

TOWN OF GLEN ECHO
Town Council Meeting
September 10, 2012

ATTENDANCE: Deborah Beers, Mayor,
Nancy Long, Councilmember
Eve Arber, Councilmember, absent
Steve Matney, Councilmember
Mark McCaffrey, Councilmember
Nicole Fraser, Clerk-Treasurer

VISITORS: Captain David Falcinelli, MCPD¹
Gary Johnson, MCDOT
Bruce Johnston, MCDOT
Yasamin Esmaili, MCDOT
Seraifi Sogand, MCDOT
Polly Angelakis, NPS Site Manager of GEP
Aaron LaRocca, NPS
Bonnie Whyte, The Echo reporter
Matt Stiglitz, Resident
Andrea Matney, Resident
John Barrett, Resident
Blair and Tisha Anderson, Residents
Andrew Barton, Boy Scout
James Montfort, Boy Scout
Stephen Hathaway, Resident
Andy Backus, Resident
Willem Polak, Resident
Phyllis Fordham, Resident and The Echo Editor
Ellen Leary, Resident
Nick Lambert, Resident

Mayor Beers called the meeting to order at 8:05 p.m.

MONTGOMERY POLICE

Captain David Falcinelli, Commander of the 2nd District of Bethesda, reported on recent crime trends in the division, residential burglaries are down 31% and auto thefts are down 13%. He reported that the string of car break-ins and thefts in Glen Echo and Bannockburn stopped after an arrest on the third night of the break-ins. There have been

¹ Abbreviations used in this document include EA (Environmental Assessment), GEP (Glen Echo Park), MCDOT (Montgomery County Department of Transportation) MOU (Memorandum of Understanding), NHS (National Historic Site), NHP (National Historical Park), NP (National Park) and NPS (National Park Service).

a series of robberies at the DC line in the Friendship Heights area, those too have stopped with an arrest of two suspects.

Mayor Beers told Captain Falcinelli that the town gets repeated resistance from the police department when asked to enforce abandoned autos and unregistered cars. The town attorney has worked on an MOU with other municipalities and she would like to see Glen Echo included so that the Town could expect enforcement by the MCPD for problems concerning abandoned vehicles and animal control. Captain Falcinelli said that he had not heard of the MOU's with other municipalities but did not see a reason why it not one could not be written. He asked the Mayor to provide documents.

Councilmember Matney said that another difficulty is parking enforcement. Captain Falcinelli said that across the district, staffing is not sufficient to handle requests for parking enforcement. However, to have success with parking complaints, he suggested providing your name and phone number in addition to information about the illegally parked vehicle.

Mayor Beers asked about the stop sign at Oxford Road and University Avenue. Captain Falcinelli suggested making the entrance to the GEP parking lot where the current parking lot exit is (*i.e.* two-way). Councilmember Matney said that was the original design for the GEP parking lot but it was not implemented. Ms. Angelakis said she would check into why this exit configuration was not adopted. Captain Falcinelli said that approval for a stop sign camera was unlikely given the current public opinion about speed and stoplight cameras.

Mayor Beers asked if people should call police about theft of minor items from vehicles. Captain Falcinelli said yes, a report should be completed online.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION: SHARED USE PATH

Ms. Yasamin Esmaili of the Montgomery County Department of Transportation gave an overview of the shared-use path project. Begun in 2003 as the bikeway improvement project, the shared-use path starts at Old Angler's Inn and proceeds to the DC line, 7.3 miles with the intent to increase safety for pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists and to have a calming effect on traffic. Public meetings and hearings have been held and a preliminary plan was presented in 2006 to communities for feedback. The project has been broken into three components; Glen Echo is within the middle section (from Interstate 495 to Oberlin Avenue). MacArthur Boulevard will be narrowed from 11 feet in each lane to 10 feet for each lane with a 3 foot shoulder on the eastern side of the Boulevard to accommodate bicyclists who choose to ride on the motorway. A green space will separate the motorway from an 8 foot wide shared-use path. In areas where no green space is available, there will be some protective measures such as flexible bollards.

Councilmember Matney pointed out that the trestle in Glen Echo Park was not included in the preliminary plan. Ms. Esmaili says it has now been added and the trolley bridge (trestle) will bring the shared-use path through GEP.

Mr. Gary Johnson reported that the plan is to advertise for bids in Fall 2012, with construction to begin in Spring 2013. The middle section is expected to be completed in 2015; other sections will be completed later. The project is completely funded.

Ms. Esmaili said that MacArthur Boulevard would be resurfaced but due to the conduit below the Army Corps of Engineers has restricted what kind of materials may be used for the resurfacing. Ms. Andrea Matney asked if some of the curves on MacArthur Boulevard will be straightened. Mr. Johnson said that due to the conduit underneath the road, the roadway may not be moved significantly.

Mayor Beers asked if the stop and dismount signs across the one-lane bridge to Cabin John could return. Ms. Esmaili said that she could bring it up with the traffic section.

Mr. Speke Wilson said that the barriers around the traffic circle at MacArthur Boulevard and Goldsboro Road are ineffective and create a safety hazard for those waiting at the bus stop. Ms. Esmaili said that the area around the traffic circle is severely restricted as the waterworks within the circle are part of the Washington Aqueduct and are owned by the Army Corps of Engineers, and the property directly behind the stop belongs to NPS. The county does not own a right-of-way there. This safety hazard is the main reason for the shared-use path to have an alternative path on NPS property over the trolley bridge and into GEP. Ms. Esmaili said that she looked at many options but was unable to find a solution. Mr. Wilson asked for a more substantial barrier. Mr. Johnston reported that a more substantial barrier would be 14 inches thick and there is not enough room.

Councilmember Long reported that the creek is the only natural area left in the park. She asked that the DOT team work closely with NPS to protect the scenic quality. She also asked for signs to alert bicyclists that they are approaching the bus stop, since the area can be dangerous for bus passengers boarding and alighting because the outbound cyclists approach the stop around a curve so the visibility is limited.

Councilmember Matney noted that the three crosswalks across MacArthur Boulevard (Wilson Lane, Bannockburn Lane and Princeton Avenue) are dangerous. At Wilson Lane, the lane striping creates two lanes while heading south on MacArthur Boulevard, it becomes confusing when one car turns left and another car passes on the right, pedestrians are at risk in the current configuration. Ms. Anderson suggested blinking pedestrian lights on the roadway. Mr. Johnson said that DOT has placed those around the county.

Councilmember Long asked about drainage along the shared use path. There is standing water between Oxford Road and Princeton Avenue and intermittent water between Princeton and Harvard Avenues. These can become breeding grounds for mosquitoes.

Ms. Bonnie Whyte expressed concern about reducing the width of the roadway and asked if there were going to be reflectors down the middle of the road. Sometimes cars are

forced into the bike path. Councilmember Matney asked if there would be anything separating the road from the bike path besides paint. Mr. Stiglitz asked if the road could be “scalloped” like Rock Creek Parkway near Georgetown, creating an audio and physical disturbance for drivers if they veer into the bike path.

Ms. Phyllis Fordham questioned the purpose of the project since it fails to achieve many of the goals. Mr. Johnston said that the project represents a series of compromises, there is no perfect solution given the topography of the route, the nature of the roadway, overlapping property concerns and multiple users. Mr. Nick Lambert asked given that various problems have not been addressed, why is DOT so determined to build it. Ms. Seraifi Sogand said that the County Council directed them to build this project and they need to implement it as employees of DOT.

[Since the Council meeting, DOT has provided copies of the shared use path plans to the Town, they are currently on view at the Town Hall.]

GLEN ECHO PARK REPORT

Ms. Polly Angelakis reported that the Labor Day Art Show, Clara Barton Open House and Clara Barton Art Show were well attended. The blood mobile had approximately 10 donors. The NPS has two new exhibits in the Candy Corner: one about the Crystal Pool and one for kids about the animals and plants that live in the Potomac Gorge. Then & Wow will occur on Sunday September 30. NPS will have an exhibit in the Popcorn Gallery.

NPS has purchased new parts for the broken playground equipment. New portable lights have been purchased in case of power outages. Underground phone lines have been damaged by water and rodents; new lines will be installed.

NPS will meet with DOT to discuss the bike path on Wednesday September 12. NPS will also meet to discuss funding for Clara Barton NHS EA; the geothermal project has been tabled for now.

Ms. Angelakis informed the Council that she will be leaving GEP for a position at Haleakala NP on Maui and introduced Aaron LaRocca as her temporary replacement.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion 2012-17 to accept the August 2012 Council Meeting minutes with one change. Under attendance, after Steve Matney, remove “acting Mayor” and add “acting President of Council.” Motion passed unanimously. Councilmember Long abstained because she was absent from the August Council meeting.

ADDITIONS TO AGENDA

Ms. Long said that the Labor Day Art Show was well received and noted that there were more entries this year than last year.

Mayor Beers said that she spoke to State Senator Brian Frosh and he reported that he was not hopeful to get legislation passed at the state level for stop sign cameras. He did agree to look into the possibility that the Town might be able to collect a fee to offset the cost of paying the police officers to enforce stopping at the stop sign. Councilman Berliner has not responded.

Clerk-Treasurer Fraser confirmed that Council would like to hold the Halloween Party for the Town on Wednesday October 31st. Ms. Long said that she will ask the FSGW-English Country Dance Group to cancel that Wednesday. Mayor Beers reminded those residents who would like to have trick or treaters stop at their houses should leave their porch lights on.

Mayor Beers said that due to the severe storm on September 8th, the Town would have Mark Peyton come to clear away tree debris.

Ms. Ellen Leary asked for two more Tuesdays (9/18 and 9/25) to use the Town Hall for the Phone Bank. Council agreed, provided there are residents who will give their free Town Hall uses for this purpose.

Meeting adjourned at 10:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Nicole Fraser, Town Clerk

Deborah M. Beers, Mayor

Date

Attachments: Department of Transportation questions