

PRA MEETING MINUTES
January 7, 2008

Kira Lueders, President of PRA called the meeting together. Everyone introduced themselves to the group.

First Kira announced that she had just received an email from Joe Pospisil saying that the permit parking signs would be going up on Tuesday January 15 on Saul Road between Franklin Street and Oldfield. This is the location as requested on the application. At the same time they will be removing the parking restrictions on the school side of Saul Road but they will be keeping no stopping signs. Anyone with questions can contact Mr. Pospisil.

Treasurers Report – The treasurer's report was included in a handout with the agenda. No questions or discussion followed.

Kira said that she had provided some documents from the neighborhood to Mr. Pogue to demonstrate problems Parkwood had had with DPW&T. These included a letter to Mr. Brett Linkletter regarding trees needing county attention for which we had created an excel chart that seemed to have been lost by the previous person in charge. The original request from PRA went back to November 2006 and we still have trees that need trimming. She also sent the emails regarding the whole process with the street paving so that they would have some idea what the neighborhood had to go through. Kira also sent some correspondence about the permit parking process and how she had sent a letter which was taken out of context and that she tried to correct by contacting three people, but never got any answer that it had been received.

Kitty Stone gave the membership report – Laura Akinbami, Tamara Stuckey and Gerald Sharp formed an envelope committee to increase membership – they had pink slips with Kitty's address on the envelopes. Since December 20 – Kitty received a total of 76 responses which is really good. And of those over 60% used their address labels. Kitty was also interested in how many of those were returning members – 2/3 were returning members. Kitty could not report how many members PRA has because her computer crashed. But we have about 90 – 100 for the new year. So she thought it was a big success. Thank you envelope committee!

Old Business: We had a question about the move of Walter Reed to Navy with regard to the traffic. Once the draft environmental impact statement was published members would decide whether PRA would write a letter on behalf of the associate about how they think this will affect the neighborhood. A draft letter was given to members when they came in. Kira wrote the letter, Liz Brennan edited it. Kira asked that if members agreed that the letter should be sent. Could someone to make a motion.

There was discussion regarding the letter and potential impact on Cedar Lane. The letter pointed out the areas not studied which we think are important. The letter has to be submitted to the Navy by the 28th of January. Kira encouraged everyone to send an individual letter as well.

Motion was made to vote on this letter with emphasis to be changed. A vote was taken after more discussion and clarification of the changes. As a result of the discussion, the letter was revised before being sent to the Navy. A copy is on the PRA website.

Guest Speakers: Tom Pogue, Community Relations Manager, Montgomery County Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPW&T) and Joe Pospisil, Head of Traffic Engineering and Operations Section, MC DPW&T.

Kira introduced the speaker by noting that in many ways the department has been very helpful with regard to holiday schedules for trash pick-up; traffic lights and/or pot hole repairs, however, on some other respects it has not been as helpful.

Peter Mansbach expressed his concerns for a sidewalk on Franklin from Edgefield Rd to Beach Dr. He made a motion to have PRA support his request to have a sidewalk installed. Open discussion followed about exactly where the location would be, the demographics, other experience in requesting a sidewalk, etc.

Tom Pogue then spoke explaining who he is and what he does. He is a relations coordinator so he cannot make the sidewalk appear, however, he can guide us through the steps. Mr. Pogue handed out a residents' guide to services folder to everyone. We have approximately 85 different services. The county has a web site: www.montgomerycountymd.gov

Montgomery County is a suburban county of almost a million people that is fast becoming urbanized and people are expecting an urban situation in a suburban county. So the reality is there are waiting lists for everything. The department just does not have enough resources. They are using a "queue" format. For instances, does that sidewalk connect to a school? If yes, it becomes a higher priority. Does the civic association stand behind it and is there unidarity behind the request? This also helps the process. An area map of some of the sidewalks was discussed and it was pointed out that since the community evolved as it developed some areas did not get sidewalks when in fact they should have way back when – which is frustrating for the county, however, it is like this throughout the whole county.

The County is now obligated to have public hearings for new sidewalks. Some discussion followed on the process and how long to wait for responses etc. Mr. Pogue did explain that since they have limited resources, to allow approximately 60 days and/or look at the area residents are concerned about (whether it be a knocked down sign etc.). He stated that a lot of the departments receive so many requests that they work on the requests but do not have the necessary time to call back to give an update.

General discussion followed and concerns were voiced and discussed. One main topic was the issue of cross-walks. Discussion came up with regard to our tree issue and how Kira had done so much work on the excel chart and emails back and forth with the county and then "poof" everything was dropped because the person "assigned" to our "case" left the county job.

The Department is extremely reluctant to give out dates. Because they were spending more time explaining why they missed a date and not getting the work done at all. Then Kira also talked about the horrible experience we suffered with the "dates" from the "paving" of the streets. There was extensive discussion about the poor quality of paving work done this past summer. Mr. Pogue stated that the county is locked in with the contractor. If residents have water collecting on the sidewalks (puddles) please call 240-777-6000 and ask for Mr. Berrick. This is a breakage issue and he is the person who needs to know about it. Their inspectors go to the areas if such issues are called in.

The county had sent via regular postage mail the flyer/newsletter regarding the improvements to the neighborhood. They switched from bulk mail in order to ensure this information was being delivered. The county is looking into the possibility of automatic email alerts through their web site, however, at present they do not have enough resources to get this up and going. But for now they are using the flyers. Resident's feedback is very helpful because he knows if residents are not getting this communication the County needs to figure out why.

Questions regarding the condition of the sidewalks were asked. It was explained that the material was inspected before the contract was awarded. The material and work product are under warranty. Therefore, the contractor will keep coming out and repair what will be needed.

Question came up: "How are you going to fix the resurfacing?"

It has been determined that this is typical paving. If there is a lot of debris out there then the sweepers will come back. Because of the cost of this type of application the County can do three times are many places/applications compared to a fully new paved street. It is an industry standard used throughout the United States and has always been an acceptable level for maintenance to cover 5,000 miles of roadway. The County would like to pave all the roadways, however, the County cannot afford it. If a residents have specific locations they would like inspected – they cannot pull their guys out to look everywhere, since they are in the middle of the next big project. Call 240-777-6000 and talk to Glenn Leahy.

Question arose about permit parking – Last winter/spring the County looked at the criteria to implement the parking. Either a block or neighborhood needs to make an application for it. They need to meet certain criteria as far as vehicles, the amount of parking space that is taken up, and the amount of that space that is taken up by non-residents. If these criteria are met then it goes to the public hearing process which took place in September 2007. There was a lot of opposition throughout the neighborhood and I think part of that was the inability of the County to convey what the program was to everyone. The County came out with a large ultimate area and what that meant was that the people within that area would be eligible to get permit parking but that does not mean that they have to ever get it. They create a large area in an effort to make things easier for themselves because 2/3 majority on the block have to agree to have permit parking installed. Permit parking could be overturned the Parkwood permit parking area is now the block between Franklin and Oldfield Drive – one block plus the school. Come two months from now – if the block decides that the problem is resolved they can request to have the permit parking taken out and it will be done. Those in the affected area that have not received a packet, please contact the County via email: joseph.pospisil@montgomerycountymd.gov

Lara Akinbami has been communicating with the County about the traffic concerns in our neighborhood. The traffic study was done two days after Easter, so the dates and times were not appropriate for the problem times we experience. Parkwood between Puller Drive and Saul Road will be re-studied. It met the volume criteria but just missed the speed criteria and historically it had been the speed criteria. It was requested that Franklin from Cedar to Edgefield be studied as well. One option would also be to increase the number of speed signs in the neighborhood as a reminder to drivers that they are in a residential area. General discussion followed.

Peter Mansbach made a motion that the PRA support his application for this new sidewalk on Franklin St, from Edgefield Rd to Beach Dr. Kathy Byars noted that she had already spoken to several of the residents adjacent to the proposed sidewalk, and they were in favor of it. Maryann Dillon moved to amend the motion by first requiring that we check with all the adjacent residents and get a majority of them supporting the sidewalk. Peter argued that this would delay the application, that Kathy had indicated that we already had the support of half of those residents, and that in any case there would be a public hearing before any decision was taken by the county. Maryann's amendment was defeated. Peter's original motion was passed, without the amendment.

New Business:

Elections are coming. The current officers will not be running again. We need new people so residents were encouraged to start thinking of candidates. Voting will be at the March meeting.

The next meeting is March 31st. Hope to see you there!

Meeting was adjourned.

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