

Darnestown Civic Association

Town Meeting

June 17, 2010

President Lisa Patterson called the meeting to order at 7:34pm followed by self-introduction of attendees.

I. Secretary's Report

The minutes from the December meeting were approved with corrections.

II. Treasurer's Report

Guy Armantrout reported that the association's assets are currently \$120,392.61. The treasurer's report was approved.

III. Crime

Lisa Patterson reported that the string of daytime burglaries seems to have abated. She urged continued watchfulness by neighbors.

An arrest has been made related to Darnestown burglaries. It is unlikely, however, that the suspect is responsible for the serial daytime burglaries.

Burglaries have been recently reported in Haddonfield, on White Rock Rd and on Bondy Way. It is not known if these break-ins are related to those that had occurred previously.

Two cars were broken into in Ancient Oak. In addition, two chain saws were stolen from the garage at one of the addresses.

The air conditioning unit was stolen from the Civic association offices. Although there is a security tape of the theft, the recording is too grainy and the light too low to make an identification of the thieves possible. The board is looking into ways of securing the new unit.

Child Care Center sign on Route 28 was vandalized on June 16th.

The Finnegan Farm development has been experiencing vandalism since 2008. Mailboxes have been vandalized, doorbells rung and the pillars at the entrance damaged. An eighteen year old from Darnestown was arrested over the Memorial Day weekend in connection with these crimes.

IV. Master Plan

Lisa Patterson attended a reception at the Potomac Oak Center. She reported that the owners of Potomac Oak Center are lobbying for sewer service to their building. The owners would like to expand the shopping center, but the current septic system cannot handle any additional usage. Lisa pointed out that if a sewer line comes in, it will enable denser housing to be built in the area. The shopping center owners make the claim that the sewer line will only go to strip mall but once it is in, there is no guarantee that it would not be used by other developers. Lisa urged Darnestown residents to oppose the extension of sewer lines into the Darnestown area.

Bruce Deppa pointed out that Potomac Oak owners waited until the master plan for development was approved and then challenged it.

V. Village/Zoning /Compliance

Steve Ellis reported that the Franklin Press is considering putting in a mini satellite USPS office. There is currently not very much information available about their plans but they are looking for support from the DCA for their application to Postal Service.

Metropolitan Washington Senior Housing has received an extension for their zoning approval. It is planned that construction will begin in the late summer or early fall.

Steve Ellis also reported that the new daycare center on Route 28 is in compliance with zoning regulations.

In other village news, the Hobbs property on Route 28 has been put up for sale. This property has been a source of problems for its neighbors and the DCA for 15 years. There are two houses on four acres priced at \$974,000. The houses on the property are in poor condition and most likely be demolished. Steve feels that at this high price, the probable buyer would be a religious organization or a special exception business.

VI. Wildlife

Bruce Deppa reported that he had been in touch with Joe Brown of Patriot Land and Wildlife Management. This company removes deer by bow hunting very early in the morning and donates the meat to homeless shelters and food pantries. The removal of one hundred five deer from near Seneca Creek Park had a significant impact on the deer population and therefore on the plant browsing. Patriot Wildlife Management will mail information to Darnestown citizens. Information can be also be found on their website, patriotlwm.com. Neighbors will need to band together to get an area large enough to allow hunting.

It was pointed out that invasive weeds are taking over because deer have cleared the woods of undergrowth.

VII. Seneca project

Steve Ellis reported that there are maps in the current issue of the Little Acorn showing the location of the two sites planned for the deer exclusion project. Kevin Keegan, Karen Hinrichsen, and Steve Ellis met with park officials today. It was agreed at this meeting that the Seneca Project committee will mark out the exclusion areas and the park biologists will survey for invasive plants. The committee plans to put up the fence posts in the fall and install the fencing material in the spring. The agreement with the park will be reviewed every six months for the first year and annually thereafter.

VIII. Utility Reliability

Art Slesinger reported that after many years of Verizon being unresponsive to maintenance and repair problems in the Darnestown area, progress is finally being made. State Senator Rob Garagiola set up a meeting with the western Maryland manager, Bruce Coyle. Mr. Coyle has overseen many improvements to the local service including resplicing lines, cleaning connectors, and replacing a major cable.

The scheduled meeting with Pepco representatives did not take place as their representatives could not find the office. It will be rescheduled. At the meeting, Art plans to ask them to have the tree trimming ordinances revisited, especially to allow more aggressive trimming of white pines near power lines.

IX. Guest Speaker--Rob Garagiola

Mr. Garagiola started by stating that he views being an advocate for his constituents as the most important part of his job. He then gave an overview of what occurred in the most recent legislative session in Annapolis.

By law, Maryland has to balance its budget. Because of the difficult economy some very hard decisions had to be made. Currently the state is spending less than they did four years ago despite increased fixed costs (13 billion vs. 13.5 billion). This was partly accomplished by trimming the state work force to less than the level of four years ago. There have been no cost of living increases for state employees for three or four years. The state has been imposing furloughs of four to ten days a year for last 3 years. There has been no pay increase for legislators since 2006 and until at least 2014.

Senator Garagiola predicted another cost cutting budget next year due to several factors. There will be no federal stimulus money next year. Secondly, even if the economy improves this year, improvement in income to state and local governments lags by a year.

On the positive side, even though the state pie is shrinking, Montgomery County has the largest delegation in Annapolis and they have managed to get a 10% increase for the county from the state. Montgomery County will receive a 61% increase for education from the state.

Art Slesinger inquired about the rapid transit system proposed for Science City. Senator Garagiola responded that there is currently no money budgeted for it. At this point, it would take creative financing to make it happen.

Dick Jurgena asked if there was the possibility that Maryland would introduce an Immigration enforcement bill akin to the law recently passed in Arizona. Senator Garagiola replied that Attorney General's office is currently investigating the constitutionality of the Arizona law. The Maryland legislature will wait to see how these issues are resolved before proceeding.

X. Welcome committee

Lara Wibeto announced that she is running in the primary election for the State House of Delegates this year.

She also reported that some young families and retirees have moved into the Darnestown area.

XI. UpCounty Advisory

Bob Thompson reported that the County has made many staffing cuts. However, the budget for education was cut less than rest of government. All county employees, excepting those in education, will be furloughed for several days. Education now accounts for 57% of the county budget as compared to 55% last year.

In regards to the development of Science City, he pointed out that the development of the transportation infrastructure will pace the building development.

XIV. Old Business

Art Slesinger announced that the County had put out generic drawing of Science City with dense clusters of tall building. He advised that the civic association should remain vigilant in regards to what is planned for that development.

XV. New Business

Bruce Deppa stated that the Church on Route 28 and Riffleford Road has stopped mowing. Lisa Patterson said that she would look into it.

The meeting was adjourned 9:22pm

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Allaway
Recording Secretary