



CITY OF TAKOMA PARK

City Manager Comments

Report for City Council Meeting of September 19, 2018

Information to Share

Dorothy's Woods

On September 10, 2018, the City Council met in closed session to consult with the City Attorney regarding options for the preservation of the City's interest in and control over the City-owned Dorothy's Woods parcel, which was subject to a foreclosure action by Fairview Investment Fund, the holder of a lien secured by the property, and scheduled to be sold at auction on September 13. Fairview sought to collect \$382,600 in principal, interest, penalties, and expenses from the proceeds of the foreclosure sale.

Dorothy's Woods, a 2.68 acre, mostly wooded parcel, is one of the largest undeveloped properties in Takoma Park. The City purchased Dorothy's Woods at an IRS auction in 2015 with the primary intent of preserving it as open space.

Preceding the September 10 Council Meeting, the City Attorney engaged in negotiations with Fairview regarding securing the City's interest in the property by either purchasing Fairview's lien or having Fairview release the City's property from the lien. Fairview's lien was secured by the City's property as well as an adjacent property still owned by Washington-McLaughlin Christian School, but Fairview's lien was the first priority lien on the City property and was subordinate to a lien held by the U.S. Department of Housing and Development Department on the School's property.

After considering the history of the negotiation, the limitations on the potential to recover additional funds from Washington-McLaughlin Christian School if the City purchased the lien, and the risk that the property would be purchased by a developer at the foreclosure auction, the Council authorized a settlement with Fairview involving a payment of \$250,000 to Fairview in exchange for the dismissal of the foreclosure action against the City's property and the release of the City's property from the lien. Mayor Stewart and Councilmembers Kovar, Dyballa, Kostiuk, Seamens, and Smith voted in favor of the settlement. Councilmember Searcy voted against the settlement.

As a result of the settlement with Fairview and the City's earlier negotiation with HUD for the release of the City's property from its lien, the City's property is now free from the \$382,600 Fairview lien and the \$624,800 HUD lien.

The \$250,000 payment will be made from approximately \$150,000 of City funds and \$100,000 in resident donations. The total expenditure of City funds to purchase the property and obtain the release of the Fairview and HUD Liens is approximately \$235,000, including legal fees, the payment to Fairview, and the purchase price at the IRS auction. This total was offset by \$69,400 in earlier resident donations and the recovery of previously unpaid property taxes.

Call for New Youth Council Advisor

The City is seeking a new Advisor for the Youth Council, as the term of the current Advisor is nearly up. This is an excellent opportunity to work with *awesome* youth from around the City to help the Council address problems and accomplish the goals of the community. Additional detail on the role and responsibilities is available here: <https://takomaparkmd.gov/government/boards-commissions-and-committees/takoma-park-youth-council/>.

Thank you to the current Youth Council Advisor, Ashleigh Nugent, who has done an excellent job helping the group get started and make a name for itself!

The 13th Annual Holiday Art Sale – Call for Vendors

HCD staff is beginning work on organizing the annual Holiday Art Sale that will be held here in the Community Center on Saturday, December 8. This is a juried sale, with only original, hand-made work sold by area painters, photographers, potters, jewelers, knitters, glassmakers and more. If you or someone you know is interested in participating in the sale, we encourage you to check out the Arts page and apply.

<https://takomaparkmd.gov/initiatives/arts-and-humanities/holiday-art-sale/>

Glow Back 2 School Party

On Friday, September 14, 2018 Recreation Department Teen staff hosted our annual Back to School Event for ages 11-18. This year's theme was "Glow in the Dark Carnival." There were over 85 middle and high school students in attendance. Activities included carnival games, Live - Hungry Hippo, Jumbo Checkers, Jumbo Jenga, Jumbo Connect Four and face painting. Staff grilled hot dogs, hamburgers, turkey burgers, and vegan burgers for the kids to enjoy. A special thanks goes out to Takoma Park Police Department staff for dropping by and partying with the kids!

Welcome New Planning Intern

The City is pleased to welcome Yohannes Eagle Bennehoff to the Housing and Community Development Department. Yohannes is currently a Community Planning graduate student at the University of Maryland and spent the last seven years working as a Naval Officer. He is excited to assist with planning efforts in Takoma Park.

Kudos

Huge congrats to **Susan Cheung**, Finance Director, who recently passed the last of the series of CPA exams! She still has several steps before being awarded the CPA designation, but she's over the biggest hurdle and we are all happy for her.

I also wanted to pass along some feedback we received from a local landlord about our **HCD staff**: "As a landlord for over 20 years I want to acknowledge and applaud the education and advice that I have received by the Rental Housing staff. This support has helped me in my interactions with my tenants and to understand and execute my responsibility as a landlord. Kudos to **Mr. Moses Wilds** for his vast knowledge and infinite patience. He's been a very helpful resource to me over the years."

Hiring Update

We are currently advertising for a number of positions, including Deputy Police Chief, Communications Specialist (formerly Media Specialist), Economic Development Manager, Grants Coordinator, Contract CDL Driver (a great opportunity for someone in the community who has a CDL and is looking to make some extra money on an as-needed basis!), Police Officer, Senior Accounting Assistant (Part-time), Sanitation Technician, Recreation Program Assistant, Recreation Program Leader, HR Intern, and Planning Intern.

Personal Schedule

The International City County Management Association (ICMA) Convention will be held in Baltimore, Maryland September 22–26 this year, hosted by the Maryland City County Management Association (MCCMA). The City Manager and Deputy City Manager both try to attend this valuable conference each year. As our small State Association is hosting the conference, we will be heavily involved in coordinating activities, so may be less available during this time than we normally are when attending the conference.

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