

e-Bugle

Garrett Bugle Internet Edition

Volume 53

January 2006

No. 1



Calendar

- Fri., Jan. 20 Film Society, Town Hall, food at 7 pm, film at 8, *City of God*
- Sat., Jan. 21 Town Dinner, Town Hall, 6 pm (see p 3)
- Sun., Jan. 29 Reception, needlepoint cushions, Penn Place, 2 pm (see p 2)
- Mon., Feb. 6 Monthly yard waste collection; Mayor's Coffee Break, Penn Place, lobby level, 10-11:30 am
- Thurs., Feb. 3 Jam Session, Town Hall, 7 pm
- Sat., Feb. 5 Budget workshop session, Town Hall, 8:30 am
- Sat., Feb. 11 Film Society, Town Hall, food at 7 pm, film at 8, *A Very Long Engagement*
- Mon., Feb. 13 Town Council Meeting, Town Hall, 8 pm
- Tues., Feb. 14 Valentine's Day; Lunch Bunch, Town Hall, 12:30 pm; *Bugle* deadline, 4 pm
- Wed., Feb. 22 Citizens Assoc. Meeting, TBA
- Fri., Feb. 24 Festival of Lights service, Town Hall, evening
- Sun., Mar. 19 GIVES Soup Supper, Town Hall, 4-7 pm

Town Council Meeting

In the absence of your regular correspondent Margaret Soltan, I filled in at the last minute for the Town Council meeting of January 9. Lacking her descriptive powers, I will give you my overall view of the meeting: Bor...ing. Reports and an offer of cookies were the main thrusts. One item in which several of us were interested was that the railroad people say that our little station is here to stay, even though they may spend \$135,000 a year to maintain a ticket machine. (See the Mayor's letter, p 6.) Some of us volunteered to do that job instead of the machine. It was noted that the town is solvent, there appear to be no great controversies looming on the horizon, no one requested a variance, and we were done by 9 pm, so the four attendees (two reporters and two citizens) could go home.

Mary Moyer



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Dual Celebration at Penn Place

All residents are invited to drop by Penn Place starting at 2 on Sunday, January 29. A reception will mark the unveiling of the new needlepoint cushions for the window seats in the post office. The gathering also celebrates the opening of a new exhibit by Jane Salomon in the upstairs gallery. Many of you are familiar with Jane's elegant watercolors. She is the fourth Garrett Park artist to be featured in the "Art in Penn Place" series.

Six Garrett Park needlepointers have worked hard over the past year on the design and execution of the post office cushions, so please come by and see the results of their efforts and thank them for their hard work.

We're Green Again!

Thank you to Damian and Stephanie Salvatore for the green banner this month. We are now funded for the rest of this year. The Citizens Association is sending out envelopes with this issue for your annual dues. Because of rising costs (postage and printing, town dinner, 4th of July supplies, etc.), the dues are going up to \$10 per person, or \$20 per household. We tried hard to stay within our budget, but did not succeed. Plus, do you realize how long the dues stayed at the previous rate? At least 15 years. So please mail in your dues or pay them at the Town Dinner. The Citizens Association thanks you—everyone in town is a member.

Mary Moyer

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Mark Your Calendars

Time for another GIVES Soup Supper to be held on Sunday, March 19, from 4 to 7 pm at Town Hall. Children are most welcome. There is no charge, but voluntary contributions will be much appreciated. The meal will be simple but delicious, a variety of homemade soups, breads, and beverages. This is a perfect opportunity for residents, new and old, to meet and mix for a good cause.

Over the year all money collected by volunteers (as well as donations from the supper) goes to the American Friends Service Committee to promote hunger and relief self-help projects here and in other countries and to Zacchaeus Community Kitchen in Washington, D.C. Since the hurricane, Garrett Park has directed money directly to Hurricane Katrina victims through the Quakers.

We do need helpers for the supper: soup makers, bread makers (you can also buy bread from many good bakeries), people to set up, clean up, etc. Please call Glenda Ingham or Karen Anderson. We hope to have an "old timer" GIVES volunteer give some background on how this program got its beginning, and also maybe some informal hometown entertainment. Please plan to join us. Watch for flyers in the P.O. and for more information in the next *Bugle*.

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The *Garrett Bugle* is a publication of the Citizens Association of Garrett Park, published 10 times a year. Publication of the *Bugle* is supported by member dues. All residents of Garrett Park are members of the Citizens Association. Yearly dues (\$10 per family or \$5 per individual per address) can be sent to Citizens Association, Box 456, Garrett Park, MD 20896.

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Out-of-town subscriptions cost \$13 (first class) or \$10 (bulk mail). Letters to the editor can be submitted by mail or hand to *Bugle* staff or by e-mail. The editor reserves the right to edit submissions for length and clarity. Unsigned letters will not be printed.

Town Administrator Notes

Leaf collection has finished for the year. Chances are you have a few leaves left over. You can either pile them up in a corner of your yard for composting, or bag them for the yard waste pickup the first Monday in February (Feb. 6). If you missed the scheduled Christmas tree pickup, just put your tree out and we will take it away.

So far we have avoided snow. This is very good for our budget, but unlikely to last. So please remember that it is especially important to try to park off the streets when snow is expected so that we can clear the streets curb to curb whenever possible. This will allow for more space to park after the streets are plowed.

I'd like to thank the many residents who generously gave tips to the Montgomery County Sanitation employees who take away our trash, recyclables, and yard waste. A fine year-end gift was made to each of the five men, and letters of acknowledgement will be sent out to all who gave before the end of January.

At its regular meeting on January 9, the Council adopted an ordinance to revise the town's current budget (fiscal year 2006) in response to changed income and expense projections. Work now begins on developing the budget for fiscal year 2007—the years do march by fast! If you have questions or would like more information, please call the office. If you have suggestions for next year's budget, you should contact members of the Town Council or the Mayor.

Best wishes for the new year from all of us who work for you as town employees—we enjoy working for you and do our best to provide you with as high a level of service as is possible. Suggestions as to how we may do this better are always welcome!

Finally, in these winter months it is often hard for some of the town's residents to get out. Please try to be particularly alert for a friend or neighbor who might need a little extra support this time of year. If there is any way you feel that we here at the office might be able to help out, please call 301-933-7488 or drop by.

Ted Pratt, Garrett-park@comcast.net

The Franklins of Garrett Park

Jane and Ben moved to Rokeby Avenue in Garrett Park in 1954, 51 years ago. From the beginning, Ben took an interest in attending and participating in Garrett Park town proceedings, although he never held elected office. He was known for his outspoken and often humorous contributions to the town's deliberations, which continued for most of the 50 years he was a resident.

In 1959, Jane and Ben moved down the road on Rokeby Avenue to build a new home on an undeveloped wooded lot they bought at the end of the street. This is the house Ben occupied with our family for the past 46 years, and it's where Ben died, last month. He loved that house, and he was passionate about Garrett Park. Ben took an active role in getting the homes at the end of Rokeby attached to water and sewer lines for the first time in 1960. Till then, everyone had well water.

One of Betsy's and my most vivid childhood memories is moving into the new house at the end of Rokeby Avenue during the days immediately before Christmas 1959. I was nearly 7 and Betsy was 5. All our belongings were still in packing boxes, and it was Christmas Eve. It was a beautiful, snowy evening. All of a sudden the sound of many voices singing Christmas carols could be heard approaching from the street. We ran to the front door and discovered a gathering of some 20 neighbors serenading us with holiday music and bearing a pine tree to decorate our empty living room.

That's the kind of place Garrett Park was in 1959: still holding on to the vestiges of small-town America. The town has adapted remarkably well over the last 50 years.

Abby Franklin

Town Dinner Is Here

If this issue makes it into the mailboxes in time, the Town Dinner will be tomorrow. Please bring your own serving and eating utensils, and one of the following for 8 to 10 people: appetizers, salad and breads, main dish, or dessert. Please label the ingredients of the main dishes for people with allergies or who are vegetarians. *Bring your own eating utensils!* A fee of \$5 each will be collected at the door to cover the cost of decorations, drinks, and paper goods. We hope you have made your reservations, because we can only accommodate 70 people. If you would be willing to help in the decoration of the Town Hall on that morning (January 21, 10 am), we need you. The only order of business at the dinner will be the election of Citizens Association officials. After that the evening's entertainment will begin. See you there.

Mary Moyer

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Strathmore Signal

A version of this letter was sent to the Director of the Office of Highway Development, State Highway Administration.

When drivers approach Strathmore from Kenilworth, stop signs clearly indicate that they should stop before proceeding. The blinking yellow light informs drivers on Strathmore to slow down as they approach the busy intersection. However, when the light turns red for the drivers on Strathmore, it is extremely dangerous both for drivers on Kenilworth and for pedestrians trying to cross Strathmore.

- Visiting drivers on Kenilworth do not understand why traffic is stopped on Strathmore, because there is no light facing Kenilworth.
- Resident drivers on Kenilworth do understand but cannot see when the red light changes back to a blinking yellow light, allowing Strathmore drivers to proceed.

Two examples:

1. A car traveling west on Strathmore was at a stop, although he was moving to and fro. I was at a stop on Kenilworth waiting to turn left onto Strathmore. Was the driver of the car on Strathmore moving to and fro because he was stalled or merely anxious to get going while waiting for the light to change from red to blinking yellow? Was the light even red? I could not tell. To my right no cars were stopped at the light; however, cars were approaching the intersection, traveling east on Strathmore. I stretched to see if the light was red or yellow blinking. The afternoon sun was blinding as I tried to see the color of the light, which was red. I edged out but was unsure if the light would change as I executed the turn, or if the driver who appeared to be impatient would pull out and hit me.

2. A driver traveling east on Strathmore decided to stop at the intersection with about five cars behind him. There were no pedestrians waiting to cross or in the cross walk. The driver had no signals indicating he was intending to turn, but he seemed to be giving me the opportunity to proceed. No cars traveling west were stopping at the light on Strathmore although they were approaching the intersection. Was the courteous driver traveling east on Strathmore stopped because the light was red? How could I know? He may have thought he was doing a good deed, providing me a safe opportunity to proceed; however, if the oncoming traffic was speeding or not paying attention I would have been in danger of being hit. In an accident report I would have been in the wrong. As I turned I realized the light was not red for the other drivers. I am fortunate oncoming traffic did not hit me.

People are imperfect and accidents do happen. If someone is killed or injured because of incom-

plete direction from a one-sided traffic signal, it will be an avoidable tragedy. We all benefit from clear signs, lights, and laws.

Michael A. Mendelson

In Defense of Trees

Don't cut down trees! If you don't know why you shouldn't cut down trees, read on. Trees are habitats for animals, and if you cut down all the trees most animals will be extinct. Trees don't just help animals; they also help us in many ways. One way trees help us is by giving us oxygen. If we don't have oxygen, we can't breathe; we wouldn't live for more than a few seconds. Another reason we should save trees is because we might not have any trees one day. When people cut down trees, they may not bother to replant new ones. Trees are also part of nature, and if we cut them down we are hurting the environment. We are also part of the environment and need trees to live, and if we cut all the trees down we are hurting not just animals and the environment, but ourselves.

Third Grader, GPES

Penn Place Parking

The controversy over parking at Penn Place has riven the town and the Town Council for years. It began in the winter of 2004 when Mayor Shawaker appointed a committee to look into the matter. The committee considered two options: one with a divider island and a turnaround on Rokeby Avenue to regulate traffic, and one without the divider/turnaround; both options included a sidewalk on the north side of Rokeby. Based on the position of Dick Pratt, a highway engineer, the committee decided that to maximize safety, the divider should be re-installed on Rokeby and a sidewalk put in. The committee prepared a plan to that effect, which was approved by the Town Council in February 2005.

In October the Town Council asked the Parking Committee to review its plan with Ballard Engineering. The committee met with Paul Upton



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Letters to the Editor (cont'd)

of Ballard on November 29, and the results were reported by Dennis Collins, a committee member, on December 11. According to Collins, Upton approved the plan with the island, calling it safer than the existing arrangement because the island and turnaround assured predictable traffic. Upton made some other observations that also supported the divider alternative.

The next day Chuck Berry wrote a letter stating that he had attended the committee meeting with Upton and that Upton had stated that the island alternative "may be safer" not "is safer" than the alternative without the divider, and that in answer to a question from Berry, Upton also stated that the current parking layout in Penn Place area is similar to hundreds or thousands of parking lots around the world. A stand-off.

The issues that are the crux of the matter are the number of parking spaces and the safety of pedestrians and drivers. The number of spaces is determined by the town's commitments: a total of 68 (51 per the Penn Place parking permit plus 17 per agreement with MARC).

On December 11 Pratt wrote the committee calculating the number of parking spaces that the two options would provide. The following day John Bennett wrote a letter disagreeing with Pratt's calculations and providing another set of numbers:

Pratt Bennett

With divider: 43 spaces 39 spaces
Without divider: 42 spaces 56 spaces

Another standoff? Not in my view. The without-divider proposal involves all angle parking. The divider proposal involves partly parallel parking. Angle parking provides more spaces than parallel. It appears that the divider proposal would result in a substantial reduction from the present number of parking places.

So we are left with the safety issue. It appears uncertain that the divider would increase safety. If spaces become scarce, we can be sure that more people eating at Black Market will park in places reserved for the Post Office. It is possible, of course, to increase the number of parking places by parking further north on Argyle, on both sides of Montrose, and further west on Rokeby. But the users of the Post Office, the offices in Penn Place, and the many elderly patrons of the Black Market might not like that. And when drivers try frantically to outmaneuver each other for the last remaining space, how much do you suppose they will be thinking about safety?

Altogether, in terms of number of parking places, safety, and construction costs, it is clear to me that the no-divider alternative is the clear winner.

Arthur Heyman

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Bugle Notes . . . Sweet and Sour

- ♪ Condolences to Charlie Snyder on the death of his mother, Florence Brenwasser. She was 95 and lived in Manor Care in Wheaton. She died on November 30 after a four-month illness.
- ♪ A well-attended funeral was held at Holy Cross Church on January 4, 2006, for ex-Garrett Parker John Pollard. He died on December 31 of complications related to a failing heart valve. Survivors include daughters Maura of New York, Tara Macia of San Francisco, and Sean of Bethesda.
- ♪ Have you tried the new crosswalk lights at Strathmore and Kenilworth? The lights work fine; now if only the cars would stop!
- ♪ The holiday lights sure were pretty around town. Did you get a chance to get out and see them all? The next event to watch for outside is the cherry trees blossoming in the spring in the north end of the estates. Try driving along Waycross Way when they are out; you will think you are downtown at the Tidal Basin.
- ♪ Take a look at the construction at GPES if you can. A big pile of dirt is being transformed into a building. The circle in front of the nursery school sure looks naked without the big pine tree at its center.
- ♪ Where is the snow?

Letter from the Mayor

A large thank you to all of you who took the time to send e-mails about both the Post Office hours and the MARC trains.

Post Master Kathy Matczek, Councilmember Peter Benjamin, Penn Place Committee Chairman Harry Gordon, and I have been exploring the possibility of installing parcel lockers in Penn Place. The lockers would be available during and after window service hours so that one could pick up a parcel or held mail without needing to go to the Post Office window. The problem is that there is a lot of stuff in the walls like waste drains, vents, electrical equipment, and steel columns, to name a few of the obstructions. We will continue to search for a good solution for both the Post Office patrons and the staff of the Post Office.

The Post Master has agreed to maintain the old hours of window service on Mondays and Wednesdays (7:00–1:00 and 2:00–5:30). Window service will be available during the new hours on other days. I suspect that this is the first time in Garrett Park Post Office history when no one who lives in town is on the staff. All three of our current Post Office staff have to commute a considerable distance to be here.

Be ever vigilant about the MARC trains is the message I am getting from congressional, state, and county level elected officials. Here's what I have learned thus far:

1. I have a written statement that I have placed in the official records of the town saying, "MTA will never consider closing the Washington Grove, Garrett Park, or Kensington stations," signed by the top MTA customer affairs official who was present at the MARC hearing in Barnesville on January 5. I have received a very similar message from the MTA official in charge of taking testimony on the proposed closing of four MARC stations. It gives me pause that people in Boyds and Dickerson tell that me that when service was reduced at their stations they were told that MTA would never consider closing those stations.

2. The Maryland Transit Authority has already purchased SmarCard machines at the cost of \$116,000 each. It will cost \$135,000 a year to maintain each of these machines. (You did read correctly. All of those zeros are real.) As you can see, it might not be economically sound to install one of these machines here. The MARC system is determined to end the practice of conductors selling tickets on the trains. Only 33.4 people get on the train in Garrett Park on an average day. I have asked a MTA official to check the list to see if Garrett Park is slated for a SmarCard machine. He did admit that it is likely that a machine would not be installed at such a small station as ours and he said that if a machine is not installed, service would be ended. On the other hand he has not heard anyone talk about ending our service.

So I have concluded that the advice I have been getting about being watchful is very reasonable. I did enter all the messages I received from town residents into the record. A number of you copied me on the messages you sent directly. I hope that this will impress MTA that we do not intend to give up our MARC service.

In extolling our great staff in my last mayor's letter, I forgot one very important member of the staff who keeps everything straight moneywise for us. Mary Ruttkay has been our bookkeeper for years and prepares our financial reports. I very much appreciate her careful work.

Our revenues have been a bit above expectations, and we are in pretty good shape financially. As I look toward building the fiscal year 2007 budget, please let me know about projects or services we should consider to make our town even better. Many residents have told me that the town is looking very good. We have an excellent and very dedicated staff, a good Council, many volunteers who give a great deal of time and their professional expertise to the town, and you, the residents, who have been very helpful and supportive. We make a great team. Happy 2006!

Carolyn Shawaker