



Green Space Advisor

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Message From The President

Dear Newsletter Reader,

Allow me to extend an invitation to the annual meeting of Greater Sandy Spring Green Space. It's a bit early because the meeting won't happen until March, but our invited speaker will surely make it worth your attendance. In recent years we've had speakers representing Conservation Montgomery, the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection (stormwater management), and the Department of Public Works and Transportation (recycling). Last year's talk was by Greg Mort, a

local artist with an international recognition who also is a serious amateur astronomer. Greg spoke about "Conservation of the night sky and the fight against light pollution". Inspired by his presentation, Green Space has started to lobby for street lighting that is both effective and dark-sky-friendly. See more in the article on Trotters Glen in this issue.

Bobby Berg



Star Map, by Greg Mort

Planning Board decides to allow development in fragile area

An issue which should concern all of us in Montgomery County is the upcoming County Council decision about the Ten Mile Creek watershed. The decision will be part of the final revision of the Clarksburg Master Plan. In the present plan, proposed final stage development, first suggested in the 1990's, was required to be reviewed in light of the needs of the community today – some twenty years later. Ten Mile Creek is the last class A stream (defined as one of pristine quality) in the county. The headwaters are in the areas being studied for development. These headwaters are in lands west of Route 355 and around Route 270 as it heads toward Frederick County. The creek flows across West Old Baltimore Road – one of the last few fords in the county. It is a wild and free creek which escaped impact by the development of the Clarksburg Town Center. This creek flows into Seneca Lake, which serves as a back-up reservoir should our regular water supply become compromised.

So – it is in the interest of us all to keep Ten Mile Creek clean and unpolluted. To contrast – watershed runoffs in the town center area east of Route 355 have already shown degradation. Currently Pulte (which said its properties were purchased for \$12 million) proposes to build over 900 homes in the impact area. The Planning Board's staff draft report had advised a development of only 200 homes; this was increased by the Planning Board to more than 600 homes. This decision was defended by the claim that the development was clustered,

leaving more land to be in open space. Another proposal [not yet approved by the Planning Board] is to develop a nearby area as an outlet mall. Two major firms are contesting for the right to build this mall. Together these proposals, if built, would greatly increase the amount of impervious surface in an area currently occupied by forests, streams, ravines and farmlands. The Planning Board's own consultant indicated that doing nothing is the best way to allow for preservation of the fragile ecosystems in the stream valley areas. In contrast, the Planning Board is allowing higher than the advised area of impervious surface – which can only increase runoffs and raise water temperatures in the Creek watershed. Furthermore, much of the development being proposed would use environmental site design methods which have never been tried in such a large area. This is one of the last large and undeveloped tracts outside of the Agricultural Reserve left in the County.

The *Save Ten Mile Creek Coalition*, which includes 19 member organizations, has mounted a strong campaign to save this Creek and watershed. They now plan to take this campaign to the County Council, which will be the final deciders in this matter. Below is an article from one of the coalition members – Conservation Montgomery - which gives more detail about this important environmental campaign.

Sharon Dooley

Planning Board Vote Leaves Fate of Ten Mile Creek to County Council

Disappointing vote by planning commissioners could pave the way for pavement in a fragile stream

The final Planning Board working session on the Ten Mile Creek Area Limited Master Plan Amendment was held on Oct. 24th, with an outcome that now places the imperiled creek in the hands of the Montgomery County Council. A Council hearing is scheduled for Dec. 3rd.

Over the past year, concern over the environmental impact of proposed development on the watersheds feeding Little Seneca Reservoir, particularly Ten Mile Creek -- a biologically superior reference stream considered the 'last best creek' in Montgomery County -- has consumed Planning Board meetings and activated community groups.

Three Planning Board work sessions were held in September and October. Chair Carrier had directed Planning staff to review any new technical issues raised by experts at the September hearing, reach out to the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC) to elicit input on the safety and security of the region's back up water supply in Little Seneca Reservoir and had asked staff to meet with property owners and stakeholders to explore any new information that might affect the Staff Draft. Now that the Planning Board decision has been rendered, the Draft Report will be submitted to the County Council who will make final decisions on the future of Ten Mile Creek.

"The Planning Board vote for Option 2 ignored citizens and experts who have urged them to follow the science of watershed protection," said Diane Cameron, Conservation Director of the Audubon Naturalist Society and a Conservation Montgomery Board Member. "The science tells us that Ten Mile Creek is our most fragile stream, and doubling the level of pavement in its headwaters will cause significant damage and contribute more pollution to Little Seneca Reservoir."

The 1994 Clarksburg Master Plan vision recognized the unique nature of Ten Mile Creek and provided a pause after Stages I - III triggers were met to revisit the Plan before finalizing it, and before allowing any further development to encroach on the pristine Ten Mile Creek watershed. The [Save Ten Mile Creek Coalition](#), consisting of 19 member organizations -- that are environmental, civic and faith-based groups -- has garnered support from residents throughout the county to protect Ten Mile Creek as a backup source for the region's closest emergency drinking water source in times of severe drought.

"Twenty years down the road now, we know a lot more about what harms watersheds," said Conservation Montgomery Vice Chair Ginny Barnes. "We wonder what we've really learned when the Planning Commission vote is less than favorable to the creek."

Trotters Glen

Another big change is coming to Batchellors Forest Road in southeast Olney: Toll Brothers is planning to build 69 houses on what is now Trotters Glen golf course. This is the largest undeveloped property in Olney's southeast quadrant, which makes it central for the master plan's number one recommendation of preserving open space, streams, and forests in that area.

Last July the county planning board approved Toll Brothers' (preliminary and site) plans for the 176-acre property, of which 115 acres will be set aside as rural open space to fulfill the 65% requirement of the Rural Neighborhood Cluster (RNC) zone. Most of the property is open rolling uplands and stream valley lowlands, and about 14 acres are forested. The plans include the construction of two groups of

houses on the north part of the property, conversion of the large pond to wetlands, and planting forest trees on 26 acres of open fields.

At the July hearing, testimony from GSSGS persuaded the Planning Board to require a conservation easement that will be held jointly by GSSGS and Montgomery County. Our involvement has three advantages. First, it assures potential house buyers and the neighbors in southeast Olney that the easement will survive future turnovers of the county council and the planning board. Second, it ensures periodic monitoring for compliance with the terms of the easement. Third, it gives GSSGS standing in court to contest any violation in the event that our monitoring finds a violation and discussions with the violator fail to resolve the matter.

An undecided question at the time of this writing is what type of streetlight to install in Trotters Glen. The question arose because the traditional notion that “more light is better” creates problems when the light goes where it isn’t needed. One problem, glare or “light trespass”, is obvious when it happens; few people want a streetlight that illuminates their living room like a searchlight. A second problem, “uplight”, is more subtle. Uplight occurs when a streetlight allows some of its light to go upward. The wasted energy might be small, but when this

happens by the thousands, it takes away our dark sky. You might remember constellations and the Milky Way from your youth, but few kids have such luck these days. Installing dark-sky-friendly streetlights is necessary to restore our natural and cultural heritage of a beautiful night sky. Inspired by Greg Mort, we have been talking to Toll Brothers and Montgomery County to see if something better than the usual “Colonial Post Top” design could be installed at Trotters Glen.

Bobby Berg

Farquhar Middle School by John Spears

Greater Sandy Spring Green Space has followed the Farquhar Middle School land swap since the swap was first proposed. In general, GSSGS is skeptical about swapping easement areas, as a swap doesn’t necessarily protect the original intent of the easement.

In the case of Farquhar Middle School issue, the Board of Education has moved to condemn an existing open space easement owned by Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, in order to build a new Middle School. When the new school is completed, the former Farquhar Middle

School parcel will be returned to open space, and protected with an easement provided to MNCPPC. GSSGS is committed to monitoring the progress on this land swap, and helping to ensure that returning a similar amount and quality of open space land takes place, as has been resolved by the Board of Education. We urge our membership and other interested parties to also follow this issue, and help ensure that the goals of the original open space easement are maintained.

Part of the resolution reads as below:

Resolved, That Department of Facilities Management staff is directed to pursue a joint use agreement with the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission that gives primary use of the current William H. Farquhar Middle School property to the Maryland- National Capital Park and Planning Commission and allows imposition of a rural open-space easement on that property and gives primary use of the adjacent parcel, where the modernized middle school will be sited, to Montgomery County Public Schools in exchange for release of the rural open-space easement on the adjacent parcel, an agreement for continued use of the existing William H. Farquhar Middle School facility as a holding school until the new school building is completed, and demolition of the existing William H. Farquhar Middle School facility and restoration of the site as agreed to by the parties; and be it further

Resolved, That Resolution 447-11 is hereby amended to the extent that it is inconsistent with the provisions of this resolution.

The full text of the resolution is available at:

<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/boe/meetings/agenda/2013/072913/04.2.1%20Wm%20H%20Farquhar%20MS%20Mod.pdf>

Public Access Connects People To Land Conservation Easements by Steve Berry

The Fall 2013 edition of SavingLand, a magazine published by the Land Trust Alliance Organization contains an article by Edith Pepper Goltra which states that land conservation trusts can serve a positive role by connecting the public to nature by allowing access to preserved open space. Ms. Goltra quotes with approval MaryKay O'Donnell, the Midwest conservation manager for the Land Trust Alliance as saying, *"We cannot expect people to care about or support the conservation of nature before they learn to love nature. Whether it is a wilderness area, a pocket park in your neighborhood or a paved trail along a river, we need access to the natural world. We need a way to connect."*

Greater Sandy Spring Green Space, Inc., is in the forefront of the movement to permit public access to land conservation easements because GSSGS, Inc.'s very first easement – in 2001 – preserved multiple acres of open space surrounding the headwaters of the old Sandy Spring. The grant was made possible as nearby farmland land was subdivided for suburban homes and Sandy Springers lobbied for the preservation of this historic open pace.

The Sandy Spring gave its name to a community founded by Quakers in the mid-1700's in the midst of newly cleared farmlands. These ancient farmlands – now held in trust by GSSGS, Inc. – is accessible to the public by means of the newly-created Underground Railroad Experience Trial. This trail will one day become one segment of the proposed 25 mile long Rachel Carson Greenway Trail Corridor.

The Underground Railroad Experience Trail can be walked every day of the week. During the spring, summer and fall, Montgomery County provides a free guided hike on Saturday mornings along the trail between the Woodlawn Manor Historic Park and the historic Village of Sandy Spring, where the abolitionist Quaker community once provided a safe haven to escaped freedom seekers on their trek northward. While slavery did not end in Maryland until 1864, Quakers living in Maryland – among themselves – agreed to free all of their slaves in 1777 on the pain of banishment from the Quaker community. In Sandy Spring, itself, free African Americans owned their own homes and farms – and organized their own church, school and social clubs before the Civil War.

Beginning at Woodlawn Manor, the Underground Railroad Experience Trail runs for a distance through a wooded area before coming out to open fields that are held as a conservation easement. Passing by the enclosed area around a modest monument marking the headwaters of old Sandy Spring, the trail moves northward past the country retreat once owned by Dean Acheson (who served as President Harry S Truman's Secretary of State) and ends at the parking lot at the 1817 Friends Meeting House. Hikers should be aware that the Meeting House is not a public museum. It is still used by local Friends during the week. Since silence is a fundamental part of the Quaker way of practicing their faith, hikers should be respectful when the Meeting is being used for worship services, weddings or memorial service.

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