

## GYM FUNDING REQUESTED:

Debate Continues

See page 3

# Takoma Park NEWSLETTER

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. . ."  
Margaret Mead (1901-1978)

KEEPING  
CRIME OUT OF  
OLD TOWN

See page 9

Published by the City of Takoma Park

www.takomaparkmd.gov

MARCH 2007

## Takoma Park Finds Many Paths to a Vibrant Gateway

By Susan Holliday  
and Virginia Myers

**T**he vision for the Takoma Park neighborhoods near the intersection of Eastern and New Hampshire Avenues seems straightforward: a "highway commercial gateway area that also provides neighborhood retail service to area residents," states the Takoma Park Master Plan.

Easier said than done.

Everyone in the neighborhood wants to realize the Master Plan vision — they just differ on how to get there. Some see the need for changes in zoning and property assessments. Others want beautification and infrastructure enhancements to attract businesses. Still others think only public-private partnerships will work. All agree that all neighboring jurisdictions need to work together on some projects to improve the area.

### Buy Local, Zone Local

"All our local businesses have a common interest to make our local area more vibrant," says Dan Robinson, owner/developer of the new office building on Orchard Avenue, a block off New Hampshire. The best way to do that is

for businesses to be locally owned and operated so the benefits of commerce don't leak out of Takoma Park, says Robinson. "If you take a dollar and spend it locally, it multiplies. A dollar spent at a chain store in Silver Spring is mostly lost to Takoma Park."

This philosophy steered Robinson, a Takoma Park resident, to Orchard Avenue. His original plan included ground-floor retail with offices above. But the "car-centric mentality" of Montgomery County zoning laws, says Robinson, requires five parking spots per 1,000 square feet of retail space; offices need just 2.4. He would have been prohibited from even constructing the office space except for the area's Commercial Revitalization overlay zone, which allowed him to negotiate the number and placement of parking spots.

Such zoning laws often drive development. For example, the county requires only one parking space per 1,000 square feet for a self-storage business. Maisel Development Company, which owns the Takoma Park property at Eastern and New Hampshire Avenues, proposed such a business on the site but dropped the idea after area residents actively opposed it.

Through-the-roof commercial property assessments also affect the kind of development an area experiences. "Some assessments are completely wacky," says Jim O'Brien, owner of Edge Construction on Sligo Mill Road. In one instance, the building assessment for a property on New Hampshire Avenue dropped



**A new office building on Orchard Avenue is part of the revitalization of a neighborhood near the gateway of Takoma Park, at the D.C./Maryland border. Continuing such projects has proved to be a challenge.**

Photo: Dan Robinson

to nearly nothing while the land value rose to more than \$1 million, notes Rob-

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## 20-Year Resident Plunges into Council Work

By Virginia Myers

**W**hen Reuben Snipper was elected to be city council member for Ward 5, he jumped in with both feet. In fact, his constituents were approaching him even before the special election on January 30, asking about neighborhood issues and how he might help resolve them.

It's exactly the kind of work Snipper relishes. A 20-year resident of Takoma Park and long-time community activist involved in a variety of city issues, he is looking forward to becoming a catalyst for his neighbors, bringing their concerns to the city council and leveraging his position there to "get some stuff done."

Snipper's election was the first Instant Runoff Voting (IRV) election in the city, and one of the few conducted nationwide. IRV has voters rank the candidates by order of choice; if there is no majority winner, the candidate with the fewest first choice votes is eliminated, and the voters who selected that individual as first choice have their second choice votes redistributed to the other candidates. As it turns out, Snipper did win a majority, with 53 percent of the vote; candidate Eric Hensal received 35 percent, and Alexandra Qu  r   Barrionuevo 11 percent. Snipper is finishing out the city council term of Marc Elrich, who left the council when he was elected to the Montgomery County Council.



**Mayor Kathy Porter shakes the hand of Reuben Snipper moments after he was sworn in as the newest City Council member, February 12.**

Photo: Lonni Moffet

Snipper was motivated to run by neighbors and friends who suggested he consider it, and by a desire to serve the community on a larger scale. After working on city committees and as

**SNIPPER** continues on page 5

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## CITY COUNCIL AND COMMITTEE CALENDAR\*

**Monday, March 5** - Public Hearing, Interviews and Worksession of the City Council, 7:30 p.m. (Community Center Auditorium)

**Thursday, March 8** - Meeting of the Police Employees' Retirement Plan Committee, 8:30 a.m. (Community Center Atrium Room)

**Monday, March 12** - Regular Meeting and Worksession of the City Council, 7:30 p.m. (Community Center Auditorium)

**Tuesday, March 13** - Meeting of the Facade Advisory Board, 7 p.m. (Community Center Hydrangea Room)

**Tuesday, March 13** - Meeting of the Tree Commission, 6:30 p.m. (Community Center Atrium Room)

**Tuesday, March 13** - Commission on Landlord-Tenant Affairs, 7 p.m. (Community Center Auditorium)

**Tuesday, March 13** - Meeting of the Committee on the Environment, 7:30 p.m. (Community Center Lilac Room)

**Monday, March 19** - Worksession of the City Council, 7:30 p.m. (Community Center Auditorium)

**Tuesday, March 20** - Meeting of the Safe Roadways Committee, 7 p.m. (Community Center Hydrangea Room)

**Tuesday, March 20** - Meeting of the Montgomery College Neighbors Advisory Committee, 6 p.m. (Montgomery College - Location TBA)

**Monday, March 26** - Regular Meeting and Worksession of the City Council, 7:30 p.m. (Community Center Auditorium)

**Tuesday, March 27** - (Tentative) Commission on Landlord-Tenant Affairs Hearing, 7 p.m. (Community Center Auditorium)

**Tuesday, March 27** - Meeting of the Arts and Humanities Commission, 7:30 p.m. (Community Center Room Hydrangea Room)

**Wednesday, March 28** - Meeting of the Public Safety Citizens Advisory Committee, 6:30 p.m. (Community Center Atrium Room)

**Thursday, March 29** - Meeting of the Emergency Preparedness Committee, 8:30 a.m. (Community Center Atrium Room)

\* For the most up to date information, check [www.takomaparkmd.gov](http://www.takomaparkmd.gov), e-mail [Clerk@takomagov.org](mailto:Clerk@takomagov.org) or call 301-891-7267.

# City Council Briefs

For further information, or to receive a copy of the legislation, contact the City Clerk's office, 301-891-7267 or e-mail [clerk@takomagov.org](mailto:clerk@takomagov.org).

## January 16 Regular Meeting

**Ordinance 2007-1** was accepted at first reading, appointing Judges for the January 30, 2007 Ward 5 Special Election (VOTING FOR: Porter, Austin-Lane, Barry, Seamens, Williams; ABSENT: Clay)

## January 22 Special Session

**Ordinance 2007-1** was adopted at second reading by roll-call vote, appointing judges for the January 30, 2007 Ward 5 Special Election (VOTING FOR: Porter, Barry, Clay, Seamens, Williams; ABSENT: Austin-Lane)

**Single Reading Ordinance 2007-2** was adopted by roll-call vote, awarding a contract for a replacement voicemail system (VOTING FOR: Porter, Barry, Clay, Seamens, Williams; ABSENT: Austin-Lane)

## January 29 Regular Meeting

**Ordinance 2007-3**, revising the scope of the Emergency Preparedness Committee, was accepted at first reading (VOTING FOR: Porter, Austin-Lane, Barry, Clay, Seamens, Williams)

**Ordinance 2007-4**, amending the size of the Noise Control Board from seven members to "five to seven members," was accepted at first reading (VOTING FOR: Porter, Austin-Lane, Barry, Clay, Seamens, Williams)

## February 12 Regular Meeting

**Ordinance 2007-3**, revising the scope of the Emergency Preparedness Committee, was adopted by roll-call vote (VOTING FOR: Porter, Austin-Lane, Barry, Seamens, Snipper, Williams; ABSENT: Clay)

**Ordinance 2007-4**, amending the size of the Noise Control Board from seven members to "five to seven members," was adopted by roll-call vote (VOTING FOR: Porter, Austin-Lane, Barry, Seamens, Snipper, Williams; ABSENT: Clay)

**Single Reading Ordinance 2007-5**, authorizing a contract for newsletter printing, was adopted by roll-call vote (VOTING FOR: Porter, Austin-Lane, Barry, Clay, Seamens, Snipper, Williams)

**Single Reading Ordinance 2007-6**, authorizing a contract for replacement fuel pumps, was adopted by roll-call vote (VOTING FOR: Porter, Austin-Lane, Barry, Clay, Seamens, Snipper, Williams)

## Speak with the Mayor

Have a meeting with Mayor Porter and let her know your issues and concerns.

**Office hours are Tuesdays 2-4 p.m. and Wednesdays, 7:30 - 9:30 p.m..**

Walk-ins are welcome for Wednesday office hours only.

To schedule a meeting, contact Executive Assistant Peggys F. Washington at 301-891-7230 or [peggyew@takomagov.org](mailto:peggyew@takomagov.org).



Mayor Kathy Porter

## Vacancies on Council-appointed Boards and Committees

Potential members are encouraged to attend meetings prior to applying for appointment. Further information on committees, their meeting schedules, and applications for appointment are available at <http://www.takomaparkmd.gov/committees> or by contacting the City Clerk's office at 301-891-7267 ([clerk@takomagov.org](mailto:clerk@takomagov.org)).

**There are vacancies on the following:**

**Arts and Humanities Commission:** This up to 15-member commission serves in an official advisory role to the City Council on all matters related to the arts and humanities promoting, coordinating and strengthening public programs to further cultural development of the city.

**Board of Elections:** This five- to seven-member elections board plans and will conduct future City elections. Registered voters residing in the City of Takoma Park may apply to serve.

**Citizens Liaison Committee for the Community Center:** This committee serves to foster communication among interested parties and the Council in the ongoing process for the development of a community center.

**Committee on the Environment:** This seven- to 11-member committee is charged with advising the City Council on

all environmental issues, including but not limited to tree protection, open space conservation, biodiversity, watershed functioning, energy use and conservation, and recycling; reviewing and providing advice on City actions that affect environmental quality; educating Takoma Park residents, businesses, and government on environmental issues; conveying citizen views on environmental issues to Council and City staff; and working with City staff on environmental issues and projects.

**Council Compensation Committee:** This committee reviews the salaries of the Mayor and Councilmembers and will make recommendations to the Council regarding whether or not current salaries should be adjusted. Any adjustment would be adopted by a two-reading ordinance prior to the 2007 election and would take effect with the next succeeding City Council.

**Emergency Preparedness Committee:** This committee includes six Takoma Park residents, members of the City staff, and other representatives. It was established to provide community input to and assist in the City's planning and preparations for emergency operations and to involve residents in providing appropriate assistance during emergency operations. Applicants should have some professional

background in emergency preparedness or operations and be available to attend a monthly meeting during the day.

**Ethics Commission:** This seven-member commission is charged with overseeing the implementation of and adherence to the City's Ethics Ordinance.

**Noise Control Board:** This seven-member board assists and advises the City on noise control issues, including administration and enforcement of the Noise Control Ordinance and adjudication of noise disturbance complaints.

**Nuclear Free Takoma Park Committee:** This seven-member committee is responsible for overseeing the implementation of and adherence to the Nuclear-Free Zone Act.

**Public Safety Citizens Advisory Committee:** This 12-member committee is charged with providing input and advice to the Council and the City's public safety agencies about how the City can better meet the ongoing needs and concerns of residents in the area of police services and public safety.

**Safe Roadways Committee:** This up to 11-member Safe Roadways Committee advises the City on transportation-related issues including, but not limited to, pedestrian and bicycle safety, traffic, and transit services.

## GREEN TIP



## Scratch paper

Every week in Takoma Park you'll see bags and stacks of paper - newsprint and "mixed" office paper, cereal-box cardboard and other paper packaging — set out at the curb for recycling. The city can be proud of the tons of paper recycling it accomplishes each week. But what can you do to sustain a market for all that paper - how can you consume recyclables? City policy allows purchase of recycled paper as long as it's no more than 15 percent more expensive than the lowest bid available, and city staff habitually uses both sides of the paper in city council reports and other official business. You can recycle all those school notices and neighborhood flyers by setting them in your printer tray and printing on the blank side, or using them for grocery lists and notes to the family. And, you can keep five pounds of carbon dioxide from leaking into the atmosphere for each ream of 100 percent post-consumer recycled paper you use.



## THE TAKOMA PARK NEWSLETTER

Editor: Virginia Myers  
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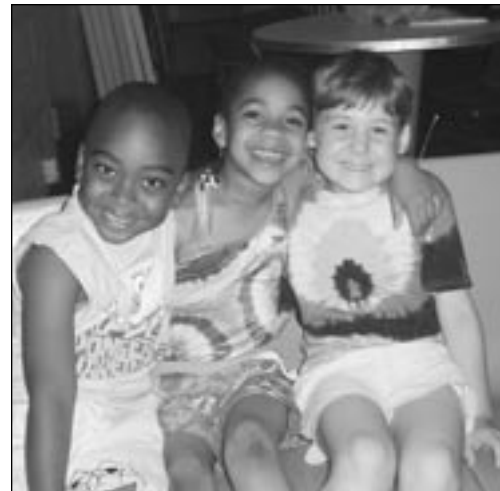
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Unsolicited materials by Takoma Park residents, including reports by community groups and articles that may contain opinion, will be considered for publication. Name, address, and telephone number must accompany all submitted material. Pursuant to City Council Resolution No. 1992-36 of June 8, 1992 that sets forth the editorial guidelines of the Newsletter, the Editor reserves the right to edit all submitted copy for length, clarity, style, spelling, and grammar.

Published material containing opinions does not necessarily reflect the views of the Newsletter or the City of Takoma Park.

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**These children are enjoying one of the many Recreation Department programs sponsored by the City and conducted in the Community Center and at nearby school properties. A proposed City gymnasium would give them more opportunities for supervised fun.**

Photo: Carey Antoszewski

## Gym Funding Requested, Debate Continues

By Virginia Myers

**S**tate representatives, with the Takoma Park City Council's blessing, have submitted a request for \$3 million to fund a gymnasium at the Community Center. But in a meeting Feb. 12, the City Council, sensitive to constituent concerns over cost and management of the project, indicated it would hold off on final decisions about whether and how to follow through with construction until more information about operating costs and the need for a gym has been gathered and more of the public has taken the opportunity to weigh in.

The decision to delay final action was based in part on a summary of resident sentiment about the gym. At the Feb. 12 meeting, city staffer Suzanne Ludlow reported that, "More people registered opposition to the gym than were in favor," though she added the gym has "a large number" of supporters as well. Her summary was based on two workshops held Feb. 10 and 11 (attended by a total of 52 residents), and on 70 emails and phone calls received in response to an informational flier issued by the City, encouraging resident input on the matter. Most of the feedback received by the City was from property owners, even though more than half of the City's residents are renters.

Among the responses, according to Ludlow, were many informed, thoughtful and sometimes passionate reactions. "Some people were really, really angry," she told the Newsletter. "They are disappointed with how the community center turned out, they are worried about their property taxes, they don't trust the government, [and] they believe any new project will have the cost overruns of the first phase of the Community Center."

Ellen Zavian emailed a long list of objections and accused city staff of failure. Nancy Cohen vehemently opposed the project during the Feb. 11 workshop, and later summarized the feelings of many residents: "I think if we were fiscally solvent and we could take money

without borrowing, it would be wonderful to make this gym an opportunity for the children of our community. But we don't have money, and we don't know what it would cost. We don't even know how much it would cost to operate. Who would even oversee such a project? . . . Many of us are very concerned and have lost faith in our leadership to even conduct that process of building."

But other residents support the gym as the impetus for building the community center in the first place, suggesting that abandoning the project would be stopping short of the community's original intent for the facility. Linda Norkin, a staunch supporter of the gym, favors it for enhancing community spirit and encouraging a "healthy, active community life." Others profess a pressing need for more athletic facilities for young people in the area.

Council encountered similar sentiment in their wards. Several expressed personal support for the facility, and others support it but would not vote to pursue it with any finality because their constituents objected. Councilmember Colleen Clay said people who have spoken to her say "more than two to one that they don't want to go forward, so I can't say, 'I know better than you because I have all this other information that you don't have.'" To do so would further decay the public trust, she said.

In her Feb. 12 report, Ludlow addressed some of these concerns, telling Council that the City's cost estimates for a gym are "highly detailed," and include "large contingencies for cost escalation" as well as for design. She also noted that city staff has "learned a great deal from Phases I and II of the Community Center project" and that City Manager Barbara Matthews, who came to the city after community center construction was well underway, is extraordinarily committed to financial transparency and cost containment.

With much of the opposition centered on concern over property taxes, Ludlow focused a good portion of her presentation at workshops and to Council

on costs for various manifestations of the proposed gym. If built according to the preferences workshop attendees indicated on their surveys — a standard-sized gym with storage lockers, dressing rooms, and restrooms with little additional parking and no fitness center — the gym project would cost approximately \$5.4 million, including about \$600,000 in design work and \$100,000 for green features. "I think that that is a realistic figure based on the kinds of components that were indicated by the community [members] who had a preference for a gym," said Ludlow. Gym options with more amenities (such as increased parking and a fitness center) would be more costly; the most expensive design is projected to cost \$8.1 million. Details on the various gym options are available on the City's website, www.takomaparkmd.gov. Costs could be covered by borrowed money; the City estimates that, for every \$1 million borrowed to build the facility, a homeowner with a house worth \$400,000 would pay an extra \$25 per year in property taxes for debt payments.

The Council's decision on Feb. 12 allows the city to continue to explore funding possibilities for the gym while additional community input is solicited. So far, the city has secured a total of about \$1.5 million for the project, made up of private funds from Washington Adventist Hospital and various state grants. Requests for funding from the federal government and from the Montgomery County Council are pending.

The opportunity to request funding from the Maryland General Assembly is very limited, with "bond bills" (which are matching grants) only considered in February and March of each year. Agencies and organizations from across the state will be making presentations on their respective bond bill requests to the Senate and House of Delegates in mid March. Bond bill announcements are made in April.

Meanwhile, City Council is considering a public hearing to explore the issue further.





## HOUSING Mailbox

Moses A. Wilds, Jr.,  
Landlord-Tenant Coordinator

A tenant contacted the Mailbox and wants to know how he and his neighbors may start a tenants association, the minimum number of tenants who must participate and whether the landlord has to approve the organization and its activities.

In accordance with Section

6.16.030 of the Takoma Park Landlord-Tenant Law tenants have the right to meet within tenant organizations, to meet and confer, through representatives of their own choosing and to engage in activities for the purpose of mutual aid and protection. This section further notes that tenants and tenant associations have the right of assembly in the meeting rooms and other areas suitable for meetings within a rental facility during reasonable hours and upon reasonable notice to the landlord for the purpose of conducting tenant organization meetings.

City law requires that a minimum of one third of the total number of tenants in a rental facility be members for a tenant association to be registered with the city. To assist tenants interested in forming a tenant association, the city has secured the services of two experienced community organizers who help tenants form their association, elect officers, and plan and implement activities to

sustain the organization's growth and development. To contact these contractors call 301-891-7101, ext. 5863.

Tenant associations having one-third of the tenants as members should register with the city's Housing Department and provide a listing of their officers and members. Tenant Associations must also update their membership roster every three years with the city.

While a landlord does not have to approve the formation or activities of a tenant association, part of the city registration process is written notification to the landlord advising that the association has been formed and is interested in working with the landlord/owner for an improved rental facility.

*Tenants or landlords having questions regarding the city's Landlord-Tenant Law are requested to call 301-891-7215 and or contact me via the web at MosesW@takomagov.org.*



**Bryan Smalls (left) and Josh Baker show off their Nano iPods, prizes for winning the "Name the Teen Lounge" contest sponsored by the City of Takoma Park Recreation Department. The Rec staff reviewed more than 100 entries and winners were selected based on relevance and originality. Their entries — Teen Zone and Takoma Zone — were combined to express the new name T ZONE.**

Photo: Debra Haiduven

## Folk Festival Seeks to Expand Crafts Show

By Nick Scorza

**F**or Katherine Gingrich it began as a hobby. First she made bead necklaces for herself and friends. Then people began to want to buy them. "I was making necklaces during meetings. It got to the point where I said, 'Just quit your job and make necklaces.'"

Since then, Gingrich has moved to working with silver and glass, and she has developed a loyal following of customers. One place that those fans know they can view her latest creations is the Crafts Show at the Takoma Park Folk Festival, where Gingrich has been a presenter for the past eight years.

"I feel better seeing the caring and activism of people at the Festival," Gingrich said. "It's nice to see that people haven't sold out and that they still care about what happens to this planet."

Every year the Folk Festival showcases the work of artists like Gingrich. The Crafts Show has always prided itself on its high quality and its support for local artists. This year, the Festival is hoping to attract new artists to show and sell their work.

"I'm always excited about finding new talent," said Laurie Summers, who organizes the Crafts Show. In addition to choosing the best work and supporting local artists, Summers said she and her fellow jurors look for diversity in making their decisions. "We try to have a mix of the traditional and the new and original."

Applications for the Crafts Show can be found at [www.tpff.org](http://www.tpff.org). The deadline for submitting work is May 15. All work must be designed and made by the applicant; commercially produced work is not eligible for consideration.



**Last year's Folk Festival celebrated crafts as well as music.**

Courtesy photo



## COLTA's CORNER

by Jean Kerr,  
Housing Specialist

**T**he Commission on Landlord Tenant Affairs (COLTA) recently approved two capital improvement petitions for rental properties in Takoma Park. They appear in order of their petition numbers:

### Capital Improvement Petitions

#### 240 Manor Circle (2006-64L)

On January 24, a capital improvement petition was approved for rent increases ranging from \$4.37 to \$164.27 on all eight units at the property. The improvements included electrical upgrades, new roof, new windows, plumbing, stove, refrigerator, replacing the dishwasher, faucet, smoke detectors, flooring, bathroom vanity and shower tiles.

#### 8213 Roanoke Avenue (2006-65L)

On February 1, a capital improvement petition was approved for rent increases ranging from \$2.79 to \$21.16 on all 11 units at the property. The improvements included replacing electrical fixtures, doors, floors, ceiling and painting. One improvement was disapproved because it was petitioned and approved in a previous petition filed by the landlord.

All increases are in addition to the annual Rent Stabilization Allowance in effect at the time the increases are taken.

### Rental Properties Exempt from Rent Stabilization

On October 1, 2006, the City Council passed an Ordinance which allows for rental facilities to be exempt from the Rent Stabilization Law if they provide affordable rental housing to low and moderate income residents through state, county and federal affordable housing programs or if the owner has constructed a new rental unit. All landlords must submit an application to the Department of Housing and Community Development and be approved for an exemption. The ordinance exempts the following:

1. Rental units leased to tenants assisted under the federal Tenant Based Assistance Program commonly referred to as the Housing Choice Voucher Program (Section 8)

or a similar federally funded subsidy program;

- Any rental facility in which one or more rental units are subject to a regulatory agreement with a governmental agency that controls the rent levels and are available only to low and moderate income tenants; and
- For a period of five years after the issuance of a rental license, any newly constructed rental unit first offered for rent after July 1, 2006. The reconfiguration, renovation, change in description, or change in identification of a rental unit shall not result in a newly constructed rental unit.

### To date, the following properties have been approved for exemption from the Rent Stabilization law:

7051 Carroll Avenue  
8624-8626 Flower Avenue  
641 Houston Avenue  
666 Houston Avenue  
676 Houston Avenue  
108-110 Lee Avenue and 7406 Hancock Avenue  
7513 Maple Avenue  
7620 Maple Avenue  
7777 Maple Avenue  
1001-1005 University Boulevard

*For further information about the program or to request an application for exemption, please contact Jean Kerr at 301-891-7216.*

[www.takomaparkmd.gov](http://www.takomaparkmd.gov)

by Bruce Sidwell, President of  
Friends of Sligo Creek  
and Montgomery County staff

**R**esidents can learn to make their yards and community more wildlife friendly by attending a program March 13 in the Azalea Room of the Community Center, at 7:30 p.m. (come early for refreshments). The main speaker, Alison Gillespie, is author of the Sligo Naturalist column in the Takoma Voice. She will share her long experience in developing yards that not only attract birds and butterflies, but are also friendly to humans — one of her specialties is to reduce “nature- deficiency” in kids and grown-ups. Handouts will list recommended plants and sources of information.

Another opportunity to learn about attracting wildlife to your garden comes up Wednesday, March 21 with the workshop, Attracting Birds and Butterflies to your Garden. Presented by Montgomery County Master Gardener Marie Rojas, it will help gardeners understand which trees, shrubs and other plants most readily attract wildlife — and particularly birds and butterflies. The session will be held from 7:30-9 p.m., in the Azalea Room of the Takoma Park Community Center, 7500 Maple Avenue, Takoma Park. Contact Cindy Walczak for more information, [cwalczak@helix.nih.gov](mailto:cwalczak@helix.nih.gov), or call 301-588-6894.

These meetings are part of a larger effort to improve prospects for preserving and enhancing the natural parts of our environment. Last December, the City Council passed a resolution supporting certification of Takoma Park as a National Wildlife Federation Wildlife Habitat Community. The charge has been led by the Committee on the Environment, the Takoma Park Horticulture Club, the Takoma Voice, and Friends of Sligo Creek, in cooperation with the Public Works Department.

Five elements are required for habitats

suitable for wildlife: food, water, cover, places to raise young, and sustainable gardening practices. At least 100 backyards, four common areas (e.g., parks), and three schools need to be

certified for the city to qualify as a NWF community. At last count more than 40 backyards were already certified. For more about this topic, contact [www.wildwildtakoma.blogspot.com](http://www.wildwildtakoma.blogspot.com).

## TAKOMA PARK GOES WILD



### SNIPPER

continued from page 1

an activist with Sensible Growth, he felt the City Council would be the next step toward putting his policy experience — he is self-described policy wonk at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services — to work for the greater community.

Snipper has a long list of priorities, many of them influenced by the constituent feedback he got while campaigning door-to-door. Among them: environmental issues and safety in Sligo Creek Park, concluding plans for the community center gym, developing mentoring opportunities to serve area youth, working with Washington Adventist Hospital so that it remains a presence in the neighborhood, ensuring the availability of affordable housing, calming traffic on Flower Avenue, and addressing safety through better police training.

The nine months left in his term is “a short amount of time to get something accomplished,” Snipper admits, but he plans to at least get started — and he may run for re-election in November.

### Calling all poets

#### Poet Laureate Nominations Open

The Takoma Park Arts and Humanities Commission is soliciting nominees for its second poet laureate. The selected poet would serve from July 1, 2007 through June 30, 2009. He or she must be a published poet and a Takoma Park resident. Nominations or self-nominations will be considered. All nominees must submit a cover letter, a curriculum vitae/resume including a list of publications, and three samples of poetry. The cover letter should identify a project the candidate would pursue over the two-year term to expand the community's awareness and interest in poetry.

Nomination submissions are due no later than 5 p.m., Monday, March 26 and must be submitted to the Arts and Humanities Commission, c/o Sara Anne Daines, 7600 Maple Avenue, Takoma Park MD 20912. For more information call 301-891-7224 or email [ahc@takomagov.org](mailto:ahc@takomagov.org).

## Federal Flood Insurance now Available

On January 29, 2007, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) approved the City's application to participate in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), making the City of Takoma Park one of more than 20,000 communities nationwide that are allowed to purchase federally backed flood insurance. The availability follows the community's adoption and enforcement of ordinances to reduce flood losses and acceptance by the NFIP. The City has participated in the NFIP since September 29, 2006.

Property owners may purchase flood insurance from licensed agents and brokers; building and content coverage is available to owners and tenants. Residents may purchase flood insurance up to the limits under the Regular Phase of the program. However, there is a 30-day waiting period before flood insurance coverage goes into effect. For single-family dwellings, the building coverage limit is \$250,000, and the contents coverage limit is \$100,000. Renters can also protect their belongings by purchasing contents coverage. For commercial properties, the building and contents coverage limits are both \$500,000.

Lenders must require borrowers whose properties are located in a designated flood hazard area to purchase flood insurance as a condition of receiving a federally backed mortgage loan in accordance with the Federal Disaster Protection Act of 1973.

The NFIP is implemented through the Federal Emergency Management Agency. There are over 4 million flood insurance policies in more than 20,000 participating communities nationwide.

A few additional notes for those interested in purchasing flood insurance: the 30-day waiting period is not required when insurance purchase is connected to a home loan application. In other words, if it is required by the lender that the applicant purchase flood insurance then the waiting period may not be required. Also exempted from the 30-day waiting period are those properties that would be required to purchase flood insurance as a result of a revision or update of a Flood Hazard Boundary Map (FHBM) or a Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM).

More detail regarding coverage exceptions and other cases of exemption can be found in the NFIP Policy Issuance 5-98 dated October 1, 1998.

The cost of insurance is based on the location of the structure's first floor and whether or not it is within the Base Flood Elevations (BFE) of the City of Takoma Park. Current flood maps only cover the floodplain of Sligo Creek. For additional information, contact the director of the Federal Insurance Mitigation Division, FEMA Region III, One Independence Mall, Sixth Floor, 615 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 10106-4404.

### Request for Proposal, Fuel Management

The City of Takoma Park has issued an RFP for replacing the City's Fuel Management System. Interested vendors are required to complete the official packet which is due by 4 p.m. March 15, 2007. For more information, and to download the packet, please visit the City web site: [www.takomaparkmd.gov](http://www.takomaparkmd.gov), or call 301-891-7218 and one can be mailed to you.



RECREATION

Parenting Session: Coping with Challenging Behaviors

Has your child become a picky eater? Feeling tired because he or she is waking up every night? Or are you embarrassed that your child hit another at playgroup? Children pass through many stages as they grow, at times developing behaviors that are frustrating for us. This session provides parents of young children (birth to 4 years) with practical tools and resources to better understand and deal with children in a positive and constructive manner. Parenting resource materials provided at each session. Minimum of four.

**When:** Wed., March 28  
**Time:** 7:30 - 8:30 p.m.  
**Location:** Azalea Room, T.P. Community Center  
**Fee:** T.P. City Res..... \$25  
Non-Res. .... \$30

Morning Addition

*Grades K - 6*  
This before-school program provides early morning care for the hours before class starts. Staff provides informal recreation activities and escorts the children to Takoma Park and Piney Branch Elementary Schools. Children have time for homework assignments, breakfast (not provided) or to prepare for their day at school. For more information please call Carey Antoszewski at 301-891-7233.

**When:** Mon. - Fri., through June 14  
**Time:** 7 - 9 a.m.  
**Location:** T.P. Community Center  
**Fee:** T.P. City Res ..... \$175 (nine weeks)  
Non-Res. .... \$215 (nine weeks)

*Morning Addition will not operate on the days schools are closed: holidays or other school closings (including inclement weather, professional days, winter or spring breaks or school emergency closings).*

Fun Day Program 2007

*Grades K - 5*  
The Fun Day Program offers exciting field trips on scheduled whole day closings and activities and performances on scheduled half day closings. Participants meet in the auditorium of the Community Center, 7500 Maple Avenue. Bring a snack! Trips, activities and performers are subject to change. Space is limited, sign up early.

**When:** Tues., March 27  
**Location:** Maryland Science Center  
**Time:** 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.  
**Fee:** T.P. City Res..... \$20  
Non-Res. .... \$25



Photo: Debra Haiduven

***Making crafts takes carefully focused attention for the Recreation Department’s smallest learners, who learn patience along with creativity in Montesorri Morning.***

Family Fun Day

Trips are geared for families with children 6 years and older. One family member must be 18 years or older. Meet in the parking lot of the Takoma Park Community Center, 7500 Maple Avenue, one half hour before the trip departs. Advanced registration required. Minimum enrollment must be met by RSVP date. Bringing a snack or lunch is recommended.

Ice Skating

**Date:** Sat., March 24  
**Location:** Gardens Ice House, Laurel  
**Time:** 12:30 - 3:30 p.m.  
**Fee:** T.P. City Res..... \$15/participant  
Non-Res. .... \$20/participant  
*RSVP: March 16  
Maximum of 12.*

Family Friday Fun

Looking for a little action, adventure, and comedy for the family? On the third Friday of each month join area families for movies and popcorn. Movies are free and will be shown in the auditorium of the Takoma Park Community Center. Refreshments available for a small fee.

**When:** Fri., March 16  
**Movie:** Madagascar - Rated PG  
**Time:** 7 p.m.

Dog Training Class

Teach your dog foundation skills and basic obedience. Positive reinforcement training using NO PUNISHMENTS and lots of fun. Must have current vaccination records. Kids 10 and up with adult are welcome! Indoor location. Instructor: Gretchen Savoy.

**When:** Wed., March 7 - April 18

*(No class April 4)*  
**Location:** Heffner Park Community Center, 42 Oswego Avenue  
**Fee:** T.P. City Res..... \$85  
Non-Res. .... \$95  
**Time:** Puppy Kindergarten  
(14 months and under) 6 – 7 p.m.  
Basic Dog Manners  
7 – 8 p.m.

Yoga Kids Club

*Ages 8 - 11*  
In this introductory yoga class children become rabbits, turtles, lions and trees through games and postures. Includes movement and relaxation techniques, enhances flexibility, focus, concentration and relaxation, and cultivates peaceful relationships with other kids. Wear comfortable clothing and bring a yoga mat or beach towel. Instructor: Gabrielle Dorr, RYT. Six week session. Maximum 15, minimum six.

**When:** Saturdays, March 17 - April 28  
**Time:** 1:30 - 2:30 p.m.  
**Location:** Dance Studio, T.P. Community Center, 7500 Maple Avenue  
**Fee:** T.P. City Res..... \$55  
Non-Res. .... \$60  
*No class on April 7.*

Belly Dancing

*Ages 11 and older*  
Students will learn movements of expression and muscle control as they explore the rhythms and melodies of Middle Eastern music. Wear comfortable, form-fitting attire that permits instructor’s viewing of the torso (to ensure correct movement); midriff baring is optional. Bring a scarf to tie around your hips. The dance may be performed barefoot, or with soft dance shoes. Taught by director



Looking for more classes?

*Find our complete Spring/Summer Program Guide inside this month's Takoma Park Newsletter.*

RECREATION

of a local dance troupe, Maya Taahira. Maximum 25, minimum six. Six weeks. For more information e-mail instructor at maya@bodylovebellydance.com.

**When:** Tues., March 13 - April 24  
**Time:** Beg. 7 - 8 p.m.  
Inter. 8 - 9 p.m.  
**Location:** Dance Room, T.P. Community Center  
**Fee:** T.P. City Res. .... \$65  
Non-Res. .... \$75  
*No Class on April 3.*

Hip Hop

*Ages 12 and older*  
An opportunity for self expression to today's top 10, hip hop and r&b music. Includes simple warm up exercises, body isolation and a variety of basic popular dance moves, such as Nellie, B-Boy steps, Top Rock and slide. Six weeks. Instructors provided by Suto Dance Studio.

**When:** Fri., March 23 - May 4  
**Time:** 6 - 7 p.m.  
**Location:** Dance Studio, T.P. Community Center  
**Fee:** T.P. City Res. .... \$60  
Non- Res. .... \$65  
*No Class on April 6.*

Dance of the Warrior Goddess Belly Dance Sword Workshop

Join local instructor Maya Taahira for an unforgettable experience: dancing while balancing a sword on your head! Includes the history of sword dance as well as numerous tips to wow any audience with your finesse and skill. Dancers will learn choreography that can be performed on its own or incorporated into a lengthier routine. Loaner swords available in limited supply; first come, first served.

**When:** Sat., March 25  
**Time:** 3 - 5 p.m.  
**Location:** Dance Room, T. P. Community Center  
**Fee:** T.P. City Res. .... \$30  
Non-Res. .... \$35

Drawing and Watercolor

*Ages 11- 14*  
Techniques of black and white and color drawing, watercolor painting, pen and ink and mixed media. Includes still life, portrait, landscape (weather permitting) and floral studies. Develop observational skills and explore personal expression through color, texture, light, form and movement. Materials/model fee of \$25, paid directly to the instructor, due on the first day of class. Maximum 12, minimum seven. Six weeks. Instructor Katie Dell Kaufman.

**When:** Tues., March 6 - April 17  
**Time:** 3 - 5 p.m.  
**Location:** Art Room, T. P. Community Center  
**Fee:** T.P. City Res. .... \$130  
Non-Res. .... \$140  
*No Class on April 9.*

COLLAGE

*Ages 18 and older*  
Work with memorabilia and items of personal significance, while combining collage materials and

art media. Suitable for beginners and experienced students. Basic materials supplied, you provide some personal or found collage elements. Materials/ model fee \$30, paid directly to the instructor on the first day of class. Maximum 12, minimum seven. Six weeks. Instructor Katie Dell Kaufman.

**When:** Mon., March 12 - April 30  
**Time:** 11:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.  
**Location:** Art Room, T. P. Community Center  
**Fee:** T.P. City Res. .... \$200  
Non-Res. .... \$220  
*No Class on April 3.*

Basket Weaving Level I Round Wood Base Basket

*Ages 7 and older*  
The round basket is an excellent beginning base for all future basket-weavers. Use round reed weaving on a drilled wooden base to create a beautiful decorative basket. One session.

**When:** Sat., March 31  
**Time:** 10:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.  
**Location:** Art Room - T.P. Community Center  
**Fee:** T.P. City Res..... \$27  
Non-Res. .... \$37

Introduction to Silk Painting Workshop

*Ages 16 and older*  
No previous art background needed — even if you never picked up a brush you can share in the joy of watching the dyes glide through the silk. This intensive two-day workshop will introduce you to stretching, diluting, resisting, spotting, salting, double loading, wet-on-wet, fabric setting, plus much more. Cost includes most supplies; bring an empty egg carton (preferably plastic), a roll of paper towels, plastic gloves, lunch and “show and tell” piece in any medium. Maximum 12, Minimum six.

**When:** Sat., March 17 and Sun., March 18  
**Time:** Sat. 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.,  
Sun. 2 - 6 p.m.

Or

**When:** Wed., March 28 and Thurs., March 29  
Wed. and Thurs. 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.  
**Location:** Art Room, T. P. Community Center  
**Fee:** T.P. City Res.....\$160/two day session  
Non-Res. ....\$170/two day session

Floral Design Class

*Ages 16 and older*  
Learn to quickly, easily and economically bring the joy of flowers into your home with balance, design, style, proportion and simplicity. Bring a sharp knife, a pair of clippers or shears, two small vases or containers, greens, branches, or twigs from your yard. A \$15 materials fee, due the first day of class, covers flowers for the arrangements. Maximum 15, minimum six.

**When:** Sat., March 24, 31  
**Time:** 3 - 5 p.m.  
**Location:** Art Room, T. P. Community Center  
**Fee:** T.P. City Res. .... \$60  
Non-Res. .... \$65



Joan Samworth shares some examples of artwork in her painting class.

Photo: Debra Haiduven

Spring Break Camp

Get your passports ready! We'll be traveling to a different country each day, exploring culture, music, dance, traditions, food, games and much more.

**Monday** - Bahamas  
**Tuesday** - India  
**Wednesday** - Turkey  
**Thursday** - Peru  
**Friday** - Japan

**When:** Mon. - Fri., April 2 - 5  
**Time:** Before Care: 7 - 9 a.m.  
**Camp Hours:** 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.  
**After Care:** 4 - 6 p.m.  
**Location:** Takoma Park Community Center,  
7500 Maple Avenue  
**Fee:**  
**Before Care:** T.P. City Res.....\$20  
Non-Res. ....\$30  
**Camp:** T.P. City Res.....\$100  
Non-Res. ....\$110  
**After Care:** T.P. City Res .....\$20  
Non-Res. ....\$30

ANNUAL EGG HUNT 2007

Ages 2 and under, 3 - 4, 5 - 6, 7 - 8  
Look over there! Oh look, there's another one. Wow, eggs are everywhere! Come join us for an exciting “egg”stravaganza. Bring your baskets and a great eye. There's prizes in those eggs.

**When:** Sat., March 31 (Rain Date: April 1)  
**Time:** 11 a.m. Sharp  
**Location:** Ed Wilhelm Field, 7510 Maple Avenue  
(behind Piney Branch Elementary School)  
**Fee:** FREE!!!

TAKOMA PARK COMMUNITY CENTER • MARCH HOURS

<b>Game Room</b> Monday through Thursday 2:30 – 5:30 p.m., Ages 7-12 6-9 p.m., Ages 13-19 Fridays until 9:30 p.m. and Saturday 12:30 – 5:30 p.m., Ages 7-19 Sunday, 2 – 5:30 p.m., Ages 7-19	<b>TZone (Teen Lounge)</b> Monday through Thursday, 2:30 – 9 p.m. Fridays until 9:30 p.m. Saturday 12:30 – 5:30 p.m. Sunday 2 – 5:30 p.m. Ages 13 – 19	Hours subject to change Membership is required  7500 Maple Avenue Takoma Park, MD 20912 301-891-7290
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## TAKOMA PARK LIBRARY CALENDAR

MARCH 2007

### Neighborhood Circle Time

Every Tuesday  
10 a.m. at the Library

### La Hora de Juego en Espanol

Thursdays, March 1, 8 and 15  
10 a.m. at the Library. Spanish Circle Time with Lupe Marks

### Sabado Gigante para Ninos en la Biblioteca

Saturday, March 3  
10:30 a.m. at the Library, Spanish story time with Laura Kleinmann

### Reading with the Dogs

4-5 p.m. every Monday at the Library  
Come read to some specially-trained, book-loving dogs

### Banned Books and the First Amendment

A presentation by Bridget and Alexis Egan, 7 p.m. at the Library.  
Please call 301-891-7259 to sign up

### Teddy Bear Time

Monday, March 12  
7 p.m. at the Library. Bring your teddy (or other stuffed favorite) to hear some stories and sing some songs.  
Please call 301-891-7259 to sign up.

### Teen Book Club

Thursday, March 15  
5-6 p.m. at the Library. Come talk about what you're reading now.  
Snacks provided; please call 301-891-7259 to sign up.

### Spring Fling

Monday, March 19  
7 p.m. at the Library. Get a jump on spring with stories, songs and a craft.  
Please call 301-891-7259 to sign up.

### Friends of the Library Annual Meeting

Tuesday, March 27  
7:30 p.m. at the Library  
All are welcome.

## The Oscars of Children's Books Announced

The movie industry has the Oscars and music has the Grammys. For the world of children's books, success is measured in Newbery and Caldecott medals.

Awarded each January by the American Library Association, the Newbery Medal is bestowed upon the best-written children's book, while the Caldecott Medal goes to the best-illustrated children's book. The winners, plus several honor or "runners-up," are chosen by committees of librarians.

Authors and illustrators who win the Newbery or Caldecott Medals are guaranteed at least some fame, and a good amount of fortune. Medal-winning books are purchased by every public and school library, become instant best-sellers, and are virtually guaranteed to never go out of print.

Here's a closer look at this year's children's Newbery and Caldecott award winners and honor books. The library already has some of these books, and we've got the rest on order.

### Newbery Medal:

The winner of the 2007 Newbery Medal is "The Higher Power of Lucky," written by Los Angeles librarian Susan Patron. It tells the story of 10-year-old Lucky Trimble, who lives in the desert town of Hard Pan, California (pop. 43). Lucky, who's never known her father and whose mother recently was killed in a freak accident, hopes to one day find a "Higher Power" that will help her navigate through some increasingly difficult questions. Among them: is Lucky's guardian, a French woman named Brigitte, going to head back to France and leave Lucky all alone? And why did Lucky's mother have to die?

In "The Higher Power of Lucky," Patron presents an unforgettable portrait of a girl determined to make some sense out of her suddenly mixed-up world. With humor and empathy, she details Lucky's courage, persistence and confusion as she runs away, survives a brutal dust storm and eventually finds a mea-



## LIBRARY News

By Karen MacPherson

sure of peace in her new life.

While the Newbery Medal always puts the winning book in the public spotlight, the spotlight is particularly bright this year on "The Higher Power of Lucky." A recent New York Times article detailing how a few librarians object to Patron's mention of a dog's "scrotum" in the book has sparked an outpouring of support for "The Higher Power of Lucky" by other librarians and children's book experts. They note that the word is anatomically correct and used in context to perfectly capture Lucky's bafflement with much of the adult world (Ages 8-12). (Note: the library has several of Patron's earlier books, which are picture books. They include: "Bobbin Dustbobbin," "Five Bad Boys, Billy Que, and the Dustbobbin," and "Dark Cloud, Strong Breeze.")

### Newbery Honor books:

"Penny From Heaven" by Jennifer L. Holm. Set in 1950s New Jersey, the book stars 11-year-old Penny Faluci as she tries to figure out why her widowed mother feels such bitterness towards her late father's large, kind-hearted Italian family. (Ages 9-12)

"Hattie Big Sky" by Kirby Larson. Teenage orphan Hattie Brooks becomes a homesteader in the harsh wilds of Montana in 1918 in this engrossing historical novel. (Ages 10-14)

"Rules" by Cynthia Lord. Twelve-year-old Catherine tries to figure out her feelings for her autistic younger brother in this book, which deftly mixes humor and drama. (Ages 8-12)

### Caldecott Medal:

The winner of the 2007 Caldecott Medal is "Flotsam" written and illustrated by David Wiesner. This is Wiesner's third

Caldecott Medal! Only one other illustrator, Marcia Brown, has ever won the medal three times. Wiesner previously received the Caldecott Medal in 1992 for "Tuesday" and in 2002 for "The Three Pigs" (one of my all-time favorite children's books).

In his latest medal-winning book, Wiesner takes a cinematic approach as he explores what happens when a boy finds a vintage camera washed up on the beach. The camera contains a roll of film, and when the boy has it developed, he discovers worlds within worlds involving both humans and sea creatures. It's mind-boggling to the boy, who clearly revels in the idea of being part of something much larger. By the time "Flotsam" concludes, the boy's focus - his lens on the world - has been forever changed.

Wiesner's illustrations in "Flotsam" blend whimsy and masterful artwork as he plays with perspective and scale. As a result, the reader's focus is constantly shifting in this entertaining, thought-provoking book. "Flotsam" is particularly aimed at young readers ages four through eight, but older readers, including adults, will enjoy sifting through the many details in Wiesner's artwork.

### Caldecott Honor Books:

"Moses," written by Carole Boston Weatherford and illustrated by Kadir Nelson. This book, which also won the Coretta Scott King Award for best illustrated book by an African-American, details how Tubman's deep spirituality informed her decision to repeatedly risk death to lead hundreds of slaves to freedom. The Caldecott Honor was given to this oversized picture book for Nelson's luminous illustrations, which highlight both Tubman's humanity and her legendary status as the "Moses" of her people. (Ages 4-8)

"Gone Wild," written and illustrated by David McLimans. Although this is technically an alphabet book, it's not really aimed at preschoolers (although they certainly could enjoy it as well). Instead, McLimans has merely used the alphabet as an organizing tool for a book about endangered animals that will attract and hold the interest of elementary school students. Striking black-and-white illustrations make this a good beginning point for learning about endangered creatures. (Ages 5-10)

## LIBRARY EVENTS

### Cajun music enlivens Friends annual meeting

The Friends of the Library will hold their annual meeting and board elections at a special event in the Library on Tuesday March 27 at 7:30 p.m.

The evening's entertainment will feature the lively Cajun music of Snakesauce. Band members Jim Schmidt (fiddle), Anne McCabe (vocals and guitar) and Don Henninger (fiddle) play music in the old time tradition, and have performed most recently at the French Quarter in Germantown.

Following the concert and refreshments, elections will be held for open positions on the Friends of the Library board, including treasurer and two member at large positions. Members of the Friends whose dues are current are eligible to serve on the board and vote in the election. New and renewed memberships will be

accepted at the March 27 meeting.

If you are interested in finding out more about the Friends or in being a candidate for a position, contact nominating committee members Faith Stern at 301-270-6547, or Karen Petersen at 301-891-2588. Nominations will also be taken from the floor at the annual meeting.

All are invited to join us for this evening of music, refreshments and an opportunity to meet new friends and greet old ones. Come and join us! Bring family, friends and neighbors!

### Favorite Poem Evening Returns

The 9th Annual Favorite Poem Evening will be held on Thursday April 26 in the Library. This year's public celebration and reading of poems is sponsored jointly by the Library and the Friends of the Library, and will

once again be hosted by Takoma Park's Poet Laureate Don Berger.

If you are interested in participating in this year's event, choose a poem you have read and admired by a published poet (rather than poems written by you or your friends). Poems written in languages other than English are welcome, if they are accompanied by an English translation.

Please send the name and author of the poem you have chosen and your own name and generic occupation for inclusion in a printed program to Ellen Robbins at the Takoma Park Maryland Library, or by e-mail to ellenr@takomagov.org. The deadline for submissions is April 20.

The Favorite Poem Evening has been a lovely, warm and community-building event for the past eight years. Please come and bring your friends and neighbors! Refreshments will be provided by the Friends of the Library.



# Police tackle Old Town Robberies

By Virginia Myers

Over the last two months, Old Town Takoma has experienced a spike in commercial robberies that has merchants knocking at the police department door, asking for beefed up protection. In response, the department has made robbery detail in Old Takoma "our number one priority," says Chief Ronald Ricucci. Police have increased the number of officers assigned to the neighborhood, coordinated and shared intelligence with surrounding jurisdictions, and prepared street officers with the latest investigative information. "We're throwing everything we have at it," says Ricucci.

The spree began December 20, when the Subway sandwich shop on Carroll Avenue was robbed at gunpoint. Then on December 22 the House of Musical Traditions on Carroll Avenue was robbed within the same hour that two other Takoma Park stores in other commercial areas (Moonlight Travel, on New Hampshire Avenue, and El Alazon Western Wear on Holton Lane) and four establishments in nearby Hyattsville and Silver Spring were hit. Subway was robbed a second time on January 14, and the Takoma Cleaners, on Laurel Avenue, was robbed January 19. Within a month, a total of three Old Town stores were robbed on four different days.

But with increased attention to the area, Ricucci believes further robberies have been prevented. It is especially discouraging, then, that Action Tech Services, on Carroll Avenue, was robbed February 16. Investigation is underway and police will continue to dedicate resources to reduce the risk of further crimes.

At the same time they are focusing on their own ef-

forts, police are urging business owners to take steps toward protection, themselves. "We can't be everywhere at once," notes Ricucci. "It's a partnership. We need the businesses to be safer and we as partners need to be very visible."

Following are recommendations gathered by Detective Corporal Andrew Johns, to help business owners, residents and customers help prevent crime:

## Video Surveillance Systems

Not only are these camera / video based surveillance systems an excellent deterrent, in past situations they have been key in immediately identifying suspects. The video can act as strong evidence during criminal prosecution. Exterior video surveillance can capture the activity of suspects prior to a robbery.

## Clear clutter from storefronts

Staff should be able to see out the front windows and the community should be able to see in.

## Security Lighting

Illuminate dark areas of the business. If staff needs to access alleys for trash or delivery purposes, these areas should be illuminated for safety.

## Protect your funds

Do not keep large amounts of cash on hand and advertise that minimum cash is held on the premises. Bank regularly but vary the times of banking and routes taken to the bank. Use two staff members for banking when possible. Larger businesses may consider an armored car pick up. Don't use a bank

## CITIZENS AND CUSTOMERS CAN ASSIST US BY:

### Remaining alert

If you see persons loitering in the front, side or rear of business establishments without a purpose, call the police. Often we hear that citizens do not want to call the police because they believe it is a burden to the police, but we are here to help. If you see activity that does not appear to be ordinary, report it. Suspects are known to make preparations such as putting on a mask and gloves just minutes prior to the robbery. Be on the look out for vehicles left running unattended or double parked in front of businesses.

Most robberies are over in less than one minute. Take note of everything you can...the robbers' size, weight, build, dress, speech, abnormalities, method and direction of travel. Use a marker or decal to affix a height chart to the exit door of your business. This will help with suspect identification.

Being prepared and alert are ways that we as a community can enhance the safety of our businesses and customers.

## When Peddlers Knock

By Detective Corporal Andrew Johns

Citizens have recently asked the question, "What do I do if someone comes to my door selling goods or asking for money?" In general, most people going door to door in the City must have a permit and an identification badge. Canvassers for some organizations and nonprofit agencies may be exempt from the requirement if their primary purpose is ideologic support rather than financial donations.

Many reputable groups have indicated they will abide by the City's requirement of prior notification if they plan to solicit or canvass within the City (see below). The relevant city code may be reviewed at: [www.takomaparkmd.gov/code/Takoma\\_Park\\_Municipal\\_Code/Title\\_8/12](http://www.takomaparkmd.gov/code/Takoma_Park_Municipal_Code/Title_8/12)

The Police Department encourages residents who feel uncomfortable with people coming door-to-door to call the Department at 301-270-1100. Questions about this portion of the code may be addressed to the City administrative offices at 301-891-7100.

### License, ID and Hours

All peddlers, transient merchants, and junk or secondhand dealers must first obtain a license. All solicitors must obtain a solicitor's permit from the City Clerk, except for city residents who are soliciting on behalf of a nonprofit organization or candidate for public office and are not involved in the promotion or sale of commercial goods or property on behalf of a for-profit business enterprise.

Canvassers, licensees and permit holders may conduct business only between 9 a.m. and 9 p.m. (except by appointment with a resident).

Police and code enforcement officers may require such persons to show their identification badge and permit upon request. Residents may post a sign (at least 4 x 6 inches) stating "solicitors prohibited" or "solicitors and canvassers prohibited" at their residence or business.

A canvasser may obtain an identification badge but is

not required to do so. Anyone conducting canvassing activity that involves the solicitation of money, shall notify the Police Department of the dates they will be conducting such activity within the city, the name of the organization to benefit, the names of the individuals conducting the activity, and the license plate number and state of registration of all vehicles used in connection with the activity.

### Solicitors, canvassers and peddlers

A solicitor is a person who attempts to make personal contact at a residence without a prior appointment for the primary purpose of: attempting to obtain a donation to a nonprofit organization, even if incidental to such purpose there is the sale of some good or service; or distributing a flyer advertising a commercial event, service or product.

A canvasser is a person who attempts to make personal contact without prior specific appointment, for the primary purpose of: attempting to enlist support for or against a particular religion, philosophy, ideology, political party, issue or candidate, even if incidental to such purpose the canvasser attempts to raise money for or against such cause; or distributing a handbill or flyer advertising a non-commercial event or service.

A peddler is a person who attempts to make personal contact, at a residence without prior specific invitation or appointment from the resident, for the primary purpose of attempting to sell a good or service. Generally, a transient merchant is any person, whether or not a resident of the city, who engages in a temporary business of selling and delivering goods, food, wares or merchandise within the city and to do so hires or uses any temporary building, vehicle, street, etc., for showing and selling the merchandise.



### Chief Ricucci joins the force

As his family, close friends, Takoma Park city staff, police department personnel and former co-workers looked on, Chief Ronald A. Ricucci was officially sworn in as the Takoma Park Police Department Chief of Police. Ricucci assumed his duties on February 20.

The Chief was also honored with a reception prior to his swearing in, where he was greeted by elected officials, city staff, family and friends. Earlier in the day, the Chief hit the ground running meeting with command personnel, supervisors and various agency personnel.

During the next few weeks, Chief Ricucci will be personally meeting with all agency members, community leaders and elected officials.

# THE CRIME REPORT

*This blotter is not intended to be inclusive of all crime and arrests reported to the Takoma Park Police Department.*

By Detective A/Lt. T. Collington

## ROBBERIES

**On January 19 at 7:23 a.m. in the 6900 block of Laurel Ave.,** a commercial armed robbery occurred. Two subjects entered a business, displayed handguns and forced the one employee, an adult male, to lay on the floor. After they took cash from the register, they fled on foot. The victim was not injured.

**On February 9 at 9 p.m. in the 100 block of Grant Ave.,** an armed robbery occurred. An adult female was walking alone when she noticed three subjects in a car parked ahead of her. One of the subjects got out of the car, approached her, displayed a handgun and demanded her purse. The victim dropped her purse, the subject picked it up and fled in the vehicle. The victim was not injured.

## BURGLARIES

**On January 26, between 9:58 am and 2:30 p.m. in the 8100 block of Roanoke Ave.,** a residential burglary occurred. A basement window was broken to gain entry. Property was taken.

## AUTO AND RELATED THEFT

**Between January 21, unknown time and January 27 at 12:45 p.m. in the 7600 block of Maple Ave.,** an auto theft was attempted. The door handle of the 2006 Dodge Dakota was damaged in the attempt.

**On January 23 between 5:30 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. in the 8200 block of Roanoke Ave.,** an auto theft occurred. It is unknown how the 1997 Honda Accord was stolen.

**On January 26, between 9:40 and 10:30 a.m. at the intersection of Takoma and Fenton Aves.,** an auto theft was attempted. As the owner of the 2000 Chrysler Concorde approached his parked car, he saw an unknown subject inside. When the subject noticed the owner, he threatened the victim, got out of the car and then fled in a green Dodge Caravan. The ignition and door handle were damaged. The victim was not injured.

**Between January 27 at 7:50 p.m. and January 29 at 8:30 a.m. in the 7500 block of New Hampshire Ave.,** a commercial burglary occurred. A piece of paneling under a window was knocked out to gain entry. Property was taken.

**On January 30, between 3:34 p.m. and 4 p.m. in the 7600 block of Maple Ave.,** an auto theft occurred. Unknown means were used to steal the 1998 Plymouth Breeze.

**Between February 3 at 11 p.m. and February 4 at 8 a.m. in the 7600 block of Hammond Ave.,** an auto theft occurred. It is unknown what method was used to steal the 1985 Toyota Camry.

**On February 4 at 7:46 p.m. in the 900 block of East-West Highway,** an auto theft occurred. The 1994 Volkswagen Golf, was left unlocked with the key in the ignition.

**On February 5, between 7 p.m. and 9:50 p.m. in the 1200 block of Kirklynn Ave.,** an auto theft occurred. It is unknown how the 1987 Toyota 4Runner was stolen.

**Between February 8 at 10 p.m. and February 7 at 7:30 a.m. in the 8300 block of**

**Roanoke Ave.,** an auto theft occurred. It is not known how the 1998 Pontiac Sunfire was stolen.

**Between February 8 at 10 p.m. and February 7 at 7:30 am in the 8300 block of Roanoke Ave.,** an auto theft occurred. It is not known how the 1998 Pontiac Sunfire was stolen.

**On February 14, between 9:30 p.m. and 11:59 p.m. in the 8100 block of Lockney Ave.,** an auto theft occurred. It is unknown how the 1996 Honda Civic was stolen.

## ARRESTS

**On January 19 at 5:28 p.m. in the 6300 block of New Hampshire Ave.,** an adult male was arrested and charged with theft over \$500, unauthorized use of a motor vehicle and motor vehicle theft.

**On January 22 at 10:45 a.m.,** an adult male being held in Loudon County was served with an open Montgomery County warrant charging him with possession of CDS, possession of CDS paraphernalia and possession of CDS with intent to distribute.

**On January 22 at 9:39 p.m. in the 1300 block of New Hampshire Ave.,** an adult male was arrested and charged with driving under the influence of alcohol, driving while impaired by alcohol, driving with a suspended license, and driving with a revoked license.

**On January 31 at 3:10 p.m. in the 7500 block of Maple Ave.,** an adult male was arrested on an open Montgomery County war-

rant for failure to appear in court on traffic related charges.

**On January 31 at 9:50 p.m.** at the intersection of Takoma Ave. and Fenton St., an adult female was arrested on an open Montgomery County warrant for failure to appear in court on a charge of driving while suspended.

**On February 2 at 11:19 p.m. in the 700 block of Maplewood Ave.,** an adult female was arrested on an open Montgomery County warrant for failure to appear in court on a charge of driving while suspended.

**On February 3 at 12:05 p.m. in the 7700 block of Chicago Ave.,** an adult male was arrested and charged with possession with intent to distribute CDS, possession of CDS and possession of CDS paraphernalia.

**On February 4 at 7:25 a.m. in the 7400 block of New Hampshire Ave.,** an adult male was arrested on an open Montgomery County warrant for burglary. A criminal citation for theft under \$500 was also issued to the subject.

**On February 6 at 2:45 p.m.** an outstanding Montgomery County/Takoma Park warrant for failure to appear in court on a charge of possession of CDS, was served on an adult male being detained in Prince George's County.

**On February 7 at 6:35 a.m. in the 8100 block of Roanoke Ave.,** an adult male was arrested and charged with first degree burglary, theft over \$500 and several credit card offenses related to a burglary that occurred on January 26 in the 8100 block of Roanoke

Ave. Detectives are continuing to investigate similar residential burglaries in the area to determine whether further charges are possible.

**On February 8 at 2:10 a.m. in the 7200 block of Carroll Ave.,** an adult male was arrested and charged with driving while impaired by alcohol and driving under the influence of alcohol.

**On February 9 at 11:15 p.m. in the 7000 block of Westmoreland Ave.,** an adult male was arrested and charged with fourth degree burglary, trespassing and possession of CDS paraphernalia after police responded to a call for a suspicious person inside the business.

**On February 11 at 12:55 a.m. in the 8000 block of Carroll Ave.,** an adult male was arrested on an open Montgomery County warrant for violation of probation.

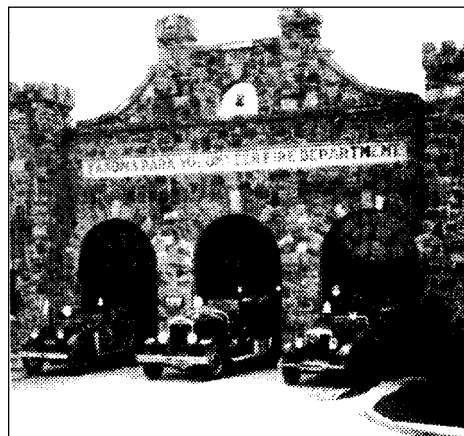
**On February 11 at 1 a.m. in the 7700 block of Maple Ave.,** an adult male was arrested and charged with violation of a protective order.

**On February 11 at 4 p.m. in the 7680 block of New Hampshire Ave.,** an adult male was arrested and charged with second degree assault.

**On February 11 at 10:30 p.m. in the 7600 block of Piney Branch Road,** an adult male was arrested and charged with driving under the influence of alcohol, driving while impaired by alcohol and following a vehicle too closely.

**On February 12 at 1:13 a.m. in the 7200 block of New Hampshire Ave.,** an adult male was arrested on an open Montgomery County warrant for possession of CDS.

**On February 15 at 10:46 p.m. in the 1100 block of University Blvd.,** a criminal citation for theft under \$500 (shoplifting) was issued to an adult male.



## Firehouse REPORT

As of Jan. 31, the Takoma Park Volunteer Fire Department and the personnel of the Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service assigned to the Takoma Park station have responded to 68 fire-related incidents. The department handled or assisted with 212 rescue or ambulance-related incidents, for a total of 280 incidents this year. Totals for 2006 were 87 and 178 respectively, for a total of 265, representing an increase of 15 incidents.

## National Fire Sprinkler Association reports

In the six days between February 6

and 11, there were six fires that killed 19 children and nine adults across the nation. These are the latest in what seems to be an increase in fires that have claimed the lives of three or more people per incident. In the past 30 days, 65 people have been killed, with more than half of them being children. Compounding these tragedies are that so many of these are probably preventable with fire safety practices that we all know.

For many years, fire departments have been doing fire prevention activities, so the question arises: why do these fires keep happening? In an attempt to reach people, here are safety tips for your home:

## A Few Fire Safety Tips For Your Home

- Never leave any cooking unattended.
- Keep matches and lighters up high and away from children's reach.
- Never leave a lighted candle unattended. When you leave it, take it with you or put it out.
- If you use a space heater, remember they need space. That's 36 inches around!
- If you have a fire place, make sure after you use it, the hot ashes are moved to the outside away from the house. Not on the porch!
- If you must smoke, must sure when you are finished, that you put the cigarette out...dead out.

Finally, make sure your home is protected with working smoke alarms on all levels of the home. You also must have a fire escape plan for the entire family. If you would like a free fire safety check of your home, please contact the fire department at 301-270-4242.

## New Takoma Park VFD Volunteer

At the Takoma Park VFD membership meeting held December 13, 2006, Kenva Crawford was voted into the department. We are still looking for more interested people to join. Are you that one? If so, contact Mike Livingston at the fire station 301-270-8209.

## Blood Drive to be Scheduled

The Takoma Park VFD and Takoma Park Lions Club will be sponsoring another blood drive in April. Stay tuned for specific date and time.

## Used Eyeglasses Needed

One of the big projects conducted by the Takoma Park Lions Club year round, is collecting used eyeglasses. Some will be recycled and others will be sent to developing countries. You may drop off used eyeglasses and hearing aids to either Takoma Park Library and the Takoma Park Fire Station. To make a financial donation, send it to the Takoma Park Lions Club, P.O. Box 11226, Takoma Park, MD 20912.

## Takoma Park City TV Events in March '07



City TV will start out the month by taping the Y.E.S. League Basketball Championships on March 2, to be held at Piney Branch Elementary School starting at 7 p.m. These games should be edited and ready for viewing by early April. Other new programming recently released includes more performances from the last Takoma Park Folk Festival including Roustabout, Little Bit of Blues, The Smith & Roberts Band, Takoma Zone, Iona, and Shen Fine. Also featured this month will be some of the sessions from the City's Green Building Conference held on February 18 at the Community Center.

Be sure to visit City TV's award-

winning webpage at [www.TakomaParkMD.gov/cable](http://www.TakomaParkMD.gov/cable) for specific program information each month.

### Takoma Snapshots will feature the following episodes: (to be filled in)

- \* Community Oriented Policing: The Takoma Park Police Department, A Look back.
- \* The Gym - What Do You Think, Takoma Park?
- \* Reuben Snipper; Councilmember Ward 5.
- \* Going Green at Home (Takoma Park Green Building Conference).

Community and neighborhood groups may submit non-commercial notices regarding meetings or special events to City TV for inclusion on the bulletin board.

All Council meetings and Snapshots episodes are also available for patron check out at the Takoma Park Maryland Library. VHS Tapes of these shows, as well as other Takoma Park City TV events, may be purchased for \$15 (pick up) or \$18 (mail). Some programs are also available on DVD. Call 301-891-7118 or send an email to: [cabletv@takomagov.org](mailto:cabletv@takomagov.org) for more information.

## PROGRAMMING SCHEDULE - MARCH 2007

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
7:00 AM	Community Bulletin Board	The Road to Recovery	Takoma Park City TV Local Events	Community Bulletin Board	Takoma Snapshots	Community Bulletin Board	Community Bulletin Board
8:00 AM	Takoma Park Snapshots	PreSchool Power!		Takoma Park Snapshots	Community Bulletin Board	Takoma Park Folk Festival	Takoma Park Snapshots
9:00 AM	Takoma Park Folk Festival	Takoma Park Snapshots	National Gallery of Art	Coffeehouse	NASA Programming		Haiti a Suivre
10:00 AM		Coffeehouse	City Council Meeting (REPLAY)	Music da camera	Government Focus	Takoma Park Snapshots	Coffeehouse
11:00 AM	Takoma Park City TV Local Events	CaribNation		Takoma Park Folk Festival	National Gallery of Art	Takoma Park City TV Local Events	Media Watch on Hunger
NOON		Community Bulletin Board			City Council Meeting (REPLAY)		
1:00 PM	The Road to Recovery	Takoma Park City TV Local Events		Takoma Park City TV Local Events			Takoma Park Folk Festival
2:00 PM	Media Watch on Hunger		Takoma Park Folk Festival			Media Watch on Hunger	
3:00 PM	Takoma Park Snapshots	NASA Programming		Music da camera			Takoma Park City TV Local Events
4:00 PM	PreSchool Power		Takoma Park Snapshots	Coffeehouse	Takoma Park Folk Festival	Haiti a Suivre	
5:00 PM	Music da camera	Takoma Park Snapshots	Government Focus	Haiti a Suivre		Takoma Snapshots	
5:30 PM	Chinese News				Takoma Park Snapshots	Community Bulletin Board	Community Bulletin Board
6:00 PM		Community Bulletin Board	Chinese News	Community Bulletin Board			
7:00 PM		National Gallery of Art		Takoma Park Snapshots	Takoma Park City TV Local Events	Coffeehouse	Takoma Park Snapshots
7:30 PM	City Council Meeting			Takoma Park Folk Festival		Takoma Park City TV Local Events	Takoma Park Folk Festival
8:00 PM		Coffeehouse	City Council Meeting (REPLAY)		Takoma Park Folk Festival		
9:00 PM		Takoma Park City TV Local Events				Haiti a Suivre	Coffeehouse
10:00 PM				Haiti a Suivre			
11:00 PM		CaribNation	Takoma Park Snapshots	Takoma Park City TV Special Events	Coffeehouse	Takoma Park Folk Festival	Takoma Park City TV Local Events
12:00 Midnight	Takoma Park Snapshots	NASA Programming			Haiti a Suivre		
1:00 AM	Road to Recovery		Community Bulletin Board				

Programming subject to change without notice.  
Takoma Park City TV  
7500 Maple Avenue  
Takoma Park, MD 20912  
301-891-7118

Email: [cabletv@takomagov.org](mailto:cabletv@takomagov.org)  
Web: [www.takomaparkmd.gov/cable](http://www.takomaparkmd.gov/cable)

## GATEWAY

continued from page 1

inson, whose own land assessment rose 400 percent in two years. Such sky-high increases could force owners to sell or build higher density commercial to afford the increased property taxes. Who can afford such high taxes? The national chains, responds Robinson, which defeats the buy-local ideal.

### Serve the Community

Many Pinecrest neighborhood residents don't care anymore who owns the businesses, as long as they provide goods and services they need in a safe and attractive environment. "If I run out of milk or eggs, I need to get in my car and drive," says Lea Chartock, who's lived in the neighborhood since 2000. "I'm not going to walk up and down New Hampshire Avenue - it's not a pedestrian-friendly place."

Some establishments just north of the New Hampshire/Eastern Avenue gateway are oriented to the closest residents - a Chinese restaurant, a pizza joint, a couple of grocery stores - but few locals will walk past trash-littered streets and abandoned fields, through an area with no sidewalks, minimal landscaping and six lanes of traffic to get there. The gateway itself hosts an auto parts store and a McDonald's restaurant. "I don't want to sound like an old fuddy-duddy, but no businesses at the Maryland gateway are conducive for neighborhood business," says Chartock.

And many locals want to move or improve the temporary day laborer site located in a trailer parked on Sligo Mill Road near Sheridan Street. Operated by CASA of Maryland, the trailer is filling in while Prince George's County looks

for a permanent home for a workers' center; meanwhile, businesses and residents, many of whom support the laborers right to seek work, voice concern for the workers' welfare and safety, and recognize the pressure that crowds of unemployed men put on a business community.

### Public Investment

Cayo Gamber, an eight-year resident on 4th Avenue, is blunt. "Pinecrest has been abandoned," she says. "We have not received the kind of attention that other parts of Takoma Park get." She points to a vacant tract of land at the corner of Orchard and Sligo Mill Road. "A park was supposed to happen there, but nothing ever did."

The park is part of the Master Plan, notes Ward 3 Councilmember Bruce Williams, who represents the area, and should be included in a "concept study" to be completed by the Maryland National Capital Parks and Planning Commission in fiscal year 2008, which begins in July 2007. It would be built and maintained by MNCPPC. "It takes a long time, I agree," says Williams, "but Pinecrest is not being ignored."

In fact, the area has garnered more attention since the City Council declared the redevelopment of the New Hampshire Avenue corridor a priority. City staff has applied to the state to place wayfinding signage at the gateway corner.

Such partnerships are encouraging, but Harvey Maisel of Maisel Development believes they must be expanded. Change will come only with strong political leadership and government willingness to work closely with business, he says, as happened on a grand scale in Silver Spring. "You have to create a pub-

lic-private partnership," says Maisel. "Without that, nothing will happen."

It seems the area is working toward that vision. The Maryland Enterprise Zone program offers property owners state and local tax abatement of 80 percent of the increase in taxes for investing in new development, a program Robinson utilized; he also received loan assistance designed to support inner-Beltway communities.

State funding for streetscapes could address the area as a whole, and the City is working with Montgomery and Prince George's County representatives - and is encouraging area residents - to ask state legislators to restore New Hampshire Avenue streetscape funding, which former Gov. Robert Ehrlich's administration cut. The project included community workshops that designed a walkable, leafy New Hampshire Avenue before funding was pulled. The City has received a \$36,000 community legacy award for facade improvements on New Hampshire Avenue, has invested in a new code enforcement officer, and has partnered with the Prince George's County Economic Development Corporation to produce an Enterprise Zone information fair.

### Points of Agreement

All of the businesses and residents interviewed for this story agree on one thing: All of the governments involved need to do all they can to clean up the area and make it more attractive to business. "Anything the City can do to get more upscale businesses and newer stores would be great," says American Pest Management Owner Matthew Nixon. O'Brien, of Edge Construction, suggests code enforcement and facade

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Area residents are invited to provide their input at a meeting about the Gateway neighborhood, scheduled for early April. Check the city web site after March 15 or call Ilona Blancha at 301-891-7205 for more information on time, date and place.

improvements would make a big difference.

The people who live and work in the area are, of course, another driving force, says O'Brien. Businesses will come when they see a customer base that will help them thrive. "Until we meet the threshold of demographics that retailers want, development won't happen," says O'Brien.

### Moving ahead

A change in the market is on the horizon. A D.C. property one block from the gateway is the planned site for 198 new single-family houses and condos, says City Planner David Suls. "With the increase in housing density directly on New Hampshire Avenue, developers and business owners are going to be looking at what type of neighborhood-oriented businesses will be in greater demand," says Suls. The Takoma Park side of New Hampshire Avenue is zoned to allow mixed-use developments, so the area "might see a burst in redevelopment with buildings that have shops on the street level and housing above," he adds.

Whatever the final result - and all stakeholders hope for a vibrant and thriving area - residents and local business owners are expected to participate in the process, in true Takoma Park fashion.



# Tenant Displacement: What Are Your Rights?

"This is a two-month notice for you to vacate the apartment in which you reside." This type of notice can come without warning and can turn your life upside down. Are you being asked to vacate because of a proposed condo conversion? Or possibly your landlord has informed you that he is planning major renovations. Could it be that he did not give you a reason? Your rights as a tenant are defined, based on the reason that is presented to you for your displacement. Here is a brief summary of your rights under the Maryland Condominium Conversion law, Montgomery County's Condominium and Displacement Laws and the City of Takoma Park's Landlord-Tenant Relations law.

## Your Rights Under the Maryland Condominium Conversion Law

If the owner of the rental facility where you live is converting the property to a condominium or cooperative, the owner may not terminate your lease in order to avoid their obligations under the Maryland Condominium Act. The Condominium Act gives the following rights to tenants:

You have a right to a 180-day written notice of condominium conversion. Your landlord must give you 180 days written notice of their intent to convert your rental facility to condominiums. Do not assume you have to move out unless it is clearly stated in the written notice of intent letter. You may remain in your apartment on the same rent, terms, and conditions of your existing lease for at least 180 days, if you want, or if you have a lease that ends after the 180 days, you can stay until the end of your lease-provided that you continue to pay your rent and abide by the conditions of your lease.

You have a right to purchase your unit. If you are interested in the purchase of your apartment, you need to respond in writing to the purchase offer included with the notice of intent to convert to condominium within 60 days after receiving the notice.

You have a right to terminate your lease and to receive moving expenses. If you want to move out of your apartment before the end of the 180-day period or before the end of your lease, you may cancel your lease without penalty by giving a one-month written notice to the owner. The notice must be in the owner's possession prior to the rent due date of the month you are leaving. (example: if your rent due date is the first day of each month, then your notice must be in your landlord's possession by the thirtieth or the thirty-first day of the previous month. Your obligation to pay rent continues through the end of the month that you are leaving.) Moving or relocation expenses vary depending on your income and will need to be documented within 30 days of vacating.

You have a right to be offered an extended lease if you live in a rental facility with 10 or more apartments and are a "Qualified Household." The landlord is required to offer extended leases of three years to "Qualified Households" for up to 20 percent of the apartments in the rental facility. A Qualified Household is defined as a household having a handicapped person or senior citizen (62 years or older) occupant, who has lived in the household for more than 12 months. The household must have an annual household income not exceeding 80 percent of the median income for the local area. The household must also be current in rent payments and in good standing. An application for an extended lease must be filed within 60 days of the notice of condominium conversion. Annual rent increases for households that are designated as "Qualified Households" are limited to Takoma Park's rent stabilization program or rent increases that are 100 percent of the consumer price index, whichever is less.

## Your Rights Under the Montgomery County Condominium Law

In addition to the Maryland Condominium Act, Montgomery County has a condominium law which applies to rental facilities with 10 or more apartments. Under the County law, Montgomery County and its housing agency, the Housing Opportunities Commis-



sion (HOC), have the right to purchase the rental facility before the owner can convert it to condominiums. Montgomery County and HOC have a period of 60 days after receiving the owner's notice of conversion to express interest in purchasing the rental facility. Montgomery County and HOC also have the right to purchase individual condominium units even if they do not want to purchase the entire building. Montgomery County's condominium law gives tenants the following rights:

You have a right to a life tenancy.

Montgomery County's condominium law gives an extension of the lease beyond the three-year period granted by state law to those who fulfill the requirements of a "Qualified Household" (see above Maryland Condominium Act) under the state Condominium Act. If a household is part of the 20 percent of the apartments in the rental facility that are "Designated Households" (i.e., tenants who meet the "qualified household" requirement because a senior or handicapped person has lived in the apartment for the past 12 months and the household meets the income requirements) it is entitled to a lifetime lease.

Your Right to a three-year tenancy.

Additionally, all of the following types of households may be entitled to three-year extended leases, as long as the application for the "qualified household" status was submitted to the owner within the 60-day period following the condominium conversion notification. Again, the total number of Qualified Households can be no higher than 20 percent of the total number of apartments in the building.

1. Households with a senior citizen, physically handicapped, or developmentally disabled occupant that meet income requirements, where a person has been a member of the household for less than 12 months preceding the notice.

2. Households which include a senior citizen, physically handicapped, or developmentally disabled occupant, but do not meet the annual income or membership in household requirement as indicated in the state law.

3. All other households which meet the annual income requirement as indicated in the state condominium law.

## Your Rights Under the Montgomery County Tenant Displacement Law

This law applies to multi-family rental housing built

before February 5, 1981, that have four or more apartments. Before an owner can "convert" such rental housing, the owner must give the tenants notice and the tenants have certain rights under the Montgomery County Tenant Displacement law. "Convert" and "conversion" mean:

1. Changing the use of rental housing to non-residential use;
2. Demolishing at least one-third of the apartments in a 12-month period; or
3. Displacing tenants from at least one-third of the occupied apartments in a 12-month period by: a) raising rents, or b) preparing to renovate or rehabilitate the rental housing, or c) any other act that ends the use of the property as rental housing.

The Montgomery County Tenant Displacement Law does not apply to rental housing that is being converted to condominiums or cooperatives. The tenant rights provided by the Montgomery County Tenant Displacement Law include:

## You have a right to receive a 120-day notice of the conversion.

You have a right to terminate your lease without penalty by giving one month written notice. Your notice must meet the requirements of the Takoma Park Code in that the owner must receive it before the rent due date for the month you are vacating. Thus, if the rent due date is the first day of each month, you would need to have your notice to your landlord no later than the thirtieth or thirty-first day of the previous month. Your obligation is to pay rent through the last day of the month in which you vacate your apartment.

You have a right to be paid relocation assistance equal to two months' rent if you move out within 180 days of the receipt of the notice of conversion. The relocation assistance is paid not more than 10 days after the owner receives your notice of termination of the lease. (Note: please be aware that the Takoma Park Code requires that you send to the owner a 30-day written notice if you move out before the termination date stated in the landlord's letter of conversion.)

## Your Rights Under Takoma Park's Landlord-Tenant Relations Law

### Two-Month Notices to Vacate For No Cause

Recently the Office on Landlord Tenant Affairs has been aware that some landlords have circumvented their obligations under the state and county condominium conversion and tenant displacement laws by giving tenants a two month notice to vacate for no cause.

Tenants should take note that Takoma Park's Landlord-Tenant Relations law requires that one year leases that have not been officially renewed each year may not be in compliance with section 6.16.070 (D) of the Takoma Park Code. This part of the code, which was adopted in May 2003 states that "The landlord shall offer the tenant the opportunity to renew a lease of one year or more for an additional term of one year at least two months prior to the end of each lease term unless:

1. The landlord has given the tenant notice to vacate (at least two months prior to the end of the one-year term);
2. The tenant has given the landlord notice of intent to vacate; or
3. At least two months before the end of the lease term, the landlord has provided the tenant with a written statement of the landlord's reasonable cause for offering a lease term of less than one year.

If the landlord fails to offer a tenant a one-year lease renewal (and none of the circumstances have occurred), then the tenant shall be presumed to have a one-year lease. This means that a landlord cannot require you to vacate until the end of that one-year lease term.

*If you believe that your landlord is not offering you the rights you have under the state and county's condominium conversion and displacement laws or you would like further information, please call The Office on Landlord-Tenant Affairs at 301.891.7222.*