



CITY OF TAKOMA PARK

City Manager Comments

Report for City Council Meeting of June 12, 2019

Information to Share

Late Newsletter Delivery

We've heard from a few people that they received their Newsletters a bit later than usual this month. We always strive to get things finalized and out as early as possible. Sometimes there are issues on our end, and sometimes there are things beyond our control (final design, printing, delivery, etc.). It seems there was a combination of factors this month with design and printing taking longer than usual, plus a snafu with our payment to the USPS for postage.

The complaints we received note that when the Newsletter is received a week into the month, many of the items in the monthly calendar have already occurred. We hope you can help us remind folks that you might hear from that there are many ways to get real-time information on meetings, events and other happenings. In addition to a calendar on the website, we have a weekly e-mail blast (now called the Takoma Insider) that has probably the most comprehensive listing of events.

You can sign up for the Insider here:

<http://takomaparkmd.gov/about-takoma-park/sign-up-eneews-updates/>

And the calendar is available here:

<https://takomaparkmd.gov/events-and-meetings/city-calendar/>

Employee Appreciation Event

We are holding our annual employee appreciation event tomorrow afternoon from 1:30-5:00pm. During that time, we will still have coverage as staff will be staggering their hours, but we will not be at full capacity. We do hope Councilmembers can join us!

Ed Wilhelm Field Grass Replacement

At the conclusion of the MCPS school year, Ed Wilhelm Field (behind Piney Branch Elementary School) will be closed for extensive renovations to ensure full grass coverage and increase the safety and playability of the surface. The renovation is anticipated to commence June 19th and is expected to conclude at the end of August. The project will include de-compacting the soil, regeneration of natural Bermuda grass, and improving irrigation efficiency. All services will adhere to the City of Takoma Park's Safe Grow Act of 2013.

Passing of Kwame Ansah-Brew

We are sad to note the sudden passing of Kwame Ansah-Brew, Executive Director of the Performing Arts Center for African Cultures (PACAC). City staff worked with him most recently as PACAC applied for a Community Grant.

Mr. Ansah-Brew was a frequent collaborator with arts organizations in the City of Takoma Park and a member of the Maryland State Arts Council. He was a professor at the University of Maryland-Baltimore, Master Drummer, dancer, and instructor sharing traditional music, dance, and storytelling of Ghana, as well as contemporary jazz fusion music with gospel-infused afro-beats. He has appeared as a performer at Virginia's Wolf Trap Institute, a Resident Artist at the Smithsonian Institution, and as a music instructor for the State of Maryland, as a musical storyteller at suburban elementary schools throughout the metro Washington area. Our thoughts

and prayers are with his family during this difficult time. There will be a memorial drum circle in his honor this Friday, June 14th from 4:00 to 8:00 pm at the Performing Arts Center's headquarters in Laurel, Maryland.

Clarification Regarding Recent City Manager Blog

In a recent City Manager blog on the subject of the SHA Visioning Study, I stated, "Under Montgomery County law, without a change in the intersection configuration, NO area business will be allowed to expand its building by even 1000 square feet or by a change to a use that increases traffic demand by even one car." This is correct under the County's development review standards because the traffic volume has increased to such an extent that any development triggering a traffic study would mean that a significant alteration to the intersection would be required. However, it is possible that the Planning Board could choose to override those standards and permit a development without intersection changes. Alternatively, traffic volumes could decline over time so that intersection improvements are not required.

Public Piano Music and Art Project

As part of our public music and art initiatives, we hope to have the City join an [international street piano program](#), which has placed more than 1,900 pianos in public spaces where people can play or listen to piano music. It would provide an opportunity for local residents to share their musical talents with the public. We have received one donated piano and are discussing placing it in the downtown gazebo. We have secured a permit from Montgomery County, and the Richardson School of Music has agreed to sponsor an opening concert and have some of their students and teachers play. Members of the public also will be invited to play at the concert.

If the project moves forward a concert most likely would occur on a Sunday afternoon in July so people visiting the farmers' market could hear the music. The piano also would be painted by an artist or artist team to add a public art element. A sign would be posted on the piano stating that no playing is allowed after 9:00pm, and Arts staff would work with the Takoma Park Police to address any noise complaints. The piano won't be amplified.

As part of our efforts to include public music and art projects outside the downtown area, we also are hoping to find another donated piano that could be placed outside the Starbucks in the Takoma Langley Crossroads shopping center where we would hold a similar opening concert. We are working with the Takoma Langley Crossroads Development Authority to secure permission from the property owner.

Update on Pesticide Litigation

Per the City Attorney, the Court of Special Appeals denied the pesticide industry's motion to stay the court's mandate making the County pesticide ordinance go into effect, so the County is now free to enforce its law. The industry will likely appeal to the case to the Court of Appeals and ask that court for a stay.

Hiring Update

We are currently advertising and/or interviewing for a number of positions including Human Resources Director, Budget Specialist, Mechanic, Recreation Program Leader, Planning Intern, HR Intern, Sr. Accounting Assistant, and Police Officer-Lateral.