

The Echo

The Town of GLEN ECHO, MARYLAND Chartered 1904



January 2014

December Town Council Meeting

By Bill Vincent

Residents Concerned About Church Redevelopment

The December Council meeting was held in the main room at the Town Hall to accommodate the approximately 25 residents interested in the plan for the former Baptist church at 2 Vassar Circle. Aaron Hirsch has a contract to purchase the property with plans to demolish the church and build four homes on the parcel. The contract is currently under a study period until January 5 with a signature date planned for February 5. The proposed redevelopment will require subdivision approval from the County Planning Board. That process will take four to eight months' time, during which the Town government and residents can influence the County approval process. No specific date has been set for demolition of the church, but a demolition application is pending approval from the County. Mr. Hirsch was at the

What's Inside

Church Property.....	1
Holiday Party Photos	6
Gas Installation Update.....	9

Council meeting to present additional details, after introducing his concept at the November Council meeting. Many of the details and background of the plan were reported in the December edition of The Echo.

Much of the 90-plus minutes of discussion centered on three main topics: additional information associated with the development plan; resident opposition to the development, including several proposals

CONTINUED on page 3

THE ECHO

Published unofficially by, for, and in the Town of Glen Echo, Maryland. Distributed free to Glen Echo residents. Subscriptions for non-residents: \$12 per year (to subscribe call Susan Grigsby, 301-229-7735). Copies of *The Echo* are on file at Little Falls Library. Also provided online at www.glenecho.org. Total circulation: 190. Distributed the first weekend of the month.

EDITOR	Phyllis Fordham
Editor Email	TheEchoEditor@gmail.com
DESIGN EDITOR	Debbie Lange
REPORTER	Bill Vincent
COPY EDITORS	Maire Hewitt
	Erica Tokar
ADVERTISING REP	Patty Sieber
DISTRIBUTION	Jane Stevenson
	Jan Shaut
	Sally Law
	Raya Bodnarchuk
	Debra Burton
CIRCULATION	Susan Grigsby

Next Deadline: January 20, 2014

Letters to the Editor are welcome. They must be signed. Articles for publication are also solicited. Please send comments about *The Echo* to the Editor, the Mayor, or any Council member. Volunteer reporters are always needed.

TOWN OF GLEN ECHO MARYLAND 20812

Phone: 301-320-4041
Fax: 301-320-3639
Office: 6106 Harvard Ave.
Website: www.glenecho.org

Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 598, Glen Echo, MD 20812

Office Hours: Monday and Thursday
9:30 am–12:00 pm or by appointment

MAYOR
Debbie Beers 301-229-7308

COUNCIL MEMBERS
Matt Stiglitz 301-229-0926
Nancy Long 301-332-3823
Mark McCaffrey 202-248-8449
Steve Matney 301-320-2059

CLERK–TREASURER
Nicole Fraser 301-320-4041

Next Town Council Meeting
January 13, 2014, at 8 pm

SUNOCO



KENWOOD SUNOCO CENTER
(formerly Kenwood Mobil)
5201 RIVER ROAD
BETHESDA, MARYLAND 20816
PH: (301) 652-9527 • FAX: (301) 652-1138

James Spicer
 OWNER

Dick Spicer
 SERVICE MANAGER

AUTO REPAIR • FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC
FACTORY SCHEDULED MAINTENANCE

Law & Associates, Inc

Independent Registered Investment Advisor



Wealth Management & Financial Planning

(301) 229-8500

Heather Cottage
 6111 Tulane Avenue
 Glen Echo, Maryland 20812-1205
www.lawandassociates.com

Securities offered through Raymond James Financial Services, Inc.
 Member FINRA/SIPC

CONTINUED from page 1

for alternatives; and significant concern on the part of the Council and residents regarding traffic and parking on the narrow Vassar Circle.

Subdivision Planned

The discussion began with a presentation by Mr. Hirsch. To procure the property from the National Community Church (NCC), the current owner, he was bidding against other developers and expressed a belief that, in the end, the NCC accepted his bid because he will be a resident of the Town. Hirsch purchased the former Baptist Annex and is in the process of renovating the building to use as a residence. His potential development plan for this site includes four 3500-square-foot farmhouse style homes, each with a driveway and off-street parking for three cars. Montgomery County regulations require parking for at least two cars. Mr. Hirsch presented drawings of homes like the planned homes on the circle from various perspectives. The houses he showed are not necessarily what will be built but rather types of houses he favors. Some residents expressed concern about the contour of the land and its impact on overall building heights. In answer to questions, Mr. Hirsch stated that storm runoff and right-of-way concerns will be addressed as part of the zoning and planning process. These will have to be reviewed and approved by the Planning Board and utility companies.

Hometown Aspect

During his presentation, Mr. Hirsch pointed to his current development of the former Baptist Church Annex at University and Harvard Avenues. He plans to live in the house and he offered to discuss with anyone the many reasons he and his wife chose to live in Glen Echo. He believes his remodeling of the church annex is compatible with the nature of the Town and wanted to reassure residents that he will approach Vassar Circle in the same way. He stated he intended his plan to be compatible with the Town (small lots and farmhouse-style homes) but also it has to be financially feasible and in keeping with

current market demands, in which larger homes are desired. Even with those assurances, some residents expressed skepticism and pointed out that in some cases developers have been known to move out of the area once the development is complete.

Neighbors' Objections

Opposition to the development plan was expressed by several residents, at times quite passionately, with a range of concerns. Cris White, a Vassar Circle resident, discussed with Mr. Hirsch the idea of making half the property a park and building two houses on the other half. According to Mr. Hirsch, this proposal does not work financially, based on the cost of property. Cris's wife, Anna, advocated for using the circle as a "celebratory space" and wanted the Council to explore ways to do so. One suggestion was to trade other Town-owned land (including the two small parks at University and Princeton and the existing Town Hall building) for the 2 Vassar Circle Property. This approach would allow the church to be renovated and used as a new Town Hall location and perhaps the other two properties could be redeveloped. The Mayor noted that the NCC had estimates for \$1.5 million to renovate the church building, that those renovations may not be adequate for Town Hall needs, and that after trading property the Town would still not have enough funds to perform the renovation.

During the meeting, the idea of dividing the prop-

CONTINUED on Page 4

the irish inn
live music
at glen echo

mondays - traditional irish
7 pm - 10 pm

every other wednesday
19th street band
8 pm - 11 pm

sundays - jazz
5:30 pm - 8:30 pm

6119 Calvary Ave, Glen Echo
Maryland 20812

301.229.6600 • www.irishinnglenecho.com

CONTINUED from Page 3

erty into more than four lots was raised. The idea of building 16 tiny houses was mentioned and drew a few chuckles. Mr. Hirsch expressed an interest in tiny houses and stated, "If you let me build 16 tiny houses I would definitely consider it." Apparently, there is a Tiny House Movement and further information can be found at www.thetinylife.com.

Attorney's Opinion

In response to residents' concerns about the development, Mayor Beers distributed a memo from Town Attorney, Norman Knopf, who was present at the meeting, regarding options the Town has with regard to the subdivision and development of 2 Vassar Circle.

It was noted that the Town itself does not have zoning authority. Options discussed included purchase of the property if it is for sale, imposition of stricter height and setback standards, and active participation in subdivision proceedings at the Planning Board. Specific topics that could be discussed with the Planning Board include adequate storm water management measures and adequate street access as conditions of approval.

The Town Attorney stated that even if the Town opposes the subdivision for what may be considered valid reasons, the plan would not be dismissed. In that case, four out of the five members of the Planning Board must vote for approval rather than the normal three. During the Council meeting, Mr. Knopf reinforced the notion that legally valid reasons for opposition to any subdivision are not the same as many of the reasons that residents expressed during the meeting.

One area of contention was whether the four pie-shaped wedges planned by Mr. Hirsch are compatible with the rest of the Town since so many of the Town's lots are square or rectangular.

Parking and Traffic

Significant discussion centered on the impact this development would have on parking and traffic around the narrow streets. Truck traffic on the circle already

barely can stay on the road and in some cases trucks leave ruts in yards when they go off the road. One resident said, "We need to have wider streets."

The impact on street parking came up several times. Residents were concerned that such large homes would invite larger families with more than three cars and further crowd an already crowded street with resident parking. The issue of getting in and out of the driveways was also raised as a concern. It was suggested that driveways be angled in a way to make backing in and out onto the one-way Vassar Circle easier. Mr. Hirsch said he would consider that. One idea, not discussed at the meeting but which could also be considered, is the use of shared driveways to reduce the number of areas impacted around the circle. Finally, the idea of aligning the driveways with University and Cornell Avenues was raised as another approach to improve the plan.

Widening Vassar Circle

An area of primary focus was on the issue of right of way and whether the Town, for the purpose of widening Vassar Circle, could claim part of the property and reduce Mr. Hirsch's lot size. Mr. Hirsch expressed a concern that if this happened he could be forced into subdividing into three lots. If this is the case, Hirsch said that this would allow and financially require him to build three larger homes. Mr. Hirsch said, "This is a town of small lots" and encouraged the Town not to pursue this approach. Detailed questions were raised about the property survey and the Council decided that a professional survey was necessary to answer many of the questions regarding existing right-of-ways and easements. Mr. Hirsch offered to share the cost of the survey.

Other Town Council News

The Town received a letter from The Glen Echo Park Partnership for Arts and Culture requesting a one-time increase from \$2000 to \$2300 in the annual gift from the Town. Mayor Beers, quoting from the letter, stated, "They have suffered extraordinary losses as

CONTINUED on Page 5

CONTINUED from Page 4

the result of the closing of the Park for the better part of a month or more.” The Council discussed the merits of the increase and the fact that the Park had paid for use of the Town Hall during the shutdown. The Council passed a measure to increase the gift to \$2300 this year.

Glen Echo Park Report

Aaron LaRocca, representing Glen Echo Park and the Clara Barton House, reported on recent developments. In December the National Park Service (NPS) announced its intent to rehabilitate the Clara Barton House. This will include three projects: fire suppression, climate control, and roof replacement. Funding for the fire suppression project is available this fiscal year and the NPS is looking for a location where it can relocate the nearly 45,000 artifacts before the projects can begin.

From December 15 through February, the Clara Barton House will be closed on Mondays and Tuesdays as part of a personnel management effort during the slower winter months. NPS is working with the State of Maryland to address spring water draining onto the ramp from the Clara Barton Parkway to the American Legion Bridge.

Finally, the George Washington Memorial Parkway has secured a grant to re-establish Dyke Marsh, which has been slowly eroding away since the 1930’s.

PETSITTING BY PATRICIA
 Serving NW DC and Bethesda for over 18 years
 Bonded and Insured · Excellent References

- Cat care
- Midday dog walks
- Overnight housesitting

301-229-4774
 petsbypatricia@gmail.com
 www.petsittingbypatricia.com

Police Report

Off-duty Montgomery County Policemen were engaged by Town government to monitor traffic on Oxford Road. Two officers spent a total of 10 hours and issued 26 warnings and 7 citations to those who violated traffic laws during the month of December.

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER
 BETHESDA, MARYLAND
 O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness; let the whole earth stand in awe of him.

■ **SUNDAY MORNING SCHEDULE**

Holy Eucharist	8:00 a.m.
Adult Forum & Bible Study	9:15 a.m.
Nursery Care	10:15 a.m.
Choral Eucharist	10:30 a.m.
Church School for All Ages	10:30 a.m.

■ **UPCOMING SPECIAL EVENTS**

Sunday, January 5, at 5:00 p.m.
 The Yale Whiffenpoofs in Concert

Sunday, January 12, at 5:00 p.m.
 The Countertop Ensemble & Illuminare in Concert

Sunday, February 9, at 5:00 p.m.
 British Organist Simon Thomas Jacobs in Concert

6201 Dunrobbin Drive at MacArthur Boulevard
 Bethesda, Maryland 20816
 301.229.3770 • office.redeemer@verizon.net
 www.redeemberbethesda.org

ADHD Coaching For LIFE™

- Support for Children and Adults
- Specializing in Professional and Academic Transitions
- Focus on Moving Forward in all Areas of Life and Work
- Daily Check-Ins
- Flexible Schedule

Candace Sahm, MA Ed/HD
 contact: coach@candacesahm.com

Positive Learning Experiences, LLC

- A Coaching Approach to Tutoring
- ADHD Specialists / SAT-ACT Prep

Call 301.229.9515
 www.candacesahm.com • www.pletutoring.com

Holiday Party Photos

Thanks to Harley Feldbaum for capturing these images. Thanks also to the following helpers: **Setup:** Susan Stiglitz. **Gingerbread Houses:** Madeleine Carter and Dia, Tea, Ian, and Matt Costello. **Cleanup:** Patty Sieber, Matt Stiglitz, Dawn Tanner, Grace, Katie and Kirsten Roddy, Bernie Edelman, Harley, Nora, and Maddox Feldbaum, and Nancy Long.



Chuck Violand with Sascha,
baby Bryndis, and Eden Haverfield



Matt, Dia, and Tea Costello



Max White



Susan Thon, Susan Grigsby, and Carlotta Anderson



GLEN ECHO HARDWARE

7303 MacArthur Blvd.
Bethesda, MD 20816
301-229-3700

Authorized Distributor of
Makita • Paslode • Fein • Benjamin Moore Paints

C.G. Cianci & Son Contractors

Concrete • Decks • Remodeling
Kitchens • Baths • Tile

MHIC# 49600
Licensed & Insured

(301) 916-5622
ccianci@verizon.net

LADIES OF GLEN ECHO

Ladies Night

on Thursday,

January 16, at 8 pm

At the home of

Debra Batista

6108 Bryn Mawr Ave

RSVP: 301-351-2045

Indulge your Inner Gourmet &
Satisfy your Inner Green!
Serving the Community since 1975



Enjoy the Finest in Organic Local & Gourmet Products
Introducing Fine Wines & Microbrews—Organic Local Kosher, too!
Fresh Produce, Pastries & Artisan Breads Daily
Imported & Domestic Cheeses & Delicacies
Veggie, Vegan, Macro & Gluten-free Specialties
Vitamins, Supplements and Herbal Remedies
Unique Gifts, Cards, Clothing, Books, CDs and more...

www.bethesdacoop.org • 301-320-2530
M-Sat 8:30-9 • Sun 8:30-8
6500 Seven Locks Road • Cabin John, MD 20818



301-330-4949

A FULL SERVICE LANDSCAPING COMPANY
RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL

LANDSCAPE DESIGN AND INSTALLATION
PATIOS, WALKS, WALLS, BUILT-IN GRILLS
BRICK, FLAGSTONE, BLOCK, TWBER

COMPLETE MAINTENANCE
TREE / SHRUB CARE & INSTALLATION
LICENSED MD TREE EXPERT

SERVING GLEN ECHO HOMEOWNERS SINCE 1983
VISIT OUR WEBSITE - WWW.HUGHESLANDSCAPING.COM



LOCAL EVENTS

Encore Choral

**Washington Conservatory of Music
at Glen Echo Park**

Thursday, January 16

1:30 pm to 3 pm for 15 weeks.

New adults, age 55 and over, are invited to join this group who sing in four parts at performances in community concerts. For registration or more information see www.encorecreativity.org or call 301-261-2747.

Church of the Redeemer

The Yale Spizzwinks(?) in Concert

Sunday, January 5, at 5 pm

The Yale Spizzwinks(?), America's oldest underclassman a cappella group, will entertain with a unique blend of sweet harmony and tongue-in-cheek humor. The suggested donation is \$15. Redeemer Church.

Concert Organist Simon Thomas Jacobs

Sunday, February 9, at 5 pm

British organist Simon Thomas Jacobs, First Prize Winner at the 2013 St. Albans International Organ Competition, performs works by J.S. Bach, César Franck, Franz Liszt, and William Walton. Free-will offering.

**GLEN ECHO TOWN
HALL EVENTS**

These events are free to Town residents.

FSGW English Country Dance

every Wednesday, 8–10:30 pm

FSGW Concert:

Doug MacPhee with Adam Bern

Thursday, January 2, 8 pm



Real Estate Report

6001 Bryn Mawr Ave	\$1,699,000	For Sale
44 Wellesley Circle	\$1,495,000	For Sale
2 Vassar Circle	\$1,749,000	Contingent contract

Update on Gas Installation

Nicole Fraser reported that a work session is planned with Washington Gas on January 10. Since Montgomery County permits have been issued, this will be a construction scheduling meeting. The Mayor and Council members have been asked to attend. As of press time the meeting time was not determined.

Cabin John Organizing

Feeling disorganized?

Stuff always lost?

Tired of paying late fees?

call 301-263-9482

Melanie@dorsetwest.com

www.cabinjohnorganizing.com

Glen Echo Park Activities

The Puppet Co.

Tales of Beatrix Potter

Jan. 17–Feb. 9

Tiny Tots

Select Weds, Sats, and Suns at 10 am

See www.thepuppetco.org

or call 301-634-5380

Adventure Theatre MTC

Miss Nelson is Missing

Jan. 17–Mar. 9

See www.adventuretheatre-mtc.org

or call 301-634-2270



Oxford Road Snow Creature

The two-headed snow creature shown to the left was spotted on Oxford Road.

*We Wish Everyone
a Warm and Joyous
New Year*



The Echo Staff