

The Echo

The Town of
GREEN ECHO, MARYLAND
Chartered 1904



July 2014

Stacey Malmgren Appointed Town Clerk–Treasurer

By Jerry Bodlander

New Town Clerk-Treasurer Named

Wellesley Circle resident Stacey Malmgren has been hired as the new Town Clerk–Treasurer, a position she held about 15 years ago. She'll begin work in July. That will allow for, roughly, a one month transition period before outgoing clerk-treasurer Nicole Fraser moves to Switzerland with her family for a few years.

At last month's meeting, the Mayor expressed concern that no one had applied for the job and there might be a delay in filling the position. At the June 9, 2014 meeting, Mayor Debbie Beers announced that she had offered the position to Ms. Malmgren, anticipating agreement by the Council. Office hours will change and are expected to be 5–7 pm. While

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this fits in with Ms. Malmgren's schedule, the Mayor noted that the hours would also help town residents who are away during the day. The Mayor said she would step in when necessary to deal with contractors and other issues that might arise during the day. Clerk–Treasurer Frazier said office hours have usually been at the convenience of the clerk and she has been at home during the day so she kept the hours as they had been before her tenure.

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THE ECHO

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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.

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Next Town Council Meeting
July 14, 2014, at 8 pm

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The Installation of Gas Lines Continues

Clerk-Treasurer Nicole Fraser says that as of the last council meeting, 27 homes now have gas service lines and that 69 permits have so far been approved.

Town Picnic

There was a reminder from the mayor that the town picnic will be on July 13.

Enabling Ordinance to Allow Widening of Vassar Circle

The Glen Echo Town Council approved an ordinance requiring a 50-foot right-of-way when an area is being re-subdivided and the property covers the entire block. The move came amidst an effort to divide the Glen Echo Baptist Church property on Vassar Circle into four single-family home parcels. The proposed construction provides the Town with a unique opportunity, said Mayor Debbie Beers. "We have an opportunity here to establish a standard that on a blank slate would provide much safer access, much safer parking, and access for fire trucks and everything else, and I think we ought to take that opportunity," she said. She noted that due to the new subdivision, the developer would pay for the wider road. The Mayor also said the ordinance is not directed at Aaron Hirsch, who wants to divide the church property to build four homes, but added "I am sure that he feels it is."

Several residents who live on or near Vassar Circle spoke on behalf of the ordinance, saying the proposed construction would add to street traffic and would make it even harder for emergency vehicles to get through on the street. They say the narrowness of the one way street, which is only 18 feet in some spots, exacerbates safety concerns.

They also said the proposed development would impact what little on-street parking there is.

Renny Springuel noted that fire and garbage trucks, snow plows and construction vehicles already have a difficult time on the street, with many leaving ruts in dirt just off the roadway.

John Niles told the Council there are "serious, serious safety ramifications" and that large vehicles will continue to be a concern.

In urging council approval of the ordinance, both Springuel and Niles said the proposed construction would make on-street parking more difficult than it already is. Several residents noted the church parking lot is a de-facto parking area when there is no street parking available. Other residents noted the developer had no plans to widen the road without Town action. Resident Phyllis Fordham argued against having a 50-foot-wide road. It would change the character of the town "and make it look like any suburban street." It "would destroy the nature of the Town," she said.

Engineers for the developer said they are proposing to widen the road to 20 feet, which would include 8 feet for parking and 12 feet for emergency vehicles.

Developer Hirsch has in the past expressed concern that the ordinance would reduce the buildable lot sizes so he would only be able to build three homes instead of four.

Marie LaBaw, a civil engineer with the Fire Marshal's office who specializes in vehicular access, says fire engines need 20 feet, noting the fire apparatus is 8 feet wide. She told the Council the Fire Marshall can eliminate parking areas if it is determined those spaces prevent fire department vehicles from getting through on the street. And, she said, there is almost always a compromise that can be reached,

CONTINUED on Page 4

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CONTINUED from Page 3

adding that she would support the Town if its goal is to create a standard for the future.

At the start of the meeting, Mayor Beers revealed that the council had met in closed session on June 3 to discuss this matter and consult with counsel. Her announcement is in keeping with requirements of Maryland's Open Meetings Act.

Glen Echo Park

The Hall of Mirrors building at the park is being rehabilitated. Final plans are being reviewed and the hope is that the work can begin this summer. Aaron LaRocca of the National Park Service says it will be used for educational programs. In another announcement he stated that the park service will mark its centennial in 2016. Representatives of non-profit groups associated with the Park met a few months ago to do some planning. Mr.LaRocca says the groups discussed how to promote the Park as well as which shovel-ready projects might be done in advance of the celebration.

LADIES OF GLEN ECHO

Ladies Night

on Wednesday,

July 16, at 8 pm

at the home of

Patty Sieber

6109 Princeton Avenue

RSVP: 301-229-0660

Town Budget 2015

**Government Cutbacks Threaten
Town Interests & Funding**

By Rex Rhein

Income sources for some of Glen Echo's programs and local interests are drying up as a result of continuing cutbacks in a number of government programs and the end of congressional "earmarks," according to Mayor Debbie Beers.

This became clear at the May 26 hearing on the Town's proposed budget for the fiscal year that ends June 30, 2015. Mayor Beers said she fears that the Glen Echo Post Office, which contributes nearly \$30,000 a year in rent to the Town, as well as being a major asset in convenience and status, is likely to be "shut down" in a year or two as part of the U.S. Postal Service's continuing efforts to balance its own budget.

Further, she noted, the National Park Service's reduced budget, lacking the earmarks that have historically helped Glen Echo Park, has resulted in the elimination of government personnel dedicated to the Park, including the Park's manager, and downgraded to virtual abandonment changes long desired by the Town, such as a new entrance to the Park off of MacArthur Boulevard.

The Town's current surplus, \$407,571, will drop next year by more than a third as a result of expenditures of approximately \$209,000 to Washington Gas. This is expected to reduce total income (which includes the surplus) from \$639,089 to \$504,096, according to budget figures reviewed at the meeting.

"I would like to see this surplus replenished," Mayor Beers said in her notice announcing the budget hearing. But she also proposed to retain the existing real property tax rate of 14 cents per \$100 and the personal property tax rate of 80 cents per \$100, which is expected to raise only an additional \$8,188 next year (to \$103,144). Of this amount, there was nothing either this year or in fiscal year 2015 coming from "unincorporated" personal property taxes, as reported by the state of Maryland. This suggests that there are no unincorporated businesses in Glen

Echo. Mayor Beers said she knew better, since she was aware of several businesses being conducted in residents' homes. But "I'm not going to bother shaking people down," she said.

The only other significant revenue increases expected next year are an extra \$13,000 from state income tax revenue (to \$80,000), an increase of \$2,400 (to \$6,000) in revenue from the parking lot at the Irish Inn, and \$3,600 more from building permits (to \$4,000), the latter largely due to construction related to the introduction of natural gas. There were also some reductions, including \$3,059 less (to \$6,712) as the Town's share of the state highway fund, which is based on the number of registered vehicles in Glen Echo.

Revenue from county revenue sharing remains at \$20,000, which Mayor Beers complained was less than the Town deserved, since Glen Echo provides for its own trash pickup, which alone exceeds what the county gives back.

In all, the Town's total revenue expected for fiscal year 2015 is \$256,046, compared to \$231,518 budgeted for fiscal year 2014, of which \$234,494 actually came in, as of April 10, 2014. But the increase budgeted for fiscal year 2015—\$21,552—was not enough to prevent a shortfall of more than twice that amount when expenditures are added up.

In the budget approved by the council after the hearing, total expenditures for fiscal year 2015 come to \$304,176, or \$48,130 more than anticipated revenue. As noted in Mayor Beers' May 10 letter, "Notable expenditures in this budget include ap-



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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, June 1, 5:00 p.m.
Solemn Evensong for Ascensiontide (*Reception to follow.*)

Saturday, June 14, 11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
41st Annual Strawberry Festival & Silent Auction

Monday, August 4 – Friday, August 8, 9:00 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. daily
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proximately \$12,000 for converting the Town Hall to natural gas, \$20,000 for replacing the elevator at the Town Hall, and \$20,000 for moving the speed bump [on Oxford Road]. While I have not included a budget item for slurry seal, I think that this may be necessary and advisable—in this year’s budget or the next year’s budget—in order to preserve the streets after the Washington Gas completes its repairs.”

Other significant expenses approved for next fiscal year include \$15,000 for “administration,” an increase of \$3,000, largely to train a replacement for Clerk–Treasurer Nicole Fraser, who is leaving Glen Echo for a few years to move to Geneva, Switzerland, where her husband, Harley Feldbaum, has taken a job. Mayor Beers complained that as of the time of the hearing (May 26), no Town resident had expressed positive interest in the job, which is slated to pay \$27,256, a 4% increase from fiscal year 2014. “We could raise it to \$28,000,” Ms. Beers said. But she added that even this probably would not be enough to attract a Glen Echo resident to take the job, described as “half time,” i.e., without benefits. “When I started in the ‘90s,” she said, “it paid \$5,000.” The search may widen, to include Bannockburn, if no Glen Echo resident takes the job, she said.

Legal charges next year are expected to reach \$40,000, up by \$10,000 from fiscal year 2014. “I’m surprised it is as low as it is,” commented Council Member Matt Stiglitz, considering the implicit threat of lawsuits over the development of houses on Vas-sar Circle and parking on Tulane Avenue.

As usual, refuse collection and recycling costs are expected to account for 20% of the budget. Next year, they will rise by \$2,000, to \$62,000. Mayor Beers said it could be less if Glen Echo, like the rest of Montgomery County, opted for once-a-week pickup. Then the county could take over this service and it would not even appear in the Town’s budget. But Glen Echo residents appear willing to pay for the extra service, she noted, so it abides.

Sidewalk repairs and money to maintain the Town Hall parking lot, which resulted in no outlays this year, are budgeted for \$10,000 and \$5,000, respectively, in fiscal year 2015. This is \$10,000 less than the 2014 budget allowed.

Landscaping is, again, budgeted at \$25,000. Ms.

Fraser said contractor Mark Peyton, who handles snow plowing, street sweeping, and right-of-way cutting for the Town, has delayed sending in his bills, so she has paid out only \$1,603 as of April 10, even though \$12,500 was budgeted for them this year. For fiscal year 2015, the council approved \$14,000 for these services, assuming that Mr. Peyton will finally ask for his money. *[Ed. Note: Mr. Peyton told The Echo that he will try to send Ms. Fraser his invoices, but he tends to fall asleep when he finishes work each evening. After the meeting, Ms. Fraser reported that she recently received all but one invoice.]*

GLEN ECHO TOWN HALL EVENTS

These events are free to Town residents.

FSGW English Country Dance
every Wednesday, 8–10:30 pm

Town Picnic
Sunday, July 13, 5 pm–7 pm

C&O Canal Association Board
Sunday, August 3, 1 pm

Summer Concert Series

Thursdays, June 18–August 28 at 7:30 pm
Bumper Car Pavilion
See www.glenechopark.org
or call 301-634-2222

Budget Hearing Becomes Forum for Assessing Town’s Future

By Rex Rhein

It was not on the agenda, but two Town residents attending the May 26 budget hearing suggested that a mechanism be created for looking into Glen Echo’s future requirements. One resident advocated that the Town’s annual budgets should include “planning money” for this purpose. Mayor Beers was not receptive to the idea, although one Council Member thought it should be explored.

Phyllis Fordham, of Princeton Avenue, stated that “there seems to be no intention for planning” in the budget the council was reviewing. “We are a reactive government that gives the impression of instability, best described as ‘government by whim,’” she said. “That stance has caught up with us several times in the past few years.”

In one case, Ms. Fordham said, the Council passed a “setback rule to make one house builder change a footprint of a house to satisfy another property owner.” In another, “We are trying to address a problem of street width that is not a new problem by suggesting that our streets should look like a two-way road in a suburban subdivision. Finally, we are replacing a speed bump that was just put in place a few years ago with another which will probably not have the desired effect anyway. We need a very good overall urban plan for our Town,” she said.

Mayor Beers noted that the speed bump had been placed at the corner of Oxford Road and University Avenue against the recommendations of engineers, who had advised the Town to put it higher up on Oxford Road, adjacent to Ms. Fordham’s property. Ms. Fordham had argued at that time that it would not be effective in slowing Park traffic at any location on Oxford Road. She maintains that position. The mayor said she was now going to follow the engineers’ original recommendation, a decision Ms. Fordham called “punitive.”

On the idea of adding “planning money” to the budget, Ms. Beers said she opposed creating some kind of quasi-official body of planners that could

lead to a “bunch of regulations about what people can or can’t do above what the county requires.” To the Mayor, it was obvious that “not everyone believes the same thing” about what sort of community Glen Echo should be. “For 100 years, people did what they wanted” and the Town became what it is today, she pointed out. Agreeing that some of the Council’s decisions were unplanned, she said, “You can’t plan on everything. Things come up.”

Gloria Levin, of University Avenue, thought of an alternative to making planning part of the budget. The Town could conduct a workshop “where residents can bring up ideas” for Glen Echo’s future, “even if it’s just a learning experience,” she said. “Rather than, at this point, putting money in the budget to have someone tell us what to do, we could go to a university and get a graduate student [in urban planning] to come and take a look at the future without expending money.”

Mayor Beers seemed to warm to this idea, so long as it was purely voluntary, while holding to her objection to putting any “planning money” in the budget. She noted that George Mason University and the University of Maryland had programs that “deal with urban planning issues.” At the same time, she questioned whether any volunteers would come forward on this, or on other ideas proposed at Council meetings, to improve the Town. Council member Matt Stiglitz said the idea was worthwhile.

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Police Report

Between May 12 and June 8, off-duty police issued seven warnings and two citations for not stopping at the stop sign on Oxford Road. The Town paid \$160 for these services.

AROUND TOWN

Ford Woods McFarland was born to Julie and Matt McFarland in early June. He joins siblings Gibson and Lilli at 6005 Princeton Avenue and was recently seen being wheeled around town.



LOCAL EVENTS

C&O Canal Activities

Weed Scavenger Hunt

Wednesday, July 2, at 9 am
Great Falls Tavern

Registration required. Contact mark_frey@nps.org or call 202-339-8317.

Nature Walk to View Dragonflies

Saturday, August 9, at 10am
Pennyfield Lock

Contact levelwalker@candocanal.org for details.



Real Estate Report

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July 24–August 31

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Adventure Theatre MTC

Pinkalicious

June 20–August 31

See www.adventuretheatre-mtc.org

or call 301-634-2270

Summer Concert Series

Thursdays, June 18–August 28, 7:30 pm

Bumper Car Pavilion

See www.glenechopark.org

or call 301-634-2222



Celebrate Summer

Town Picnic

Sunday, July 13

5 pm–7 pm

at the Town Hall

Flyers will be distributed
prior to the event.

Volunteers are
always welcome.

