



CITY OF TAKOMA PARK

Acting City Manager Comments

Report for City Council Meeting of June 7, 2017

Follow Up to Last Council Meeting

Increased Patrols on Colby Ave

Councilmember Male requested increased Police patrol/presence on Colby. We have done so and will continue to monitor the area closely.

Additionally, the Police Department is collaborating with Park Police to step up presence in and around Takoma-Piney Branch Park (off of Darwin), where we have received a growing number of reports about illegal or suspicious activity.

Public Engagement Opportunity – Housing & Economic Development Strategic Plan

Councilmember Kovar asked if, in addition to the [online survey](#), there would be an opportunity for members of the public to provide feedback for the consultant's consideration as they develop the housing and economic development strategic plan. Staff is in the process of finalizing arrangements for a planned listening session scheduled for later in June. The session is intended to provide community members with additional opportunity to provide input as the plan is developed. Residents are encouraged to attend the session or participate in the planned Facebook Live broadcast and share their experiences as they relate to the Housing and Economic Development Strategic Plan. Additional details on the listening session will be released early next week.

As noted at the last City Council meeting, the online survey for the upcoming strategic plan was released on Monday, May 22. As of Tuesday, June 6, a total of 226 surveys had been submitted. The survey is designed to solicit input from community members on a variety of housing and economic development topics. The information gathered during this process will be shared with the Council and the community and will be used to inform the development of the Strategic Plan. We encourage the Council and residents to participate in the planning of Takoma Park's future by taking a moment to complete the [Takoma Park Housing and Economic Development Strategic Plan Survey](#).

Carroll Bridge Detour for Independence Day Parade

Councilmember Seamens requested an update on the Carroll Ave Bridge detour as it relates to the upcoming Independence Day Parade. We learned from SHA that the bridge is now scheduled to reopen on June 14th. There will still be remaining work, but the bridge will be open to traffic. On that same day, they will remove the traffic signals at Sligo Creek and Maple and at the WAH entrance.

Plantings on Tulip

We regret that the weather delayed the plantings on Tulip occurring in May as we had originally planned. However, staff is on site this week.

Information to Share

Update on Washington-McLaughlin and John Nevins Andrews Properties

The day after your last meeting, we learned that all of the real property taxes and charges owed by the Washington-McLaughlin property owner had been paid and that the property was removed from the Montgomery County Tax Sale. Information on the entity which made the tax payment is not public. Some good news is that the City will be receiving the taxes owed for Levy Years 2012-2016 (about \$28,000).

We also met with representatives of the John Nevins Andrews School. They confirmed that the school will be closing effective June 30, 2017, at which point administration, staff and students will be transferring to their sister school, Takoma Academy Preparatory School (TA Prep). According to JNA reps:

“It is the plan to offer the Elm Street property to any interested party for whatever purpose may be in the best interest of the City of Takoma Park and the immediate neighborhood. In the interim, use of the facilities will be by joint ventures of the Takoma Park Seventh-day Adventist Church and the Sligo Seventh-day Adventist Churches at various times. In addition, three churches will be conducting services on the property either on Friday evening, Saturday morning and Sunday morning. Everyone using the Elm Street property will be parking on the lot, NOT on the street so as not to impede normal traffic flow. During these times, supervision will be on site for the purpose of assisting those who are using the property, as well as being certain that all assets of the property are used appropriately so that the property will continue to be well maintained. The property is being listed for consideration by interested parties, with the recognition that its future use will be useful to those who live in that neighborhood.”

County Lobbyist RFP

A Request for Proposals for a “qualified and experienced person or firm to represent and promote the City’s interests to the Montgomery County Council, Montgomery County Executive, and other Montgomery County and/or Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (“M-NCPPC”) governmental agencies, boards, and commissions” was posted on Tuesday. Proposals are due back to the City by Friday, July 7. The RFP with a detailed scope of services is available at the following link: <https://documents.takomaparkmd.gov/government/city-manager/requests-for-proposals/rfp-cc-20170601-legislative-advocate-services.pdf>

Sligo Mill Overlook Playground

The City’s contractor is onsite this week setting up fencing and preparing the park for construction of the playground. The work is expected to take several months to complete.

Update on Piney Branch Elementary School Feasibility Study

The MCPS Division of Construction is in the process of completing their report on the Piney Branch Elementary School feasibility study which includes the cost estimates of each of the four options that were presented at the recent public meetings. They hope to have the report finalized by the end of June, at which time it will be shared with the superintendent and MCPS leadership team. This study, as well as others recently completed, will be used to help guide the decision making process during the development of the upcoming 2019-2026 Capital Improvement Program (CIP). The CIP process and the associated discussions with specific project stakeholders is scheduled to begin this summer and continue through the fall and winter of 2017-2018.

Per an email received this week from Veronica Hill, Assistant Director of the Division of Construction: "We value the community's advocacy surrounding the Piney Branch ES project and also acknowledge the importance of the school in the conversation of solving capacity challenges within the Downcounty Consortium elementary schools. As we continue to evaluate all options of capacity building, including additions and a potential new school, we will continue to update you as information becomes available."

Ward 1 Mosquito/Zika Outreach – this Saturday

On Saturday, June 10 from 10:00AM – 5:00PM, Takoma Park Boy Scout Troop 33 will be conducting an Eagle project where they will be educating residents on the Zika virus and mosquito awareness prevention. Scouts will be going door-to-door and passing out fliers on the Zika virus and mosquito prevention, as well as conducting yard checks to remediate mosquito breeding areas for those residents who request it. The project is being done in collaboration with the City, through Ron Hardy, Emergency Preparedness Manager.

Invasive Management Program

In April, some residents brought concerns about the application of certain pesticides to treat invasive species to the attention of Council and staff. In response to the concerns expressed, all pesticide treatment was halted and Council and staff committed to working with the Committee on the Environment to review the current invasive management program once the new Urban Forest Manager, who oversees the program, was hired. As an update, we wanted to let you know that this is still the plan, but that staff will not be able to give it proper attention until the weather starts to cool off for the year. At that time, the Urban Forest Manager will convene a work group that will include members of the Committee on the Environment and Tree Commission, among others. Until that time, we do not intend to apply any pesticides to treat invasives.

Sustainable Energy Action Plan

In response to the Mayor recently joining other mayors from across the country pledging support of the goals of the Paris Agreement, we have received some questions about what the City intends to do. We have a comprehensive plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the [Sustainable Energy Action Plan](#), and we have been working on implementation of its 17 key strategies through things like the Neighborhood Energy Challenge, municipal energy savings projects, expanding bike share locations, and the streetlight conversion project. In the coming year Takoma Park will fulfill its commitment to the Compact of Mayors by completing a climate risk assessment and resiliency plan. We measure our progress through energy data and the greenhouse gas inventory which will be updated in FY18 to help us evaluate our progress.

Board of Elections 2016 Report of Activities

The City's Board of Elections has submitted its 2016 Report of Activities. The report is posted on the City's website and has been distributed to the City Council this evening.

Montgomery College Takoma Park Community Conversation – Takoma Park Silver Spring Campus

The third of three planned community meetings co-hosted by Montgomery College and the Takoma Park City Council was held last evening. During the conversation, Montgomery College President Dr. DeRionne Pollard reaffirmed her commitment to working with the City and the community to balance the needs of the community, neighbors, students, and fiscal prudence in the siting and development of the planned Math/Science building. She assured participants that a decision regarding the placement of the building had not been made.

Initially proposed at the beginning of this process in March, the College and the City announced their plans to create a working group of representative stakeholders to assist in the siting of the Math/Science building. The creation of the working group will not replace or supplant the design charrette process that the College has committed to for the design of the planned Math/Science building. Details about the working group will be forthcoming within the next week or two and the timing of the planned charrette will be announced later this fall.

Residents who were unable to attend the earlier community conversations, or who would like to provide additional feedback on the discussion are encouraged to submit their comments using the [Comment Form](#). Comments will be accepted through Friday, June 16. The feedback provided by participants throughout this process can be viewed on the [Montgomery College Facilities Master Plan](#) on the City's online project directory.

Home Stretch Downpayment Assistance Program

The Housing and Community Development Department is pleased to report that the City has been designated as a partner community in the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development's Community Partner Incentive Program. Under this initiative, Home Stretch-eligible home buyers may receive up to \$7,500 in down payment assistance match funds from the State of Maryland in addition to the \$10,000 the City provides. Additionally, potential first-time home buyers, purchasing within the City, may also be eligible for a low-interest first mortgage under the Maryland Mortgage Program. Please email housing@takomaparkmd.gov for eligibility requirements and more information.

Ed Wilhelm Field Closure: Approximately June 19 - August 30, 2017

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission is under an ADA Settlement Agreement (SA) with the US Department of Justice (DOJ) dated August 12, 2011. In the SA, the DOJ identified certain parks within the Montgomery Parks system that required certain barriers to accessibility be removed. Takoma Piney Branch Local Park (Ed Wilhelm Field) was one of the DOJ parks identified for renovation. As you know, the park was renovated several years ago to make all amenities accessible to those with disabilities. Unfortunately, the one amenity which was not upgraded was the softball field. M-NCPPC has to make the player bench areas and access onto the field itself ADA accessible. This work will take place at the conclusion of this school year and will last approximately one-month. In addition, the Recreation Department will be utilizing the time to restore the field. The field will be closed from approximately June 19th - August 30, 2017.

Missing Person Statistics

After reading about the "Missing Girls of DC" and seeing recent reports of missing juveniles in Takoma Park, I inquired with our Police Department about the City's statistics and our efforts in tracking cases. District of Columbia leadership has been heavily criticized because of the outstanding number of missing persons (particularly juvenile females) and the perception that the MPD are not actively investigating the cases.

A total of 229 Incident Reports were taken by our Police Department since January 1, 2014 for missing persons and/or runaways (of those reports, 98 were generated from a single residence, the Helen Smith Girls Home). I was happy to learn that there are no outstanding cases and that all missing persons and runaways are accounted for.

Kudos

Kudos to **Captain Richard Bowers** who graduated just this morning from the FBI Academy, a rigorous and residential two month long training which provides coursework and field work in intelligence theory, management science, law, behavioral science, law enforcement

communication, forensic science, and dealing with terrorism. The purpose of the training, which hosts law enforcement officials from across the globe, is to raise law enforcement standards, knowledge, and cooperation worldwide.

Hiring Update

We recently hired a new Recreation Manager II, two new Dispatchers in the Police Department, a Recreation Program Front Desk Assistant, and an Elections and Special Projects Intern. We will begin interviewing for the IT Manager position next week and have a few other open positions, including PW Sanitation Driver and Equipment Operator, and HCD Planning Intern. An announcement for a new Police Chief is not expected for several weeks.

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