



Green Space Advisor

Volume 11 No. 1

June, 2009

Message From The President: Bobby Berg

Have you ever heard of a “viewshed”? Wikipedia defines it as an area of land, water, or other environmental element that is visible to the human eye from a fixed vantage point. That definition is so general that it applies even to military planning, so let’s think instead about the varied scenery you see while driving along Route 108. Going around each curve exposes a new viewshed, often one that is easy on the eyes because it is open and green.

But... development happens. Can land conservation preserve those nice views? In principle, the answer is yes, and we know that land conservation can be accomplished by conveying property to the government or to a land trust. However, the outright transfer of property is costly, and much more land is conserved each year by the donation of conservation easements. A conservation easement is a voluntary agreement that allows a landowner to limit the development on their property while retaining private ownership. Donating a conservation easement can have benefits for the property owner, such as tax breaks and the knowledge that the property will

stay open indefinitely, even if the property is sold or inherited. Preservation of an attractive viewshed is a frequent benefit for the public. Other examples of public benefits can be encouragement of local farming, enhancement of a stream’s water quality, and protection of a wildlife habitat.

To see an example of a recently donated conservation easement that preserves viewsheds near the Little Gunpowder River, go to *HarfordLandTrust.org* and search on “viewshed”. To see the bigger picture of conservation easements in Maryland, go to the website for the Land Trust Alliance, *LTA.org*, and search for the “land trust census”. You will learn that, as of 2005, local land trusts in Maryland protected 5334 acres through ownership and much more, 191,330 acres, through conservation easements. That sounds like a lot, but it’s only about 2% of Maryland’s total acreage. The important local question is: Will the open space that we see today in eastern Montgomery County be there 20 years from now?

Executive Director’s Report 2009: Joli A. McCathran

While the main mission of Greater Sandy Spring Green Space is to hold conservation easements on property to create open space, we also support the planting of trees. Maryland has a goal of planting 50,000 trees by 2010. The State of Maryland is offering \$25 coupons for purchasing of trees valued at \$50 or more. Coupon redeemers must purchase from an approved nursery listed with the Maryland

Department of Natural Resources. To receive more information and download a coupon, please visit www.trees.maryland.gov. There are numerous reasons to plant trees on your property. Trees conserve energy and when mature can cut air conditioning costs by 15-35%. Trees help clean the air and attract songbirds too. Trees increase property values and it’s fun and easy to do. The Montgomery County

Planning Department is helping meet this goal with their own program “[Leaves for Neighborhoods](#).” Print out the county coupon to save \$25 off a tree purchase of \$75 or more at [montgomeryplanning.org](#). At nurseries participating in both programs you can use the state and county coupons together to save the most!

Additionally, the Montgomery County Forestry Conservancy Board has just published the “2009 Register of Champion Trees” for Montgomery County. This book lists the largest known species of trees in the County. The County has 35 new County Champion trees listed; six of those are State Cham-

pions. If you would like to receive a copy of this impressive document, please contact me at kmccathran@verizon.net.

Greater Sandy Spring Green Space relies on donations from you to keep operations alive. The Board of Directors works hard to keep the vision of open space in the Sandy Spring and surrounding communities. If you have not paid your dues, please consider doing so today. To help you, below is a voucher for you to clip and send in. We look forward to new members joining too. Help preserve open space by joining today.

Planning Board Seeks New Member **By Sharon Dooley**

In what is seen as an annual June ritual in Montgomery County, applicants are again lining up for a vacant planning board seat in the County. Last year saw two new members joining the planning board, one to fill an expired term and the other to fill the term of a member who suddenly died in his first year of office. Terms on the board are staggered so that the turn over results in a board with experienced and new members each year, as the initial learning curve can be a steep one. Other than the Chair position, which is considered full time, each member serves in a part time capacity and many have other career positions. The salary for this position certainly belies its importance in the local power structure, as it only pays about \$30,000 annually.

This year there is only a single vacancy for the seat of two-term member John Robinson, who is term limited. Next year is possibly the last for Chair Dr. Royce Hanson, who took over the troubled agency in 2006 and vowed to stay only one term. Soon to be 80, Royce is said to be ready to step back, although he is still vigorous in pursuit of his duties. Royce is known to many in the county as the father of the Ag Reserve, for it was he who first conceived the set aside of the county’s traditional farming area as restricted for development, back in the 1970’s when he first served on the Planning Board.

Traditionally the party in power in the county chooses the chair and the board is balanced between Democrats and Republicans or independents. Since Robinson is in the Democratic seat it is likely that the position will go to another Democrat, although an unaffiliated candidate could fill it. The two women currently on the Board are both Republicans – former delegate Jean Cryor and marketer Amy Presley. Joe Alfandre, a Democrat who joined last year, is a developer. None of the members of this board is a member of a minority group.

Just what does the planning board do? Basically this board looks at the growth policy, approves or disapproves site plans, conservation, development and transportation projects and reports to and advises the council. It can change the character of a community in recommendations for Master Plan revisions and can also drive the process. There is a lot of power given to this appointed board, which answers only to the County Council. It works in cooperation with other county agencies such as the permitting departments. The Maryland National Parks and Planning Commission, of which the Board is a part, also has professional planners, a parks department and an appointed Planning Chief. It is chartered by the State as a bi-county commission with Prince George’s County.

The Montgomery County Council has chosen from over 15 candidates and, as I understand it, there are 8 finalists who were selected for interviews from the list of applicants. *Although I have not had a chance to read the current applications or bios – what follows is information from previous years and the local press...(Washington Post Montgomery news section Tuesday May 28, 2009.)*

These are: (in alphabetical order)

Alan Bowser, who lives in downtown Silver Spring, is a graduate of Princeton, Johns Hopkins and Georgetown Law. A lawyer in local practice, he served in the Clinton administration as an economist and attorney and has applied previously to the planning board. He is known as an activist in Silver Spring and serves as President of his civic association and as a member of the Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board.

Carol Van Dam Falk was said to have withdrawn her name.

Ilaya Rome Hopkins lists Bethesda as her hometown and is a member of the Western Montgomery Citizens Advisory Board. She was graduated from Johns Hopkins and the University of Wisconsin. She has been a project manager and consultant.

Patricia Lee is from Olney and is also a lawyer with degrees from Northwestern University. She has worked for the National Institute for Urban Entrepreneurship and for the Institute for Justice. She has also worked for the Montgomery County Conflict Resolution Center.

Chris Paladino, who lives in the Layhill section of Silver Spring, was formerly an executive with the American Red Cross and worked in disaster relief. He was graduated from Rutgers University.

Donna Mandel Perlmutter who lives in Potomac has a master's in urban planning from the University of Pennsylvania and serves on her homeowners association architectural review committee. She has

supported the Montgomery Housing Partnership.

Roberto Pinero from Silver Spring is an analyst with the General Accounting office He holds a Doctorate in city and regional planning from the University of California at Berkeley. He serves on the Montgomery County Housing Opportunities Commission and as a board member for a senior low-income housing project in Rockville.

Cynthia Rubenstein, a civic activist, also lives in Silver Spring. She is the executive director for Passion for Learning, a non-profit that supports underserved students. She holds a BA from Cornell College in Iowa and a Masters degree in design and housing from the University of Iowa.

Marye Wells-Harley has also applied previously for the position and is another Silver Spring resident. She has previously worked in the parks and recreation department in Prince George's County. She is also a community activist and has a degree from Winston-Salem State University.

These are all obviously talented, well-educated, experienced and knowledgeable candidates. Most likely each one could do the job in question. The dilemma for us, as observers of the process, is how does one choose which candidate to support and be an advocate for?

It is my suggestion that each reader studies the backgrounds and learns what they can from the council interviews, if they are on tape on County Cable 16. Check with friends and neighbors to see if any personally knows the candidates and develop a list of expectations for the job. Does the candidate know the county well? What is the environmental policy they most support? What is their belief about urban centers, increased density and growth? Do they support the Master Plan concept on which our communities are based? Which one of these candidates will give us a county that respects the need to plan for and create necessary green spaces in our limited development options in the future? Which one will work to keep the trust offered by the Agricultural Reserve set-asides? Who will work to keep further sprawl from our communities? Those

are the questions I feel are imperative to have answers for as we move further to balance needs for affordable housing, adequate open space and protections for our environment, while we avoid future transportation gridlock.

The selection will most likely be made in mid- to

late June, so the time for comments is limited, but do let your council member and the at-large members know your thoughts – send email to the county council president (who will forward your mail to the others):

county.council@montgomerycountymd.gov

Sandy Spring, Farmer’s Markets, and Community Supported Agriculture **By Meg Pease-Fye**

When was the last time you breathed in the aroma of freshly-picked tomatoes? If you are fortunate enough to have a garden and grow your own, you know what I mean. There is nothing like the intoxicating earthy scent of produce that was just harvested. For the rest of us, busy lifestyles often interfere with our best intentions of eating better, losing weight, and building a healthier body.

There is increasing evidence supporting the idea that the food we eat affects, not only our health, but the quality of our lives and well-being of our world. A growing number of people in our community are discovering the ways that having locally grown food options, such as Farmer’s Markets or Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) groups reconnect and limited flooding, shielded wetlands and watersheds and sustained air quality. In terms of preserving the character of Sandy Spring, farms fit the bill more than malls.

Most Americans today never knew a time when our food grew on the outskirts of our towns and cities. People used to be closely rooted to the land that fed them. This connection is disappearing along with working farmland; many of us remain unaware of where or how our food was grown. Our knowledge of our food supply ends at the supermarket, restaurant or vending machine. Much of what we eat now has been treated, processed, packaged, and transported, usually a great distance (1500 miles or more). One industry definition of “local” is whatever can be shipped (including by air) in 24 hours.

us with food that nourish our bodies and preserves our remaining farmland.

Fewer than 100 years ago, a third of our nation lived on farms. In Sandy Spring, farming set the pace for the community’s way of life for over 200 years; everyone either worked the land or in farming-related jobs. Today, we watch as more and more of the local farmland is sold for new housing. Local farmers no longer support their families with agriculture. Many opt out of the gruelingly hard work with small monetary return and choose to sell our best agricultural soils to suburban development. Those of us old enough to remember these green landscapes miss them. These lands gave wildlife food and cover, absorbed and filtered wastewater CSAs and Farmer’s Markets can provide an alternative. In a CSA, members and farmers form a partnership and mutual commitment. Members support the farm, providing upfront capital, and in return, receive a share in the bounty and risks of farming (pests, disease, flood, drought, hail, frost). Member payment covers salaries, seed, equipment and delivery. Farmers have committed buyers, no left-over produce, and they are freed from packaging and processing. In exchange, each week farmers deliver individual shares to a central location. Members enjoy healthy locally grown produce, delivered the day it is harvested, and support the local community and economy. CSAs enhance the quality of life for rural, suburban and urban communities and our world.

The Sandy Spring CSA was founded in 2002 and has grown from 35 members to over 270 and has pick-up locations in Sandy Spring, Rockville, and Kensington. Produce has come from co-ops in Northern Maryland, supplemented at times by Amish growers close by in Pennsylvania. Going into its eighth year, the CSA now partners with and supports one certified organic grower, Calvert Farm in Cecil County. The CSA has pickup locations. Every Wednesday, members collect their share of the week's harvest and each week's yield varies depending on the growing season. A share is enough for two-to-four adults, depending upon how much produce they eat. This year's summer season runs from May 12 - September 29. Another seven-week season is offered in the fall.

A welcome addition to our community is the Olney Farmer's Market, located on Route 108 in Olney's town center. Farmer's markets are one of the oldest forms of direct marketing by small farmers. From 9:00 am to 1:00 pm on Sundays from May through November, growers from all over the county gather to sell their produce directly to the public. In the last decade Farmer's Markets have become a favorite marketing method for many farmers throughout the United States, and a weekly ritual for many shoppers. In a farmer's market, a group of farmers sell their products once or twice a week at a desig-

nated public place like a park or parking lot. Fruit is naturally grown; vegetables are often organic and free from genetic manipulation, chemical fertilizers, pesticides, preservatives and radiation. What most newcomers comment on first, however, are the compelling flavors and how different everything tastes from what can be bought in most groceries.

CSAs and Farmer's Markets are not for everyone. Members and buyers must enjoy cooking and be willing to do more of it than for "instant packaged" meals. Also, meal plans must be adjusted to the seasonal produce harvested each week,. Since the food comes straight from the field, it often bears traces of soil and imperfections, but always makes delicious, nourishing meals.

The growing demand for CSA memberships and Farmer's Markets exceeds the supply. If interested GSSGS members can get further information about the Sandy Spring CSA, including a harvest schedule and application, at www.sandyspringcsa.com. The Olney Farmer's Market has information at www.olneyfarmersmarket.org. Additional information about locally grown food can be found at www.localharvest.com.

The author gratefully acknowledges an earlier article by Gene Klinger.

Cut here and send in

**YES! I want to preserve open space in Montgomery County
MAKING GREEN SPACE A REALITY, NOT A MEMORY**

_____ Individual Membership - \$25

_____ Family Membership - \$40

Additional Contributions

_____ \$500 _____ \$250 _____ \$100 _____ \$50 _____ Other

Please make your tax-deductible contribution payment to:

Greater Sandy Spring Green Space, Inc.

PO Box 92, Sandy Spring, MD 20860

**Green Space Advisor
P. O. Box 92
Sandy Spring, MD 20860**



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