



CITY OF TAKOMA PARK

City Manager Comments

Report for City Council Meeting of September 6, 2017

Information to Share

Solar Lighting Pilot Project

You may have noticed some new light poles and small solar panels installed in front of the Community Center and at the intersection of Maple and Grant. These are part of a pilot project showcasing solar lighting technology. The pilot project came through Montgomery County Councilmember Tom Hucker's office, and is in partnership with two civil engineering and building technology firms based in South Korea, UNO and KCIT. The pilot will involve, at no cost to us, two solar streetlights and several crosswalk lights. The lights have a new driver technology that improves upon the traditional solar streetlight system. The lights will not need to tie into any electricity source and will be powered entirely by the built-in solar panels on the light poles. We're proud to be involved in the testing of this cutting-edge technology!

There will be an unveiling ceremony in front of the Community Center tomorrow at 1:00 pm. We hope you can join us.

Projects, Projects everywhere!

Summertime is the time for construction projects, and work is going on across the City. Other types of projects are underway as well, and the upcoming Rolling Agenda lists many topics that will be presented to and discussed by the Council in the coming months. Please continue to check the Project Directory under the Initiatives page of the City's website for updates on the projects. Some new information to note: the \$300,000 budget for ADA sidewalk improvements on City streets for this fiscal year has already been expended, so some work will be put on hold until the next Fiscal Year. (\$100,000 in ADA funds for work along State Highways remains.) The Sligo Mill Overlook Park project should be completed this month and we are looking for a ribbon cutting date. The Lincoln Avenue sidewalk project is not yet fully approved for construction. Because it is already September, construction on this project will not be able to take place until the spring.

While many projects are being worked on, we do not have any additional staff for this heavy workload. We will endeavor to keep you and the Project Directory up-to-date with any changes in schedules.

Signs

Election signs, event announcement signs, and other similar signs should NOT be placed within the City's right of way. The signs should be on private property, with permission of the property owner. So, no placement of these signs in the green strip between a sidewalk and the curb, in the median of a road, affixed to a pole or on City property. Rules regarding candidate signs are on the City's election website at: <https://takomaparkmd.gov/candidate-information/> but the easiest rule to remember is that they must be on private property, with permission of the owner.

Police Chief Advertisement

The executive search firm we hired to assist with recruitment of the next Police Chief should be putting out an advertisement for the position this week. We expect that the application period will be open for about 30 days once posted, with application review beginning as they are

submitted. At this point, based on the timeline we worked out with the search firm, we hope to extend an offer in early November.

Youth Focus Group – Police Chief Qualities and Characteristics

As part of our ongoing effort to solicit feedback from community members regarding the preferred qualities and characteristics we should seek in the new Police Chief, the Mayor and Deputy City Manager held a focus group with eight high school students to gather some insights from some of the younger members of the community. Participants shared their thoughts on the types of qualities and characteristics they would like to see, as well as what they thought the top priorities for the new Police Chief should be.

Temporary Waiver – Polystyrene Cups in Clinical Units at WAH

While Washington Adventist Hospital proactively eliminated all polystyrene products from patient and visitor food service areas prior to the enactment of the City's polystyrene ban, it came to our attention that they have continued to use polystyrene cups in clinical areas where patients are receiving medical care. Upon issuing a warning, we received a waiver request from the President of the hospital to permit the continued limited use of polystyrene cups in clinical areas of the hospital. I have granted a time limited waiver, per the ordinance, and encouraged WAH leadership to find a suitable alternative as soon as possible.

Girls Who Code – MacLab

Council has approved a request to set aside the MacLab for use by a local [Girls Who Code](#) club on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3:30-5:30 pm during this school year. The MacLab will no longer be available for walk-in use by members of the public during those times.

Community Legacy Project – Parkview Apartments / Opal Daniels Park

As part of a joint effort between the City and Montgomery Housing Partnership, the stairway and path to Opal Daniels Park behind Parkview Towers at 7667 Maple Avenue is now complete and open to the public. The project is part of a larger effort including stormwater management improvements, landscaping with native vegetation, a robust rain garden, and a bicycle runnel (track) on the stairs. The improved park entrance enhances pedestrian access to the park. The project was funded by a Maryland Community Legacy grant and a Takoma Park Community grant.

“Ask Moses” Series

Over the upcoming months, the Housing and Community Services team will provide live technical assistance regarding renting in Takoma Park with the “Ask Moses” series. Presented in a Facebook Live format, viewers will have the opportunity to interface with Housing staff on a monthly basis. “Ask Moses” will broadcast on the first Wednesday of each month at 11:00 am from the City's Facebook page and explore topics that include: the lease term, entry, rent payments, maintenance requests, and properly issuing a notice to vacate, for example. We were not able to have the “Ask Moses” program today, so we will have a special one next Tuesday, September 12, at 11:00 am. Please tune in!

Tenant Safety Summit

On August 3rd, Housing and Community Services staff, along with the Tenant Capacity Building Team, hosted a Tenant Safety Summit. The summit explored the theme, “Collaboration Strategies for Safer Neighborhoods.” During the event, City renters discussed safety in and outside their homes as well as ways to improve their overall peaceful enjoyment through building partnerships with neighbors, the Management Agent, and property owner. The summit was attended by Tenant Association representatives from the following rental communities: Hillwood Manor, Maplevue Apartments, Essex House, Victory Tower and Parkview Tower.

Tenant Association News

Over the past month, a brand-new tenant association formed. The Flower Hudson Tenant Association registered to serve the building located at 8240 Flower and 711 Hudson Avenues.

Rent Increase Update

City Code Chapter 6.20, Rent Stabilization, maintains the affordability of rental units in the community by limiting the number and amount of rent increases that may be charged for a specific rental unit. Generally the rent may be increased only once in a given 12-month period and is limited to the annual increase in the Consumer Price Index. The rent stabilization allowance is calculated on an annual basis and applies to all licensed multi-family rental facilities with two or more rental units and to all licensed condominium units. Effective July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2018, the 2017-2018 Rent Stabilization Allowance is 1.3%.

Library's Kid Author/Illustrator Fall Series

The Washington Post's KidsPost page today (on the back of the Style section) is devoted to an article – in English and Spanish – on Margarita Engle, the Young People's Poet Laureate, who will kick off the Library's Kids Author/Illustrator Fall Series next Tuesday, Sept. 12 at 7pm. Engle, who will be joined on Tuesday by illustrator Mike Curato, is one of 13 top kids authors and illustrators who will be visiting the Library as part of our partnership with Politics & Prose Bookstore. The diverse mix of visiting authors/illustrators includes Newbery Medalist Katherine Applegate, Caldecott Honor Illustrator Peter Brown, graphic novelists Nidhi Chanani and Liniers, kids' novelists Tracey Baptiste and Chris Grabenstein, and non-fiction picture book authors Emma Otheguy and Jeanne Walker Harvey. The full list – including the titles of their new books – can be found here:

http://www.takomapark.info/library/mt/archives/004312.html?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter

Police Department Activities in the Community

Over the summer, there was a good deal of community interaction and outreach by members of the Police Department. The summer started out with the National Night Out that had a freak thunderstorm, but still engendered a lot of good will and showcased the hard work of the Police Explorers group. Officers met with school officials and welcomed students of many of the public and private schools in Takoma Park as they were beginning the new school year, there was a successful backpacks with school supplies collection, several officers accompanied a group of seniors to the Frederick Douglass House in Washington, D.C. and quite a few kids (and officers!) got a kick out of the Slurpee Justice effort. There has been a greater effort to share these activities via social media, which seems to be well-received by young people and others in the community.

Kudos

Kudos to Captain Rick Bowers who, like the two Captains before him, has done an exceptional job in his capacity as Acting Chief. Captain Dan Frishkorn will resume the Acting Chief duties beginning on September 12.

Kudos as well to Rick Baravechia of the Neighborhood Services Team who has impressed me in the way he handles difficult situations, frustrated residents and generally uncomfortable conversations with a calm demeanor that is remarkably effective. His work has also been well-received by the Committee on the Environment.

Hiring Update

In August, we hired a new Crossing Guard, two Recreation Program Leaders, two Recreation Program Assistants, and a Planning Intern.

We are currently advertising for a number of positions, including Licensing Specialist, Economic Development Specialist (limited-term position), Code Enforcement Officer, Dispatcher, Parking Enforcement Officer, Arts Coordinator, Crossing Guard, Sanitation Driver, Sanitation Tech, Right-of-Way Tech, and various Recreation Specialists, Program Leaders, and Program Assistants. As noted above, the Police Chief advertisement should be going out this week.

Upcoming Schedule of Selected Events

September 10 – Takoma Park Folk Festival

September 12 – Nominating Caucus (7:30 pm in the Auditorium)

October 1 – Takoma Park Street Festival

October 11-14 – Maryland Municipal League Fall Conference in Rockville

October 21-25 – ICMA Conference (for Suzanne and Jason) in San Antonio

October 23 – Candidate Forum (7:00 pm in the Auditorium)

October 28 – Monster Bash

November 7 – Election Day