



Aspen Hill Civic Association—General Membership Meeting

Wednesday, May 13, 2015 at 7:30pm

Aspen Hill Library Meeting Room, 4407 Aspen Hill Road, Rockville, MD 20853

All are welcome, so please attend!

The meeting agenda includes:

- A presentation on emergency preparedness by Joe Corona of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security
- A presentation on current and future system improvements, road repaving, and an explanation of water discoloration in Aspen Hill by Donald Barrett of the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission
- An opportunity to hear from some of Aspen Hill's representatives in Annapolis
- Updates on the activities of the Aspen Hill Civic Association

Update from the AHCA Board

On November 10, 2014, the AHCA Board elected new officers for the 2014-2015 Membership year. Since then, the new board members and officers have been working on AHCA's various committees to keep members and neighbors informed about issues affecting Aspen Hill, increase AHCA's visibility, and recruit members to join or re-join AHCA.

In the following pages we will highlight some of our activities over the past six months. But we continue to need your new ideas and support, and the new ideas and support of your neighbors. Aspen Hill is a dynamic community, and AHCA is committed to representing the interests of all in our community. We encourage you to reach out to us about your concerns and tell us what we can do to better serve you.

Melissa Ryan, President
Jamison Adcock, Vice President
Steve Cohen, Treasurer

Bob Clarke, Recording Secretary
Sheila Convery, Corresponding Secretary

Renewing AHCA's Incorporation Status

AHCA's incorporated status with the State of Maryland lapsed in 2011. On February 11, 2015, the board voted unanimously to file the paperwork and pay the fees necessary to regain AHCA's incorporated status. Although AHCA maintains insurance, remaining incorporated is important as it limits AHCA's potential liability if anything were to happen at any of the events we sponsor.

Maintaining incorporation status requires AHCA to file tax documents with the State of Maryland annually. AHCA owes a special thank you to our Treasurer, Steve Cohen, for researching how to reincorporate, writing four years of AHCA tax reports, and filing the paperwork. AHCA anticipates receiving a decision on our reincorporation from the State of Maryland in early May.

AHCA Joins the Montgomery County Civic Federation

In December, the AHCA Board voted unanimously to join the Montgomery County Civic Federation, and AHCA's application was submitted in January. AHCA received notice in April that its application has been accepted, and AHCA is now a fully-fledged Civic Association member. MCCF is a non-profit group made up of condo, homeowner, and neighborhood associations that aim to make life better throughout Montgomery County by keeping the public informed of, deliberating over, and speaking out on issues that affect our communities.

Each month MCCF publishes an informative newsletter, Civic Federation News, which can be read on their website <http://montgomerycivic.org>. MCCF meets on the second Monday of each month, except July and August, and meetings are open to the public. With its membership, AHCA has two voting delegates on the MCCF throughout the membership year, which runs from July 1 to June 30.

AHCA Speaks Out Against MCPS Bus Depot and Alternative Education Relocation

AHCA has taken a strong stand against the Capital Improvement Plan proposal by Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) to relocate the county's Alternative Education Program (AEP) from the Blair Ewing Center on Avery Road to the site of the former English Manor Elementary School on Bestor Road in Aspen Hill to make way for a new MCPS bus depot at the site of the Blair Ewing Center. The proposal has raised a number of concerns including:

- Overcrowding at Lucy V. Barnsley and Wheaton Woods Elementary Schools in Aspen Hill.
- Reducing the number of school buildings in the county at a time of both overcrowding and limited funding for school construction.
- Potential for creating environmental problems by locating a bus depot in Rock Creek Park.
- Potential for increased traffic on Norbeck Road if MCPS places a bus depot on Avery Road.
- Suitability of a former elementary school that has not been refurbished in more than 30 years to house middle and high school students.

After conducting a survey of the opinions of AHCA's full membership on the issue, the AHCA Board voted in January to support the re-opening of English Manor as a neighborhood elementary school to ease school overcrowding in Aspen Hill, to oppose the relocation of the AEP programs away from the

Blair Ewing Center, and to oppose the razing of the Blair Ewing Center for MCPS to relocate a bus depot to the site. AHCA's president sent letters to the MCPS Board Members, County Council Members, the County Executive, and our State Representatives clearly outlining AHCA's position on the issue.

By working together with other neighboring civic associations, as well as our own neighbors who started the grassroots www.SaveBlairEwing.org campaign, AHCA has seen positive movement on these issues. First, the County Council has decided not to approve a declaration of no further need for the land slated for development near the Shady Grove Metro where the MCPS bus depot currently sits. This allows MCPS additional time to study potential alternative sites for one or multiple bus depots to be built. Second, the MCPS Board is recommending that a feasibility study for a future location for the county's AEPs be conducted on the Blair Ewing Center. While other sites for AEP location feasibility studies have not yet been identified, recommendations to study English Manor have been put on hold for the time being. AHCA has arranged for interested residents to tour the Blair Ewing Center on Wednesday, April 29, at 2:30pm and Thursday, May 7th at 3:30pm. To participate, visitors must sign in at the main entrance. The Ewing Center's address is 14501 Avery Road, Rockville, Maryland 20853.

For more information and updates on the issue, AHCA recommends you visit www.SaveBlairEwing.org.

County Council Votes on Vitro/BAE Site Zoning

On March 31, the County Council voted to approve revisions to the Planning Board's Draft Aspen Hill Minor Master Plan Amendment. While the Planning Board had advocated for NR zoning to allow the developer maximum flexibility, and many members of the Aspen Hill community had advocated for the more restrictive CRN zoning, the Council revised the plan language to zone the site as CRT, which is seen by some as a compromise between NR and CRN.

The County Council's revisions include a notable statement that "A Combination Retail Conditional Use is not appropriate for the Minor Amendment area because such a use would have a significant long-term impact on the area and alter the character of the surrounding low-density residential neighborhoods." The revisions also made additional recommendations for maintaining a buffer between any development and adjacent residential properties, and for further study before recommending increasing the length of the two-lane traffic merge area on Aspen Hill Road east of Connecticut Avenue. To view a copy of the approved revisions, click on resolution number 18-104 at <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/council/leg/res/index.html>.

AHCA Sponsors Homeowners Property Tax Workshop

The Aspen Hill Civic Association hosted a Homeowners Property Tax Workshop on March 17th at the Aspen Hill Library. Richard Gottfried, CPA, Master of Science in Taxation led the session to educate residents on how they might qualify for a property tax credit. Those who live in Montgomery County and have a household income less than \$64,000 per year with a net worth of less than \$200,000 (not including the value of their house or qualified retirement savings,) qualify for the tax relief on the first \$300,000 of the home's assessed value. If individuals qualify, the credit could be several hundred dollars, with a maximum credit of the total County tax due on the first \$300,000 of the home's assessed value. If residents are age 70 or older, individuals may file for the credit three years retrospectively.

www.aspenhillcivicassociation.org

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Forty residents participated in the session and learned how to complete the form to receive the credit. If you missed the workshop but want to learn more, contact 1-800-944-7403 for more information.

AHCA Contributes to Rock Creek Clean-Up

Members of the Aspen Hill community gathered at the Russett Road entrance to Rock Creek Park on Saturday, April 11th to take part in the 7th Annual Rock Creek Extreme Clean Up. AHCA donated \$100 for snacks for volunteers and signs to publicize the well-attended event. The Rock Creek Conservancy estimates that in the first six years, the volunteers who performed clean up at more than 75 locations along the creek collected over 14,600 bags of litter, 69 tons of junk, 867 tires, and 37,350 plastic bags!

Aspen Hill Residents Invited to Apply for Mid-County Citizens Advisory Board

On March 13, Montgomery County Executive Isiah Leggett released a statement announcing a vacancy on the Mid-County Citizens Advisory Board (MCCAB) and specifically encouraging Aspen Hill residents to apply. Appointees to the fifteen member board serves for three years as a liaison between county government and communities. Duties include advising the County Executive, County Council, and County Departments on community concerns, while educating the community on county government and its operations. AHCA knows of at least two Aspen Hill residents who applied to fill the vacancy on MCCAB before the April 3 deadline, and wishes them both well in the application process.

Membership Drive

Over the last few months, AHCA's Membership Committee has been working hard to reach out to former members to encourage them to renew their memberships. In the coming months, we look to reach out to new members by increasing AHCA's visibility in the community. Several ideas have been proposed, including targeted mailings to homes throughout Aspen Hill. In preparation for this push, AHCA is revamping its website and creating a Spanish language version of its membership form. If you have additional ideas of ways AHCA can reach out to create awareness of our service to the Aspen Hill community, please do not hesitate to let us know.

Upcoming Community Events and Meetings

- Tour of the Blair G. Ewing Center, 14501 Avery Road, Wednesday, April 29 at 2:30pm
 - Tai Chi Demonstration and Workshop, Saturday, May 2 at 2pm in the Aspen Hill Library
 - Tour of the Blair G. Ewing Center, 14501 Avery Road, Thursday, May 7 at 3:30pm
 - AHCA General Membership Meeting, Wednesday, May 13 at 7:30pm in the Aspen Hill Library
 - Narrated Travel Adventure of Bangkok, Singapore and China, Tuesday, May 19 at 6:30pm in the Aspen Hill Library
 - Montgomery County Civic Federation Annual Awards Banquet, Friday, June 5 at Tony Lin's Restaurant at 12015 Rockville Pike
 - AHCA Board Meeting, Wednesday, June 10 at 7pm in the Aspen Hill Library
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