



CITY OF TAKOMA PARK

City Manager Comments

Report for City Council Meeting of July 10, 2019

Information to Share

Right of First Refusal Properties

When rental properties are placed for sale in the City of Takoma Park, the tenant(s), the City, and Montgomery County all have the opportunity to purchase the property under City and County law. The owner of the property must follow the applicable laws and provide notice. City staff ensure that the correct processes are followed and notices given. Staff also provide advice as to whether or not the City may wish to exercise its right to purchase the property. If a property looks like it might be appropriate for City purchase (guided by City policy and goals), information on the property will be shared with Council for a decision. Recently, the following property was determined to not meet the criteria for City purchase:

704 Kennebec Avenue, Ward 5 – a multi-family building with three units

Presentation on Flood Plains Scheduled

Bill Musico, Senior Permitting Services Specialist/Floodplain Coordinator for the Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services, Water Resources Section, has agreed to do a presentation to Council and the public on July 17 from 6:30 pm to 7:15 pm in the Auditorium. He will go over what flood plains are and the process for building within a flood plain. To the extent that he can, he will address issues as they relate to the Library and the Community Center. Information regarding the Library project is attached.

Call for Artists to Paint Public Piano

The *Takoma Park Arts* cultural series is seeking an artist or artist team to paint a public piano that will be installed in the gazebo in downtown Takoma Park this summer. The theme is up to the artist but could include some aspect of diversity, community spirit, etc. The application deadline is July 28, and payment for the project is \$500. Please click on [this link](https://takomapark.seamlessdocs.com/f/PianoProject2019/) (<https://takomapark.seamlessdocs.com/f/PianoProject2019/>) for more details and share the news with your artist friends!

Implementation of Allowance for Doubtful Account Policy

In accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles and under the recommendation from its auditor, the City has established an Allowance Policy. The concept of the policy is to provide a consistent method of calculation for the adequate provision for doubtful accounts. Doubtful accounts represent monies owed to the City with certain risk of collectability. (These were formerly known as “bad debt.”) These accounts include revenue receivables for Property Tax, including Personal Property and Inventory Tax. The allowance provision is based on the aging of the receivable accounts to calculate an equitable “reserve” that acknowledges that some of the receivable balance may not be collected in the future. The City’s Finance Director will make an annual calculation of allowance provision and submit to the City Manager for approval. A review of uncollectible accounts will be considered during the annual budget process and allowance adjustment must be presented via budget amendments for Council consideration. The first allowance provision for Fiscal Year 2020 is in the amount of \$19,000 and is included in the budget amendment being considered by the Council this month.

Occupation of the American Mind Screening

The screening of a controversial film titled “Occupation of the America Mind” was postponed last month after we received a number of comments from residents and others. The screening has been rescheduled to July 23 from 7:00 pm to 9:15 pm in the Auditorium. Instead of simply showing the film, there will now be a moderated discussion that includes panelists from various stakeholder groups and an opportunity for Q&A from members of the audience.

Tracking Staff Time

In late June, three Councilmembers along with the City Manager and Deputy City Manager met with resident David Navari to discuss and better understand his interests related to tracking staff’s time on task, an issue he has brought up during public comment at Council meetings earlier this year. The group agreed that simply tracking how much time is spent performing all job-related tasks across the organization without a purpose for collecting that data would not, in general, yield information that is useful in making management decisions. Rather, the goal for tracking staff time and other resources used on a project basis should be to provide information that better informs decision-making and resource allocation.

The group discussed the various types of work/projects where tracking time and costs might provide useful information. In general, work identified involved new initiatives, policies, larger projects, or projects in partnership or in response to outside agencies that contribute to existing workload. The information could be used to determine what work may need to be discontinued or put on the back-burner while new items are addressed. Or, in some cases we could use the data to demonstrate costs that could be charged back to an outside agency (this is something we have to do when there are major weather events – typically when there is an emergency declaration – for which we might be eligible for reimbursement from other levels of government). The information could also be used to help determine where it might make sense to contract out for similar work in the future.

A few items discussed were tracking staff time associated with the implementation of the new administrative regulations related to the small cell town ordinance, tracking staff time spent on responding to inquiries and complaints from residents by ward, outreach related to potential new parking regulations, and police officer time spent engaged in community policing activities. We will be discussing these items with the appropriate staff and soliciting other ideas.

Kudos

Kudos to the Recreation Department who dressed up the Takoma Park Recreation Center for the July 3 event transferring ownership from the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission to the City of Takoma Park. It was a nice event – we had photos, cute kids, Council representatives, and gelato! – and we had an official start to improvements to come along New Hampshire Avenue for all of our residents.



Kudos to all the folks who helped prepare for and assist in the 4th of July activities. Despite all of the changes to the usual plan – some of which were anticipated, like the inability to use Lee Jordan Field for fireworks, and some not so anticipated, like the tree that fell right on Maple Avenue right on the parade route early Thursday morning – the festivities were enjoyed by all and the City looked great!

Thanks to all the staff and volunteers for an excellent job, especially to the Public Works, Police, City TV crews and others who helped make the 4th shine in Takoma Park.

Hiring Update

We are currently advertising and/or interviewing for a number of positions including Human Resources Director, Parking Enforcement Officer, Landlord – Tenant Mediator, Victim/Witness Coordinator, Budget Specialist, Mechanic, Recreation Program Leader, Planning Intern, Sr. Accounting Assistant, and Police Officer-Lateral.

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Library Renovation and Expansion Project

July 10, 2019

As part of the FY18 City Budget, \$7 million in funds were borrowed and other funds allocated to move forward on renovation and expansion of the City of Takoma Park Library. Concept designs have been prepared and other early investigative work undertaken, such as property and utility surveys, and most of the work of a flood plain delineation study has been completed.

To move the project forward, the City Council needs to authorize additional design and engineering work. That work would include completion of the flood plain delineation study, detailed building and site design, detailed engineering design, and construction document set preparation in order to go out to bid for construction. Consultation discussions would occur throughout the process, with several points for Council action. As the plans near completion, construction cost estimates would be refined. Actual costs would not be known until bids are received. To ensure compliance with plans and regulations, resolve construction issues, and review change orders and invoices, the City would contract with a Construction Manager as its advocate. At any point, the Council can stop or delay the project.

Flood Plain Delineation

In consultation with Montgomery County permitting officials, it was determined that a new flood plain delineation study would be required. That study was undertaken and a draft document was submitted for review to Montgomery County. More site plan work is needed to finalize the flood plain report and, to do that work, a contract needs to be authorized. Nevertheless, there were a number of take-aways from the work to date:

- 1) The flood plain delineation study done when the Community Center construction was planned in 2005 only focused on areas of new construction. The flood wall that was installed was to protect the below grade parking area and offices.
- 2) The newer flood plain delineation study done this year used modeling software that is greatly advanced from that used a decade ago.
- 3) The top of the flood wall near the Library is at an elevation that matches the 100 year flood elevation; commercial construction (which is the category for this use) in a flood plain requires protection to be a foot above the 100 year flood elevation level.
- 4) If the Library is reconstructed with a higher floor level, the concept design plan that was favorably received by the Council and public can be used. Rather than expansion of the existing structure, however, the existing building will need to be demolished to raise the floor. Such demolition would allow for the accommodation of less expensive HVAC infrastructure, a more fire-safe roof (from the current wooden roof), and greater flexibility in placement of bathrooms and interior connections.
- 5) Construction or expansion of non-residential buildings can occur in flood plains providing appropriate protections are taken. As we make plans for ongoing maintenance of our facilities, we will be referring to the information we learn through these flood plain delineation studies so as to provide resilience from floods. We will also be looking at other climate change resiliency needs for our City facilities.

- 6) Bill Musico, Senior Permitting Services Specialist/Floodplain Coordinator for the Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services, Water Resources Section, has agreed to do a presentation to Council and the public on July 17 from 6:30 pm to 7:15 pm in the Auditorium. He will go over what flood plains are and the process for building within a flood plain. To the extent that he can, he will address issues as they relate to the Library and the Community Center.

What if the Library Project is Not Pursued?

Some residents and Councilmembers have wondered if construction of the Library will or should proceed and, if not, what would be the implications for the City.

There would not be a significant monetary savings for the City if the project did not proceed. The money has been borrowed and cannot simply be returned; it needs to be paid back with interest per the bonding documents. The funds could be used elsewhere within the Community Center property for other renovation activities. The \$300,000 in funds (called "bond bill" funds) that the City has been granted by the Maryland General Assembly can only be used for Library-related design and construction work.

If the Library expansion does not proceed, there will need to be a conversation about what to do with the building. Currently, the building is not ADA-accessible, the HVAC system is being held together with temporary measures, and the building is not flood resilient. With significant investment, the existing facility could be made ADA-accessible and the HVAC system upgraded, but it would not be flood resilient and there would be much less space for books because the ADA improvements require many extra square feet of space. Part of the reason for expanding the Library was to meet the needs of populations of special interest to the City Council: young adults, new immigrants, seniors, and people with special needs. The area needed for books, programs and accessible bathrooms for these populations cannot be accommodated within the current building footprint.

Moving the Library to another location would be many times more expensive than reconstruction on site.

If the Library were to be moved or discontinued, the site could not be used for housing as new residential use cannot be built within a flood plain. It could be used for other commercial, institutional or government use. If any expansion of the footprint of the building were contemplated, the floor level would need to be raised to meet the flood plain requirements or other protective measures would need to be taken that meet County requirements.

Tentative Library Project Schedule

Providing there continues to be interest in pursuing the renovation and expansion of the Takoma Park Library, approval of a new contract with the architect, Greg Lukmire, needs to take place. A discussion of the work that is included in the contract is scheduled for July 24. Since the prices for his work and for subcontractors are only good for a relatively short period of time, it is best if the contract for the work would be approved soon. If all that is desired by the Council is additional work on the flood plain delineation study, just that work could be authorized, but other design work would be delayed and new pricing for the other work would need to be obtained.

July 24, 2019	Library contract overview/discussion of options
July 31, 2019	Vote to authorize library design contract (tentative)
Late 2019	Identify temporary space for Library storage and operations; authorize contract(s) for temporary space for storage and circulation, including upfits as necessary
Early 2020	Hire Construction Manager to review near-final design and identify any issues and then to oversee the construction activities on behalf of the City; Council will need to vote to authorize contract award
Early 2020	Design development/construction documents completed (6 months)
Early 2020	Review of design once completed (Council will have an opportunity to discuss design; revisions can be made as necessary); final design documents created
Spring 2020	Bid/award construction contract (staff issues RFP; Council vote to authorize contract award)
Spring 2020- Winter 2022	Construction
Late 2022	Move materials into new building; open Library