

TOWN OF GLEN ECHO  
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES  
March 8, 2010

ATTENDANCE:     Debbie Beers, Mayor  
                  Nancy Long, Councilmember  
                  Dan Macy, Councilmember  
                  Steve Matney, Councilmember  
                  Nicole Fraser (filling in for Cathie Polak)

VISITORS:        Polly Angelakis, Site Manager, Glen Echo Park (GEP)  
                  Jim McGunnigle, Echo reporter  
                  Matt Stiglitz  
                  Gloria Levin

Mayor Beers opened the meeting at 8:00, noting Town Clerk/Treasurer Cathie Polak's absence, and noting that she could remain at the meeting only a short time. At her departure, Councilmember Long would Chair the remainder of the meeting.

**GLEN ECHO PARK (GEP)**

Ms. Angelakis reported that the playground installation is scheduled for next week. Previously scheduled installations were delayed due to snow. In case of more bad weather, the installation will be delayed but she hopes installation will be complete before Family Day (May 1) and hopefully before April.

The First Aid building rehabilitation is on schedule to be completed by mid-April. Any camps and classes that were previously held in the Candy Corner will switch over to the First Aid Building upon completion. The National Park Service (NPS) will use the Candy Corner for interpretive displays and programs.

Sam Swersky, park ranger and volunteer coordinator at GEP accepted a post at Wolf Trap Farm Park for the Performing Arts. Councilmember Long asked if the position at GEP would be a permanent posting. Ms. Angelakis said that the position will be kept.

Starting on February 22, licensed gun owners may bring firearms into national parks as long as they are allowed by state law. Ms. Angelakis said that she was not sure what the Maryland firearm laws were but she distributed a pamphlet on FAQ about firearms in national parks and wildlife refuges. Mr. Stiglitz suggested that he could check into it but it was under extremely limited circumstances such as a state police permit that might allow someone in Maryland to carry a loaded gun; he offered to look into it. Mayor Beers summed up the discussion as "Guns okay, skateboards out."

Ms. Angelakis reviewed upcoming events at GEP. On March 21, there will be a blood drive and dramatic presentation "Clara Barton Red Cross Angel." Reservations for the performance are required.

Two rooms in the Clara Barton house will be restored; it was hoped they would be completed in March but now scheduled for mid-April.

Snow caused delays in many projects in the park, but there was no significant damage to the park. All structures were safe and the park staff and visitors were all safe in the storm. Mayor Beers asked about the roof of the Spanish Ballroom as some events were cancelled due to the snow even though access was clear. Ms. Angelakis reported that there was no damage; a contractor recommended not to use the ballroom until the snow on the roof melted.

Councilmember Long noted some statements made at the January GEPPAC (Glen Echo Park Partnership for Arts and Culture) board meeting that seemed to indicate that GEPPAC may assume greater responsibility at GEP. Ms. Angelakis said that she remembered a lot of ideas passed around at the meeting, but as it is federal land it can take a long time to get new ideas reviewed and approved. Mayor Beers asked if there was to be a new cooperative agreement. Ms. Angelakis said that the current cooperative agreement is not up for a couple of years. Mayor Beers said that the last cooperative agreement was approved in 2001 or 2002 and may be up in 15 years or so. Councilmember Long offered to check the Town's copy. Ms. Angelakis noted that there is some talk about GEPPAC operating the café. The current concessions agreement with General Service, Inc. (GSI) is up in the next year.

### **SNOW REMOVAL**

Mr. Stiglitz asked why plowed snow was deposited on the west side of University Avenue rather than the east side, which receives better snow exposure to hasten melting of piled snow. Mr. Stiglitz suggested that possibly the snow emergency routes might be switched as the sun shines longer on the MacArthur side of University Ave. Mayor Beers said that she would not like to change anything until we get through the current FEMA process "It will not come up as an issue however I do not want to go to the county to say we are changing the (snow emergency) route." The snow emergency route is Oxford Road.

Mayor Beers reported from a meeting in College Park that explained how to get assistance from FEMA for relief for the costs associated with snow removal. If the December 19 storm is reclassified as a disaster, Glen Echo would get one 48 hour period for snow removal costs and then 75% after that. She hoped to get Mark Peyton's bills for snow removal in time to apply for funds. When all of the bills and paperwork are compiled, she will apply to the county to get some of the money back. Even with the FEMA assistance, Mayor Beers anticipated that the snow removal costs would be way over budget. The last major storm season in 1996, the town spent \$9,000-10,000 in snow removal costs. The town has about \$3,000 budgeted for snow removal.

Ms. Levin said that she thought Senator Mikulski was petitioning FEMA for a waiver for Maryland. Mayor Beers said that her impression was that the 48 hour regulation was not likely to be repealed; it hinges on whether or not FEMA chooses to treat the two February storms as separate events or a single storm event.

Ms. Levin noted that one couple complained in The Echo about Mr. Peyton's services. She felt that this was an unusual storm, an every hundred year event. Ms. Levin said that in the past she has always felt so comforted by the arrival of his crew. Ms. Levin was not able to get into her driveway, Mr. Peyton came over to help her out and in a few minutes he had his plow come over and open her driveway. Mayor Beers said that Mr. Peyton had been up for 72 hours straight and she had hoped that Norm and Diana Hudson-Taylor had attended the meeting so that they could voice their concerns. Ms. Levin reiterated that she felt lucky to have Mr. Peyton and his crew.

Ms. Levin asked about debris removal. Mayor Beers said that the town planned to have debris removed when the snow melts. Ms. Levin voiced concern that there were limbs overhanging in the street and that she might be blocked getting in and out of her driveway. Mayor Beers said that if individuals wanted to contact Mr. Peyton about helping with tree removal then they may do so. Mr. McGunnigle asked for clarification: "Will the town pay for trees to be cut down?" Mayor Beers said that if tree limbs were hanging over the street as a result of the snow, the town would pay to have the limbs cut down. Ms. Levin said that a tree by the church is half dead and may fall into the street. Mayor Beers said that she would call and check on it.

Ms. Levin asked the town council to consider adopting a policy for how long someone can reserve a parking spot that has been cleared of the snow. She suggested that 24 hours would be appropriate but it should not be blocked with signs or chairs. She feels that it is unfair to save parking as there are so few spaces available. She proposed that the town adopt some kind of policy. Mayor Beers offered that she held the opposite point of view, she personally had dug out spaces and lost a few spaces as visitors to neighboring homes came to use them. Ms. Levin suggested that these are public streets and that they are public for all. Mr. Stiglitz pointed out that in Boston and other cities with heavy snows the informal rule is that people only park in spaces that they have cleared. In the winter, Mayor Beers would ask others to please not park in a space that they have not cleared. Councilmember Macy pointed out that while Ms. Levin's proposal is legally correct, it is a matter of civility to not park in a neighbor's snow-cleared parking space.

Councilmember Macy reported that after the early February snowstorm, the Wednesday night dance in the town hall was not cancelled. Any cleared spaces that evening were gone. Mayor Beers proposed that in the future we should ask the Wednesday night dance coordinators to cancel after major snow storms until the streets are cleared. (The English Country Dance group did cancel one Wednesday night dance.)

Ms. Levin urged the council to vote on the issue of parking in snow-cleared spaces. Mayor Beers said that she did not feel the need for a vote. Ms. Levin said that possibly that an abeyance on babysitters or other visitors that might take snow cleared parking spaces during snowstorms would be in order to allow for more snow-cleared parking spaces. Mayor Beers said that forcing residents to do that was not possible and if

someone needs a spot that they have not cleared, it could be on an emergency basis (e.g. service people).

Councilmember Long asked if Ms. Levin had observed the saving of snow-cleared parking spaces in previous storms. Ms. Levin said in the future that she would use the snow emergency parking on University Avenue. Councilmember Matney noted that Snowbelt cities use the informal policy of “you cleared it, it’s yours” every winter. Mayor Beers thanked everyone for their comments on the snow.

Councilmember Long asked the status of Oxford Road. Mayor Beers said that she has received a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and would like to discuss it with the town council and the town lawyer in a closed session at a later date.

Mayor Beers left the meeting at 8:34 p.m., turning the meeting over to Councilmember Long.

#### **TOWN HALL USE**

Noted upcoming events in the town hall:

- Balkan Celebration (organized by Betsy Platt), March 13;
- Western Montgomery County Citizens advisory board on March 15;
- St. Patrick’s Day Town party on March 20;
- Potomac Valley Scottish Fiddle Club on March 27;
- Movie night, “Up” on April 10;
- Folklore Society Concert, April 15;
- Family dance (last one before moved to GEP), April 11.

Council members Macy and Matney discussed having a movie matinee on March 20 they will check with the plans for the St. Patrick’s Day party setup.

Councilmember Long pointed out that parking might be an issue for the March 13 event, partly due to the closure of all green-space parking at GEP where those spaces are saturated with snow melt and cannot be used. Overflow parking has moved on to Town streets. She said that Ms. Platt expects up to 120 people and 124 is the capacity of the hall. Councilmember Matney suggested that Ms. Platt should encourage people to car pool. Councilmember Long said that Ms. Platt understands the parking situation in Glen Echo, and has encouraged carpooling.

#### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Motion 2010-03** to approve as amended (verb change) the January 11, 2010 Town Council meeting minutes. Motion passed as amended.

#### **RIDE ON BUS SERVICE**

All council members attended the public meeting held by Montgomery County Councilmember Roger Berliner on January 25. Councilmember Berliner said he would

“fight tooth and nail to keep” the Ride-On Rt. 29 weekend bus service. No cuts will be made to the Ride-On 29, 23, and 32 bus service and T2 will not be cut for now. Councilmember Matney said that the Town council showed in its submission for the record that there would be no public transit west of Wisconsin Avenue on weekends if the bus service were to be cut. Councilmember Long wrote an addendum to her personal statement showing how to save money (e.g. functioning fare boxes). Councilmember Matney rides daily, noting that the fare boxes are frequently inoperable.

#### **ADDITIONS TO AGENDA**

1. Stevenson Memorial: Councilmember Long noted that she and Jane Stevenson have had a conversation about recognizing Brockie Stevenson. Ms. Stevenson would like to have a bench with a plaque that she would provide and pay for. Ms. Stevenson suggested two locations; she and Councilwoman Long favor the Town Hall yard. (The other location was the older of the two Town parks.) Councilmember Long discussed this with Mayor Beers, who also preferred the Town Hall location. Ms. Long offered to continue to work with Ms. Stevenson; the Council had no objections.

2. Senator Charles Mathias: Councilmember Long noted the passing of former U.S. Senator Charles Mathias on January 25, 2010. “A man that had much to do with things that happened in the Potomac Valley that were good. A very unusual man that I had the privilege of working with in his campaigns. There was a huge turnout for his memorial service at the National Cathedral: Colbert King gave a retrospective of working in Mathias’ office. Another person who worked in Mathias’ office was U.S. Congressman Chris Van Hollen, who was one of his pall bearers. Van Hollen is quoted in newspaper articles with favorable and wonderful comments about his experience working in that office and that he learned a great deal that was so valuable to his own Congressional experience. We lost a real statesman and there really are not many of those these days.”

3. CR Zoning: Councilmember Long noted that on March 2, the Montgomery County Council passed legislation establishing a new zone called commercial-residential (CR) zone. Councilmember Long will give a better report to the town council once she has read the county report in full. Councilmember Macy was surprised that the county does not have a commercial-residential zoning already. Councilmember Long said that the county currently has C-T (commercial-transitional). Councilmember Arber noted that CR zoning is similar to mixed use and she believes its creation is intended to simplify the current zoning code.

4. Rain Gardens: Ms. Levin noted Bethesda Green is sponsoring an information/education session on rain gardens on March 16. Ms. Levin said that the county is encouraging rain gardens with \$1200 rebates. Councilmember Arber stated that it is now law to keep any runoff on your own property; she offered invite to Ann English (of Montgomery County’s RainScapes Program) to lead an informational session for the town. Ms. Levin was curious how this affected the street car right-of-way purchased as open space where she has observed quite a bit of runoff into her property. If these were to be turned into rain gardens, she queried who would maintain them. Councilmember

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Long noted that not every section of the right-of-way is a problem. She asked if Councilmember Arber would like to follow up. Councilmember Arber agreed. Ms. Levin said that there is no problem in front of The Irish Inn. Councilmember Macy stated between paving and new drain system there might be less runoff from the right of way areas. Councilmember Long said that there is a problem of runoff near the drain on Bowdoin Street. Councilmember Arber asked if that was the Town's drain. Councilmember Long said that the NPS is responsible for the Bowdoin Street drain.

Meeting adjourned at 9 p.m.