The Town Council meeting was held December 10 with Members Costello, Spealman, and Stiglitz present, along with the Mayor, Town Manager, and four residents.

Town Business
Town Manager Nicole Ven-tura told the Council that going forward the Irish Inn would be billed quarterly for the Town land they use for parking, and payment has been received. It was also mentioned that a new laptop had been purchased for the office. It will be used by Ms. Ventura and the archivist. Ms. Costello asked that a legend for the budget categories be created, so that they are clearer.

Ms. Ventura spoke at length about the Town’s website not being completely ADA compliant. At 94 percent compliant, we’d need to hire someone to make the site 100 percent—a legal requirement for government websites, she said. As for Town Hall, the ADA-compliant elevator hasn’t worked in a while and is awaiting a part to be fixed. Modernizing the elevator could cost a lot ($50k), so Ms. Ventura and the Mayor are also looking into a chair elevator, which would go up the stairs ($8k–$12k).

Resident Martha Shannon gave the archive update (For more on this, see page 10). The archivist has been at work in Town Hall since September. She has gone through Council meeting minutes and back issues of The Echo. They are now stored in archival boxes, which were donated, in Town Hall. The archivist is first creating an inventory and then a plan for organizing, saving, digitizing, displaying, etc. She will come to a Town Council meeting once the inventory is complete. For now, she continues to tackle the files in Town Hall, which are in a “significant state of disarray.”

Ms. Ventura and the Echo editors are working on a pamphlet for new residents, which explains Town government and services. Once it is complete, all residents will receive a copy.

Building and Permitting
A pre-construction meeting to discuss the Vassar Circle project will be set soon. All residents will be welcome to attend. Town resident and developer Aaron Hirsch is still waiting for the permitting but hopes to break ground in January both on the first house within the circle and on the road widening of Vassar Circle. The Council asked Mr. Hirsch to come to the January meeting with a timeline for the road work, since that will have the most impact on residents. The first house to be built will be on the lot facing upper Cornell Avenue. Welty Homes will be the homebuilders as well as the contractors for the road project.

The owner of 7315 University Avenue had until December 16 to appeal the County’s ruling that walling in the back porch and expanding the kitchen without permitting was unacceptable. At the time of this meeting, that hadn’t happened. (In an update to The Echo later in December, Ms. Ventura reported that the Town had received a building permit from the owner: He hopes to convert the addition to a covered porch, going out 9 feet.)

The owner and developer of 31 Wellesley Circle (aka 6004 Cornell Avenue), Alex Boyar, has his permit from the County to start building. He submitted his plans to Town Council in early
The Council began to discuss a resolution to change the Town’s building permit fees. The resolution was a collaboration of the Mayor and Ms. Ventura with the Town lawyer, and at the time of the December 10 meeting, had not been shared with Town residents. Council Members too seemed to be responding to this resolution for the first time, but there was a possibility it would be voted in that night. Many new and increased fees for both demolishing and building structures had been added. The Mayor and Ms. Ventura said this was to shift the cost of the Town hiring an engineer to sign off on projects as needed to the property owner. They also argued that this was how other towns in the area conduct their permitting process. Ms. Costello and Mr. Stiglitz said they didn’t think the fees should go up in cases when the engineer wouldn’t be called in, and that smaller projects should have smaller fees associated. Mr. Hirsch raised the question: Why does the Town even need an engineer? Mr. Stiglitz said after the case of 7315 University Avenue, where the County didn’t issue a stop-work order when asked to by the Town, the Council determined that the County can’t be relied upon to do its job.

The costs go up, so the fees go up. Mr. Hirsch argued that the Council was replicating a level of government that already exists and doing it without transparency to Town residents. The new fees would cost Mr. Hirsch $8,400 more for his upcoming Vassar Circle homes.

The Council agreed that residents should be notified of the proposed changes to the Town’s building permit fees and given a short period to comment. The Mayor and Council committed to drafting a document that will outline the changes as well as their thinking behind them, and plan to distribute it later in December. They still hope to pass a version of this resolution at the January 14 meeting.

Town Hall Rental

The Council’s plan for the building permit fee resolution is now similar to what was done for the resolution to increase Town Hall rental fees—although that process also included several
As mentioned in the Town Council Notes, the Mayor and Town Manager have proposed a set of increased fees for various Town permits. In the past, the fees were typically $50 or 10 percent of the cost of the County permit. Now the proposal is for $2,500 for new construction, $125–$1,200 for additions depending on the size, as well as smaller fees for fences, walls, and any demolition, which previously didn’t carry a fee.

The main argument for these increases set out in a letter from the Mayor to residents is that the Town will now be hiring its own engineer (or lawyer or arborist) to review any plans submitted to the Town as seen fit by the Manager. The Mayor also writes that these increased fees are more in keeping with towns of comparable size. The impetus for this change in the Town’s permitting process, alluded to in the Mayor’s letter, is the recent trouble with 7315 University Avenue. In a nutshell, illegal work was done on the property and when requested, the County did not issue a stop-work order. The Mayor had to do it, and the ensuing legal fees came from the Town’s savings. These permitting fees would protect the Town in the future, according to the Mayor.

These changes as well as the manner in which they were presented—as a resolution ready for a vote at the December Council Meeting, and then as a proposal with an 11-day comment period over the Christmas holiday—have received some criticism. The Hirsches, residents who would experience the biggest financial impact with the building of four homes on Vassar Circle in the next year, did research into those comparable towns and have reported on the listserv that the towns used by the Mayor and Manager are larger and have building codes that differ from the County’s. The tiny towns in the County, like Glen Echo, are more in keeping with our old permitting fees. Another question is, do we want to have the Town replicate oversight already provided by the County? Further, would the increased fees do anything to prevent a scofflaw from walling in a screened porch, like in the University Avenue example?

The Council Members were not particularly ready or available to comment on this due to the holidays. At press time, a hearing to discuss the issue had not been set. If this issue is of interest to you, attend the January 14 Council Meeting, where it will surely be on the agenda. —Emily Parsons

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January is the time to put your garden to bed. It is tempting to leave any gardening chores until the first signs of spring, but your spring to-do list will be much shorter if you have completed some of the following winter tasks:

- Do a final removal of old annuals, weeds, and any slimy plants. Some perennial flower stalks should be left above ground as they may be providing vital food and overwintering spots for pollinators. Remember, brown is a beautiful color, too!
- Leave evergreen perennials such as lavender or hellebores alone except for removal of dead leaves and branches. Some perennials are partially evergreen, and for these, it is best to remove the dead or damaged leaves only. If it looks happy, just leave it.
- Clean out fallen leaves, especially where they have collected on the crowns of perennials, which could rot the plants. Then shred the leaves with a mower and either reapply them to the beds as compost/mulch in a layer of 2–4 inches, or compost the leaves elsewhere. (By the way, the topic of our next Environmental Committee program is composting.)
- Put an extra layer of mulch and/or shredded leaves on plants that are border-line hardy in our area. Examples are camellia, fig, and crape myrtle.
- Add compost in the garden beds, as it will provide the kind of gradual nutrition that is helpful for plants. Do not use synthetic fertilizers on your plants. Applying synthetic fertilizers is like giving your children a steady diet of candy resulting in too much energy and then a sudden crash.
- On your woody plants, cut any dead, diseased, or damaged branches. Although most winter pruning for late-blooming shrubs and trees is not done until late February, plants such as Rose of Sharon (Hibiscus syriacus) can be cut back now.
- Do not prune spring blooming woody plants that have already developed flower buds such as azalea, magnolia, or dogwood. They should be pruned after flowering, before the development of flower buds.
- Crape myrtles (Lagerstroemia indica and cvs.) are best pruned in spring.
- Hydrangeas fall into two categories. First are those that bloom on old wood and should only be cut back after blooming, because otherwise you are cutting off the flower buds. These include the bigleaf hydrangeas (Hydrangea macrophylla and cvs.) and Hydrangea serrata and cvs.). Hydrangeas that bloom on new growth should be pruned in early spring and can be cut hard. These include the Smooth Hydrangea (Hydrangea arborescens and cvs.) and the Panicle Hydrangea (Hydrangea paniculata and cvs.). If old flowers on hydrangeas are looking ragged, it is no problem to remove them on any type.

Take a serious look at your garden right now. How does it look in the winter? What do you think it needs? The possibilities are endless. Perhaps more evergreens or more winter fruit. Do you need to fill in gaps or improve your hardscape? Write notes, study catalogues, and call landscape designers in winter when you might get their attention and possibly even an off-season deal!

—**HOLLY SHIMIZU**
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When you landscape your yard to attract birds, you win on two counts: You improve the beauty of your property and you provide food, nesting areas, and cover for your local birds. You can get creative in your gardening endeavors. Some people have even “planted” large, dead trees to attract nesting woodpeckers! Flowering trees, shrubs, and a variety of both annual and perennial flowers make a successful hummingbird garden. For the seed-eating birds, you even can dedicate some space to growing your own sunflowers, corn, and millet. Stick with plants native to our area and appropriate for our climate. They are the easiest to grow and most likely to attract the insects that in turn feed the insect-eating birds. Gardening and landscaping for birds is fun for the whole family. With a little time and effort you can create a welcoming environment that invites birds by providing their four necessities: food, water, shelter, and nest sites.—The Wild Bird Centers
Proudly based in Glen Echo since 1996
Please visit us online at www.wildbird.com

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You may have noticed white bins around the area that are collection sites for gently used clothes, shoes, accessories, linens, etc. The bin closest to our Town, in the Glen Echo shopping center, directly benefits the Glen Echo Fire Department (GEFD). Other GEFD-branded bins are located at the fire station on Massachusetts Avenue, the Westbard shopping center, Whitman High School, the church in Brookmont, and near the pedestrian overpass at River Road. Newer to the program, the Bethesda and Kensington fire departments also participate but on a smaller scale than GEFD.

The network of white bins is managed by MetroAid LLC, co-founded in 2012 by Steve and Rachel Renzy Meima, a couple living in our area. In a recent interview, Steve described his concern that some small, local nonprofits were not taking advantage of the fundraising potential from the massive used clothing market, now dominated by national organizations, like AmVets and Salvation Army.

One day Steve walked into the GEFD station and solicited their participation as the first of their nonprofit recruits. Fire stations who own their property can provide the necessary permission for installing a bin without time consuming clearances. Viewing this as a promising funding stream for local nonprofits, the Meimas have recruited other small nonprofits that could arrange for local sites for the bins.

The goal is to collect usable items that can then be converted into cash for local nonprofits. An ancillary goal is to diminish the environmental impact by diverting usable items from landfills. MetroAid is dependent on the revenue generated by the Clothing Recycling Company (CRC) of Springfield, Virginia, which also provides trucks and a warehouse and then sells the items to the second-hand market, including to local thrift stores. The participating nonprofit—in this case GEFD—will, upon request, provide a receipt for the items based on the donor’s inventory and estimated value. (You can print a clothing donation receipt at www.gefd.org.)

Other than producing receipts for donors, MetroAid does not require any further effort from its nonprofit partners. MetroAid also maintains branded bins for itself, from which it makes contributions to six area charities. Since MetroAid is not a 501c3, no tax receipts are given for those donations.

In sorting clothes at its warehouse, CRC is able to store out-of-season items for later use. Bagged items should be deposited in the bins, which are generally emptied one to three times weekly. Steve and Rachel, during the course of their daily driving, also monitor bins and will call for a CRC truck if maintenance is needed.

An interesting aside: The Marine Corps Marathon has proved to be a producer for the second-hand clothing market. That is, many runners discard layers of clothing along the route, after which the Marines collect and deliver them to CRC. —GLORIA LEVIN
Local History

Town of Glen Echo Archives

Our Town’s history is now being saved through the efforts of a professional archivist, Sarah Hedlund. Sarah is the archivist at Montgomery History in Rockville and provides her expertise several hours per week at Town Hall. The archives of the Town go back to our founding in 1904 and include a variety of official documents, photographs, drawings, news articles, and publications. The archival project was launched by our Town Council this year with a goal of organizing and preserving documents associated with our 115 year history.

Various efforts to create an archive have occurred over the years, and we can thank the past mayors and council members as well as Town residents Carlotta Anderson and Debbie Lange for their efforts in documenting our history. As a former museum administrator and professor of museum studies, I know that local history is a great resource—providing an avenue to understanding how we got where we are today and setting standards for the future.

Archival preservation includes inventorying and categorizing our holdings, physically sorting and placing items in acid-free folders and boxes, and housing them in secure and climate-controlled spaces. An important part of the work includes creating a database for retrieval. Our project will eventually lead to digitizing historic records to create an accessible copy and cut down on physical handling. To date, Sarah Hedlund has rehoused the all-important Town Council minutes, copies of The Echo, and various files that relate to Town history. A goal of the project will be to set up files on Town properties that in the future can be a resource for residents. The project will also include setting up a Records Retention plan, as required by the State of Maryland.

Our Town Council and Mayor will approve a set of guidelines for access and future archiving. We have, through the help of Jean Sperling, made contacts with the Chevy Chase and Garrett Park town archivists and look to their excellent work as a model for our endeavor. In the future, we will be looking for volunteers to help with this project! Stay tuned.—Martha Shannon

Have You Heard?

The pages of this publication are most vibrant when many neighbors contribute. Please take a moment to think about what you could add this year. Send in your kid’s birthday for our monthly list; add an event you are involved in to our calendar; share a photo of an animal doing something funny in your yard; suggest a new column; pitch a feature; interview a neighbor. I’d wanted to write a food and drinks column, but never have the time—could that writer be you? Been living in the Town for decades? Share some memories with newer residents. Have a teen interested in publishing in your household? Send them to the Echo editors for some local experience. Photos of daily life around Town are also welcome! So, make a New Year’s Resolution: Be part of The Echo!

Save the Date: Our Town’s Environmental Committee is presenting a program on home composting for anyone interested. The presentation will be on Monday, February 4, from 7:30 to 8:30 PM at the Town Hall. The speaker is Alan Pultyniewicz with Montgomery County.

On December 19, members of Glen Echo’s Environmental Committee walked the right-of-way...
with Ann English, Rainscapes Program Manager and Darian Copiz, Watershed Planner, Montgomery County. The purpose was to discuss options for enhancing the right-of-way with some naturalistic planting to increase its effectiveness as a rainscape and conservation landscape. The Committee will present some of the suggestions that emerged from this meeting at the next Town Council meeting.

Two years after a collision on River Road resulted in the deaths of three members of a Bethesda family, the speed limit has been reduced from 45 miles per hour to 35. The new signs are up and cover the area from Springfield Drive to the beltway.

A few National Park properties remain open during the government shutdown. One is our Glen Echo Park.

Real Estate Report
30 Wellesley Circle remains active with a $30k reduction to $1,029,000.

Glen Echo Park Events
Jan. 13 3–5 PM, Family Dance in the Ballroom Back Room, $5
Jan. 4, 11, 18, 25 11:30 AM, Animal story time at the aquarium, for ages 2–5, standard entry fees apply
Dec. 8 4–7 PM, Winter’s Eve, holiday activities throughout the Park, free

The Puppet Co. www.thepuppetco.org; 301-634-5380
The Velveteen Rabbit, January 18–February 20
Tiny Tots select Weds, Sats, and Sundays at 10 AM

Adventure Theater MTC
www.adventuretheater-mtc.org; 301-634-2270
Fancy Nancy’s Splendiferous Christmas, through January 6

They Say It’s Your Birthday!
January 13, David Chused, 7
January 13, Elspeth Chused, 7
January 15, Niklas Gillberg, 6
January 15, Reed Jensen, 6
January 15, Riya Kishore, 3
January 23, Conrad Hirsch, 10

On the right-of-way near Cornell Avenue (left to right): Ann English, Darian Copiz, and Environmental Committee members Alec Graham, Martha Shannon, Speke Wilson, Bevan Shimizu, Holly Shimizu, and Susan Grigsby. Photograph by committee member Tim Bragan.
NEW YEAR OPEN HOUSE
on Saturday, January 12th from 12pm - 6pm

Meet with teachers and learn about our classes.

12:00-12:15 Journey Space Welcome
12:15-12:45 Why Do Cacao Ceremony? With Christel Libiot
1-2:15 Drum Meditation and Drum Circle with Yolanda
2:30- 3:15 Shamanic Self-Awareness with Mimi Ikle-Khalsa and Christel Libiot
3:30-4:15 Know Your Chakras and Find Your Wellness with Kate Lanxner
4:30-5:15 Yoga Basics with Julie Holly
5:30- 6:00 Rest and Relaxation with Ashira

Consider renting the Journey Space rooms for your next healing event. Options Available.

2 Day Introductory Workshop to Biodynamic Craniosacral Therapy Jan 05 - Jan 06, 2019  9:00 AM - 4:30 PM

Alchemical Alignment
Jan 31 - Feb 03, 2019  8:30 AM - 6:00 PM

Circle of Compassion & Moving Meditation
Jan 06, 2019  4:30 PM - 5:30 PM

Cacao & Imbolc Ceremony
Feb 02, 2019  7:00 PM - 10:00 PM

2 Day Introductory Workshop to Biodynamic Craniosacral Therapy Jan 08 - Jan 09, 2019  9:30 AM - 4:30 PM

2 Day Introductory Workshop to Biodynamic Craniosacral Therapy Feb 05 - Feb 06, 2019 9:30 AM - 4:30 PM

Foundations of Yoga
Jan 09 - Feb 27, 2019  Wed  6:30 PM - 7:45 PM

Akashic Record
Feb 09, 2019  1:00 - 5:00 PM

New Year Open House
Jan 12 12:00 PM - 6:00 PM

Circle of Compassion & Moving Meditation
Feb 10 - Feb 11, 2019  4:00 PM - 5:30 PM

Creative Mandala Workshop
A Fusion of Art and Meditation for Personal Growth
Jan 20, 9:30 - 11:30 p.m.

Shamanic Self - Awareness: Being a Spiritual Being: get to know your guides and allies. Feb 15 2019 9:30 - 5:30 PM

Know Your Chakras, Find Your Wellness!
Jan. 22 and 29. 7:30-9:30 p.m.

6110 Oberlin Avenue Glen Echo, MD Behind The Irish Inn
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