magnolia grandiflora), which has large shiny leaves and a sturdy appearance. Although native to the Southeastern United States, these plants have been hardy and thriving in this region for over 35 years. The Morris Arboretum in Philadelphia sent me a gift a few years ago of a cultivar known as Edith Bogue. It has been happy in my garden and looks outstanding. As an evergreen tree, it is especially useful as a screen, thereby creating a sense of privacy in your garden. If you need to manage the size or shape of your tree, it will take pruning extremely well. Magnolias arose early in the evolution of plants, literally millions of years ago, before the existence of bees. Thus, this tree adapted to pollination by beetles. Throughout the summer, magnolias produce stunning, large, velvety white flowers which have a refreshing citrus scent.

Bark can be a highlight of the winter garden. Observe the exfoliating bark of our beautiful river birch trees (Betula nigra) and crape myrtles (Lagerstroemia sp.) A lesser known plant with unique bark is the small understory tree or large shrub known as snakebark maple (Acer pensylvanicum). The name snakebark refers to the beautiful whitish, distinctive striations on the greenish bark. In nature, it is found in the rocky forests of Eastern United States and adjacent Canada. In our garden, it must have shade and be planted in a moist, well-drained acidic soil. ‘Erythrocladum’ is a fascinating form of the plant, because the branches turn a glowing salmon red in winter and spring. Unfortunately, this particular type of snakebark is hard to find because it is so difficult to propagate.

One of the best perennials for the winter garden is the hellebore. Certain hellebores are known for poking both leaves and blooms right through a carpet of snow. Since hellebores have become a rage in the horticultural scene, there are many new hybrids available. Helleborus ‘Penny’s Pink,’ named for the famous British plantswoman Penelope Hobhouse, is my absolute favorite. The plant is gorgeous throughout the year due to the attractive foliage and lovely flower. The leaves are a mix of pink and...
silver grey-green in a handsome pattern. Its deep pink flowers are long blooming and visually splendid from every angle. These plants grow about 20” tall and wide. They need shade and soil that is rich and moist. I found these plants at a local garden center and have been pleasantly surprised by their performance and striking beauty.

An evergreen ground cover that grows well in winter is the strawberry saxifrage (Saxifraga stolonifera). Its delightful patterned and textured leaves will grace the ground and spread through the shade garden because plantlets form at the stolon tips and grow where they fall, similar to the way strawberries grow. It grows gracefully on rocks and around moist areas but is not really particular about where it grows.

Another winter winner is the sacred lily (Rohdea japonica), a superb evergreen from Japan, which grows about 2 feet high with strong strap-shaped leaves. Plants appear robust and happy all winter and often retain their beautiful red fruit nestled in the foliage. Sacred lily tolerates dry shade conditions and is easy to grow. I have one from a rare plant auction that cost a small fortune because of the white variegation that edges the leaves.

If you like smaller delicate beauties, then snowdrops (Galanthus sp.) may be the winter blooming plant for you. Snowdrops are often the first little bulbs to emerge with their pendulous white flowers on nodding heads that are bold enough to bloom right through snow. They are only 3 to 6 inches tall, so you need to make an effort to notice them in the garden, but once they pop up, they will bring a smile to your face as they mark the first sign of spring. I have friends in the plant world who collect many species and varieties of snowdrops. One friend even travels to England each year to buy new selections. A great source for buying snowdrops and Penny’s Pink hellebore is Carolyn’s Shade Garden, a nursery in Pennsylvania (carolynsshadegardens.com).

—HOLLY SHIMIZU

Our birds experience difficult challenges, especially on the coldest days during winter periods. Their problem is finding sufficient food without extensive foraging to give them enough heat and energy to survive—even just overnight. This is when the birds benefit from a little help from their human friends. This also is why February has been declared National Wild Bird Feeding Month by the Wild Bird Centers of America, based right here in Glen Echo. Since receiving Congressional endorsement in 1993 and having it listed in Chase’s Calendar of Annual Events, we have been creating coast-to-coast recognition for the observance. As winter goes on, natural food supplies such as seeds that matured in late summer are used up. While migratory insect- or worm-eating birds have gone south, many of the seed-eaters remain, including cardinals, finches, titmice, woodpeckers, chickadees, and sparrows. Even in the worst weather, birds will find much of their daily rations in the wild. But they always are searching for food and remember where it is too. That’s why it is important for feeders to be kept clean and filled during these colder months.

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I know many of our Town residents partake of the myriad fun and educational offerings in Glen Echo Park. As a member of the Glen Echo Park Partnership for Arts and Culture (called the Partnership or GEPPAC) Board of Directors, I see a lot of positive change ahead for this national treasure!

The Park already offers great programming including social dancing in the Spanish Ballroom, art classes in the Yellow Barn, glassblowing, art glass, silversmithing, pottery, and photography classes. Over 400 offerings are available for you to polish your artistic skills. We also have the Puppet Company and Adventure Theater-MTC, Washington Conservatory of Music, the GEP Aquarium, and numerous classes for children. The many free programs in the Park include Carousel Day, the Washington Folk Festival, a summer concert series, the Labor Day Art show, and events to celebrate our history (Then and Wow), as well as monthly art shows of local artists (Art Walk in the Park). The children’s playground, historic picnic area, and beloved Dentzel Carousel provide fun opportunities for families. The popular Praline Café offers food and drink and a place to watch the world go by. The Park is in many ways our “town square.”

Some of you may be curious about the Park, how it operates, and what is coming in the future. The Partnership was established in 2002 under a formal agreement between the National Park Service (NPS) and Montgomery County and fulfills many responsibilities, including managing programs and buildings, planning public events, and overseeing property management. The NPS operates and maintains the Clara Barton House (which is separate from Glen Echo Park) and the parking lots. NPS also approves and oversees all major building improvements on the site.

Recently through funds from both NPS and Montgomery County, the Spanish Ballroom roof was replaced. We are also replacing equipment and painting the Bumper Car Pavilion with a grant from Montgomery County. This will make it a more appealing space for dances and event rentals. We are planning to install a new fire suppression system and replace the roof on the historic 1921 Dentzel Carousel with funding from the State of Maryland, Montgomery County, and NPS. The Partnership is responsible for interfacing with the Park’s resident groups (called co-operators), the tenants that produce many of the Park’s programs and also offer programs like classes and festivals. A central office and a web site provide information on programs, scheduling, classes, and events.

As a 501c3 non-profit organization we raise funds to serve the public through affordable and free programs and keep the facilities in good condition. Our board of 20 individuals including a Town representative (new Mayor Polak) is working to implement a new strategic plan that will add more programs and update facilities. Recently, the Park partnered with the University of Maryland School of Architecture. Students spent a semester developing options for long-term improvements to the Park including way-finding, new buildings, and better use of existing spaces. The next steps will involve reaching out to stakeholders, including the Town residents and other park patrons, to determine what they would like to see for the future.

This year we are celebrating the Partnership’s 15th anniversary.

For those interested in learning more about the Park history, the publication Glen Echo Park: A Story of Survival, written by Richard Cook and Debbie Lange, is a wonderful compendium of the history the Park ranging back to the 1890s. For more information about the Park, its programs, and management, please see our website www.glenechopark.org.

—MARSHA SHANNON
We are having a **party** in February to celebrate the hard work of all our **Echo volunteers and contributors**. I’d like to extend invitations to any residents who are interested in learning more about the volunteer opportunities with our publication. If you would like to become involved, email Emily at TheEchoEditor@gmail.com.

**Virginia** Governor Terry McAuliffe’s official portrait now hanging in the state Capitol was painted by **Gavin Glakas**, who paints and teaches at the **Yellow Barn Studio** in Glen Echo Park. Glakas said he began painting the portrait in April, working off and on until he finished in early January. “We could’ve set it at Monticello, with the setting sun in the background,” said Glakas, whose paintings also hang in the U.S. Capitol and other prestigious locations. “But the governor wanted to talk about work—he wanted to be at work. So I knew we had to set it in his office.” In the portrait, McAuliffe stands behind his desk with his hand over documents on “the restoration of rights,” Glakas said, a reference McAuliffe’s restoration of voting rights to about 170,000 felons who had served their prison time.

**As you clear out closets and basements to make a fresh start in the new year, save your stuff to donate to Walt Whitman High School’s annual yard sale for charity this month!** Bring any books, toys, games, small appliances, sports gear, and more to Whittier Woods at 7300 Whittier Boulevard on February 9 from 2:30–5 PM or February 10 from 8:30–11 AM to donate to the sale (no underclothing or damaged items, please). The yard sale will be open on February 10 from 11 AM–3:30 PM. All proceeds will be used to help rebuild the Jost Van Dyke Primary School and surrounding community in the Caribbean that were devastated by hurricanes Irma and Maria. In addition, unsold items are donated to AmVets. Please contact Dana Gurland danargurland@gmail.com with any questions.

**Thank you for the generosity of our residents once again as the S.O.M.E. gift drive was another success!**

**Carol Barton**’s December residency at the Virginia Center for Creative Arts in Amherst, Virginia, was both productive and inspirational. The 25 artists-in-residence included Charles Graeber, author of **The Good Nurse**, and D.C. essayist Randon Noble Billings whose book **Be With Me Always** will be out in 2019. Carol did a number of paintings inspired by the Shenandoah Valley landscape and by the supermoon. You can view her work on her new website www.carolbartonpaintings.com.
In early January, the alarm at the Clara Barton House went off for a couple of nights getting the attention of nearby residents. The National Park Service reported that the cause was a frozen pipe which burst, but that luckily there was little damage.

The extreme roller coaster temps in January caused huge potholes to open up on the Clara Barton Parkway, which created unsafe driving conditions. The NPS made an emergency decision to close the parkway from the Glen Echo turnaround to Chain Bridge Road on January 24. The rerouted traffic caused huge delays as people made their way that day into DC via MacArthur Boulevard. “Our own” NPS rep Aaron La Rocca was on the Channel 4 news to discuss it.

Real Estate Report
The Zeidenberg home at 23 Wellesley Circle listed at $1,195,000 began having open houses in mid-January. Built in 1930, it was a Crescent-model Sears house. The commercial property at 6110 Oberlin Avenue, which has come down to $1,800,000, is the only other active listing at press time. The 3 bedroom/2 bath home at 47 Wellesley Circle has been rented for $2,500/month.

Glen Echo Town Hall Events
FSGW English Country Dance, Wednesdays, February 7, 14, 21, 28 8–10:30 PM, free to Town residents
February 10 9–9:30AM coffee, 9:30–11:30 AM, charette to discuss the Town Land Advisory Committee report, open to all residents

Local Events
February 10 11 AM–3:30 PM, Walt Whitman High School’s annual yard sale for charity

Glen Echo Park Activities
February 2, 9, 16, 23 11 AM–1 PM, Animal story time at the aquarium, for ages 2–5, standard entry fees apply
February 11 3–5 PM, The Folklore Society of Greater Washington presents a Family Dance in the Spanish Ballroom’s back room, $5

The Puppet Co. www.thepuppetco.org; 301-634-5380
Tales of Beatrix Potter through February 11
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