

Situated in the green hills & valleys of Sligo Creek & its tributaries, abutting the burgeoning downtown Silver Spring

Seven Oaks Evanswood



CITIZENS' ASSOCIATION
SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND

Next meeting: **TUESDAY, MAR. 15, 7:30 pm, SILVER SPRING INTERNATIONAL MIDDLE SCHOOL CAFETERIA**

The old Silver Spring Library

The primary topic of this month's meeting will be the future of the old Silver Spring library building and site. Speakers, to be confirmed, may include people from organizations that have possible plans for the site.

Feb. 3 meeting on the old Library

On February 3, a County-led meeting to discuss the future of the old Silver Spring Library on Ellsworth Dr. was held in the Civic Building. Several SOECA residents were among the audience. Past President Jean Cavanaugh provided these general notes.

David Dise, director of the County Dept. of General Services (DGS), presented and led the discussion. Also present were Greg Ossont, deputy at DGS, Gabe Alborno, director of Dept. of Recreation, and Reemberto Rodriguez, director of SS Regional Services Center. There was also a representative from the Housing Opportunities Commission. There were about 40 people there including representatives from the offices of Councilmembers Riemer, Elrich and Hucker.

The old Library was built in 1957 and was closed and boarded up in March 2015. The Friends of the Library will probably use it for their bookstore starting in March 2016 for 20-24 months while the new Wheaton Library is being built. It needs repairs that probably exceed \$1M. The HVAC needs to be replaced, the roof is leaking, and the basement is messy.

March 2016 Issue

Next meeting:
Tuesday, March 15
7:30 – 9:30 pm
Silver Spring International
Middle School Cafeteria

AGENDA

7:30 – 8:30: The future of the old Silver Spring library

8:30: Current concerns, such as, Purple Line, traffic.

In this issue:

Old Silver Spring Library update

BRT Advisory Committee

Water Watchdogs

Jan. 12 minutes

The next Thursday evening contra dances at the Civic Building are on Apr. 14 and May 12, 7:00 – 10:00. All dances are taught; come early for the beginners' session. \$10 (FSGW members, \$8).

SOECA boundaries are: Colesville Road on the West, Cedar and Fenton Streets on the South, Bonifant and Wayne on the East, and Franklin and Caroline Avenues on the North.

www.soeca.org | email: soeca.board@gmail.com

The property totals 2.5 acres in two parcels. The large parking lot (L section of lot) is 31,000 sf. The parcel with the library and smaller parking lot is about 69,000 sf. The entire lot is zoned R60, detached single family homes. Whoever wins the bid will have to either keep it R60 or go through an expensive Local Map Amendment which could take 1-2 years.

Even though both the Parks Dept. (under MNCPPC) and the Recreation Dept. were interested in the property, County Executive Leggett decided to put out an RFP to make it available to bidders, including developers. Leggett is considering building affordable senior housing on the site. The developer will have to build high to get enough apartments to justify the cost of also providing a public amenity, namely some sort of multigenerational community facility. DGS is managing an RFP process, but currently there are few criteria beyond providing an undefined multi-generational center.

A few comments at the meeting: There was a lot of distrust expressed about the process. The Master Plan for our region recommends the property be used as park/recreation/open space after the new Library opens. The Planning Board approved park use at a public hearing in February 2015. There were several nonprofits at the Feb. 2016 meeting, including the Humanist Rainbow Community of Greater Washington (affiliated with American Univ.), Silver Spring Day School (now in Four Corners, providing early childhood education to 184 students), and Silver Spring Village, who are looking for program space. Montgomery Housing Partnership (MHP), which worked with the County on The Bonifant, the affordable senior housing next to the new Library on Bonifant St., said to make construction viable, they would need to build 75 apartments if 90%+ were affordable. Other funds would probably have to be used for the public amenity.

A number of people spoke about the invaluable park/open space opportunity, and how if we lose that potential open space, we can never recreate it. Silver Spring, according to the Parks Dept. and Dept. of Recreation, has a critical shortage of park, recreation and open space. That shortage will be more apparent as the approximately 10,000 apartments now in the development pipeline are added to the downtown area.

Jon Lourie, an architect who lives in Woodside Park and who held a charrette with youth in 2010 to define a youth center for the old library, called for a "stakeholders committee" to assist with the process. It is important that surrounding have representation on the proposed committee. Prezco, the council of Silver Spring civic association presidents, has sent a letter to

County Executive Leggett asking that such a committee be established.

Water Watchdogs

The Friends of Sligo Creek (FOSC) **Water WatchDogs** (WWD) citizen pollution reporting system, headed by Anne Vorce and Kathleen Samiy, monitors Sligo Creek and its tributaries for runoff events from sites throughout the SOECA neighborhoods and downtown. They have recently received a two-year grant from the Chesapeake Bay Trust to expand their work.

Anyone can use WWD to report problems to the Dept. of Environmental Protection (DEP). If you see a runoff problem or other pollution, email WWD at **ReportSligoPollution @fosc.org** and attach a photo if possible. It will be relayed directly to DEP. A few sentences on the FOSC log (fosc.org) and on the SOECA listserv would help to get more eyes on the problem.

BRT Advisory Committee

The next regular meeting of the Bus Rapid Transit Advisory Committee has been postponed while the State and County work on a revised schedule and work plan. If you have questions or comments, please contact Lori at ZellerTransit@gmail.com. You can also visit www.montgomerycountymd.gov/RTS/us29section2.html

Minutes of January 12 Meeting

While we waited for Tom Hucker, this evening's guest, President Jonathan Shurberg updated us on the re-use of the old Silver Spring library. The Friends of the Library will use it as their bookstore for the next two years, but there are no details beyond that time. The Dept. of General Services (DGS) is looking for public input. The County will probably seek a public-private partnership for whatever comes next. The property is zoned R-60 (detached single-family homes).

Tom Hucker, our District 5 Councilmember, arrived. Here is a summary of his remarks:

I've been a community activist, Delegate, and now a Councilmember. I live near Flower & Franklin. I serve on the Public Safety and the Transportation & Environment committees.

Public safety: Crime is down over 2014, but with an uptick in gang-related crime up-county. Because recent ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) raids have raised fears, leading to kids staying home from school and witnesses being reluctant to talk to police, the County has written a public letter affirming that the County does not enforce immigration laws.

Human traffickers are attracted to Montgomery County because of our wealth and a lack of competi-

tion from other crime. Penalties for customers consist of a lecture, and the State's Attorney has decided not to spend limited resources targeting solicitation. I have introduced a bill to raise the County fine for solicitation and provide resources for victims.

Transportation: We have put regulations in effect to protect us from predatory towtruck operators: store owners must give permission before a car can be removed, and "spotting," in which towtruck operators lie in wait, is outlawed. We increased the number of taxi licenses by 100 and mandated that all taxis must be handicapped accessible. The Colesville-16th St. intersection will finally be upgraded. DC Mayor Bowser's presence has changed the dynamic. DDOT, MDDOT, Metro, and the Park Service have worked together. A traffic light will be added on the Maryland side, along with other recommended changes, paid for by DDOT. I have worked with others to stop cut-through traffic behind the old library. Many people have asked for more bike lanes. There's an upcoming charrette for bike lanes on Spring & Cedar Sts.

Environment: We have funded a County Office of Sustainability. We are trying to re-start services that suffered cuts during the recession. We understand that there's a backlog of tree trimming and stump removal, and that the stumps are impeding the County's tree-planting program.

Other topics: We have tried to help small businesses, supporting things like the Silver Spring Restaurant Week. We are working on making the County's Dept. of Liquor Control work better. They have a big new warehouse and bigger trucks, but we're also asking the State for authority to privatize special orders, such as for craft beers. We're trying to improve the County's 311 information service, especially for providing information on bus waiting times. The County tracks all the information requests that come to 311. The Executive said that those data would be available to the Council, but that didn't happen until the Council held up their budget approval. I am working on a tool to help the County deal with vacant properties. If the owner is paying property taxes, all the County currently does is to cut the grass and send a bill. These properties bring crime, are targets for arson, and are targets for teenage parties. I want the County to institute a register of vacant properties so we can ramp up our inspections. Fire & Rescue will install smoke alarms with 10-year batteries for free. Exelon-Pepco will give free energy audits, and will provide free light bulbs and smart power strips.

Followup touched mostly on three topics:

Purple Line: Several residents expressed concern that there is little help from County or State government on mitigating the effects of the Purple Line and that considerably more help is being provided to Bethesda than to Silver Spring and east. Putting a station at Dale Dr. was decided by MTA fiat. Removing it could significantly reduce costs and impact. Council assurances that there is no intention to up-zone are only words. Nothing in the planning process gives us confidence that denser development will not happen.

Hucker said that he is against widening Wayne Ave. and asked for details on a promised, but still unscheduled, meeting between community and the County to discuss issues such as noise, tree loss, a proliferation of overhead wires, and the massive widening of Wayne near the school.

Green space, trees, and the old library site: With the growth of downtown and the loss of trees, air quality is going down. We need water, air quality, and tree canopy statistics, and there's no transparency from M-NCPPC or Pepco. The library site is the last green space inside the Beltway.

Increased property taxes: The Governor has slashed the State budget, and Leggett proposes an increase that exceeds the year-to-year increase cap, which the whole Council, you included, agreed to. What is your intention in exceeding the cap? Hucker answered first that there's no current proposal to do so, but second, that there are several factors to keep in mind. The State budget is healthier than last year, but the County's isn't. Our distribution from the State was smaller than expected; maybe more of our residents tend to file taxes in October. In addition, the State has strengthened teacher pensions to make them more competitive with neighboring states – part of that bill comes back to the County – and we lost the Wynn case and must reimburse those whose out-of-state income was taxed by the County.

Solar power: Some County buildings, such as the Council building and a community center, are receiving solar panels. MCPS has been very slow to install them; only six of more than 200 schools have them.

A few SOECA business items concluded the meeting. The checking account balance is \$6422.29. A motion was made and seconded to make all dues payable in October rather than on a rolling basis.

**Seven Oaks Evanswood
Citizens Association
Silver Spring, Maryland
www.soeca.org**

SOECA officers

Jonathan Shurberg, President
Jean Cavanaugh, Past President
Rachel Bowers, 1st Vice President
Tina Guina, 2nd Vice President
Tom Armstrong, Secretary
David Hartmann, Treasurer

Resident volunteers

Jonathan Bernstein, Listserv &
web site manager, SSCAB rep
Lori Zeller, BRT Committee rep

Contact SOECA:

soeca.board@gmail.com

Two ways to join SOECA's listserv:

1) Via email:

- Send an email to soeca-subscribe@yahoogroups.com with the word "subscribe" in the subject line.
- The listserv moderator will email you asking for your name and address and will add you after you respond.
- You will receive a confirmation email from "YahooGroups."

2) If you have a Yahoo Groups account:

- Go to <http://groups.yahoo.com>, find SOECA, and click "Join this group."
- Fill in the form, including the email address you wish to use, adding a comment about yourself and why you would like to join, and click on "Join."
- The listserv moderator will email you asking for your name and address and will add you after you respond.
- You will receive a confirmation email from Yahoo.

Once you have joined, post messages by sending email to soeca@egroups.com or soeca@yahoogroups.com.

SOECA Membership Form

Send this slip plus \$20 annual dues per household (\$10 for seniors and single members) made payable to SOECA to:

David Hartmann, SOECA Treasurer, 407 Ellsworth Drive, Silver Spring, MD 20910

Name: _____ Today's Date: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: Home _____ Cell _____ Email _____

Send an email to soeca.board@gmail.com if:

- You want to receive the newsletter electronically, or
- You want to check the status of your membership.

If you want to join the listserv, see the instructions above.

Note: Resident email addresses, street addresses, and phone numbers are not shared.