

TOWN OF GLEN ECHO COUNCIL MEETING

January 12, 2009

ATTENDANCE: Nancy Long, Councilmember
Steve Matney, Councilmember
Robin Kogelnik, Councilmember
Cathie Polak, Clerk-Treasurer

VISITORS: Dottie Marshall, Superintendent, George Washington Memorial Parkway (GWMP)
Sharon Cleary, C & O Canal, NHP
Eleanor Balaban, Resident
Raya Bodnarchuk, Resident
Willem Polak, Resident
Kathleen Kotcher, Echo Reporter
Polly Angelakis, Site Manager, GEP
John Barrett, Resident

Councilmember Long opened the meeting at 8:00 p.m., noting that Mayor Beers and Councilmember Arber are not in attendance due to travel. She began the meeting by citing the upcoming historic event of Barack Obama's January 20 inauguration as President of the United States—historic because he is the first person of African-American lineage to be elected to the highest office of our country.

Dottie Marshall, Superintendent, GWMP, was invited to speak.

GLEN ECHO PARK REPORT

CBNHS Propane Tanks

Ms. Marshall said that before she was officially GWMP superintendent, she was involved in a meeting at the Clara Barton National Historic Site (CBNHS) to discuss alternative sites for the above ground propane tanks. Ms. Marshall first explained that the NPS is to receive substantial funds under the new administration's economic stimulus and that she was hopeful that a geo-thermal HVAC system for the CBNHS will qualify for funding within a year to 18 months. The propane tanks and furnace shed would be removed with a geo-thermal system. Ms. Marshall will provide an update at the March 9, 2009, Council meeting, noting that if the project is not funded, alternatives to the propane tank locations can be discussed at that time.

Additional comments and discussion:

- Willem Polak questioned why the tanks could not be placed in front of the furnace shed, as agreed upon during the previous on-site meeting.
- There was an on-site meeting with Suburban Propane; they said the tanks must be 10 feet from the power wires. The new plan is to place the tanks where the yellow shed now stands closer to the bamboo area, closer to the river.

- The yellow shed will be moved on Wednesday, January 15.
- Mr. Polak noted that there are only 45 more days of colder weather; why not use smaller tanks.
- Ms. Marshall explained that the size of the tanks recommended is based on the size of the building and how often the tanks need to be filled.
- Mr. Polak said his research with Suburban Propane's Steve Case shows conflicting information from Suburban.
- Mr. Polak's said he has great concern for the NPS's interpretation of temporary.
- Councilmember Long asked Mr. Polak if the new plan is better; he said it is not any better.
- Ms. Marshall repeated that if there is no funding for the geo-thermal system, the project will be revisited this March.
- Mr. Polak questioned again why the tanks are not being placed in the hole used for the 2000 gallon oil tank. Ms. Marshall said her understanding is that some kind of structure would need to be built in the interior of the hole in order to safely accommodate propane tanks.
- Councilmember Matney asked when the in-ground tank will be removed, and suggested that the work might coincide with geo-thermal decision. If the geo-thermal project is not funded, the tanks could then be moved underground.
- Mr. Polak asked for a written commitment that tanks will be moved or buried if the geo-thermal project is not clearly funded by March 2009. Ms. Marshall said the NPS would have to conduct a value analysis between in-ground vs. the archeological study involved to move the tanks out of sight.
- C/T Polak asked why spend the funds now just to move the tanks in a few months and spend additional funds. Ms. Marshall said that anything other than above ground tanks would change the scope of the project so much that it would default the construction contract; the costs would be prohibitive.
- Mr. Polak suggested putting the tanks 20 feet from the furnace house, with a small berm over the pipes.
- Ms. Marshall said the tanks can be moved only as far away as the previously disturbed area; she will look again to see how much farther the tanks can be moved.
- It was noted that it sounds as though Willem Polak and the NPS are receiving different information from Suburban Propane.

Councilmember Long closed the discussion by asking Ms. Marshall to go back and see if any of the changes discussed tonight are possible. Ms. Marshall said she would review the previously disturbed areas and Suburban Propane's ability to put piping above ground.

Willem Polak and Councilmember Long thanked Ms. Marshall for coming to the Town Council meeting.

Stan Fowler

Councilmember Long noted the transfer of Ranger Stan Fowler, and said that while we do not intend to interfere with NPS personnel decision, she wanted to put in a good word for Ranger Fowler and the wonderful resource he has been for Glen Echo Park. Ms. Marshall agreed, and said the NPS plans to use those resources in the Virginia parks along the George Washington Memorial Parkway; it is important to have a maintenance plan for the Spanish Ballroom, especially the floor, after Ranger Fowler's departure, someone else needs to know how to maintain this historic structure. Councilmember Long noted the Minnehaha Creek project implemented by Ranger Fowler, his ingenuity and ability to motivate volunteers saved the beautiful natural setting of the creek that is the principal entrance to the Park, and this instead of the concrete tunnel recommended as the only solution to the erosion problem. Councilmember Long repeated that Stan Fowler has been an invaluable resource to GEP, and therefore to the Town. Ms. Marshall said that the bridge over the Minnehaha Creek is not out of danger yet. The Army Corps of Engineers is involved because of the potential for flooding.

Resident Raya Bodnarchuk said Stan Fowler, to his credit, is not lobbying for people to keep him at the Park. She sees his transfer as a punishment, taking him from his life's work and love of GEP. According to Ms. Bodnarchuk, Stan Fowler is responsible for saving much of GEP.

Ms. Marshall explained that all NPS employees need to be fully engaged. She explained that there are no rangers on the Virginia side of the Parkway; Stan Fowler will be fully engaged. She is hopeful that Ranger Fowler will ignite a volunteer corps in the Virginia district. Stan Fowler will not be replaced at GEP but can be there for special events. Ms. Marshall asked everyone to wish Stan well, noting that change is difficult; she is confident he will enjoy the new work.

Bikeway Project

Councilmember Long then asked about Montgomery County's Bikeway projected plan to use the old trolley bridge. Ms. Marshall has not been briefed on the Bikeway plan, and noted that some of the trolley right-of-way issues are not solved.

GEPPAC

Councilmember Long asked if there is anything to report on GEP/GEPPAC. Ms. Marshall said she has been working well with them. The rehabilitation of the Park is on schedule. She is excited by the look of the Park. GEP is in good overall health. Ms. Marshall remains optimistic that economic stimulus will benefit GEP.

2009 Inauguration Day

The GWMP will be closed, along with 46 other major roads. Ms. Marshall said this is an unprecedented situation; the Parkway has never been closed. All NPS sites will be open. Ms. Marshall noted that she has fought to keep the GEP parking lot out of the planning loop as a lot for tour bus parking associated with Inauguration Day. Councilmember Matney noted that the Inauguration Day events will be broadcast at the town hall.

C&O CANAL

Sharon Cleary would like the Clara Barton Parkway closed for the Inaugural Day; it would solve the Fletcher's Boathouse concerns (the Potomac River will be closed to all boats). The Park is following inaugural plans closely.

The C&O Canal repair projects are "moving on the fast track." Councilmember Long asked if there will be environment assessments (EA) for the areas to be repaired. Ms. Cleary said yes, the EA's are being done.

GLEN ECHO BAPTIST CHURCH (GEBC)

Mr. Meeks, GEBC, urged all residents to take advantage of the free animal photography portraits, offered by GEBC as part of the church's outreach program. Photographs will be taken at the Annex on Sunday afternoons throughout the year. He showed a sample of some of recent photographs.

STREET REPAIR PROJECT

Councilmember Kogelnik said she had nothing to report on the bid document preparation; she was not able to connect with AMT before the Council meeting.

Drivers are weaving around the speed bumps installed on Oxford Road; she recommends moving the speed bumps side-by-side. Council agreed; Councilmember Kogelnik will find out the cost to move one speed bump.

TOWN HALL MAINTENANCE

C/T Polak presented a verbal estimate from a Case Handyman to soundproof the main room of the town hall. Council asked for a written proposal: C/T Polak will get formal proposal from Case Handyman Jim Brine.

TOWN HALL USE

Councilmember Matney noted that the inauguration will be broadcast at the town hall. Town hall use report is attached.

SPECIAL ELECTION

Discussion on holding a special election was tabled until next council meeting.

Councilmember Long suggested a special council meeting. January 22, 8 p.m., was selected, pending approval by Mayor Beers and Councilmember Arber.

RICHARD LEGGIN ARCHITECTS BUILDING PERMIT

C/T Polak reported, based on the current ordinance, Richard Leggin will be required to pay \$687.50 for a town building permit; most town permits range from \$10 to \$38. She asked if Council could offer a lower fee.

Council requested an explanation as to why the fees are so much higher than other building permit applications.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Approval of the minutes was tabled until the next meeting.

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

Resident John Barrett donated a new book on a nearby neighborhood, "Brookmont," to the Town, noting that the first edition is almost sold out. Councilmember Long thanked him.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:25.