

TOWN OF GLEN ECHO
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
May 10, 2010

ATTENDANCE: Debbie Beers, Mayor
Nancy Long, Councilmember
Eve Arber, Councilmember
Dan Macy, Councilmember
Steve Matney, Councilmember
Cathie Polak, Clerk-Treasurer

VISITORS: Polly Angelakis, Site Manager, Glen Echo Park (GEP)
Kevin Brandt, Superintendent,
C&O Canal National Historical Park
Jim McGunnigle, Echo Reporter
Matt Stiglitz, Resident
Jack Reeder, Resident
Phyllis Fordham, Resident
Raya Bodnarchuk, Resident
Anna Bayer, Resident
Julian Weichel, Interested Citizen
Carol Weichel, Interested Citizen

Mayor Beers opened the Council meeting at 8 p.m.

GLEN ECHO PARK REPORT

GEP Site Manager Polly Angelakis reported that two large events are scheduled in GEP:

- June 5-6: Annual Folk Festival presented by the Folklore Society of Greater Washington (FSGW);
- June 26-27: Montgomery County's Heritage Days celebration including a special exhibition marking the 50th anniversary of the protests that led to the integration of GEP.

Ms. Angelakis requested advance notice for future street repair work on Oxford Road. Mayor Beers said the Town did not notify GEP of recent changes to the speed bumps on Oxford Road because she considered the work within the intent of the original permit. The issue came up because the permit expired December 31, 2009, and the work was done after that date due to the onset of cold weather.

Councilmember Long inquired about the temporary speed bumps which appear to be nailed into the entrance road to the Park's parking area. Ms. Angelakis explained that GEPPAC put in the temporary speed bumps to slow cars before they cross the vehicle counters. The speed bumps were to be installed with adhesive, not permanently fixed to the road because water can seep in around the attachments and cause the road to deteriorate.

Councilmember Long asked about the trees to be planted in GEP this spring. The trees, to be planted in mid-May, will be different species of Oak.

Councilmember Arber asked about wear on the older playground equipment. Ms. Angelakis said an inspector comes twice a year; replacement parts are on order after the last inspection. Mayor Beers asked if, other than replacement parts, all playground work is completed; there is still some repair to the playground surface to be done by the original contractor. Councilmember Arber asked if the smell from the new surface will dissipate with time. According to Ms. Angelakis, the shade provided by the new trees planted near the playground should help with the odors because heat from the sun on the playground surface appears to cause the odor problem.

Mayor Beers confirmed that no GEPPAC meeting will be held in May.

Matt Stiglitz asked if skateboards and scooters are banned from GEP when a child is accompanied by an adult. Ms. Angelakis clarified that both are banned from parks at all times. She noted that there are fewer skateboard/scooter violations in the Park and hopes the decline will continue once Montgomery County schools are closed for the summer.

Councilmember Long asked if Clara Barton NHS will be participating in the Heritage Day events. She suggested future interpretive themes the Park should consider include the presence of Native American life along the Potomac River, and the role of citizen activism in saving the Glen Echo Park site to be in public (NPS) ownership in perpetuity.

Phyllis Fordham said she is concerned about overflow parking from GEP. Family Day was a problem with Park visitors parking in the Town. She suggested vehicle ticketing as a possible deterrent. Ms. Fordham said the best solution is to bring cars directly in to GEP from MacArthur Boulevard, to make a new entrance and not use Oxford Road as a Park entry road. Ms. Angelakis said the NPS is trying to be accommodating; they will work with the Montgomery County police to direct Park patrons to the proper areas.

Council reported that there has been an issue of vehicles illegally parked along MacArthur Boulevard; residents find it difficult to safely leave town because these vehicles block the view of drivers trying to enter MacArthur Boulevard from Town streets.

C & O CANAL

Superintendent Kevin Brandt fielded questions from Council on the condition of the C & O Canal, specifically the area below the Town, locks 5-8. He explained that there is not enough funding to repair the recent damages to the C&O Canal noting that the repairs from storms as far back as 1996 are still being completed. Superintendent Brandt told Council how funds are juggled around to do the most urgent repairs and continue with the proactive projects that will protect the Canal and nearby communities.

Questions and comments:

- Mayor Beers said she is concerned about the condition of the Canal between Lock 5-8; there is no water in the Canal, trees are down in the Canal, and there is an odor from the stagnant water.
- Kevin Brandt: In 2008, hurricane Hannah caused a breach near Anglers Inn. Repair is estimated at \$3 million. A bypass was built with \$600,000 from emergency repair fund. The Park expected a promised matching grant that never materialized; Maryland did not have funds for the matching grant. There is no way to get water from Anglers down to Lock 5. There is no immediate solution.
- Beers: Asked about wildlife and the ecological issues; the area is a breeding ground for mosquitoes.
- Brandt: He does not have the authority to shuffle funds for the repairs to alleviate these problems. The Canal lost \$600,000 because of the blizzards of 2009-2010, and more funding because of the more urgent disasters caused by the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.
- Brandt: The 2010 breach caused problems from Lock 5 to Georgetown. Funds are being used to repair this lock (which is a feeder lock that allows water from the Potomac to enter the Canal) breach to protect Canal through Georgetown (an urban area).
- Beers: Who should the Town write to gain support for the Canal's request for funding?
- Brandt: Senator Cardin, Congressman VanHollen, and County Councilmember Berliner.
- Beers: What about at the state level?
- Brandt: This would be through District 16 delegates and senators. Maryland has been supportive but funds are spread thin from Georgetown to Cumberland.
- Macy: What about funds for the 2009-2010 storm clean-up and towpath repair?
- Brandt: The Canal has asked for immediate funds for these repairs; some or all could be funded in this, or next, fiscal year. There is a huge backlog of unfunded projects. The Canal has high visitation and has done well in getting funds. Compared to other National parks, the Canal has done well in acquiring funding.
- Beers: What about the dead trees, isn't that considered regular maintenance?
- Brandt: We hope to receive funds to clear the trees.
- Long: What is the procedure to remove large trees from the Canal?
- Brandt: It is easier now that there is no water in the Canal. Contractors are hungry for work; large tree removal will be contracted out. Small tree removal will be done from within.
- Beers: The Canal is such a popular park, it is a shame to have it in such poor condition.
- Brandt: Agrees; the Canal receives about \$.38 on each dollar of needed funding. The Park would have to receive a doubled budget to begin repairs. The Canal is fortunate to have large a volunteer program of time and funding. Communities can have a large impact on the Canal receiving funding.
- Beers: The Town is happy to write in support of funding.

- Brandt: A collective effort at all levels of the community is helpful. The NPS staff has dropped substantially since the floods of 1996.
- Long: What about maintenance staff? As retirements occur, are they being replaced?
- Brandt: Chief of Maintenance and the foreman have retired. These positions are being staffed from inside.
- Brandt: There are additional problems near Lock 8 where the Park is being aggressive about preventive work to protect the Park in Georgetown.
- Macy: How long has the Canal been a Park?
- Brandt: Since 1971.
- Macy: Is there a business plan for repair and maintenance?
- Brandt: Yes, the Park operates on a triage system where the most urgent problems are fixed first. The priorities change with every severe storm.
- Beers: Are you visiting with Cabin John Citizen Association?
- Brandt: I am trying to reconnect with communities along the Park.
- Beers: I was wondering if they have the same concerns.
- Brandt: One of Cabin John's concerns is the odor problem. WASA has broken ground for odor control structures, which should solve the problem.
- Matt Stiglitz: What is the work being done in the parking lot near Anglers Inn?
- Brandt: That is WASA's odor control building project.
- Stiglitz: Will they regrade the parking area at Anglers?
- Brandt: Funds have been earmarked for that repair since 1996. The project is waiting for completion of the odor control building. The Anglers lot is actually owned by The Army Corp of Engineers.
- Stiglitz: When will the project be completed?
- Brandt: November 2011.
- Beers: Could the stimulus funds provided to build boats for the canal be used for repair and clean-up? There is no water for the boats.
- Brandt: The Park is doing a study on how to get people to the Park without driving, using other modes of transportation; boats are included in the study.
- Long: Can you explain the operation and purpose of the Winch House at Great Falls?
- Brandt: Following the 1996 floods, a system similar to that at Dam 4 Winch House was designed to redirect the river flow and protect the widewater area by placing metal re-enforced boards by machine when there is a flood threat; this was previously done by hand. The Winch House stores these boards and the mechanism that lowers them in place. This is an example of a project with long-term benefits.

Council thanked Superintendent Brandt for coming. Superintendent Brandt said he was happy to attend the Town Council meeting and field questions and hear their concerns. Mayor Beers repeated the request for funding, and re-directed funding, to improve the area of the Canal near Glen Echo.

TOWN HALL USE

Councilmember Long reported that Anna Bayer is having an event on May 22. The event will show a movie and then feature live Flamenco dancing. Councilmember Long is concerned about the potential damage to the Town Hall floor surface from this style of dance which is characterized by heavy foot stomping. Anna Bayer agreed to have the dancers wear soft soled shoes and plan a different dance style.

There are two FSGW events this month: May 15 and May 17. Both events are open to Town residents.

The annual Town budget hearing will be held on May 24, 8 p.m

TOWN HALL MAINTENANCE

Council members Macy and Matney reported that they are still researching information on a new sound system for the Town Hall and are ready to make a recommendation. Councilmember Long asked if the multiple speakers planned come in white to lessen the visual impact of the equipment. The response was “probably not.”

ADDITIONS TO AGENDA

Phyllis Fordham reported that the rear gate to her driveway and yard has not worked since a new sidewalk was poured on Oxford Road. According to Ms. Fordham, the gate will not open after the area near the gate was regraded. Mayor Beers asked Ms. Fordham what she thought could be done. Ms. Fordham, noting that she is not an engineer, thinks the regrading and gate can be easily repaired. C/T Polak suggested asking Mark Peyton to perform the necessary repairs to the gate and surrounding area. Ms. Fordham was satisfied with that solution.

Council members Matney and Macy inquired about installing a community bulletin board in Town; they suggested putting one in the original Princeton Avenue park. Mayor Beers said that the idea of a community bulletin board was previously rejected because of maintenance concerns; remaining Council members agreed with Mayor Beers.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30.