

Olney Town Center

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Olney Town Center Advisory Committee
Tuesday, February 26, 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 Batra, Nancy DeLalio, Joe Fritsch, Paula Kahla, Dorothy Kane, Walter Lee, and Helene Rosenheim.

Others present: Khalid Afzal, OTCAC's Park and Planning liaison; Sue Barry, Buffington RE/MAX Realty Centre; Bob Beard, GOCA/OTCAC Outreach Subcommittee; Joseph Eagan, Olney Library Manager; Bette Buffington, Buffington RE/MAX Realty Centre; Dr. Joe Buffington; Joe Buffington Jr, Buffington RE/MAX Realty Centre; Ellen Coleman, Pres, Olney Chamber of Commerce; Jenni Davies; Sandy & Bobby Fletcher, Fletchers BP Service Center; Matt McShane; Lee Spencer; DeVance Walker, Mont. Co. Dept. of Economic Development; Bill Wanatosky

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

Chair Jim Smith called the meeting of the OTCAC to order at 7:30 pm. The agenda was accepted with no changes. The minutes from the January meetings were approved with no additions or corrections.

Review Public Input on Draft Illustrative Concept Plan

The following are a summary of some of the comments the OTCAC has received either via email or at this and previous presentations of the Draft Illustrative Concept Plan (ICP):

- Ms. Coleman noted that it is not the Chamber's responsibility to publicize the presentations, including the Chamber Breakfast, but they did help. The OTCAC should have notified all business owners. Her contact at BF Saul was not aware of what was happening, so there was a sense that all the appropriate people were not being notified.
- **RESPONSE:** Bob Beard noted that Ms. Mauk had agreed to help with publicity for the Chamber Breakfast because it was a Chamber event and the OTCAC had personally delivered invitations to business owners and mailed one to most property owners within the town center, and acknowledged that not all business or property owners were covered. Also, Jim noted that he and Barbara Falcigno met with staff of BF Saul early in the process to make sure they were aware of this effort and to encourage their interest in taking advantage of this opportunity; and that, in clarification, indicated that all the shops and offices in their center were left an invitation either by himself or Bob Beard.

(This discussion was continued later in the meeting – see remaining comments below.)

Nomination Application to Fill Vacant GOCA Seat on the OTCAC – Sunita reported that the Committee had received a nomination form from Bob Beard to replace Gina Angiola as the representative from the Greater Olney Civic Association, noting that he has been active with his homeowners associations, is an officer of GOCA 92007- Ex VP, 2008- Corresponding Sec), and very active with the OTCAC and the Outreach Committee for some time.

The Subcommittee moved that Bob Beard’s application for membership on the OTCAC be approved. No second was required and the motion passed.

Sunita concluded by commending Gina for all the work she had done during the previous year.

Presentation: Overview of Mont. Co. Department of Economic Development (DED) Programs, DeVance Walker, MC DED

Jim noted that the Committee has heard concerns from small business owners in rented space about the some of the stresses that redevelopment of the property they are located in may place on them. The Committee is interested in finding out if there a role the County and the State governments can play in helping these business owners. So, a representative from the County’s Department of Economic Development was invited to give an overview of the services their office could provide in these types of situations and introduced DeVance Walker from that office.

Mr. Walker noted that early involvement with their office is important and groups like the OTCAC can facilitate that communication. He noted that there are grants when a business is impacted by an action taken by a County or State agency. When the action is initiated by a property owner, the principal things their department can offer are tax incentives, loans, and technical assistance. They can help with such things as showing business owners how to negotiate leases, locating a temporary location, facilitating their relationship with the property owner, changing the focus of a business – if needed, and training employees. They do not want to see businesses move away, so their office would want to monitor the situation and see what is going on and work with their partner County agencies to help the affected business owners. Their partner agencies include the Department of Housing and Community Affairs who would work with the property owners, and the Mid-County Regional Service Center. They could also work with the Olney Chamber of Commerce. In response to a question, he is going to find out who a business owner would contact about compensation if their business is impacted by construction on another nearby site. He also suggested that Olney might be a site for one of the “incubator” organizations the County has been establishing recently. There are 4 now in the County, but none for commercial businesses.

Presentation: A Historic Perspective in the Olney Town Center Concept Plan, Joe Buffington, Jr. Buffington RE/MAX Realty Centre

Joe noted that some people are feeling some frustration because the draft illustrative concept plan was not what they were expecting. Some thought the plan was going to deal more with things like streetscape, signage, façade materials, etc. In his presentation, Joe looked at the question of whether there were buildings in Olney that may not be designated historic, but may be worth saving. He noted that the purpose of the presentation is to raise the awareness that preservation should be considered as the plan is developed. He suggested possibly identifying areas that should be preserved as they are to maintain the character of Olney and coloring these areas on the illustrative concept plan so that it is clear they should not be redeveloped. He showed photographs of many building he felt captured the character of the town center area and would be worth preserving. Khalid Afzal noted that during the master plan process Park & Planning’s

historic preservation staff did not identify any additional properties in the town center of enough historic value to designate them as historic. Having a property designated historic does place some conditions on what can be done to the exterior of a building, but it does not take away the right of a property owner to enjoy monetary benefit from their property. Joe suggested that the first step would be to talk with property owners to see if they want their properties preserved and it might be useful to talk with the County's Historic Preservation Commission.

Review Public Input on Draft Illustrative Concept Plan – continued

Jim reviewed all of the comments received via email to date. The following are additional points made during this discussion at this meeting:

- People are just now becoming aware of what this effort is about, so the comment period needs to be extended.

Joe Fritsch moved that the Committee extend outreach on the Draft Illustrative Concept Plan until June 30, 2008.

Helene Rosenheim seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

- Small property owners are not adequately represented on the OTCAC. The representation on the Committee by the Freeman Companies which is a large property owner in the town center may not be able to speak for the small property owners within the town center area. And, the Chamber represents many of the small business owners, but they may not necessarily be the property owners.

Walter Lee moved that the membership of the OTCAC include representation of a small property owner.

The motion was tabled till the March meeting to allow time for the Rules Subcommittee to review the By-Laws to see how this would be accomplished.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Executive Subcommittee- Jim noted that:

- The Committee had nominated Bill Caldwell to receive one of the Greater Olney Civic Association's 2007 Awards for all the pro bono work he and RCTL had done in creating the draft illustrative concept plan. He was chosen to receive on their Contribution to Community Awards and it will be presented to him at the March 2nd Awards Ceremony at Longwood Rec Center.
- Work on developing guidelines for a civic center will be delayed as the Committee continues to work on the Draft Illustrative Concept Plan.
- The OTCAC officers serve on a 2-year cycle and the first 2-cycle ends at the April 2008 meeting. The positions to be voted on are Chair and Vice-Chair. All Committee members are eligible to run for either position. Nominations will be taken at the March meeting and voted on at the April meeting.

Committee for Montgomery – Dorothy reported that the Committee on Montgomery held its annual Advocacy Day at Annapolis. They learned that there would be less grant money in the next few years because of the tight budget situation.

Outreach Subcommittee – Bob noted that Nancy will be making a few revisions to the one-panel display board before placing them in a number of locations around the town center. Kulley

Bancroft had okayed placing one of the display boards in the lobby of the Sandy Spring Bank. The Post Office is still considering their request to place one there. One will be placed in the Olney Chamber of Commerce office. Bette Buffington offered to place one in the Olney Community Room in the RE/MAX Realty Centre. Bob added that they were open to ideas for continuing to get the word out to the community about the Draft Illustrative Concept Plan.

Website Subcommittee – No Report

Illustrative Concept Plan Subcommittee – Nancy DeLalio reported they may need to have another of their Friday noon-time meetings after she completes the changes to the plan that have already been discussed.

High Priority Pedestrian Crossing Subcommittee – Helene Rosenheim reported that the Subcommittee held their first meeting and decided to plan a meeting with Dave Eskenazi and Joe Fritsch to discuss their observations and suggestions for difficult intersections in the town center area. Then the Subcommittee members plan to take a walking tour of the town center area to look at each of the existing intersections.

Ad Hoc Rules Subcommittee – Jim will convene a meeting of this subcommittee to look at the membership issue discussed earlier.

NEW BUSINESS - None

Before the meeting was adjourned, Helene noted that, at the suggestion of Natalie Cantor, the Director, Mid-County Regional Service Center, she had invited Pete McGinnity from their Redevelopment staff to the March meeting to discuss some of the lessons learned from the current redevelopment effort in the Wheaton Central Business District. But, in light of the items being carried forward from this meeting to the March meeting, she will delay his attendance till the April meeting.

Submitted by Helene Rosenheim