

# The Echo

## The Town of GLEN ECHO, MARYLAND Chartered 1904



August 2013

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### Gas Line Installation Major Topic of July Council Meeting

By Julia Wilson

The Town Council met on July 8 with all members present except Steve Matney.

The main topic of the evening was the possibility of gas transmission into Glen Echo.

After numerous requests from the Mayor, Washington Gas has proposed building the infrastructure for gas installation to Glen Echo for a cost of \$209,877 to the Town, according to a letter sent by a Washington Gas representative to Mayor Debbie Beers. However, at the Town Council meeting at which this proposal was unveiled it was apparent there are still some questions to be resolved about the proposal.

The letter from Washington Gas stipulates that the cost would include installing the main gas line and

bringing gas within a one-year period to each of the 73 houses where the owners expressed interest in installing gas. There would be no additional charge from Washington Gas to these owners during that one-year period. However, according to the letter, the owners would have to have already installed the new gas-capable appliances before Washington Gas would connect the house to the main gas line.

The Town Council has not yet received the paperwork for this contract but Mayor Beers said she expected to receive it this week.

Mayor Beers, who is strongly in favor of the proposal, said, "To me this is a no-brainer and something we have wanted to do for 30 years." She later added that she ran for reelection in the most recent election so she could see gas installation come to fruition.

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# THE ECHO

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**Next Deadline:** August 20, 2013

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**  
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At the Mayor’s request, Mark McCaffrey introduced an ordinance that would allow the Town to charge a \$300 permitting fee to owners who are installing gas. The funds could help offset the costs to the Town of the installation. In compliance with the Charter, the ordinance needs to be introduced a month before it can be voted upon. The introduction at this meeting will allow the Council to vote on it at next month’s regular meeting.

There were a number of Town residents who attended the meeting. After a lively discussion, there was consensus that Mayor Beers would seek additional information from Washington Gas before the Council would vote on the issue. Mayor Beers said she would contact Washington Gas this week. Some of the questions follow.

- What types of appliances have to be installed prior to the gas installation? Does it have to be a furnace or would Washington Gas accept smaller appliances, i.e. oven, fireplace, etc.
- When will the contract be delivered to the Council? The Council will not vote until a final copy of the contract is received.
- What is the timeline for the installation of the main gas lines?
- Where will the meters be installed on the houses?
- What is the process if more than the original 73 owners who expressed interest would like to install gas? Would Washington Gas be willing to install a line to any house in Glen Echo with approved appliances installed during this time?

Mayor Beers said she will probably call a special meeting to discuss the issue when she gets answers to these questions.

Resident Jim McGunnigle asked the Council members where each of them stood on the issue. Mayor Beers answered first. “This is, frankly, why I ran for office again. I believe that somebody needs to push this and I don’t see anyone else pushing it”.

Council Member Matt Stiglitz said he is undecided and wants to wait and see what the contract says before making a decision.

Council Member Mark McCaffrey said, “I am very much in favor of putting gas in my own home and for the Town I think it is the right way to go. I am with Debbie, we have worked for 30 years and we are so close.”

Council Member Nancy Long said she also is waiting to see the final contract. “I’m someone who likes to see everything in place before voting on paying such a large sum of money.”

The proposal does not include the part of town on the opposite side of the Park because Washington Gas would not run the gas main line through the Park. Aaron LaRocca, the Park representative, said the Park is not interested in installing gas.

**In other news**

Mayor Beers suggested the Town Hall rental policy for non-residents stipulate that there are two weekend days each month available for non-residents to rent the space. The rest of the weekend days would be reserved for Town residents. Because the meeting was running late, the Council agreed to table the discussion until the August meeting.

Council Member Matt Stiglitz informed the Council that he plans to remove two trees from his property.

Aaron LaRocca, representing Glen Echo Park, provided a report to the Council. He said that he or Sharna Plater, Facility Manager, will be the Park contacts for the Council. Ms. Plater will attend the September meeting. He updated the Council on the

CONTINUED on Page 4

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CONTINUED from Page 3

shared use path to be constructed by Montgomery County. He said that no decision documents had been signed yet. The National Park Service will create a construction permit once the decision documents are signed. If the Town Council has concerns with the construction document they can email those comments to the Park Service, who may be able to work with them during the permit process.

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### Police Report

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Church School	10:30 a.m.

■ UPCOMING SPECIAL EVENTS

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## Town Residents Demand Gas

By Phyllis Fordham

At a sometimes contentious special Town Council meeting held on July 16, 2013, residents demanded that Council members vote to enter into a letter of intent (LOI) with Washington Gas to bring gas lines into Glen Echo. The meeting began peacefully with Washington Gas representatives' presentation of additional information requested by the Council at an earlier July meeting. The gas company declined to attend that meeting and no written documents had been provided. Town requirements for funding and required residential participation have changed significantly since discussions began at the beginning of the year. However, a July 11 LOI from the gas company was finally rendered. In that letter, the gas company set out terms that were far different from those they initially stated. The Town attorney's opinion about the LOI was generally non-critical, and the attorney suggested that a focus on the permitting and inspection process will give the Town more control than the LOI, which was very informal and brief. The Town Clerk contacted the gas company earlier that day and circulated to the Council answers to written questions from a resident.

### Washington Gas Information

Jack Higgins, Project Manager for Sustainability and Robert Glidewell, Director of Government Affairs represented Washington Gas. Mr. Higgins discussed the project, saying that up to 73 households will be eligible for free connection to gas lines if residents install a gas furnace and interior connections within 12 months of main gas line completion. First, the Mayor must sign the letter of intent and send a check to Washington Gas for \$209,877 for the installation of major lines. The number 73 was earlier reported by Nick Lambert and was derived from two survey efforts. The initial survey was carried out by residents Catherine and Steve Hathaway, and a followup effort that included personal visits and phone calls by Nick Lambert and Diana Hudson Taylor followed. Lambert has been acting as Town liaison to the gas company at the request of the Mayor. Survey results

indicated that about 70 households either said yes, or provided a conditional yes to the surveys. A color coded map in the Town Hall illustrates those results, which were intended to persuade the gas company to provide service. The next contractual step will be for residents to sign commitment letters and return them to the Gas Company. Lambert obtained a representative commitment letter but the one for Glen Echo may be slightly different.

At the time of the earlier surveys, the cost was believed to depend on the final number of residents who would convert to a gas furnace with the cost declining as usage increased. This latest offer from Washington Gas does not rely on more residents to sign up for gas, but instead, appears to limit the number who can gain free access to 73 with the stipulation that they must have a gas furnace installed within a year after the gas lines are laid in Town. A hookup to the house will occur only after furnace installation. At the meeting, Mr. Higgins suggested that as long as a commitment and installation of a gas furnace are made within the first year, the cost of connection of up to 73 households will be free.

Higgins discussed the manner in which the project would be carried out. Construction documents will be undertaken by Washington Gas after the letter of intent is returned by the Mayor with a check. He will apply to the United States Army Corps of Engineers for approval of the initial construction plans, and he indicated that the Corps has given a preliminary nod of approval. The Town will hold the permit allowing Washington Gas to undertake the construction; the Town can put in conditions, approval processes, etc., to assure that gas company performance is in accordance with the Town requirements. Standards for repairing street and Town sidewalk damage can be included. Higgins also made clear that trees or shrubs will not be replaced if damaged. That responsibility will rest with the homeowners or, if on Town property, with the Town. Most of the pipes will be run through the sidewalks, he said, and trenches will be approximately 3 ft. deep and 6 in. wide. Connections at the houses will be made as close to furnaces or appliances as possible. The Mayor later said that the Town will hire an engineering firm to act as the owner's representative to oversee the project.

### Cost to Residents

Council members noted that Washington Gas provided conflicting information in the past few months and they asked for some clarifications. Higgins stated that the terms in the letter of intent were now firm. In answer to questions, Higgins provided additional information about the sequencing of the project and the timing before Washington Gas will hook up homes to gas. He stated that hookups after the first year might cost nothing or could be up to \$2,500, depending on the appliances residents choose. For instance, if a gas furnace is installed within the first year, there will be no cost to hookup to the house unless the homeowner has unusual requests. After the first year there could be a marginal connection fee for a furnace but that fee could be as much as \$2,500 if only a gas fireplace is connected. Even during the first year, if there is no furnace, but perhaps a gas dryer, the cost to hook up to the house will be paid by the homeowner, and will be negotiated separately from the offers to residents under the Town agreement. In addition to the cost of equipment, the Town introduced an ordinance at the earlier July meeting that mentions a special assessment to each homeowner who connects to gas. The ordinance now says the fee will be \$300 per household connection but it may be set at a higher price in order to defray the initial Town expenditure. That topic and adoption of the ordinance will be the subject of another meeting.

### The Vote

After Washington Gas representatives left the meeting, the Mayor asked for a vote from Council members on the letter of intent. While Mark McCaffrey proposed signing the LOI, no one appeared willing to second the motion. The Mayor castigated the Council members and exhorted the audience to remember who is not voting for the proposal at election time. The audience asked Council members their reasons for not voting. Matt Stiglitz and Steve Matney indicated they wanted to review the information before deciding. Nancy Long wanted assurances that the Town was on firm legal ground. Stiglitz also cited his desire to be fiscally responsible, and Steve Matney noted that he had not been at the last meeting

## AROUND TOWN

Ian Costello is back from an exciting summer trip. He taught English and mathematics in Tanzania for two weeks before going on safari. The program was coordinated by Walt Whitman High School and Ian was one of the lucky participants.

and wanted to catch up. Mayor Beers persisted in her attempt to get the motion seconded. She said she ran for re-election to get this done and has worked hard to get the agreement letter from Washington Gas.

Several Council members noted that there were many changes in the proposal that Washington Gas is now making. They have concerns borne out of the mixed messages they had gotten from the gas company from the beginning of discussions. Many in the audience of about 30 residents urged the Council to vote since many thought the opportunity to have gas in Glen Echo was a huge benefit. After getting some additional information, Matt Stiglitz seconded the motion to sign the letter of intent and expend the required \$209,877. The motion was unanimously approved. There was applause from the audience.

### Post Meeting Action

Within a week after the meeting, Washington Gas supplied the Town with preliminary construction drawings, an example of a permit agreement used by Montgomery County with Washington Gas, and Washington Gas comparisons of the cost of gas versus other energy sources. The drawings show gas lines running along every street except the section of Cornell Ave. nearest the canal and the section of Columbia Ave. between 7315 and 7311. For more facts on all the updates to the project, Town Clerk Nicole Fraser can provide updated written documents that may answer questions residents still have about the gas project.

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HALL EVENTS**

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C&O Canal Association Board  
Meeting  
Sunday, August 4, 1 pm

Town Council Meeting  
Monday, August 12, 8 pm

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## Get More Information on Energy Cost Comparisons

The following links have been suggested by Town Clerk Nicole Fraser and there are many others. They may help you to calculate the savings available from converting to gas. Washington Gas also has a calculator on their site. Most importantly, be sure of the numbers you use. For instance, for gas, include all charges including delivery costs and get up to date prices on oil costs. Griffith Energy or Petro can tell you what you pay per gallon and what the cost will be if you lock in your price for next heating season. Either company can tell you what you paid for oil for certain time periods. Other variables will include the efficiency of furnaces or boilers. Some sites to visit:

- <http://www.popularmechanics.com/home/improvement/energy-efficient/4331224>
- <http://extension.psu.edu/natural-resources/energy/energy-use/making-decisions/comparison-charts>

### Notes from Nicole:

The Penn State calculator lets one choose their energy source. So propane users could do a propane versus gas comparison.

Some of the other calculators had fixed inputs that were out of date and others were sponsored by the gas company and might have bias. If anyone else has found sites or calculators they like, please share with the list serve.

Phyllis Fordham received a quote from Griffith Energy for \$3.989/gallon for a locked in rate for 2013–2014.

Matt Stiglitz suggests a realistic natural gas rate may be \$1/therm that includes \$.59 gas and \$.41 delivery. If in doubt, call the gas supplier and make sure you include all charges.

## CLASSIFIED ADS

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*Classified ads are free to Glen Echo residents and \$1 per line for non-residents. Display ads are \$4 per vertical inch. Email Gloria Levin at [EchoBusinessMgr@gmail.com](mailto:EchoBusinessMgr@gmail.com) to set up your ad. Deadline for ads is the 15th of each month.*

## Thinking of Converting to Gas?

Contractor Contact Info for Modification Estimates\*

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Cornell Fields  
240-508-9324 (from Aaron Hirsch)

Gerald Lease  
Lease Brothers Sheet Metal  
301-695-1254 (from Debi Sacks)

Ron Gallant  
Argent Heating and Cooling  
240-398-7006 (from Nick Lambert)

Errol Nicholson  
Griffith Energy  
240-375-8390 (from Phyllis Fordham)

\*These listings are not recommendations by *The Echo*, the Town of Glen Echo, or the parties who supplied the names.

## Correction

There were four election judges who monitored the Town Council election in April. Andy Malmgren's name was erroneously omitted.

## Picnic Volunteers Make the Day

The Town Picnic, held on a hot July Sunday, was a success. The Town thanks the volunteers who made it so, including Brent Agnew, Raya Bodnarchuk, Alexis Feringa, Heather Kraus, Tom Helf, Diana Hudson-Taylor, Matt Stiglitz, and Harley, Nora, and Maddox Feldbaum. A special thanks to Aaron and

Angela Hirsch for the Paloma Cocktail Bar and to everyone who brought delicious desserts and side dishes. Photographers Patty Sieber and George Borsari roamed the event, finding great photo opportunities, and have provided the photos below.





## Glen Echo Park Activities

### **The Puppet Co.**

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### **Adventure Theatre MTC**

*Dr. Seuss's Cat in the Hat Adventure*

June 21–September 2

See [www.adventuretheatre-mtc.org](http://www.adventuretheatre-mtc.org)

or call 301-634-2270

### **Summer Concert Series**

Aug. 1, 8, 15, 22, 29

7:30–8:30 pm

Bumper Car Pavilion

### **Art Walk in the Park**

August 9, 6 pm–8 pm

Park grounds

### **Labor Day Art Show**

Aug. 31–Sept. 2, 12:00–6:00 pm

Reception Friday, Aug. 30, 7:00–9:00 pm

Spanish Ballroom

See [www.glenechopark.org](http://www.glenechopark.org) or call 202-634-2222

## New Minister and Family Move to West Virginia

By Carlotta Anderson

Andy Backus, who was scheduled to become the pastor at the new National Community Church (NCC) on Vassar Circle, has moved from Wellesley Circle with his wife Jess and family to West Virginia. The move was necessary because the family needed the help of grandparents there due to medical problems with their new baby, who joined their four other children a few months ago. "They decided that the needs of their children were such that having the support of their parents to share the care load was imperative," Tom Meeks, a Church member, said. He also stated that the NCC has completed the architectural drawings and is now receiving bids for the actual renovations of the former Baptist Church building. Of the church decision makers, he said, "they are still fully committed to Glen Echo and will be selecting a new pastor for the church as soon as possible."

## From Our Subscribers...

Susan Grigsby, circulation manager for *The Echo*, wanted to pass along some comments she received when subscribers renewed this year. Hearing from subscribers makes Susan's job gratifying.

**George Smith:** "I really enjoy keeping up with what is going on in Glen Echo."

**Sharon Lerner:** "... love staying in touch with the Town through the paper. Will always miss the great community."

**Tony & Elizabeth Huff:** "We are 'the same.' We moved to a bigger house on Mass Ave. in April."

**The Sprouls:** "A quiet year after the hectic pace of the past few."

**Martha Holdridge:** "I find the newsletter useful and fun."