

SPRING
2013

HOTLINE

The Neighborhood Newsletter of West Laurel

President's Message

As I write this, I am listening to the sound of lawn mowers up and down the street. Spring is a wonderful season in West Laurel with gorgeous azaleas in bloom — visit the end of Malcolm for some of the best — and droves of adults and children out and about. So please remember to slow down and drive carefully.

Activity in and around West Laurel remains hectic. I'd like to share with you some updates of the past quarter that impact our community.

Earlier this month I was once again reminded about what a strong community West Laurel is, when neighbors on Darwin called 911 after not seeing a neighbor for several days. Sadly, we lost a long-time resident, **Beth Evans**. However, I was bolstered by the fact that neighbors paid enough attention and were concerned enough to call in the authorities and stay engaged. Thanks to all of you for your engagement and concern. As our Neighborhood Watch officers have reminded us, pay attention and be

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**WLCA Spring
General Meeting
Thursday, May 16
7:30 PM
West Laurel Community
Building**

Meeting Topics

MD General Assembly

- Hydraulic fracturing (*fracking*)
- Legislative wrapup

Prince George's County update

Q&A

WLCA Board Election

General Announcements

Spring General Meeting

A number of bills passed in the recently ended Maryland General Assembly session, including increased gas taxes, outlawing the death penalty, legalizing medical marijuana, and the offshore-wind energy incentive package. Others failed, including an effort to stop hydraulic fracturing, or *fracking*, which is used to release petroleum, natural gas, and other substances for extraction.

The May 16 General Meeting speakers will include Delegate **Heather Mizeur** from the 20th district in Takoma Park on the process of fracking and what it means to us in the state of Maryland. Members of the 21st delegation,

Senator **Rosapepe**, Delegates **Barnes**, **Frush**, and **Peña-Melnyk**, will provide a wrap-up of the recent session. And Councilwoman **Mary Lehman** will update us on Prince George's County.

I know that after reading much about County Executive **Rushern Baker's** proposal for the Prince George's County Schools System, I am eager to hear what our elected officials have to say on this topic, where they stand, and why. I am also hoping for an update on the new hospital system — where it is going to be located, whether Laurel Regional Hospital will close, and the timeline.

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West Laurel Housing Values

By Lenora S. Dernoga, Realtor®

The news of the housing recovery is reflected in the West Laurel housing values! Home values remain inconsistent due to foreclosures and short sales that continue to impact the market. However, with record low inventories and mortgage rates, the market has shifted to a sellers' market, creating a significant increase in home values. The chart below shows home sales for the first quarter of 2013, and compares them to home sales for the same quarter of 2012. The good news is that the average sales price has increased more than 16 percent, with homes selling faster and for a greater percentage of their list price.



For more information,

visit the Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation website at <http://sdatcert3.resiusa.org/rprewrite>. West Laurel addresses in Prince George's County are located in District 10, Map 0002 and Map 0005; the Montgomery County area is located in District 05, Maps LS11, LS21 and LS22.

West Laurel homeowners can maintain and increase the value of their homes by taking these simple measures:

Clean. Clear out the clutter and donate junk you don't want or need anymore. A clean and organized home leaves the impression of one that is well-maintained.

Maintain. Keep up with your property. If you wait until it is time to sell, the cost of repairs

may be so much that you won't want to do it. Have your HVAC equipment, water heater and other systems in your home checked/serviced periodically.

Kitchen. This is the most important room in the house and where you'll get the greatest return for your investment. Update the appliances with Energy Star-rated appliances, change the paint and faucets, get new lighting, update the pulls on the cabinets, and even change the countertops.

Bathrooms. The same thing goes here as in the kitchen. If money allows, you can always update the toilet, vanity and flooring. If not, just change out the faucets, light fixtures (Energy Star) and paint.

Exterior of the Home. Clean your gutters regularly, replace rotting

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West Laurel Home Sales

Address	BR/BA	Acres	List Price	Sale Price	% Diff	DOM
6216 Kaybro St	4/4	.22	\$339,000	\$329,500	-2.80	13
6505 Walker Branch	4/4	.46	394,900	380,000	-3.77	37
5904 Parkway Dr	3/2	.46	254,990	254,990	0	38
6638 Park Hall Dr	4/3	.27	350,000	355,000	+1.43	6
6411 Forest Mill Ln	5/3	.38	150,000	198,000	+32.00	23
16113 Jerald Rd	4/4	.23	350,000	345,000	-1.43	8

Analysis

	1st Quarter 2013	1st Quarter 2012
Average SOLD price	\$310,415	266,818
Low Sale Price	\$198,000	\$188,000
High Sale Price	\$380,000	\$365,000
Average % of Original List Price	104.24%	83.26%
Average Days on Market	21	180

Conclusion

The average SOLD price has increased 16.3 percent from 1st quarter 2012 to 1st quarter 2013. The average days on market has decreased dramatically — by 88 percent. The average percent of listing price has increased by 21%. ❖

President's Message

(Continued from page 1)

alert; call 911 when things are not as they should be.

I'm delighted to share with you that at long last real estate seems to be moving in a positive direction in West Laurel. This month, West Laurel resident and Realtor® **Lenora Dernoga** has assumed responsibility for our regular column on housing values. Another great example of our community stepping forward.

After an extended period of time, the Bradford tree replacement program is moving toward its conclu-

sion. Finally, stumps are being ground and trees planted. There has been both positive and negative feedback on the new trees, with some neighbors delighted and others unhappy that a tree was planted where there had been no trees. Please note that the trees are technically in the county right-of-way, not your front yard. If you do not wish to have a tree planted, please contact the Neighborhood Design Center at 301-779-6010.

The ICC work continues. As prom-

ised after the last debacle, they are now providing regular updates to neighbors abutting the ICC work via door hangers and emails which are then reposted on the neighborhood discussion board. I encourage all of you to join the residents-only list.

The West Laurel Civic Association Board has been approached by two new development projects. The first is a small church at the corner of Brooklyn Bridge Road and Leo James Court. The second is for a commercial sports park at the intersection of 198 and Old Gunpowder Road. The WLCA Board has provided feedback to both developers to lessen the impacts on our residents.

WSSC has moved forward with their new rules for recreational usage of the watershed. As a reminder, you must have a permit if you boat, fish, hike, or horseback-ride. The WLCA continues to monitor this and work with WSSC as they continue to refine their regulations.

I look forward to seeing all of you at our upcoming **May 16** General Meeting. ❖



Membership Campaign

As we proceed toward the Spring General Meeting of the West Laurel Civic Association the WLCA Board is addressing a broad range of West Laurel quality of life issues affecting our residents.

In support of the WLCA, the number of dues-paying residents has increased from 400 for the 2010-2011 fiscal year to 590 for 2011-2012. Membership gains result from advocacy within the community for the quality of single-family-residence lifestyle we have been able to maintain since West Laurel was established.

The support of the West Laurel community for WLCA activities is commendable, and we ask that West Laurel residents continue their endorsement through contact with their West Laurel neighbors to bring the total WLCA membership to 600 members. Attainment of this goal will show an increase in WLCA support by 50 percent in just two years.

WLCA membership numbers translate into advocacy in the WLCA Board's representation of our community before the government and business committees. For those of you who have delayed paying dues for the current year until now, please respond to our ongoing membership drive by simply dropping a check for \$15 in the mail to our Treasurer, Susan Railey.

Susan Railey
Treasurer, WLCA
PO Box 387
Laurel, MD, 20725

If you are unsure of whether WLCA dues have been paid for the current year, please contact either **Susan Railey** or **Tony Spezio** (301-498-3436). Susan keeps a current file of dues-paying members and shares this file with me.

Many thanks for your support and I look forward to seeing everyone at the May 16 membership meeting. ❖

Spring General Meeting

May 16 @ 7:30 pm

West Laurel Community Building

General Meeting

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Please join us at the **May 16** General Meeting at 7:30 PM at the West Laurel Community Building. I look forward to seeing you there.

Melissa Daston

ICC Update

Update provided by ICC Project Manager in April 2013

The Maryland State Highway Administration's (SHA) contractor has removed approximately 610 feet of sound wall adjacent to Bradford Lane and Fitzpatrick Drive, which will be relocated to allow for the construction of the collector-distributor lanes along I-95.

The contractor has completed the necessary clearing and installation of erosion and sediment controls, including the temporary black silt fencing. The contractor has also placed fill (earth) on the site to create a stable ground area for the drilling equipment used to install caissons. Caisson (a caisson is a drilled shaft that is filled with

concrete for soil-retaining purposes in order to support the foundation of the sound wall) installation is scheduled through early-to-mid May.

Crews will then excavate and install the retaining wall (used to hold soil in place) on the community side of the sound wall. Once the retaining wall is in, new sound wall panels will be installed. This work is currently scheduled to continue into mid-to-late summer.



Please be cautious when traveling near construction sites. For your own safety, please do not enter the construction zone at any time. Even when crews are not working, there are still hazards within the orange fencing. Additionally, please

talk with your children about the dangers of a construction zone and make sure they know not to play in these areas.

To sign up for the construction update emails, please contact Ms. **Genevieve Rubrecht** at grubrecht@iccproject.com. If you would like to find out more about the ICC, please visit the project website at www.iccproject.com. If you have any questions regarding construction, please contact Ms. **Genevieve Rubrecht** toll-free at 866-462-0020 or grubrecht@iccproject.com.

The ICC Project Team appreciates your patience as we continue construction on this segment of the project. ❖

Beasock's Beat

by Corporal James Beasock

I want to start by acknowledging the contributions of **Beth Evans** to the Prince George's County Police Department. She was a staunch supporter and innovator with programs for West Laurel and the larger community. We have lost a good friend.

I'd also like to thank West Laurel's new community-police liaison, **Ryan Faggard**, who has stepped forward as your representative to the community policing program. Welcome, Ryan.

Crime Statistics. In response to a request from the West Laurel Civic Association board, I have assembled monthly data from 2012

to allow us to track trends in West Laurel. I'll start by saying crime continues to be very low in West Laurel. Compared to last year, West Laurel has had several additional traffic stops and one burglary; thefts from autos are down.

Our partnership in fighting crime is making a big difference but we can't let our guard down. As the weather warms up, crime traditionally increases. So keep your eyes open and remember to call 911 if you see anything suspicious. Hope to see you at the General Meeting on May 16. ❖



Welcome!

The West Laurel Civic Association (WLCA) extends a warm welcome to the families who became residents of West Laurel in 2012. Every homeowner is automatically a member of the Civic Association and, upon payment of the annual dues, entitled to vote in elections. West Laurel is an active community with many volunteer opportunities, including the civic association, recreation council, and Bond Mill elementary school. We look forward to meeting you at the May 16 Civic Association General Meeting.

Ernest Kostrick (Kaybro St)

Simon and Heather Stewart (Walker Branch)

Ryan Walderman & Marlen Castaneda (Park Hall Dr) ❖

Zoning Update

The West Laurel Civic Association has a long history of proactive work protecting the zoning outlined in the Master Plans of both Prince George's and Montgomery counties. Each year this job gets more difficult as developers look toward the few remaining large tracts of open land. As noted in the President's column, two new projects have come forward since January. Here is a recap of what is currently happening in and around West Laurel.

New **A New Life Church of Christ** (*corner of Brooklyn Bridge and Leo James Court*)

This is a new project. The WLCA Board met with members of the church at the March board meeting. We recommended that the church reconsider the parking plan and relocate the church on the lot to create a bigger buffer for the houses that abut the property. The church is scheduled to return for the May WLCA Board meeting with an update. Nothing formal has been filed.

New **Sports Park** (*SW corner of Route 198 and Old Gunpowder Road*)

This is a new project. The WLCA Board met with Mr. Gudelsky and his team at the April board meeting. The project includes an outdoor playing field, in-



door playing field, and multipurpose building. The WLCA board is awaiting responses on hours of operation and parking requirements but was positive about the proposal. Nothing formal has been filed.

Kingdom Hall of Laurel (*Sweitzer Lane and Route 198*)

Work progresses on this project. The foundation has been poured, and sidewalks and roadwork are complete. The actual building is being erected by church members and has been delayed. Once it begins, it will be a very short process.

Tommy's Shell Station (*Route 198*)

No new updates. The Stormwater Management Concept plan has been submitted to the Prince George's County Department of Public Works and Transportation. The cover letter indicates the developers are proceeding with ten fuel pumps, and a 3,180 square-foot convenience store. The accompanying blueprint also shows the proposed car wash. After completing the Stormwater Management process, the developers will submit a detailed site plan and there will be a hearing where residents may provide testimony for or against.

Eglise de Dieu (*Route 198 and Riding Stable Road*), *formally known as Snowden's Birmingham Manor*

As of January 10th, the Mont-

gomery County planning staff is still working with the developer to revise the plans to meet the planning staff and Montgomery County Department of Transportation inputs. West Laurel will receive a copy of the revised plan when it is completed.

Again, there will be a formal hearing where residents may provide testimony for or against.



Reaching Hearts (*Brooklyn Bridge Road*)

No formal plans have been filed.

Avalon Manor (*Joyce Lane*)

After a significant lull in this project, it is now underway again with lots and homes for sale.

In addition to these projects in West Laurel, the WLCA is monitoring:

Fairland Park (*Old Gunpowder Road and Route 198*)

This development is moving forward in both Prince George's and Montgomery counties.

Konterra (*Old Gunpowder, Virginia Manor*)

No formal plans have been filed, but based on preliminary site work, the WLCA is monitoring closely.

Burtonsville Master Plan.

As reported in the last *Hotline*, the WLCA supports some elements of the plan and disagrees with others. The WLCA is monitoring the Montgomery County planning board for future work. ❖

In Memoriam

Beth Evans, a long-time West Laurel resident and community volunteer, passed away on April 9th at her home. She was a formidable woman and a strong presence in our community. After her retirement from the Department of State, Beth helped fill her spare time by volunteering with the West Laurel Civic Association. She joined the Board and served as a passionate advocate for many programs in the community. Beth was a woman on a mission and heaven help anyone who stood in her way. As a result, West Laurel benefited.

She was the volunteer behind Dumpster Day—she convinced the county we should not have to make the 45-minute drive to the dump. It took more than a year to make inroads with Prince George's County bureaucracy, but she persevered.

Once she broke through, she annually scheduled the dumpsters with the county and reserved the parking lot with the Parks department. As a result, this past weekend we managed to fill several dumpsters without having to leave our own neighborhood.

Beth was also instrumental in our reinvigoration of Neighborhood Watch and our Community Policing efforts. She volunteered, ever so reluctantly, to serve as our community liaison. Under her leadership, our relationship with the Prince George's and Park Police flourished. Beth sponsored a tribute to First Responders, quarterly speakers including the FBI and Secret Service, and outreach to the children via Biking with Beasock. Based on the latest crime statistics, her efforts have made West Laurel

an extremely safe community.

Beth was engaged in good deeds outside of West Laurel as well. She was a leader of the Friends of Montpelier for many years, an active member of the National Association of Retired Federal Employees (NARFE), co-sponsor of the Prince George's County Police monthly Coffee for Seniors at the Laurel Senior Center, and a traveling ambassador for police efforts on Child and Adult Identity kits.

If the cause was righteous, Beth was there. From senior citizen requests to pleas for support for programs at Bond Mill Elementary School—she was there. As a friend and fellow volunteer, I and the community will miss her. West Laurel has truly lost a wonderful advocate for the community. May her memory be eternal. ❖



Staying in Touch

If you are new to the neighborhood or just want know more about what's happening in the community, there are several forums available.

The **West Laurel Civic Association** (WLCA) home page (www.wlcaweb.org) is the official website for the civic association. The home page has information about upcoming community events, issues of interest such as the upcoming General Meeting and WSSC pipeline, WLCA budget and board members, on-line newsletter, links to the community discussion board and to pay your membership, and Prince George's/Montgomery County important contacts. Using the online feedback form, residents may submit ques-

tions, feedback and news they would like to post.

The **West Laurel Discussion Board** (Yahoo group) is open to anyone who lives in West Laurel. Once you become a member, you can post and receive information that is sent out to members on a regular basis. This forum has been extremely helpful to residents. In the last year we have located medical equipment for residents, found lost pets, and during our power outages, identified and tracked outages throughout West Laurel. To join, go to www.wlcaweb.org, click the Yahoo Groups icon and follow the instructions.

The **Bond Mill PTO** website is

<http://bondmillpto.org/joomla/>. It provides parents and interested residents with information including a school calendar, opportunities to volunteer, and how to contribute using bonus cards at local grocery stores.

Prince George's County has several e-alerts services:

PGCPS E-Alert System provides information from the Prince George's County Schools on weather-related closings and other pertinent information. Sign up at <http://www1.pgcps.org/weather/>.

Prince George's County NotifyMe allows residents to register to receive alerts and emergency notifications by email, text messaging or

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Election of WLCA Board

All Board members serve for two-year terms unless elected to fill a one-year slot. Board meetings are held monthly on the second Thursday at 7:30 PM at the West Laurel Community Building. We prefer to have two alternate Area Reps in each area because we know it is often difficult for regular Area Reps to be at every meeting. Alternates are encouraged to attend as much as possible and participate in discussions and committee assignments, but will not be voting members unless filling in for an

absent Area Rep for their area.

Please consider being an active member of the WLCA Board to help keep West Laurel well-represented and to stay in touch with what is happening in and around your community. If you wish to add your name to the slate of officers for the 2013-2014 year, please contact your area representative, who will forward the information to the full board. *Officers & Area Representatives in bold are up for a vote at the May General Meeting.*

OFFICERS

- President..... Melissa Daston
- 1st Vice President** **Cassandra Hostetler**
- 2nd Vice President** **Barbara Sollner-Webb**
- Recording Secretary** **Tom Dernoga**
- Treasurer..... Susan Railey

AREA 1 REPRESENTATIVES

- Rep (2 year)** **Tom Sidor**
- Rep (1 year) John Hebert
- Alternate** **Kevin Reich**

AREA 2 REPRESENTATIVES

- Rep (2 year)** **Vacant**
- Rep (1 year) Patty Sobel
- Alternate** **Vacant**

AREA 3 REPRESENTATIVES

- Rep (2 year)** **Mike McPherson**
- Rep (1 year) Ryan Faggard
- Alternate** **Vacant**

AREA 4 REPRESENTATIVES

- Rep (2 year)** **Lucy Grimes**
- Rep (1 year) Tony Spezio
- Alt.....
- Doris Reynold

AREA 5 REPRESENTATIVES

- Rep (2 year) **Elizabeth Schwartz**
- Rep (1 year) Steve Steenrod
- Alternate** **Vacant**

Home Values

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wood, examine the roof — does it need new shingles? How about the windows? You will get your money back on resale and then some.

Reduce Your Energy Bills. It could be as simple as sealing around your doors and windows and upgrading to energy-efficient (Energy Star-rated) items. You will see the return when you sell *and* put a little more money in your pocket every month.

Curb Appeal. First impressions count! Landscape your yard and keep it cut and trimmed neatly. Power-wash the shingles and walkway. Paint your front door, make sure your light fixtures are clean and working properly.

Applying these tips will increase the value of your home and enhance our neighborhood! For more info, please visit my website at Listwith-Lenora.com for helpful articles and ideas. I can also recommend a list of skilled and reputable vendors to handle your home projects. ❖



Staying in Touch

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pages by registering at <https://notify.me.princegeorgescountymd.gov>. NotifyMe provides emergency notification information, including Amber alerts, severe weather, school and government closings/delays, severe traffic and utility interruptions. ❖

West Laurel Civic Association

PO Box 387

Laurel, MD 20725



Hotline — Spring 2013

THE NEIGHBORHOOD NEWSLETTER OF WEST LAUREL