

AHCA Newsletter

Message from the Board

Over the past six months, the AHCA Board has been busily tracking a number of issues that affect the Aspen Hill community, advocating on behalf of our neighborhoods to local officials, and working hard to keep area residents informed and engaged. These are some of the main functions of a civic association, and it has been our pleasure to fill these roles. Of course, we are always on the lookout for volunteers who have a passion for the community and a couple of hours per month to spare. Would you like to help out?

At our upcoming Fall General Membership meeting, the membership will have the opportunity to appoint new Board members. If you are curious, please reach out to a current or former Board member for more information. And if you are interested, please ask someone to nominate you. We would love to have you join us!

Changes in the Dues

Effective October 1, 2016, the AHCA is changing its dues structure. Individual memberships will be increased from \$7 to \$12 per year, and family memberships will no longer be available. These funds are used to rent space for AHCA meetings, purchase signs for events, pay filing fees for paperwork, and otherwise cover the expenses of operating the AHCA. While we regret the necessity of raising our membership dues, this is the first increase in many years.

Library News

The Aspen Hill Public Library will be closing at 8pm on November 8th (Election Day) for approximately six months. This closure is for a much-needed “refresh” which will involve renovations and repairs to the library. The refresh was supposed to begin several months ago, but it was postponed because the library serves as a polling place. As soon as we know the reopening date, we will let the community know. You can also get more information at:

<http://montgomerycountymd.gov/library/branches/aspenhill.html>

During the library refresh, the AHCA plans to hold its regularly-scheduled meetings at the Melvin J. Berman Hebrew Academy on Arctic Avenue.

Green Streets

In order to improve water quality and reduce erosion in our area's streams (e.g., Rock Creek, Sycamore Creek, Turkey Branch, etc.), the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection has selected the Manor Woods and Wheaton Woods neighborhoods for Green Streets projects. These projects involve putting stormwater management practices in the county's right-of-way (i.e., the strip of

land between the curb and sidewalk). For more information, please see:

<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/DEP/Restoration/manor-woods.html>

<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/DEP/Restoration/wheaton-woods-I.html>

This is an issue that has generated significant community interest, and DEP has held several meetings over the past year in our area. They gave a presentation at the AHCA's General Membership Meeting last spring, and there was a meeting more recently on October 5th regarding the Manor Woods project. There will be another DEP meeting regarding the Wheaton Woods project in the November-December time frame, and we will let everyone know the time and date as soon as we have those details.

Schools Update

Two elementary schools in our area have been plagued with portable classrooms, namely Wheaton Woods ES and Barnsley ES. However, this may soon be a thing of the past. The Wheaton Woods facility is in the process being completely rebuilt from the ground up, and it is expected to have sufficient capacity to house all of its students within the school building. The rebuilt Wheaton Woods ES is expected to open in August of 2017.

Barnsley Elementary is slated to get an expansion as well. If all goes according to plan, the new construction will begin by summertime, and will take about a year to complete. Students will be moved to a holding school in Flower Valley, likely until the 2018 school year begins.

Many residents had hoped that the old English Manor ES could be reopened as a way to alleviate area school overcrowding, but unfortunately, MCPS decided that it was not fiscally feasible to do so. The English Manor building is being renovated, and it will house the administrative offices of MCPS's Infants and Toddlers Program. At this time, it does not appear that MCPS has any other plans for this facility.

Avery Road Bus Depot

Two years ago, MCPS announced their intention to close the Blair G. Ewing Center on Avery Road in Rockville, and relocate the students to the old English Manor school in Aspen Hill. This was motivated by the County Executive's "Smart Growth Initiative" at Shady Grove, which envisioned selling the current MCPS bus depot near the Shady Grove Metro on Crabbs Branch Way and relocating the 430+ school buses to another location. Initially, the Ewing site on Avery Road site was expected to be the site of the new bus depot.

This caused a great deal of concern in the Aspen Hill community, as Aspen Hill was experiencing severe school overcrowding. After intense advocacy by a number of communities, the County Council indicated strongly that they could not support moving the MCPS bus depot, unless and until an adequate permanent replacement site is identified.

County Executive Isiah Leggett was expected to announce a bus depot plan sometime this fall, but at the time of this writing, no plan has yet been announced. In the meantime, representatives of several

area civic associations and community groups (Aspen Hill, Twinbrook, Manor Lake, Flower Valley, Avery Road and Manor Park) came together to discuss how a bus depot might affect our communities (traffic impacts, safety concerns, environmental damage, etc.) and how a bus depot might be prevented. Indeed, for every 100 buses parked on Avery Road, an additional 600 – 700 vehicle trips could be added to Norbeck Road each day.

This is a fluid situation, and the new superintendent of MCPS has just announced that he intends to relocate the students from the Blair Ewing Center to the Rock Terrace school in Rockville.

http://gis.mcpsmd.org/cipmasterpdfs/CIPFY18_SupplementC_AltEdProgramsAtEwingCtr.pdf

Veirs Mill Road Crossing at Turkey Branch

By now, most residents are probably aware of the two bicyclists that were killed during the past year at the crosswalk over Veirs Mill Road at Turkey Branch. That crossing has been seen as problematic in the past, but it is now clear that significant changes must be made as soon as possible. The AHCA has been in discussions with area bicyclist groups, the County Council, and our District 19 representatives in order to identify changes that would prevent future injuries and fatalities.

Big Changes Coming to Veirs Mill Road

Veirs Mill Road is one corridor that the County is considering for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). The County currently has three Bus Rapid Transit studies going on: Rockville Pike/355, the US Highway 29 Corridor, and Veirs Mill Road - MD586, in addition to the Corridor Cities Transitway in the northern part of the County. The BRT (Bus Rapid Transit) Draft Study of Veirs Mill Road (the one closest to our area) involves four alternatives, and is now available for review. You can access the study in printed form at Twinbrook Library, Wheaton Interim Library, and Rockville Library. The study is also available at:

http://apps.roads.maryland.gov/WebProjectLifeCycle/MO244_11/HTDOCS/Documents/Additional_Documents/2016Sept6%20Revised%20Draft%20Corridor%20Report%20MD586%20BRT.pdf

One of the alternatives will be recommended to the County Planning Commission and the County Council sometime this winter and all will involve costs and have driving and transit effects.

In addition, the County's plan to build an extension to Montrose Parkway to join up with Veirs Mill Road is still in the works. This extension would end at Veirs Mill Road at Gaynor opposite Parkland Drive. We do not have a timeline for this project, as there is apparently no funding for it to proceed.

It is also our understanding that Maryland National Capital Park and Planning intends to do a full review of the Veirs Mill corridor, ostensibly in order to improve accessibility to BRT.

<http://www.thesentinel.com/mont/newsx/local/item/3924-veirs-mill-road-targeted-for-upgrades>

Aspen Hill Fire Station #25

Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service reports that 80% of its calls for service are for Emergency Medical Services. That means that of the 116,000 calls for service last fiscal year, approximately 90,000 of those calls were for EMS. Additionally, there were around 17,000 for fire, and 10,000 other calls, such as wires down, elevators, etc. The Aspen Hill FS 25 (at Connecticut Avenue and Bel Pre Road) is the second busiest station in the county. In order to meet the needs of the surrounding area, the station will be doubled in size over the next year, all while remaining in service while the building is expanded.

Montgomery County Police Department

On October 27th there will be a Town Hall meeting at the Veirs Mill Baptist Church from 7 to 9 pm for anyone who would like to come out and meet the MCPD 4th District Staff and some of the beat officers. This will be a good opportunity to ask questions and raise concerns. Also in attendance will be Officer Hidayat of Community Services, as well as representatives from Fire/Rescue and code enforcement officers.

The Aspen Hill Neighborhood Watch has not held a meeting recently, but we hope to continue building this organization soon.

AHCA Candidate Forums

On September 14, the AHCA joined with the Aspen Hill Friends of the Library to host a candidate forum for the three Board of Education races currently underway. Earlier this year, we hosted a similar forum for the primary candidates in the District 6 Congressional race. Needless to say, we had a very good turnout and a lively question & answer session. It's no wonder that Aspen Hill is getting a reputation for civic engagement!

Rebuilding Together

Rebuilding Together Montgomery County provides free home repairs to low-income homeowners in Montgomery County, with the goal to keep low-income homeowners living in a warm, safe and dry environment. Typical repairs include: plumbing and electrical, HVAC replacement, kitchen and bathroom repairs, home safety modifications, and energy efficiency upgrades. Applicants for Rebuilding Together services must be owners and live in-home, and not plan on moving or selling after repairs. Please note that all work is subject to funding availability. For more information, please call: 301-947-9400 or visit:

<http://rebuildingtogethermc.org>