

HOTLINE

The Neighborhood Newsletter of West Laurel

President's Message

It's President's Day and we're already off to a colder and snowier winter than we've had in many years, with a snowstorm scheduled for tomorrow. As you know from our first snowstorm, the new leadership at the Department of Public Works & Transportation forgot West Laurel. By the time the HOTLINE is published, we'll know if they have learned from our prior storm and rediscovered that West Laurel is part of Prince Georges County. For your future use, I've included information on how to contact the snow desk along with some helpful hints from our District VI police.

For all the verbiage from Upper Marlboro about providing better services to constituents, services continue to be erratic and ineffectual -- particularly related to enforcing zoning codes and administration of the Section 8 housing program. For those of us living near homes that have been abandoned, are being used as rooming houses or other

unapproved uses, or Section 8 houses where residents are flaunting the rules - it's been frustrating and maddening.

In October, I met with the Prince George's County Department of Permitting, Inspections and Enforcement (DPIE) and one of the county attorney's regarding one of the more chronic cases that has been on-going for more than 4 years.

Two issues were identified -- discrepancies between the zoning code and table of uses, and the lax process of how infractions are handled.

The county lawyer stated that even if they cited the home in question, that the landlord would appeal and the case would be thrown out by the judge. One of the reasons being that the community is never informed about the case hearings so residents do not appear in court to testify and express our concerns. (continued on page 3)

Winter General Meeting

Mark your calendars now for our upcoming West Laurel General Meeting on February 20, 2014 at 7:30pm at the West Laurel Community Building. These meetings are open to everyone who lives in West Laurel.

I'll admit that the topic for this meeting came about when I was driving home from a meeting in the rain in

December using the section of Virginia Manor by the Laurel Senior Center and then over to Van Dusen and Sweitzer. In the dark with all the changes, I got lost.

Between the orange barrels, no markings, or road signs, I took a turn and ended up in the construction area (continued on page 4)

**WLCA Winter
General Meeting
Thursday, February
20th - 7:30 pm**

**West Laurel
Community
Building**

**Focus on roads in
and around Laurel**

**Rain Rebates
program**

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West Laurel Housing Values

By Lenora S. Dernoga

As the weather cooled down, so did the housing market in West Laurel which is typical. Home sales and prices declined slightly from the 3rd quarter, while the average sales price increased moderately since the same quarter last year. West Laurel homes are selling at a higher price at about the same pace as the same time in 2012. Foreclosures and short sales are declining in our neighborhood, and inventory is slightly below the norm, resulting in rising home prices. The chart below shows home sales for the fourth quarter of 2013 and compares them to the fourth quarter of 2012. For more information, visit the Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation website at <http://www.dat.state.md.us>.

Address	BR/BA	Acres	List Price	SOLD Price	Days on Market
6401 Park Hall Drive	4/3	.27	\$260,000	\$272,000	145
6214 Kaybro Street	4/3	.22	\$299,000	\$295,000	122
6406 Darwin Road	3/2	.24	\$359,000	\$350,000	39
15317 Bond Mill Road	4/3	.41	\$329,900	\$335,000	5
5802 Maple Terrace	4/3	.23	\$319,900	\$310,000	34
6312 Sandy Street	4/3	.23	\$299,900	\$309,000	6
15406 Bounds Ave	5/2	.46	\$319,500	\$315,000	135

Conclusion: The average SOLD price has increased 11 percent from 4th quarter 2012 to 4th quarter 2013. The average days on the market on the market has increased by 11 percent.

ANALYSIS	4th Quarter 2013	4th Qtr 2012
Average Sold Price	\$312,414	\$277,633
Low SOLD Price	\$272,000	\$249,000
High SOLD Price	\$350,000	\$328,000
Avg Days on Market	69	61

Bradford Pear Replacement Program

Last year, Prince George’s County in cooperation with the Neighborhood Design Center planted new street trees in West Laurel. These tree plantings were done under the Bradford Pear Tree Replacement Program. It is time for the Neighborhood Design Center to inspect the trees and evaluate their condition and health since it is approximately one year after they were planted. This will be done on a street by street canvas. If dead trees are found, they will be replaced with the same species. If you have questions or have a failed or failing tree, please contact the coordinator for this effort, Patricia Valentine at 301-779-6010.

President's Column (continued)

Similarly, the Housing Authority that administers the Section 8 housing program that allows tenants to live where they choose anywhere in the United States and provides between \$1890 (3 bedrooms) to \$2730 (5 bedrooms) per month to the property owner. If the tenant violates the lease, is involved in drug-related or violent criminal activity, or there is good cause (including a history of disturbing the neighbors, the landlord may terminate the lease. The Housing Authority will terminate support if any family member is involved with drugs, crime, or if the family has engaged in criminal activity that threatens the health, safety, or right to peaceful enjoyment of their residence by persons residing in the immediate vicinity of the premises. Unfortunately, the Housing Authority has been unresponsive to multiple complaints from neighbors. They also do not have a public notification process on hearings for reinstatement so the community is never informed about case hearings in these cases.

So what is being done? For starters, I've engaged Councilwoman Lehman on both issues. She is investigating if the zoning code can be clarified and tightened to deal with the rooming houses. She is also looking at the processes used by both of these organizations to see how the community can become part of the process when hearings are held over violations.

In my role of West Laurel Civic Association president, I have and will continue to follow-up with the various Prince Georges County departments and attorneys. For those properties where the WLCA is aware of infractions, listings on Craig's list or other references, we continue to forward them to the zoning inspector.

What can you do? You need to be vigilant about the houses around you. If you observe violations, small or large, call the new Prince Georges County 311 service, use the on-line 311 site (<http://countyclick.princegeorgescountymd.gov/>) to report a problem, or call a WLCA member who will report the problem for you. Take pictures of problems to docu-

ment the problem. Contact Councilwoman Lehman's office. Your caring about West Laurel will help resolve this problem

Let me switch gears from these issues to talk about why West Laurel remains the best community to live in despite our headaches with local government. I'll start with Boy Scout Troop 1673 which has grown from a handful of boys just a few years ago to more than 25 members. I had the great privilege to attend their most recent Court of Honor where members of the troop were recognized for their achievements. It was a wonderful experience.

Thanks to Scoutmaster **Mike House**, **Mary Loveless (Troop Committee Chair)**, **Jim Ludlam**, **Dale Lehman**, **Greg Benefiel**, **Jon Hummer**, **Amy Brennan**, **Steve Jones**, **Jaqui Gorthy**, **Mel Colvin**, and **Mark Brackett**. Our Cub Scout Pack 1673 led by **Kevin Stroud with Kim Jones (Pack Committee Chair)** continues to be active and a great entry into the scouting program. FYI Scoutmaster **Mike House** has done a great job and is retiring from this position at the end of the year. Thanks for doing such a great job!

There are a few other stalwart volunteers who are unsung heroes in the community -- **Rush Kester** and **Cynthia Atkins** who continue to anchor the Recreation Council, **Sandy Crowley** and **Barb Kester** who are the key players for the Girl Scouts, **Shari Ludlam** who is the Bond Mill PTO president and also involved with the Cub Scout Pack 1673, **Chris Folks** whose column in the Gazette keeps us all informed, **Jason Float** and **John Hebert** who coordinate the support to senior citizens on Dumpster Day, **Pastor Kevin McGhee** of Bethany Church including the medical apparatus lending service, **Dave Strahle** who maintains the entrance garden, **Ian Hebert and Matthew Hebert** who cheerfully volunteer each Dumpster Day to unload cars and load the dumpsters, **Pete Ruiz** who sponsors a math review program to prep kids for the SAT and Eleanor Roosevelt math test, (continued on page 4)

President's Column (continued)

Emily Faggard who as started up a free toy and clothes swap, **Lesley** Brinton who keeps us up-to-date on the Laurel Historical Society and American Legion events, **Craig Newell** of the Parks Department, **Cpl Beasock** our community police officer, and the list goes on.

Although the services we receive from our county

governments (Prince Georges and Montgomery) may be erratic, West Laurel remains a wonderful community because of the people who live here. I am so very thankful, I chose to move here 26 years ago. I look forward to seeing you all at the February 20th General Meeting for all residents.

Melissa Daston

General Meeting (continued)

totally off the roadway. After I got home, I got to thinking about how many of the roadways in our area are being restructured with more to come. During the same week, we also had another accident at the intersection of Route 198 and Riding Stable Road. So we've invited:

- Venu Nemani from State Highway Administration (Area 3). You might remember Mr. Nemani from a previous meeting. He has been very helpful to us with stop light timing and getting reflective lane markers on Route 198. If you have any issues about Route 198, please ask Mr. Nemani at the meeting.
- Genevieve Rubrecht from the ICC project to update us on when the work on the ramps will be completed, changes to the exit ramps for Route 198, and what work is still left to complete.
- Prince George's County Department of Public Works & Transportation to provide updates on what is happening with Contee Road, Virginia Manor, Van Dusen, and other roads in our vicinity. I plan to ask them about better lighting and signage given my off-roading experience.

We have a second topic scheduled as well -- the new Rain Check (rebate) program in Prince Geor-

ges County. Montgomery County has had a similar program for many years that allows residents to apply for rebates when they take measures to reduce run-off from storms. We've asked our speakers to talk about the various projects and rebates associated.

In addition to our guest speakers, the meeting will open with the Presentation of the Colors by a joint color guard from Cub Scout Pack and Boy Scout Troop 1673. This will be followed by a report from our Treasurer and then the main speakers. As always **Tony Spezio** will be available in the foyer for you to verify your dues are up-to-date. And of course, refreshments will be available courtesy of **Doris Reynold** and **Lucy Grimes** in the small meeting room across the hall.

And as a quick update from our last General Meeting where Dimensions Healthcare spoke to us about the upcoming changes to the hospital system, we had a follow-up email from Dr. Trudy Hall (Vice President of Medical Affairs). We are working with them to sponsor some health care lectures in West Laurel. The hospital has also added a new primary care physician and holistic practitioner who lectures on yoga and the health benefits of weight management.

Bond Mill Elementary School

Mark your calendars now for Family Bingo at Bond Mill ES on March 6th. Bring your friends and family for bingo at Bond Mill. The doors open at 6:pm for ticket sales and dinner. Games begin at 6:30pm. A 10-game bingo card pack costs \$5. There will be one child and adult winner per game; all prizes are valued at \$10 each. The concession stand will be serving Chick-fil-A sandwiches, chips and beverage as a meal for \$5 along with baked goods. Funds raised from the concessions will support **Destination Imagination** team. For more information or ticket reservations, call **Gretchen Magno** at 301-604-8823 or laurelmagnos@verizon.net.

The Bond Mill PTO Carnival Committee seeks cash sponsorships and ticket or product donations from local businesses and individuals for the *silent auction*. Your tax deductible donation will be recognized at the well-attended event on May 17, 2014. For more infor-

mation, contact **Shari Eason Ludlam** at seludlam@comcast.net.

The Bond Mill Drama Club, led by **Kristen Ruiz**, will present their production of *Romeo and Harriet* on March 1st at 7:00 pm.

Destination Imagination regional competition is scheduled for March 8th. Bond Mill is sending one team coached by **Donna Albrecht**.

Remember to support Bond Mill ES by signing up for Giant A plus bonus bucks or Safeway's e-script program. To sign up, just go to their web sites and designate Bond Mill as your school (Bond Mill code – 00385). Bond Mill is still collecting Box Tops, Campbell's Soup Labels and Coke caps. And don't forget to drop your paper into our paper recycle bins located in the parking lot. It all adds up!

Recreation Council News

The next West Laurel Recreation Council (WLRC) event is the **Family Swim Night** at the Fairland Aquatics Center on February 7th (pending completion of the Fairland renovations. The event begins at 6:30 pm and goes until the pool closes.

The **Spring Easter Egg Hunt** is planned for Saturday, April 12th beginning at 10am sharp. Come early to have breakfast with the Easter bunny before the event. Call or text Cynthia (301-395-5063) for more information. Reserve your space early! Look for updates on both events on the West Laurel Yahoo group.

The next Recreation Council meeting is Monday, February 24th from 7 to 8 pm. Of special note, we are looking for a Treasurer. The workload is minimal — 4 to 6 deposits and 6 to 10 checks annually. Call Rush Kester at (301) 490-1310 or attend the meeting if you are interested.

Prince George's County Bans Plastic Bags for Yard Waste

Beginning January 1, 2014, the Prince George's County Department of Environmental resources will no longer accept yard waste in plastic bags. In accordance with the new County Law, CB-87-2012, residents who bag their yard waste must put it out for pickup in paper bags or use reusable containers with sturdy handles and tight fitting lids that are marked **Yard Waste**. All other collection requirements stay



the same. Paper yard bags are available in most home improvement, retail, and grocery stores .

Beasock's Beat

West Laurel has recently experienced a small uptick in events in both the Prince George's and Montgomery County parts of the community:

- Car theft (5700 block of Huckburn and 6200 block of Roblynn)
- Several theft of items from cars (5700, 5900 blocks of Parkway, 5700 block on Huckburn)
- Breaking and entering (6500 block of Darwin)
- A rash of graffiti (Bounds, Sweitzer, Malaya)
- Fireworks along the power lines

Rest assured that extra patrols have been on-going and the police are actively patrolling West Laurel.

As a reminder, you are the first line of defense for your community. Pay attention to your neighbors, don't leave valuables in your car, lock your car at night, and most importantly if you see something amiss call 9-1-1. Many of you have told me you are reluctant to call 9-1-1 when you're not sure if there is an actual crime occurring -- don't worry, just call 9-1-1. It is better to report than to ignore.

After engaged neighbors, good lighting serves as a major deterrent to crime. The District VI police are currently doing a street light survey in West Laurel at the request of Prince George's County. The results will be given to the County for their review and possible action.

Stay safe, **Cpl James W. Beasock, Prince George's County Police**

Vehicle Winterizing Tips

The following information was provided to us by **Cpl James Woody** of the Prince George's County District VI Police.

Keep your headlights clear with car wax! Just wipe ordinary car wax on your headlights. It contains special water repellents that will prevent that messy mixture from accumulating on your lights - lasts 6 weeks.

Squeak-proof your wipers with rubbing alcohol! Wipe the wipers with a cloth saturated with rubbing alcohol or ammonia. This one trick can make badly streaking and squeaking wipers change to near perfect silence and clarity

Ice-proof your windows with vinegar. Just fill a spray bottle with three parts vinegar to one part water and spray it on all of your windows at night. In

the morning, they'll be clear of any icy mess. Vinegar contains acetic acid, which raises the melting point of water---preventing water from freezing!

Prevent car doors from freezing shut with cooking spray! Spray cooking oil on the rubber seals around car doors and rub it in with a paper towel. The cooking spray prevents water from melting into the rubber.

Fog-proof your windshield with shaving cream! Spray some shaving cream on the inside of your windshield and wipe it off with paper towels. Shaving cream has many of the same ingredients found in commercial defoggers.

De-ice your lock in seconds with hand sanitizer! Just put some hand sanitizer gel on the key and the lock and the problem is solved!

Dumpster Day—April 5th

The ever popular Dumpster Day will return to West Laurel on Saturday, April 5th, courtesy of the West Laurel Civic Association and the Prince George's County Waste Management Division. One of the three dumpsters will be designated for electronics recycling. The dumpsters will be available from 8:30am until 12:30 pm (**or until the dumpsters are full**) in the parking lot of the West Laurel Community Building.

Hazardous materials will not be accepted. This includes used oil, oil-based paint, tires, propane tanks, glass/mirrors, and computer monitors. We **will** be able to take mattresses, old furniture, light construction debris, and broken toys and household items.

If you are a senior or disabled citizen, the WLCA will once again pick up materials from your house and dispose of them for you. You need to call or email Jason Float, at 443-765-5300 or jason.float@gmail.com, in advance to schedule a

pick-up. As always, we need volunteers with pickup trucks willing to help with the senior citizen pickups, and to direct cars at the Community building. If you're available to help with the senior citizen effort, please let Jason Float know. We need folks willing to donate their pickup trucks and time.

Volunteers from the West Laurel Civic Association will direct cars to the dumpsters and lend assistance in filling them. If you are willing to help at the community center to direct traffic, we need you to be there between 8am to 12:30pm. High school students may volunteer and receive community service credit hours. Call or email Melissa at 301-776-2314 or mdaston@verizon.net or Cassandra, ctseckares@comcast.net, to volunteer.

We have once again secured a third dumpster to accommodate everyone but the rule still stands -- the dumpsters are available until 12:30 pm or until all three are full. Start planning your spring housecleaning now.

Welcome New Neighbors

The West Laurel Civic Association (WLCA) extends a warm welcome to the families who became residents of West Laurel in 2013. 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 February 20th Civic Association General Meeting.

Myron & Cynthia Fleming	Bond Mill Road
David & Melissa Brown	Bounds Ave
Jitesh Mehta	Darwin Road
William & Julia Norcott	Kaybro Street
Jane Heinig	Maple Terrace
Abner L. Galdamez	Park Hall Drive
David & Saramuni Kilpatrick	Sandy Street

Welcome to the Neighborhood!



Snow News

It appears that Winter of 2014 will be cold and snowy. We've already had two measurable snow storms. Here are a few reminders for when it snows enough for plows to come out.

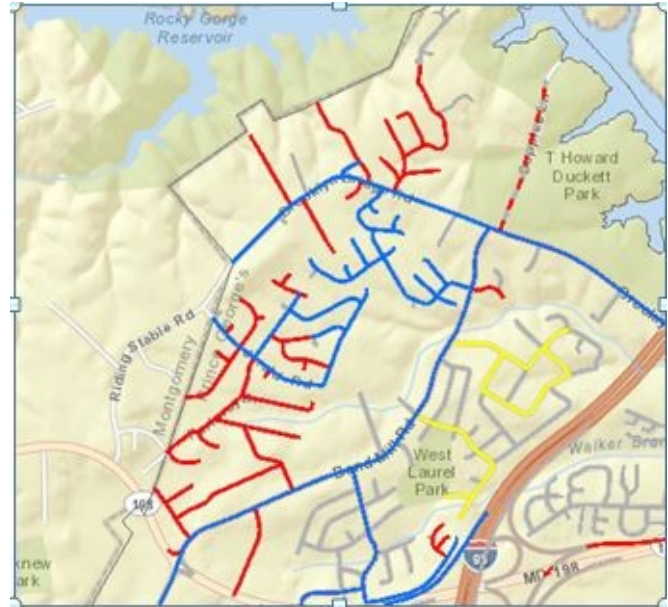
- During a snow emergency, parking is prohibited along all designated snow emergency routes.
- During a snow emergency, parking is permitted only in driveways, or on the even-numbered side of the street.
- Failure to comply with either the even-numbered parking plan or parking along designated snow emergency routes can result in a fine up to \$50 and/or towing.
- Property owners must remove snow and ice from sidewalks along their property within 48 hours after precipitation has stopped. Failure to clear snow and ice from sidewalks can result in a \$100 fine.

This year there are some new on-line applications in both Montgomery and Prince George's County to help us to monitor snow plowing and report areas that require attention.

Prince Georges County. To submit an on-line Snow Removal Request go to <http://egov.princegeorgescountymd.gov/snowtrack>. You will be asked to fill out a quick 2-step process identifying the street and the problem. It is quick and easy.

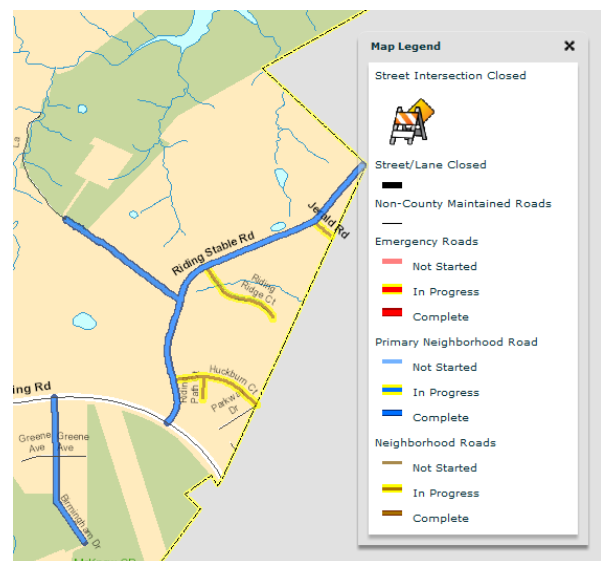
The more interesting tool is the snow plow tracker that maps in near real-time. Once the map comes up, you hone in on West Laurel and can see which streets have been plowed, salted, or otherwise treated. Go to <http://snowtracking.princegeorgescountymd.gov/sn>

owplow/. It's terrific. Here is a quick snap shot from our 21 January storm taken around 11 pm.



The Snow Information Center may be reached by calling 301-350-0500.

In **Montgomery County**, there are two similar tools both accessible from the same web page, <http://www5.montgomerycountymd.gov/snowmap/>.



Zoning News

The West Laurel Civic Association continues to be engaged in protecting the zoning outlined in the Master Plans of both Prince George's and Montgomery counties. Year after year, the pressures continue to mount with the increased development around us with more coming each year. During the past year, the WLCA has provided testimony in zoning hearings in Prince George's, Montgomery, and Howard counties as developers try and convert the rural zones into high density developments.

In addition to monitoring the planning board schedules, the WLCA Board continues to engage the developers directly. This is especially helpful when the developer is building within the guidelines of the zoning code but the overall project is not in keeping with the nature of the West Laurel community. Here is a recap of what is currently happening in and around West Laurel.

Kingdom Hall of Laurel. (Sweitzer Lane at Route 198). The Kingdom Hall of Laurel opened in mid-July. There is still some minor finishing work but the building is now occupied.

Eglise de Dieu (Route 198 and Riding Stable Road), formerly known as Snowden's Birmingham Manor. No change since our last HOTLINE. There is no updates from the Montgomery County Planning Board. Unofficial feedback is that the project has run into problems as the lot size is only 4.5 acres and the project requires 5.0 acres. WLCA continues to monitor.

Tommy's Shell Station (Route 198). This is a project where the WLCA and abutting neighbors have met on multiple occasions with the developers to reach agreement on the new plan. On November 21st, the Prince Georges Planning Board reviewed and approved this project with conditions. The major conditions cited in the report are:

- The applicant shall remove the car wash or redesign the site so that the car wash and stacking

is less proximate to the residential uses immediately north of the site and across Bauer Lane to the west.

- The style, materials, and color of the canopy shall be revised to be architecturally consistent with the revised building style and materials.
- A detail for all light fixtures shall be included in the project plans. Such light fixtures should be downward-facing and shielded so as to prevent light spillage on adjacent properties.
- Revise the schedules to note that ten shrubs are required per 35 linear feet; Provide additional shade and evergreen trees in "Bufferyard A" and revise the Landscape Schedule accordingly.
- The architecture shall be revised to create more visual interest by reconsidering the basically rectilinear form and massing, providing more architectural detail and ornament, varying the roof line and using dimensional shingles or standing seam metal, increasing the fenestration on all four façades of the buildings using real or faux windows or doors, and using less exterior insulation and finishing system (EIFS) and more brick..
- The proposed chain-link fence with vinyl slats to be utilized for the dumpster enclosure shall be replaced with brick veneer or a sight-tight fence constructed of a durable, non-white, non-wood, low-sheen material.
- The proposed retaining wall located in "Bufferyard A" shall be modified so that it is less than six-feet in height; The proposed six-foot sight-tight fence shall be relocated to an area between the edge of curb of the drive aisle and the top of the proposed retaining wall.

For the full report go to
http://mncppc.iqm2.com/Citizens/Detail_Meeting.aspx?ID=1169.

Zoning News (continued)

Avalon Manor (Joyce Lane). Being built by Sturbridge Homes, as of mid-January 5 of the 6 homes have been sold with prices beginning at \$544,000. Information on the development is at <http://sturbridgehomes.com/new-homes/prince-georges-county-new-homes-in-burtonsville/avalon-manor/>

A New Life Church of Christ (corner of Brooklyn Bridge and Leo James Court). The WLCA Board has met with this church twice to discuss their initial design. The church will be providing an update at the February 13th WLCA Board meeting. The church is a small church, less than 2,500 square feet, and is permitted within the existing zoning.

Reaching Hearts (Brooklyn Bridge Road). The hearing for Reaching Hearts was held on December 12th with multiple residents from West Laurel present. The formal preliminary plan was approved on January 22, 2014.

After multiple meetings with the RHI team, the WLCA submitted a letter at the December 12th hearing stating:

"Based on the proffers, updated landscaping plan, and agreement to abide with Staff Report recommendation 11 "Residential development shall require approval of a new preliminary plan of subdivision prior to approval of any building permits." by Reaching Hearts International, the West Laurel Civic Association has no objections."

The attorney for RHI provided testimony with the proffers. Their submission was approved with modified conditions and additional finding; and the resolution was to note the applicant's proffered amended considerations. The proffer and revised conditions are:

Revised and Additional Conditions (numbers refer to the Planning Board Staff report)

9. Prior to issuance of any building permits within the subject property, the following road improvement shall

(a) have full financial assurances, (b) have been designed per the appropriate operating agencies, and (c) have been permitted for construction through the operating agency's access permit process: Construct an exclusive northbound left-turn lane and southbound acceleration and deceleration lanes at the proposed site entrance on Brooklyn Bridge Road.

13. The applicant shall provide additional landscaping along the property's southern boundary and its frontage along Brooklyn Bridge Road. Additional evergreen plantings shall be along the frontage along Brooklyn Bridge Road.

14. If additional parking is to be provided during the development of Phase II of the project, 50% of the parking spaces for Phase II shall be constructed with pervious material.

15. The exterior of the main sanctuary building shall consist of a color palate of non-reflective earth tones and shall include a water table constructed of masonry materials.

16. The exterior of the proposed multipurpose building (behind the main sanctuary) shall include the following:

- A two-toned facade consisting of non-reflective earth tone colors that complement the exterior color of the main sanctuary.
- Shutters shall be placed on the sides of all windows.
- Exterior doors shall have an enhanced architectural appearance.
- All light fixtures shall have a lantern like appearance.

Zoning News (continued)

17. The expanded sanctuary and classroom space to be constructed in Phase III of the project shall also include a water table consisting of masonry materials.

18. Any monument sign for the project shall contain materials that complement the materials and colors of the main sanctuary and shall be softly backlit with appropriate landscaping and up-lighting. Said sign shall not consist of scrolling or LED messaging.

Gudelsky Property (southwest corner of Bond Mill and Route 198). The proposal is for an indoor-outdoor soccer facility consisting of one indoor facility, one outdoor field, a 3-story club house, and 200 parking spaces is moving forward slowly. Mr. Gudelsky's team is pursuing the necessary changes to the zoning code as a first step. No formal paperwork has been submitted.

Iager Farm/Maple Farm (south side of Route 216, Fulton) Since July when the Howard County council voted to grant the property a combination of mixed-

use and low-density zoning or a mix of commercial along Route 216 and approximately 180 homes (2 per acre), there has been no further information.

Bentley Manor (previously Fairland Park) (Old Gunpowder Road and Route 198) Development is moving forward with their development which spans both Prince George's and Montgomery counties. The majority of the 385 lots are in Montgomery, where NVR now has 216 singles and 31 MPDU towns. The Prince George's development is sizable: 104 singles and 34 town houses. All the lots are platted, and are largely permit-ready. The developer is working on the infrastructure roadways and grading, and a new brick entry way sign has been erected. A new street-light has been installed on Old Gunpowder Road at the entrance to Bentley Manor which is directly opposite the Contee Road extension.

Konterra (Old Gunpowder, Virginia Manor). No new updates from our last newsletter.

Girl Scouts

It's Girl Scout cookie season — time to stock up on your favorites during this one time a year event which began in 1917. Varieties available include: Thin Mints, Samoas, Tagalongs, Trefoils, Do-Si-Dos, and Savannah Smiles. The price is \$4 per box.



If you don't have a *cookie connection* or a Girl Scout has not stopped by your house, you can still get your annual fix you can still buy cookies from a West Laurel scout. Call **Kim**

Jones at 301-717-4960 to place an order.

If you have a daughter interested in joining the Girl Scouts, you may also contact Kim Jones. West Laurel has multiple active troops.

Boy Scout Troop 1673

Troop 1673 has been quite active during the last few months. In November, the boys attended *Thanksgiving in the Woods* at Broad Creek Scout Reservation. We had a full day of orienteering followed by a great Thanksgiving meal!

On the weekend of January 24, the Troop attended the Winter Klondike at Seven Mounts Scout Camp in Spring Mills, PA. Activities included supervised rifle and shotgun shooting, archery, cooking, first aid simulations, tree identification, two-person log sawing and portage. The boys built their own Klondike sleds with skis to carry their gear. The weather was cold (12°F) but really enjoyable!

Thanks to the community for your continuing support, we really appreciate all of your help. **Michael House**, Scoutmaster Troop 1673

WLCA Board Members Wanted

The WCLA leadership has several key positions that will be open beginning in September and one position open now.

PRESIDENT. After 10 years of being on the WLCA Board, Melissa Daston has indicated that she's ready to go on hiatus. The President's role is defined in the WLCA By-Laws. The primary role is serving as the organization's Chief Executive Officer. Our past presidents have focused much of their efforts on zoning as more and more development has occurred in Prince George's, Montgomery, and Howard counties. Other major initiatives and efforts have emphasized improving the quality of life for West Laurel residents which has included coordinating among the many agencies that provide services to residents such as snow plowing, code enforcement, dumpster days, special services for seniors, community policing, and Neighborhood Watch. If you are interested, contact Melissa (301-776-2314 or mdaston@verizon.net) to discuss this further.



TREASURER. Susan Railey, the WLCA Treasurer, is also stepping down at the end of her term in September. The treasurer is responsible for receiving and depositing all monies paid to the Association, reconciling bank statements, accounts payable, disbursement of funds when authorized, reporting membership at each General Meeting, maintain the official list of paid members, filing legal documents as required. If you are interested, contact Susan (301-490-7172 or susanrailey@verizon.net) to discuss this further. Susan is committed to providing her successor with training and turnover time.

WEB MASTER. The WLCA is also looking for a web master to take over the public web site (www.wlcaweb.org). This is a basic web site and needs to be updated about once a month with material provided by the WLCA board.

WSSC Supplee Recreation Cleanup

WSSC is looking for volunteers to pick up trash and remove invasive weeds from Supplee Recreation Area, 16904 Supplee Lane on two dates:

- Saturday, March 29 from 9 am to noon
- Saturday, April 19, from 9 am to noon

Your work will help birds and other beneficial wildlife that we all enjoy seeing along the reser-

voir.

Gloves, bags and garden clippers will be provided. You may want to bring water to drink in the event that you get thirsty.

For more information contact, Kim Knox at kknox@wsscwater.com.

Laurel Public Library Branch Moving

The Laurel Branch Library will close for about three weeks effective February 16, 2014, before reopening at its temporary facility located at 8101 Sandy Spring Road, behind the Laurel Municipal Center. The book drop will be available at both Laurel library locations during the move.

The construction of the new Laurel Branch Library, which will be almost double the size of its current building is expected to take about 18 months.

All programs and services will continue at the temporary location, including story times, Internet access and Wi-Fi. Branch hours at the temporary location will remain the same.

Parents and guardians of children that regularly visit the Laurel library after school will need to make other arrangements during this transfer period. For homework help, customers may consult the library's website, www.pgcmlls.info. Customers may access online services, view accounts, reserve and renew materials at www.pgcmlls.info. For phone renewals, call 301-333-3111.

Please visit www.pgcmlls.info for other branch library locations and hours. Nearby Prince George's County libraries are the Beltsville and Greenbelt branches. You may also use the Montgomery County library located in Burtonsville, 14910 Old Columbia Pike.

Enjoy the WSSC Recreational Opportunities

By this time you read this Hotline, it will be only about a month until WSSC reopens their reservoir lands and water for environmentally conscious recreation -- boating, fishing, picnicking, horseback riding, and hiking. Having these great recreational opportunities in our backyard is a wonderful amenity that West Laurel offers. Do plan to take advantage of them, starting March 15, from approximately dawn to dusk.

The boat ramp at the end of Supplee Lane is an easy place to launch your canoe, kayak, or other non-gas-powered small boat. From the parking lot it is a short walk to the adjoining picnic area or you can walk up or down the shoreline for fishing. Also starting at the Supplee parking lot is a very scenic 18 mile multi-use trail (formerly the "equestrian trail", but now "multi-use trail", as hiking is also permitted) -- but please, no biking or any motorized vehicles!

This trail is quite flat near Supplee but then becomes rolling hills as it heads further west, offering almost continual views of the magnificent reservoir; one frequently sees heron and occasionally eagles. In spring, the laurel bushes along the trail bloom mag-

nificently, and in summer, the trail is shaded, relatively cool, and rather free of bugs. The trail is easy to follow with occasional trees marked with orange blazes, while the cross-trails that connect to the firebreak are now all numbered and blazed in blue. [The "firebreak" is WSSC's recently much improved perimeter road, which is for emergency use and officially not for public recreation.]

Last year, WSSC started offering their old, somewhat rough watershed map online and this year they will be replacing it with a new and accurate one, for which I am providing GPS mapping of the trail and cross-trails. This is to be an interactive map with optional topological lines and other features, and it should be handy to track your hike on your smart phone.

You are **required** to have a watershed permit for these uses.—\$70/season or \$6/day; free to people 65 and over. For the regulations please see, <http://www.wsscwater.com/home/jsp/content/watershed.faces>. Note that trail use is permitted only when the ground is dry, as announced daily on 301-206-4FUN. *Barbara Sollner-Webb*

Winter Membership Drive

Thank you to the 550 families who have paid their 2013-2014 dues and made donations this fiscal year. Your on-going support for our community is greatly appreciated. Year in and year out, we are grateful for your wonderful support.

For those who may have overlooked paying your \$15 annual dues, the WLCA is running our winter membership drive led by **Tony Spezio**. Our goal is to have at least 35% of our homes, or approximately 600 of our 1,700 families, pay their dues this year.

Your support helps us underwrite community programs, meet the challenges facing the community from encroaching development, and funds special projects. Here are the top efforts that this year's dues are supporting:

- Zoning. WLCA tracking and working on a series of major and minor development projects -- Konterra, Reaching Hearts, Gudelsky property, and a score of other development projects in Prince George's, Montgomery, and Howard County -- all have potential impacts on West Laurel. Believe it or not, having support of our efforts as evidenced by dues paying members is invaluable.
- Tracking proposed legislation at the Federal, State, and County level, providing inputs to our elected officials, and attending hearings to testify on those bills that have negative or positive impacts on West Laurel.
- On-going work with Prince George's and Montgomery County offices to enforce zoning codes, improve services such as snow plowing and trash pick-up on holidays, dumpster days, public housing, and a myriad of other issues.
- Publishing the HOTLINE and delivering it to more than 1,700 homes and our elected officials.
- Support of West Laurel activities including the Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, West Laurel Rag Tag Band, Laurel Volunteer Fire Department, Laurel Volunteer Rescue Squad, Bond Mill ES Carnival, LHS Grad Night, Laurel 4th of July.
- Support for senior and disabled residents in West Laurel -- including underwriting the costs for new smoke detectors and batteries when an elderly resident cannot afford it.
- Community beautification and clean-up. This includes graffiti removal and the entry-garden at the corner of Bond Mill Road and Route 198. We are investigating how to polish up our entry ways into the community.

Remember the dues are only \$15 dollars a year! This is the best investment in your community you'll ever make.

If you aren't sure if you've paid your dues, check in at the membership desk at the February 20th General meeting. **Tony Spezio**, our membership coordinator will be manning the Membership desk.

For those unable to attend the General Meeting, check the Dues Paid list on the West Laurel Civic Association web site (www.wlcaweb.org), say yes when a WLCA rep calls during our Winter Membership drive, or send a \$15 check made out to

WLCA
Susan Railey, Treasurer
16922 Melbourne Drive
Laurel, MD 20707

Smart Home Technology

Did you know that homes are getting smarter? Today's homeowners have an increasing number of options in home automation technology, which offers increased security, energy savings, and comfort.

Smart-home technologies are growing, with everything from the ability to remotely control a home's lights and temperature to sending text messages to appliances or monitoring a home's security and energy consumption from a smart phone.

Smart homes can be trained to react to the owner and be automated based on the owner's lifestyle: Lights can turn on when it senses the owner is a certain distance and can turn off as the owner leaves.

Homes are being outfitted to capture predictive analytics that can help owners know when something is wrong, too. As a homeowner, you often don't know when an appliance or system will break. With smart home technology, your home will alert you when something is not functioning properly.

Here are some of the newest technologies available:

Texting appliances: LG's new Home Chat smart platform connects your home's appliances to your smart phone, allowing you to text back and forth.

App-controlled home: Samsung has debuted its Smart Home App, which allows home owners to control several appliances in their home, from the TV to connected appliances, wearable tech, and more. Homeowners can personalize settings on their electronics and then control them remotely.

For example, they can view cameras in their TV or other devices while they're away from home; receive alerts from the Smart Customer Service feature when something in their home is going wrong, such as an appliance malfunctioning; and use a voice-control setting to speak commands to the home, such as turning off the lights by saying "leaving."

Wi-fi Thermostats are beginning to become common

place. This type of thermostat allows you to program your thermostat from your computer, tablet or smart phone remotely. There are several major manufacturers:

- **Voice-controlled thermostat:** Honeywell recently introduced a Wi-Fi Smart Thermostat that responds to voice commands. For example, say "make it cooler," and the thermostat will cool the house by one degree. Or, tell the thermostat to "make it five degrees warmer," and the thermostat will follow your voice prompts.
- **Learning thermostat:** The Nest Learning Thermostat learns your schedule, programs itself and can be controlled from your phone. Nest has a simple design and interface and provides feedback when you are saving energy.
- **Ecobee Home IQ:** Ecobee offers several smart thermostats along with a Home IQ provides an analysis of your home's heating and cooling performance, energy efficiency and savings.

Touchscreen locks: Schlage touted a new lock that can be opened or locked with a four-digit code and controlled with a smart phone app. The lock will also send home owners alerts if the lock is being tampered with or the wrong code has been entered a certain amount of times.

Smart lights: Lumen introduced an app-enabled LED Smart Bulb that can be controlled wirelessly via a smart phone. You can dim the lights, set the lights to come on at a certain time, and even choose from one million colors to set the right mood.

Find out how these new hi-tech products can help make your life more convenient, comfortable and energy efficient. Check out www.smarthome.com. West Laurel residents can also check out BGE, Verizon and Comcast for available technologies.

To find out what will add the most value to your home, contact me at: Lenora@LNF.com.

West Laurel Civic Association
P.O. BOX 387
Laurel MD, 20725



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The Neighborhood Newsletter of West Laurel