

Olney Town Center

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Olney Town Center Advisory Committee
Tuesday, February 24, 2009 – 7:30 p.m.
Olney Library, Large Meeting Room, Olney, Maryland

Olney Town Center Advisory Committee (OTCAC) members in attendance: Bob Beard, Eileen Cahill, Mark Feinroth, Joe Fritsch, Paula Kahla, Walter Lee, Helene Rosenheim, Joe Buffington, Nancy DeLalio, and Chris Garland.

Others present: Sharon Dooley, Jim Haddow, Kathleen Broults-Olney concert band, Dave Eskenazi, Jeff Dunckel, Khalid Afzal.

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

Vice Chair Helene Rosenheim conducted the meeting in Jim's absence and called the regular meeting of the OTCAC to order at 7:35 pm. The agenda was accepted with no changes. The meeting minutes of the December, 2008 were tabled until the arrival of Khalid Afzal, suggested to change meeting location name from 'Buffington Building' to 'Olney Community Room'.

Public Comments – none.

GUEST PRESENTER – Mr. Jeff Dunckel. Pedestrian safety concerns.

How to interact with State Highway Authority (SHA), information packets were distributed. Background – 18 years with Montgomery County, he has been the safety coordinator for 2 years. Duncan established a committee in 2001 to study the impacts of vehicular/pedestrian safety considerations. Isaiah Leggett compiled information into strategy which is divided into seven strategies outlined in the table of contents from the handouts, summarized below:

1. Targeting improvement to high incident areas audit of Piney Branch Road and ___ results of strategy at work.
2. Connectivity – sidewalks 10 miles of new sidewalks a year is the goal. Safe routes to schools included in this area.
3. Bicycle and Pedestrian emphasis. SHA feels there is area for improvement here. SHA would be supportive of more walk-able development. Planning department has more control here.
4. Corridor and intersection improvements. Connecticut Ave and Grand Pre roads were reduced from 4 lanes to 2 lanes and speed limit was reduced by 10mph. Arcola is another area where this was done and both seem to be working well and are much safer.
5. Signal pedestrian upgrade. Historically SHA focus has been of vehicle speed/flow through intersections. By changing signal speed from 4 feet per second to 3 ½ feet per second, pedestrians have more time to cross the intersection. ADA compliant signal change over is occurring as well.

6. Street lighting – state roads and county roads are both being looked at for financial year 2010 budget.
7. Enforcement and education strategy. Add more speed cameras, slows cars and provides revenue. More crossing guards. Data analysis to police for crash data/analysis capability. Developing a county wide education campaign, there are funding issues/concerns. SHA is partnering with DOT, Police, Permitting, schools etc. for safety and implementation.

Question and answer session:

Eileen Cahill– offered her congratulations on the Arcola intersections changes, not a bottleneck and inquired if the revenue stream generated by speed cameras is used for specific areas?

A – Police Capt. Demme would be better able to speak to the effectiveness of speed cameras to slow traffic more long term. More effective when strategically placed, localized. Ambulance fee, bill 3508, possibility to use some revenue from speed cameras for ambulance fee. Net income of \$10 million from speed cameras last year. 35% of this income is for pedestrian safety and of that, 25% is proposed to go to Poolesville. There were 3 accidents there versus many more down county; questions of viability for that much funding to Poolesville have been raised.

Sharon Dooley – Takoma Park Campus intersections. The Takoma Park side has sufficient sidewalks on county roads. Georgia Avenue, a state road does not have enough pedestrian considerations. Parking is located on the other side of Georgia from campus. What factors influence the decision to place sidewalks and crosswalks?

A- Georgia Ave is next for audit.

Joe Fritsch – Why are there no crosswalks on the north / south portions of rt. 28 and Georgia Ave?

A- SHA response is it will slow down traffic.

Joe Buffington – As Town Center density increases it will trip into SHA review, increased growth makes it harder to cross.

A – Similar to Bethesda 355, East/West highway etc. The precedent is more lights, more crosswalks, slower traffic. Olney is a major commuter route, Brookeville bypass is proposed. The Burtonsville bypass is not considered a successful solution.

Mark Feinroth- Crossing sidewalks have so many curb cuts, driveways etc. Any thoughts on the design of sidewalks and curb cuts to make this better?

A-Wider sidewalks are safer, road code calls for wider sidewalks. Enlightened developer could help with this. Federal Realty in Rockville Town Center (355 is adjacent with walk-able sidewalk right next to it) and Bethesda.

Nancy DeLalio suggested the committee look to incorporate something in the guidelines to address these conditions.

Dave Eskenazi – Are there statistics for the Olney area?

A- He can get that for us, Olney is not on the top of the list, and an audit is probably 2 years out.

Walter Lee- Standard time to cross road is 4 feet per second entire time from white to solid red light is changing to 3 ½ feet per second. How do we contact SHA if the timing is off for a particular intersection?

A- Call 240-777-6000 to request a work order to check it out. Most are electronically monitored; you will need the time of day of discrepancy.

Jim Haddow- What can the community do either through county or state to address incident area until an audit happens?

A- Send him email with particular locations of concern and he would distribute to the right person.

Chris Garland- Does a crosswalk on state road have to have a signal?

A- Very hard not to have a signal on a state road, high speeds. County road it is done more often, 30 mph +/-.

Joe Buffington- Do you coordinate with metro and ride-on for locating crosswalks?

A- Yes, working to relocate stops for intersections and crosswalks. Many bus stops are hold-overs from earlier traffic flows, SHA and Metro are working on it.

Sharon Dooley- Flashing crosswalks is it possible to get them in Olney?

A- These are not working well and have been deemed a failure. They are a maintenance nightmare. Rockville and DC chaser system, bright flash may be a better choice/option.

Dave Eskenazi- Education and enforcement, motorist not yielding right of way to crosswalks. Interested in what steps can be taken to enforce/educate motorists.

A- A comprehensive strategy. Education and enforcement engineering only goes so far. Targeted high visibility enforcement.

Q- Ice and snow, 24-36 hours time frame for clearing sidewalks. Cases where nothing is done, some in businesses, HOA's and county houses. Is there a number to be called for enforcement?

A- DOT main number 240-777-6000. A 311 system is to be on line in 2-3 years, county centralized number.

Walter Lee- If you are walking rt. 108 and Georgia East to West at Georgia and 108 (Priti's) the timing of the left turn signal to drive South on rt. 97, a permissive green traffic light overlaps the pedestrian go light. Island is not ADA compliant.

Helene Rosenheim- Bus stop shelters.

A- 5,400 in Montgomery County, all will be updated/touched in 6 years.

B- Georgia Ave review, Arcola to Glen Allen privacy world.

C- Moving forward to identify intersections in Olney, suggested 1 or 2 members to come discuss with SHA. Send formal request for intersection review.

Nancy DeLalio- Portable orange flags are available for pedestrians in Chevy Chase on Connecticut Ave. Is this something that SHA would need to approve or can Olney implement as a community for difficult intersections to increase pedestrian visibility? Rossmoor has them as well in community.

A- He will ask about approval. Garrett Park uses raised cross walks etc. Pedestrian toolbox – countdown ped heds are now standard. Bumpouts etc, pedestrian refuge areas.

Joe Fritsch - Crosswalk and button pushing. Some intersections the button must be pushed to activate light for pedestrian crossing.

A- Automatic system or push button, controversial, moving towards more automatic countdown ped heds. Accessible versions cost \$30,000 per intersection.

Future dog and pony show of what SHA is doing, progressing. Committee should do this before Part 2 of design guidelines is complete. Road code designation change will have impact on town planning.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Executive Report – Helene Rosenheim reported that Ike Leggett came to GOCA January meeting. Jim presented overview. The message was that broad community support when we come to the county with proposals would be helpful. It was suggested that the committee meet with Mike Knapp. Eileen Cahill suggested a meeting before April 1st or during the summertime. A similar format to the Annapolis visit was suggested. Chris Garland also has contact with Mike Knapp.

Jim Smith would like to establish a panel for March / April of 3 people to look at group to seek funding for Public Private Partnerships etc for the Civic center and state funding. Dan Dionisio, involved with Freeman Fields, Sally Sternbach, Executive director of the Rockville City town center, and a member from Bethesda Partnership could be invited to speak with the OTCAC. Eileen will connect with Jim to contact individuals to discuss the process with the committee.

Design Guidelines Subcommittee – Nancy DeLalio reported that the guidelines need to be revisited and finalized to be prepared for development submissions, Moss building in particular. Walter Lee raised question of exterior of Library language/design. The Sayag property is on indefinite hold. Preliminary plans have 12 year timeframe to expiration. Ike Leggett is trying to extend permits due to economic situation.

Rules Subcommittee – no report.

Outreach Subcommittee – Bob Beard reported that the flyer is the fact sheet with display on the back. Jim Smith and Nancy DeLalio are to receive a GOCA award for Contribution to the Community.

Our House/GOCA clean up event 9 am to noon at 108 and soccer fields. Sunita Bhatia suggested contacting schools for Community Service credit possibility. Students need pre-approval for projects.

Report to Legislators – Mark Feinroth reported that they met with Ike Leggett, Rona Kramer, Ben Kramer, Kaiser, Taylor, Montgomery, Hank Heller for health reasons was not attending. Good meetings with Mike Lennet who was uninformed at first but brought up to speed. Met with Senator Kramer and 2 delegates, later joined by others. For the day a total of 2 Senators and 5 Legislators were involved in presentations of the Olney plan. Ben Kramer was interested with Freeman business issues, lease terms as they are in commercial development. As expected there was not much for funding, OTCAC was briefed on bond issues at the state level. First need to go to County for funding then may approach the State for funding. If the County does something with funding, the state may as well especially on bond issues, example a public private partnership for the civic building. The Legislators expressed an interest in traffic issues and appreciated the presentation and being kept in the loop on future plan possibilities. Mike Lennet suggested forming a higher committee to work on Public Private Partnerships committees.

Property Owners- Joe Buffington reported that he contacted the Mosses; they are still working out some things. SHA issues to work out. Possibly April or May for design revisions update.

They foresee a problem/friction with proposed allowable density, OTCAC goals and SHA.

Website Subcommittee – no activity to report.

High Priority Pedestrian Crossings Subcommittee – Helene Rosenheim report that covered in presentation tonight. Dave Eskenazi suggested having input from both OTCAC and GOCA on a letter for intersections and pedestrian safety issues to SHA for unified message. Paula mentioned a website for Walk-able streets. Dom Nozzi's urban design principles, Paula distributed her internet research.

NEW BUSINESS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

The next meeting will be held in the Olney Community Room at 7:30.
The meeting was adjourned at 9:25 PM

Submitted by Nancy DeLalio