

Aspen Hill Civic Association  
Minutes  
Spring General Membership Meeting  
May 17, 2017

**1. Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order by Jane Salzano, acting for President Jamison Adcock, at 7:32pm.

**2. Announcement:** All are invited to the Wheaton Woods Pool community picnic. Admission is free. The location of the Pool is at 4610 Landgreen St, Rockville, MD 20853. The picnic will be June 11, from 1pm to 4pm.

**3. Treasurer's Report:** Copies of the Treasurer's report were available at the meeting.

**4. District 19 Legislative Report**

**Comments by Sidney Katz, Montgomery County Councilman representing District 3:** This was a surprise visit. Councilmember Katz introduced Lisa Mandel, his Chief of Staff and went on to update us on current activities. The Council is working on the budget and a straw vote is set for May 18. Councilmember Katz continues to build on mental health work such as the visitation and exchange center which will provide for supervised visitation in Rockville, including security and separate entrances. The intent is to make it as safe as possible.

As to the bus depot, it is not stopped yet but it is stopped at Carver and Westmore in Rockville. But Avery Road is still a possibility. The County Executive acknowledged a systemic problem regarding buses and is looking for a systemic approach. There is no time frame. Mr. Katz thinks we are better off with no answer than with the answer we do not want.

The Aspen Hill Master Plan is slated to begin in March of 2018 with the goal of being ready in March of 2019. You can sign up for the newsletter to keep informed. [A sign-up sheet was provided at the meeting.]

The English Manor Playground is still an active issue with Montgomery County Public Schools.

Mr. Katz is working with the pool leadership of Wheaton Woods Pool to be helpful in any way he can.

Regarding Rain Gardens issues, Councilmember Roger Berliner sent a letter to the Department of Environmental Protection to get the same options for Aspen Hill as in the Rodgers area. He has not heard back yet. The letter was sent letter at the beginning of May.

**Comments by Delegate Ben Kramer, who represents District 19:** Delegate Kramer introduced himself and acknowledged his colleagues, Senator Roger Manno, also District 19, and Bonnie Cullison and Maricé Morales, Maryland State Delegates for District 19.

He said he is very strongly in support of **not** having the bus depot at Avery Road, where a winding and dangerous road dumps onto gridlocked Route 28. It is a bad place for a bus depot.

He cited the irregular boundaries of District 19 and the diversity of its population in a number of ways. Delegate Kramer is on the Economic Matters Committee which has a very broad range of responsibilities including such areas as consumer utilities and unemployment insurance. This year one of the largest issues was earned sick leave. The Senate passed a bill with a large enough margin to override a veto. The bill now goes to the Maryland House. [This bill has now passed both the House and the Senate and went to the Governor for signature. He vetoed it. According to the Baltimore Sun, "The sick-leave bill passed by veto-proof margins in both houses, but the Senate approved it with just 29 votes — the minimum needed to overturn a veto. House Speaker Michael E. Busch said overriding the veto will be a priority for the legislature in January."]

Delegate Kramer is also looking at issues related to seniors with disabilities and also animal welfare. He sponsored and passed a bill to push back against puppy mills.

Maryland will soon have a statewide senior call system. It's a way to have somebody routinely check in on seniors who opt to participate. There will be no cost to any senior who wants to enroll in the program. At least once a day they will receive an automated phone call and can respond essentially "all is well" or "in distress." If no answer the system can all back (based on however it is set up) and the call then goes out to a person of record to check on the senior. It will also provide the opportunity to give notifications on the latest scams (if you enroll). By the way, the latest scam is an IRS scam phone call saying the sheriff is on the way to arrest you unless you pay now with a credit card. The system will also be able to provide notifications on impending weather events.

Another bill would require all stockbrokers to be mandatory reporters of suspected financial exploitation of seniors. Other related bills were sponsored. One would give the Attorney General of Maryland additional staff to combat exploitation of seniors. The Attorney General is now able to file a suit on behalf of an exploited senior. This is a big change that can provide some after-the-fact assistance to an exploited individual senior citizen. And there is a new bill to give the AG additional staff to enforce that law.

The Montgomery County Civic Federation has expressed concern about the lack of transparency in Park and Planning and WSSC. Delegate Kramer sponsored a bill for an inspector general who would be independent of the Park and Planning and who could look for fraud, mismanagement, etc. Next year he will sponsor the same for WSSC.

Questions for Delegate Kramer:

Question from Jane: Is that Inspector General position open to citizens? Answer: It can be any individual applying as long as they have the appropriate skills to do audits and investigation. The minimum term will be four years. Currently the internal auditors now have terms of just one year and can be fired without cause. Also, authority will not be confined to fiscal matters only, and citizens will be able to bring complaints to the IG.

Question from visitor: She said that Costco went into her bank account and double debited for one purchase and Costco and the bank blamed each other. This seemed to be more of a warning than a question. She also asked if we are being vigilant enough about school safety.

**Comments by Senator Roger Manno:** Senator Manno pointed out Delegate Morales' Legislative Director, who was present, and Ira Unger, staff member for Bonnie Cullison, so all of District 19 was represented. Although the legislative part of the job is January to April of every year, Senator Manno stressed that he especially enjoys the community service part his role, and appreciates people who are active in the community and can share what problems exist in the community. He noted that the Aspen Hill community is "extraordinarily active" and he cited our Walmart effort. He opined that a Walmart at the Vitro site would have been "a small business buzz saw."

As to the bus depot issue, he questioned why here when there are industrial areas in the County better suited to that activity.

Some of the bills they passed (all District 19): 3.5% increase in disabilities budget (and he expressly called out Jane Salzano for her work for citizens with disabilities). That one came through his subcommittee. There are three senators from MOCO on the budget committee and he's one of them. One bill this year was very technical and unglamorous but also very important. In the past, there were mid-year budget cuts because of running out of money, and this was happening because the methodology the state was using to project how much money was coming in was wrong. The Board of Public Works would meet mid-year, and they have power to cut 25% of the budget. But then it's an across-the-board cut. That had to be fixed. The new formula limits the amount of non-withholding capital gains that can be put into the budget. It's a small percentage of people that have that problem, maybe 1%, but the impact is significant. The changes that were enacted will prevent those mid-year cuts.

**Comments by Ira Unger, staff member for Bonnie Cullison:** Delegate Cullison is the chair of the Insurance Subcommittee of the Health and Government Operations Committee. They are looking at what would happen if Trump cuts off funding for the approximately 400,000 people in the state who are insured by the Affordable Care Act. They did make sure that Planned Parenthood would not be cut off. Also \$3M has been put into heroin and opioid misuse and overdose policies. Also homeowners association rules have been changed to make changes to covenants and constitutions easier. Pharmacies can now substitute generic drugs. The manufacturing tax credit will increase. Also there are additional oyster provisions to help clean the Bay, and there is money for renewable energy. Mr. Unger said that if questions come at the end of the meeting he or the Delegate will get back to you.

**Comments by Therese Woorman, Legislative Director for Delegate Morales:** She said there are Delegate scholarships and if you are interested; contact them to find out more. One measure that did not pass was to get workplace accommodation for pregnancy issues, but they will try again next year. Legislation for ADHD medications did pass. There will have to be a disclaimer and there is also behavioral therapy so children will not be over-medicated. There is a task force to study health care prices going up every year. That is tough for people fixed income. There will be a task force. If you are interested, contact them.

## **5. Emergency Support for Women**

### **Remarks by Nancy Sushinsky, Director of Rainbow Place in Rockville**

More than 800 people are homeless every day in Montgomery County, about 1/3 of them

children. Tonight is one of the Rainbow Place "blitzes." They ask all the clinicians working with the homeless to go out to all the nooks and crannies where people are sleeping where they shouldn't be to try to bring them in to see what services are available. The goal is to end homelessness within our lifetime. The previous goal was to end veteran homelessness. That goal was "sort of" reached in that all veterans who were willing to work with a case manager were placed. The blitzes like tonight are trying to find people we don't even know are out there.

This year's goal is to end chronic homelessness. There are many different kinds of homelessness. "Chronic" homelessness has a specific [federal] definition. The person has to have been street homeless, in a shelter, or in some type of place not meant for living, for a year, and also have to have a serious disability, which can be mental. Also included under "chronic" homelessness are persons who have been homeless four times in the last three years, with the four times adding up to a year. This strict definition means that not a lot of the help is available to many homeless, but chronic homelessness is what's being targeted now.

Ms. Sushinsky discussed the coordinated entry system that goes by a score that takes into account many factors to determine who gets permanent support housing.

As to the current funding environment, they are definitely losing some funding but the County is committed to keeping the safety net. It won't be easy. For people who don't qualify there is lower-cost housing, and maybe helping with employment, although, in fact, many of the homeless are employed. Mostly their employment is minimum wage and in industries that will only hire part-time and which don't provide a regular schedule. That makes it hard for these employees to add a second part-time job.

Ms. Sushinsky said they are seeing a lot of new people, "maybe your neighbors." It can happen to anybody. Another thing to know is that if parents are in subsidized housing, they could lose their housing if they take in their adult child. Also, note that many of the shelters can be open only during the winter.

What can you do? First: Advocate. Be advocates for fair practices in the workplace. Advocate for benefits for people who now can't get them. Support any organizations working with the homeless. Be aware that a lot of the panhandlers you see are not homeless. She said it's a different way to earn some money. Offer to buy them a sandwich. You'll find out if they really need it. They may refuse, but somebody who is truly hungry will thank you and take it. It's really better to support the services than to give to panhandlers.

Ms. Sushinsky called attention to the Rainbow Place cards on a side table. The cards provided the address of Rainbow Place:

Rainbow Place, A Home for Homeless Women  
Potomac Presbyterian Church  
10301 River Road  
Potomac, MD 20854.

They also included the web site address: [www.RainbowPlace.org](http://www.RainbowPlace.org)

Question for Ms. Sushinsky: What percent of women are homeless and whose definition of homelessness was that?

The definition she gave is the federal definition of homelessness. There are slightly more homeless men than women in Montgomery County right now. Rainbow Place sees women who are homeless because of domestic violence. This year, of the people served at Rainbow Place, over half are now in better housing than when they came to Rainbow.

Ms. Sushinsky also informed us that the Interfaith Works Clothing Center (751 Twinbrook Pkwy in Rockville) has moved to higher floor in the front of the same location and added somebody to be there on weekdays to find out what's available for a given specific situation.

## **6. Rodent Issues in Aspen Hill:**

### **Remarks by Frank Alfonso, Montgomery County Department of Health & Human Services**

Mr. Alfonso is with the Licensing and Regulation unit of the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services. Rats have three basic survival needs: food, water, and shelter. If you're providing those needs, you will attract them. Food trash, odors, pet food, puddles of water, tires... All these conditions attract rats. As to shelter: you don't want a lot of heavy shrubbery and bushes at the wall of the house. That provides both privacy and shelter for rats. Neighbors with trash will lead rats to come to your yard.

You can buy bait stations – he showed a refillable one – and put them next the wall. Rats don't like open areas. The poison is an anti-coagulant. It has a window and you can check each day who's eating it. Don't mistake chipmunks for rats. Cut the lower level of shrubs so you can see them there. If you use snap traps put them perpendicular to the wall. Rats like nuts and berries and rotten fruit from trees you don't maintain. You can also use glueboards that go into a metal box. Those can be used inside the house. Don't use poison inside the house.

If you have a serious problem with mice inside your house you need to see how they are getting into your house. They can enter through holes in the walls or doors. Don't leave doors open. Don't leave construction materials or wood piles. Don't have sheds that don't have a foundation. As to any food trash you put out, use Febreeze or some odor they won't like and it will deter them. If you have a neighbor creating a problem, call the 311 line and you will be properly redirected to the right place to make a complaint. If you have bird feeders, use the ones that prevent the scattering of the seeds, which would attract animals – not only rats but also chipmunks and mice.

## **7. Announcements**

The audience was asked for a show of hands on how many people came because they saw the signs, and then how many came because they received emails. More people came because they saw email than signs, but both were effective. People also came because of Facebook and Nextdoor.

Marna Cary, of the Library Committee, introduced Ken Lewis, the new manager of the Aspen Hill Library. Mr. Lewis announced that although the Library is still closed for a "refresh," staff

are returning Monday [May 22] to prepare the library for re-opening. It will probably will take about four weeks to prepare.

Participants were again reminded of the upcoming community picnic at the Wheaton Woods Pool. It will be Sunday, June 11, from 1pm to 4pm, and is open to all.

**8. Adjournment at 9:17**