

TOWN OF GLEN ECHO
Town Council Meeting
February 11, 2013

ATTENDANCE: Deborah Beers, Mayor
Nancy Long, Councilmember
Eve Arber, Councilmember
Steve Matney, Councilmember
Mark McCaffrey, Councilmember
Nicole Fraser, Clerk-Treasurer

VISITORS: Aaron LaRocca, Acting Site Manager of GEP¹ & Clara Barton NHS
Debi Sacks, The Echo reporter
Nick Lambert, Resident
Debbie Lange, Resident
Stephen and Catherine Hathaway, Residents
Andy Backus, Resident and Pastor of Glen Echo NCC
James Bohi, Resident
Bill Vincent, Resident
Norman Bernhardt, Resident
Phyllis Fordham, The Echo editor and Resident
Aaron Hirsch, Resident
Chief Joe Chornock, GEFD
John Witherspoon, Conduit Road Fire Board Community Representative

Mayor Beers called to order at 8:00 pm

GLEN ECHO PARK REPORT

Acting Site Manager Aaron LaRocca reported the NPS Oxford Road entrance/exit road plan has been tabled. The project was taken out of the PMIS (Project Management Information System) because it was labeled as lost and as a result the deadline of December 2012 was missed. The project will be put in for FY 2014 (starting in October) funding request, however that does not ensure that the funds will be granted.

Mr. LaRocca reported that CBNHS has three outstanding projects: geothermal system, fire suppression and roof repair. The biggest need is fire suppression, the building is estimated to have a five minute burn time. While the fire suppression project has been funded, the funds to pay for moving the contents of the House off-site has not. The geothermal project has been tabled; after drilling in the grass field it was determined that so many wells would be needed that it would greatly affect the historical aspect of the

¹ Abbreviations used in this document include EA/AOE (Environmental Assessment/Assessment of Effect), GEFD (Glen Echo Fire Department), GEP (Glen Echo Park), GEPPAC (Glen Echo Park Partnership for Arts & Culture), GWMP (George Washington Memorial Parkway), NCC (National Community Church), CBNHS (Clara Barton National Historic Site), NHP (National Historical Park), NP (National Park), NPS (National Park Service) and WG (Washington Gas).

site; in addition, the roof is in such terrible shape that any new system would not be effective.

Nick Lambert asked if NPS would be interested in natural gas for CBNHS. Mr. LaRocca said that NPS is pursuing a green energy project, not necessarily about heating or cooling but climate control. Mr. LaRocca said the cost of propane for CBNHS is about \$7,000 a winter.

NPS GWMP is considering a request from Montgomery County to locate a segment of the county's MacArthur Boulevard shared-use path through parts of GEP and CBNHS. In connection with this proposal, the County was required to fund the preparation of an EA/AOE on which public comments are sought (see attached Project summary). The proposed project would require a special use permit from NPS. Mr. LaRocca encouraged Council and Mayor to submit comments about the shared use path to Mr. Mike O'Connell, NPS project coordinator, Councilmember Long said that she will write her own personal comments; she feels strongly that it would have a negative impact on GEP and CBNHS. The placement of an 8 foot wide path through the upper parking lot would not allow expansion of the parking lot at a time when GEPPAC is planning an increase in the number of programs in the park. The asphalt path itself would increase runoff in an environmentally sensitive area. She also was concerned about the safety of pedestrian traffic around the proposed Oxford Road entrance, especially at night. The physical aspect of the creek would also be greatly altered, changing the GEP visitor experience and potentially affecting creek fauna and flora. She also said that the language in the EA appeared to be leaning toward a favorable outcome for MCDOT and not necessarily in the best interest of NPS. Mr. LaRocca noted that those are the types of comments NPS hopes to hear in the open comment period; he stressed that the outcome of the EA is not predetermined.

Councilmember Arber said that at an earlier time NPS did not want any rehabilitation work on the trestle because of potential environmental consequences (timbers covered in creosote and/or arsenic) and MCDOT has decided to proceed with its proposal. Mr. LaRocca said he had no information regarding that issue. Councilmember Long said if the project is approved NPS should have a daily representative on site supervising the entire process. Mr LaRocca concurred.

Mr. LaRocca announced a special event on March 16th by Mary Ann Jung; she will do a first person portrayal of Clara Barton starting at 2 pm followed by an open house at CBNHS. On April 20th, re-enactors from the 54th Massachusetts regiment will be coming to CBNHS (rain location: Bumper Car Pavilion). Also on April 20th, Dr. Sandra Manning will give a presentation on the Emancipation Proclamation.

NATURAL GAS SURVEY

Nick Lambert reported on recent survey results: 72 residents are interested in natural gas (63 complete yes, 9 a qualified yes), 5 yes/maybes to be confirmed and 20 no interest.

78% of Town residents are interested in natural gas in their homes. Mr. Lambert visited WG the previous Thursday and the estimate of installation for the 73 homes has revised twice upwards to \$209,000. WG has also confirmed that residents have twelve months to install gas-fueled appliances, not the 6 months originally quoted. Mayor Beers noted that the reason the price has been revised from the first meeting was that the initial estimates were based on Virginia tariffs. The largest complication would be tunneling under MacArthur Boulevard, with the required supervision of the Army Corps of Engineers; as a result WG can not commit to a timetable or a final price. The next step is to complete a feasibility survey which costs between \$20,000 and \$25,000 and the price would be refunded if the Town proceeds with natural gas installation.

Mayor Beers said that the Maryland Public Service Commission determines what they are willing to subsidize. Councilmember Long suggested that a request for some price relief on the project could be taken to Annapolis. Phyllis Fordham asked if the Town would consider a similar effort for geothermal system; two town residents are installing geothermal systems and the credits are substantial. Mayor Beers noted that she received an estimate of \$60,000 for geothermal installation and it only works on forced air systems; most residents in town have radiator heat. Mayor Beers said that she contacted the County office that administers community development block grants and the natural gas project would not qualify. Mayor Beers said that she thinks this is a wise investment for the Town in the future and maybe we can pursue other funding.

Mr. Lambert pointed out that the cost per household will be unique to each home's system and placement. Mayor Beers thanked Diana Hudson-Taylor, Nick Lambert, and Stephen and Catherine Hathaway for their efforts to collect all the information.

GLEN ECHO FIRE DEPARTMENT

Chief Joe Chornock of GEFD and John Witherspoon of the Conduit Road Fire Board introduced themselves. The area served by GEFD is about six square miles between Western Avenue, Wilson Lane, the Potomac River and River Road. When a resident calls 911, the closest available truck is dispatched, most likely from Glen Echo but may also be Cabin John or Bethesda-Chevy Chase. Chief Chornock reported that the GEFD is a combination of career and volunteer firefighters and paramedics; there are openings for volunteers and positions on the fire board; and donations are always welcomed. Mayor Beers asked about the Santa Claus visits on the fire truck. Chief Chornock reported that after six nights they received a complaint and then the truck was involved in a fender bender. Mr. Witherspoon advised that the Conduit Road Fire Board is looking for a new community representative to the board; the board meets on the second Monday of each month. The Glen Echo community representative position is currently open.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion 2013-03 to accept the January 2013 Council Meeting minutes after confirming police report details with Matt Stiglitz. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion 2013-04 to accept the November 2012 Council Meeting minutes. Motion passed unanimously.

NATURAL GAS FEASIBILITY SURVEY

Mayor Beers asked Council if they were willing to have a referendum or move tonight on approving fund for an engineering survey to determine the feasibility of bringing natural gas under MacArthur Boulevard to the Town. Mayor Beers advised that the Town adds about \$50,000 each year that does not involve a street repair project. Councilmember Arber noted that the relocation of speed bumps on Oxford Road is a large project that has been slated for 2013. Councilmember Matney voiced his concern that any gas installation project would shorten the time until the next street repair. Mr. Lambert suggested that it might be possible to run the gas lines down the right of way or sidewalks to lessen stress on the Town's roadways. Mayor Beers suggested that asphalt on the roads will be less expensive than sidewalks.

Motion 2013-05 to advance the survey and spend up to \$25,000 to put in the application for natural gas installation by Councilmember McCaffrey. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion 2013-06 to move \$20,000 from budget line item 13.2 (street paving & sidewalk) to other capital improvements by Councilmember Arber. Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Lambert said to expedite the process, WG has suggested that political pressure be put on various representatives: Congressman Van Hollen and Senator Mikulski. The first window of opportunity is between now and October. Councilmember Matney said that residents should contact a heating or plumbing contractor.

TOWN HALL USE

Councilmember Long reported that the Town Hall will be used for the annual Town St. Patrick's Day party on March 17, 2013. The party will be open to Glen Echo and Bannockburn residents. The Scottish Fiddle Club will use the Town Hall on March 24th for fiddling and dancing; this event is open to Town residents. A request from a group looking for theater lighting and sound has been received; Councilmember Long said that the group is better suited for another facility. Report attached.

GEPPAC

Mayor Beers said that a letter sent by Katey Boerner, director of GEPPAC, on December 10, 2012 requesting the yearly donation from the Town had been missed. She advised that, as far as she knew, that the bylaw change has not occurred and the upcoming GEPPAC board meeting is on Wednesday February 13; and she will report back. Councilmember Matney requested that discussion of the Town's donation be postponed for another month.

TOWN MAINTENANCE

Clerk/Treasurer Fraser presented two bids for landscaping one from Chapel Valley and one from Great American Landscapes. Shorb Landscaping declined to bid. McFall and Berry did not respond to calls.

Motion 2013-06 to renew the contract with Chapel Valley by Councilmember Arber. Councilmember McCaffrey seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Clerk/Treasurer Fraser reported that Police Officer Lee Holland has requested to add a third police officer to the rotation for traffic management at the corner of Oxford Road and University Avenue.

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

1. Councilmember Arber reported that the parking problem at 6110 Oberlin Avenue with Exeter Trust is still an issue. Tenants and clients find it difficult to park on Oberlin due to the number of cars parked for lengthy periods of time.
2. Mayor Beers reported that the proposed ZTA for building on small lots is still undergoing some changes. The language has been revised and she hopes all parties are in agreement. Norman Knopf is still waiting for input from the Counsel for Montgomery County Council.

Meeting adjourned at 10:15 p.m.

Deborah M. Beers, Mayor

Date

Attached: Police citation report
Town Hall use report