

# *Olney Town Center*

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

## MINUTES

Olney Town Center Advisory Committee  
Tuesday, April 22, 2008 – 7:30 p.m.  
Olney Library, Large Meeting Room, Olney, Maryland

**Olney Town Center Advisory Committee (OTCAC) members in attendance:** Jim Smith-Chair, Sunita Bhatia, Bob Beard, Eileen Cahill, Mark Feinroth, Joe Fritsch, Paula Kahla, Dorothy Kane, Walter Lee, and Helene Rosenheim.

Others present: Joe Buffington, ReMax Realty Centre; Peter McGinnity, Wheaton Redevelopment Program; Jeannette Mendonca, Community Liaison for Senator Rona Kramer; Karen Rollings, Prudential Advantage Realty; Joseph Eagan, MCPL Olney Library.

**Closed Session: 7:30 – 8:00 pm for selection of Committee members**

### **Call to Order/Acceptance of Agenda/Approval of Minutes/Announcements**

Chair Jim Smith called the regular meeting of the OTCAC to order at 8:10 pm. The agenda was accepted with one change adding a presentation by Pete McGinnity – Wheaton Redevelopment Office, MCRSC. Approval of the March minutes was tabled until the May meeting.

### **Announcements**

Mike Knapp is holding a meeting the following Monday on on-street parking.

Bob Beard reminded everyone that Olney Days is on May 16-18<sup>th</sup> and there will be a Town Meeting on the 17<sup>th</sup> from 1:00 – 3:30 at Oakdale Emory Church with 4 topics of discussion: Traffic & Transportation, Public Safety, Youth & Education, and the draft Illustrative Concept Plan for the town center.

Paula noted and circulated an article in the Post on round-abouts and in the Commercial Real Estate Week on the Georgia Avenue Study Khalid is conducting.

### **Nomination of New Committee Members**

Jim noted that we had held a closed session meeting to select a representative to fill the newly created seat for a small property owner and that we had received 2 applications. He thanked both applicants and noted that they were both strong candidates and both had received support from the Committee. He noted that Joe Buffington, Jr. had been selected, and Sunita explained that we would be asking him to take the lead in forming a “subcommittee” or other group to come up with a plan to improve on the OTCAC’s communication between the Committee and the small property owners.

Action on Kim Damien's application to serve as the representative for Carl Freeman & Companies has been tabled till the next meeting because the application had just been received immediately prior to this meeting and the Committee would like to meet her first.

Joe Fritsch announced that he will be resigning from the Mid-County Recreation Advisory Board at the end of the month and will not be able to continue to on the OTCAC. There was a discussion of how that seat should be filled. The consensus was that it should be someone from the recreation area. Joe offered to serve on a subcommittee dealing with recreation in the town center as the need warrants. Jim will contact Marc Lilley, Dept of Recreation, Mid-County Service Area Manager about a replacement for Joe, possibly a staff member from a center in the Olney area.

Jim also noted that this was Sunita's last meeting and thanked her for her service as Vice Chair and with the Nominating Subcommittee which she handled very thoughtfully.

**Presentation: Lessons Learned from the Wheaton Redevelopment, Pete McGinnity, Office of Redevelopment, MCRSC**

Pete observed that the redevelopment anticipated in the Olney town center is similar in many ways with the redevelopment in Wheaton, but the redevelopment in Wheaton is more commercial. Their challenges include creating more office and residential space.

Some of the suggestions he made as we proceed include:

- Bringing everyone to the table and making sure you have everyone who is key. The thought it sounded as if our Committee is sensitive to this issue.
- What you put in a form becomes the reality for many people, even if that isn't what was intended.
- Dealing with State roads intersecting the community is an issue.
- You need to be aware of the demographics in the area, may need representation on the Committee that reflects the diversity of the community.
- As the Committee works with developers, think about who they will be marketing to.
- Have discussions with the development community to see what they look for when considering development. You can get a sense of who they are marketing to by looking at there advertising/marketing materials.
- Need to reinforce in the minds of residents that the parts of what they like about Olney will not disappear in the way you present information and images.
- May be useful to present a couple of different scenarios, and don't necessarily show the maximum that could happen. But, at the same time, developers want a sense of what the community will be like and if there is sufficient community buy-in to that image.
- Finding out what the community in the town center is thinking about is important.
- Public-Private partnerships are important, but it still requires a commitment from the County government.
- The OTCAC will need to be a strong advocate for County resources.
- The provisions of the preservation overlay zone in Wheaton may have relevance for Olney. It looks at ways to enable small business owners to be able stay in the redeveloped Wheaton by, for example, giving another story to development in exchange for providing smaller, first-floor space at reduced rents for the small business owners you want to stay but can't afford the higher rents redevelopment will generate.

## **Subcommittee Reports**

**Executive Report** – Jim reported that the Freeman Companies have indicated that they are not ready to come to our full meeting yet to present concepts of their development plans, but want to meet with a smaller group. Jim suggested forming a development proposal review subcommittee to be an initial sounding board for developers. Mark will look at the Open Meeting Act for the next month. It was suggested that they just wait until they are ready rather than placing an undue burden on the Committee to not discuss information from them publicly. Consensus was to not form a subcommittee and that the OTCAC wait until the Freeman Co. is ready to present to us in a public meeting.

**Committee for Montgomery** – Dorothy Kane reported that the legislative session is over, and the budgets for both the State and County are very tight.

**Outreach Subcommittee** – Bob Beard reported that the Subcommittee is working to get information into the Gazette next week for the presentation next week. Flyers have or are being sent to property owners, Chamber members, Willow Manor, and any others they could think of, either by mail or in person. He thanked Khalid Afzal for handling the mailing.

**Website Subcommittee** – Helene Rosenheim reported that our tech support person at Park and Planning has made several corrections to the coding for the webpages. She has updated the list of members, created a new gallery page of photos of the town center, and she is working on a page with links to news article about the town center and this process.

**Illustrative Concept Plan Subcommittee** – Bob reported for Nancy that they have made revisions to the 1-panel display, and she is working on the first and second panels of the 3-panel. They are reconsidering the importance of using the 3<sup>rd</sup> panel.

**High Priority Pedestrian Crossings Subcommittee** – Helene Rosenheim report that their subcommittee held its first meeting and has taken a walking tour of the town center. They identified areas of concern with a list of short-term and long-term actions. Two key needs were for prominent cross walks on the four spokes with coordinated traffic lights and sidewalks going from the roadways into the various shopping centers.

## **Election of Officers**

**Sunita reported that the current slate is:**

**Jim Smith, Chair**  
**Helene Rosenheim, Vice Chair**  
**Nancy DeLalio, Recording Secv**

**Mark moved approved slate by acclamation, Dorothy seconded. Motion passed unanimously.**

The meeting was adjourned at 10:05 PM

Submitted by Helene Rosenheim