



CITY OF TAKOMA PARK

City Manager Comments

Report for City Council Meeting of January 18, 2016

City Schedule / Parking for Inaugural and Protests

City offices and facilities will be open on a regular schedule for Friday, January 20 and Saturday, January 21. Parking will be free in the City's lot at Takoma Junction both days. On Saturday, January 21, parking will be available in the Community Center's rear parking lot, as it is every Saturday.

Follow up from Last Council Meeting

Plowing and Salting

Councilmember Kovar asked about arrangements with neighboring jurisdictions regarding plowing of border streets. We do not have agreements with neighboring jurisdictions. In general, City trucks keep their blades down when in service, including when they go from a city street, over a non-city street to another city street. We do not, however, engage in plow operations on another jurisdiction's streets. Doing so may raise issues of liability when it comes to damaging streets or personal property (which occurs often in plowing operations).

Councilmember Kovar also asked how we determine when to spread salt and how much salt we use. Use of a sand/salt mix for roads is based on conditions or reasonable expectations of what conditions will be like based on forecasts, and there are some basic rules we follow. If there is snow on the street, we plow first before applying the mix - otherwise we would just push the mix off. If there are freezing conditions and significant precipitation is expected but has not yet occurred, we generally apply the sand/salt mix to streets. Of course, this can be a difficult balance at times because if temperatures are expected to remain freezing and precipitation levels are not expected to be too high, salt can melt snow, which then turns back into ice.

We have spreaders on the trucks and they can be calibrated somewhat for the speed of distribution, but that is fairly limited. Each operator is responsible for making sure their spreader is working well and adjusted as needed. Each operator can adjust the angle of their truck body, which also affects the amount of sand/salt mix distributed.

We also make it a practice to run the street sweeper over the streets after snow and ice events. This is done so that excess salt can be picked up before it runs off into the storm-drain system. The crews also go around and shovel up any areas where excessive salt was dumped when the trucks were turning or adjusting their dump bodies.

Tyvek Wrapping on House on 5th Avenue

Councilmember Qureshi reported that the Tyvek wrapping on a house on 5th Avenue was creating bothersome noise on windy days, as the wrapping seems to have become unfastened in spots. He also noted that he and a neighbor had found pieces of the

wrapping in their driveways. When Neighborhood Services staff arrived on site today to investigate the issue, they found a siding crew working on the house installing siding which covers the Tyvek. The crew leader was asked to make sure that all Tyvek not covered by the end of the day was properly secured. Staff will follow up again tomorrow.

Stop Sign Obscured by Overgrowth

Mayor Stewart reported that the stop sign at Poplar and 4th had once again become obscured by a nearby tree. We have notified staff about the issue and it will be cut back soon, if it has not already occurred.

Information to Share

Takoma Junction Community Consultation Process Advisory Committee

An email has been circulating which suggests that the Takoma Junction Community Consultation Process Advisory Committee is being inappropriately “controlled” by NDC, the City’s Takoma Junction developer. In light of the reach of the email, I wanted to offer some points of clarification. In short, I believe that the process is indeed proceeding consistent with the [Resolution](#) by which the Committee was created:

- The Development Agreement specifically references community input in the design process. NDC requested the establishment of the committee in order to help them develop an inclusive process and outreach approach. They could have moved forward with community meetings on their own, but they requested the committee to help highlight the best ways for community members to participate.
- The committee is an advisory committee. The objective of the committee, as outlined in Resolution 2016-27 is "to provide assistance to ensure community participation in aspects of the design process."
- Committee attendance has indeed been low, as the email asserts, in part due to the delay in negotiating a Letter of Intent between NDC and the Co-op. The meeting schedule became irregular and meetings were suspended from September until December, awaiting an LOI between NDC and the Co-op. The committee and NDC recognized that the topics to be covered by the community engagement meetings are all shaped by the intended uses for the development.
- The four general topics to be covered by the meeting were outlined by staff, in cooperation with NDC, and articulated in the agenda from the first committee meeting on 9/12/2016: Form and Character, Public Realm, Access and Mobility, Retail and Market Considerations. The committee has discussed these topics at each meeting and felt they covered the areas of interest.
- At each meeting there has been a discussion of the number of meetings that should be held and the challenges of encouraging participation City-wide. The committee has considered the obstacles to attending meetings (including evening work schedules, child care concerns, language obstacles, and meeting fatigue). The committee discussed and supported the plan of holding two sets of duplicate

meetings as a method of presenting more people with options for participating (those who work evenings may be able to come on a weekend; those with young children may be able to trade off with a partner; those with busy schedules can attend two meetings rather than four).

- The format has not yet been determined for the community meetings. The discussion has been about how to engage the community in a way that gives the designers meaningful feedback. Generally committee members are interested in ways people can see the options, raise questions directly with the designers, and express views and opinions. The focus of the meetings will be on specific aspects of the process. NDC and Streetsense are developing the structure of the feedback to ensure that people's input is focused where it can be incorporated into the design.

In sum, while attendance at the meeting has indeed been low, the process is proceeding as designed. Now that the developer has been authorized to proceed, we hope that attendance will improve.

Home Stretch – Downpayment Assistance Program

The Housing and Community Development Department has begun receiving letters of inquiry from individuals interested in participating in the new Home Stretch Downpayment Assistance Program, which was advertised in this month's Newsletter. As of today, a total of seven inquiries have been submitted. We anticipate this number increasing as the Department expands its marketing efforts in the coming days. The program, funded by the Council's newly established Housing Fund, will provide \$10,000 in down payment assistance to five first time home-buyers.

Montgomery County Bicycle Master Plan

The project leads for the Montgomery County Bicycle Master Plan presented their proposed recommendations for Takoma Park to the Safe Roadways Committee and City staff. The plan aims to develop a unified set of recommendations for the entire county in order to guide future bicycle infrastructure development and create a high quality, cohesive bicycle network for all riders. Recommendations for Takoma Park focus on connecting major arteries and strengthening bicycle infrastructure around schools, activity centers, and other public transportation connections.

The plan recommends the addition of separated bikeways along Maple Avenue from Philadelphia Avenue to Sligo Creek as well as New Hampshire Avenue and University Boulevard. The Safe Roadways Committee will review the County's recommendations and offer their feedback. More detailed information on the Bicycle Master Plan can be found at <http://montgomeryplanning.org/bikeplan>.

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