

**TOWN OF GLEN ECHO  
COUNCIL MEETING  
January 20, 2014**

ATTENDANCE: Debbie Beers, Mayor  
Nancy Long, Councilmember  
Steve Matney, Councilmember  
Mark McCaffrey, Councilmember  
Matt Stiglitz, Councilmember  
Nicole Fraser, Clerk-Treasurer

VISITORS: Aaron LaRocca, Supervisory Park Ranger, GEP/CBNHS<sup>1</sup>  
Blair Anderson, resident  
Carol Barton, resident  
Shannon Kraus, resident  
Phyllis Fordham, residents and The Echo editor  
Peggy McEwan, reporter for The Gazette  
Christy Hughes, Owner of The Irish Inn  
Michael Collins, lawyer for The Irish Inn  
Renny Springuel, resident  
Eve Arber, resident  
Richard A. & Lindsay Leggin, owners of Richard A. Leggin Architects  
Ellen Leary, resident and reporter for The Echo  
Diana & Norman Hudson-Taylor, residents  
Aaron Hirsch, owner of the Baptist Annex  
Katey Boerner, GEPPAC  
Patrick Hooper, resident  
Julia Wilson, resident  
Susan Grigsby, resident  
Tim Bragan, resident  
Brent Agnew, resident  
Raya Bodnarchuk, resident  
Gloria Levin, resident  
Norman Knopf & Benjamin Arem, Town Attorneys

Mayor Beers called the meeting to order at 8:04 p.m.

**GLEN ECHO PARK REPORT**

Supervisory Park Ranger Aaron LaRocca reported on proposed renovation plans for the Hall of Mirrors in GEP for an improved lobby area, dressing rooms and an HVAC system. A native plant garden is planned for the Living Classroom area. The superintendent of GWMP has asked GEPPAC to look for ways to make up for financial losses suffered during the federal government shutdown of 2013. The Carousel hours may be extended but not above the 460

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<sup>1</sup> Abbreviations in this document include CBNHS (Clara Barton National Historic Site), DOT (Department of Transportation), FSGW (Folklore Society of Greater Washington), GEP (Glen Echo Park), GEPPAC (Glen Echo Park Partnership for Arts and Culture), GWMP (George Washington Memorial Parkway), MCDOT (Montgomery County Department of Transportation), NPS (National Park Service) and ROW (right-of-way).

hour/per year limit. Councilmember Long asked if funds were available for the CBNHS renovations. Mr. LaRocca reported that some funds were available for fire suppression and roof replacement; climate control is currently not funded.

Mr. LaRocca's notes are attached to the minutes.

#### **DISCUSSION OF 2 VASSAR CIRCLE**

Mr. Hirsch reviewed a proposal to "swap" one of the 4 planned parcels at 2 Vassar Circle as green space for the Town's property on Tulane Avenue (see attached letter and lot configuration diagram). The current proposal uses an easement to delineate the proposed park at 2 Vassar Circle. Mr. Hirsch explained that he preferred the use of easements as he pays a "kicker" (extra money) to NCC for each lot created during the subdivision process. Mayor Beers said that she felt an appraisal of the Tulane property was necessary and an easement was not acceptable trade for the Town; it should be a fee-simple exchange. She also said that the lots on Tulane would need to be subdivided for a more equitable trade. The Town owns two lots on Tulane Avenue one is 9,492 sq. ft. the other 4,416 sq. ft. Mr. Hirsch is interested in the 9,492 sq. ft. lot. Mayor Beers expressed her concern if the Town were to trade the larger Tulane lot for a green space parcel on 2 Vassar Circle, the smaller Tulane parcel is less than the 6,000 sq ft minimum buildable lot size. Therefore, the smaller lot is of relatively little value in the current County's zoning structure and not a valuable asset for the Town to sell.

Mr. Hirsch stated that his interest was in building right away instead of waiting for the minor re-subdivision on Tulane. He said he would have no objection ceding the pipestem shape of the larger lot to the smaller lot (which would make the smaller lot size greater than 6,000 sq. ft.). However, he is concerned that it is odd to have a residence on Tulane (the town's lots are both zoned as residential, R-60, in the current County code) where the rest of the development is commercial or commercial-transitional. His lawyer has told him that the minor subdivision would be an 18 month process with a 50% likelihood of success of rezoning to C-T (commercial-transitional). Mayor Beers and Councilmember Matney agreed that the Town would have to re-subdivide the property before the Town let it go. Mr. Hirsch felt that the sale price of the Tulane lots is likely to have a lower square foot value than the 2 Vassar Circle lots.

Councilmember Long asked Mr. Hirsch if he had established the price of the lots on Vassar Circle. Mr. Hirsch said that he only has a purchase price but not a sale price, if a swap were to take place then we would have to establish the value of the lots. Councilmember McCaffrey said that without a formal appraisal and survey done on 2 Vassar Circle, it is far too premature to swap the Town's land. Mr. Hirsch said that he will make an application for a certain configuration of subdivision on 2 Vassar Circle; under his proposed swap, it is a three lot configuration with an easement to create a park. Town Attorney Norman Knopf said that at present it is unclear what can be built on 2 Vassar Circle. Adequate roadway width is a great concern as Vassar Circle is particularly narrow; Montgomery County Park & Planning or the Town could request to widen the road, and that could result in reduced square footage and fewer than four lots. Mr. Knopf said that it was too early to discuss swapping land as this might not come up. A survey by Ed Snider & Associates is underway and the results should be available soon. Mr. Hirsch said that he was told by Park & Planning that there is no width requirement for one way streets (as Vassar Circle is) under MCDOT regulations. Mr. Knopf said that it is 30 feet. Mr. Hirsch said that the closing date for the contract is February 7<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Springuel said that his impression that the Town Council is absolutely neutral to the development of 2 Vassar Circle; the residents of Vassar Circle wished the Council to be more active. Mayor Beers said that the Town can weigh in on the parking and road width but the Town is unable to change the County Code. Mr. Springuel expressed his concern that the proposed homes are 2 ½ stories which will “destroy the character of Glen Echo.” Mayor Beers noted that 2 ½ story homes are legal under the current County code. Mr. Hirsch said that he had met with Mr. Springuel and they had discussed the density of the proposed homes; he said that the market forces him to do the highest and best use of the land. Mr. Kraus said that he agrees with the Town Council to complete the survey and then appraisal and then a discussion can take place about the park and the equitable swap proposal. Mr. Leggin noted that he has seen subdivisions denied because of the configuration of the lots. Mr. Knopf said that the Town has a major say on the subdivision, if the Town votes that the subdivision is not compatible, the number of votes needed by Park & Planning goes to a supermajority (4 instead of 3 out of 5) needed for approval but again this is far too early until the survey of the land is completed. The proposed new lots would be assessed for compatibility, shape, size and configuration, ingress/egress, adequate road width, stormwater management, sediment control. A site plan is not required for the subdivision process. Subdivisions are granted pursuant to conditions, if the applicant agrees to the conditions then Park & Planning will not stand in the way. Ms. Hudson-Taylor asked if the Town could write an ordinance on height restrictions and grandfather the existing heights that might be higher than any new restrictions. Mr. Knopf said that norm is to change the rule for all properties in Town and it would cause difficulties for some of the existing houses in Town.

Mr. Hirsch contacted NCC about possibly lowering the price to allow for a Town park. He said the NCC declined. Councilmember Stiglitz urged Mr. Hirsch to not delay his plans subdivision plans while the Town completed its surveys and collected information regarding road width.

#### **PARKING AT THE IRISH INN**

Mr. Hughes, owner of the Irish Inn, detailed how the lack of parking area has impacted his business; people with reservations are turned away for lack of parking. Mr. Hughes asked for a long-term lease on the smaller Tulane lot that the Town rents to him for parking; he was concerned that if a house were to be built on the larger lot that people would complain about noise from the lot. Mayor Beers said that the Town could make the lease more long-term and expand into the unused part of the smaller Tulane lot; she said that it is a public benefit to provide off-street parking. Mr. Hughes asked if it would be possible to have permit only parking on Friday and Saturday nights. Councilmember Matney said it would be difficult to enforce permits [*N.B.* – Part of the parking problem is caused by visitors to GEP, particularly users of the Spanish Ballroom]. Mr. LaRocca said that it could be possible to discuss using the NPS owned land that touches Tulane Avenue, Bowdoin Street and Oberlin Avenue with the GWMP Superintendent, Alex Romero. Councilmember Long pointed out that Tulane Avenue is the only entryway for emergency vehicles to go into GEP and to serve properties in that section of Town – parking is available only on one side of Tulane – are other factors to be considered when weighing parking options.

#### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Motion 2014-01** Council approved the December Meeting minutes with three revisions:

- 1) Page 2, third sentence spelling of “areas” corrected.
- 2) Page 2, under GEPPAC heading, third sentence, replace “keep” with “maintain”
- 3) Page 3, first paragraph, fourth sentence, space between “Mr.” and “Knopf” added.

Councilmember Stiglitz proposed the motion; Councilmember Matney seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

### **UPDATE ON GAS INSTALLATION**

C/T Fraser said a community meeting with Washington Gas will take place on February 27, 8 p.m. at the Town Hall. A work session will be held on February 14, 8:30 a.m. at the Town Hall. Construction will begin in April, starting on Wellesley Circle and moving south through the Town.

### **COMMUNITY POLICE REPORT**

Councilmember Stiglitz reported on the last meeting of the community police advisory board. He noted three crime trends:

- 1) illegal activity around buying and selling of items on Craig’s List especially cell phones and vehicles;
- 2) pharmacy break-ins;
- 3) enforcement of traffic violations including no cell phone use while driving.

Councilmember Stiglitz encouraged residents to contact the police if they see something suspicious, several burglaries in DC and Montgomery County occurred after suspicious behavior was not reported. Councilmember Stiglitz report is attached to the minutes.

### **TOWN HALL USE**

Mayor Beers announced that the date for the St. Patrick’s Day party has been set for March 16<sup>th</sup>, and that Kate Horwitz has volunteered to organize. Councilmember Long noted that several concerts are scheduled for the Town Hall; these are offered by the FSGW. Councilmember Long prepared a draft with new proposed rates for Town Hall rental and a description of Town Hall facilities (attached).

### **ADVENTURE THEATRE**

Councilmember McCaffrey reported that Adventure Theatre has made an emergency request of \$1000; the theatre was impacted by the 2013 federal shutdown. Council asked to take up the matter at the next Town Council meeting.

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**Motion 2014-02** Council approved a motion to go into executive session.

Council consulted with Town Attorney.

**Motion 2014-03** Council made a motion to close the executive session and return to open session.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:27 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Nicole Fraser

Clerk-Treasurer

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Deborah Beers, Mayor

Date

Attachments: GEP/CBNHS January 2014 park report by Mr. LaRocca

Letter from Mr. Hirsch for proposed land swap

Community Police Report

Councilmember Long's revision of the Town Hall Rental fees