

Parkwood Residents Association
September 25, 2006
Minutes

Kira Lueders gave opening comments. She thanked the officers, the committee chairs, listserv administrator Heidi Lipson and webmaster Peter Mansbach for all they do for the PRA. She noted that minutes from the last meeting were on the web site and printouts were available at the meeting. A motion was made to accept the minutes and was approved.

Guest Speaker: Tom Reynolds, Manager of Research and Information for the Maryland Municipal League, was invited to provide information on the process for a neighborhood to become a municipality as a result of interest shown in this topic by discussion on the listserv. Kira pointed out that Parkwood is surrounded by municipalities, and has more homes than all of them combined. Mr. Reynolds handed out a handbook/pamphlet on Municipal Incorporation and answered questions. Information is also available on a web site www.md.municipal.org.

The description of municipality was laid out in state law in 1954: Municipality is home ruled - residents control their own destiny within the bounds of what the state has laid out. For example: elected officials, control over revenue raising, control over what type of services are provide and to what extent. However, the services could cost more. On page 9 of the pamphlet is a list of considerations – why incorporate? – what are the advantages of incorporation? The pamphlet gives a comprehensive list of pros and cons.

Kira explained that the discussion of Parkwood becoming a municipality that took place on the listserv may have been prompted by the possibility that property taxes could be lower in a municipality. She expressed her concern that a municipality requires a large degree of citizen involvement, and Parkwood sometimes had problems finding residents willing to volunteer. Mr. Reynolds confirmed that this is an issue with some municipalities.

Some points raised during questioning included the following:

You would still be paying for services – Montgomery County has a program if services are duplicated – they would pay a municipality back...

For Maryland there is no distinction between city, town or municipality so there will be some overlap – a municipality can choose the name.

To go forward with the municipality Parkwood would need a petition signed by: 20% of registered voters and property owners owning 25% of the property value or just 25% of the residents. Then the petition goes to the County for approval. Then it gets put on a ballot for a vote. To pass, it requires a majority of the voters.

On the above mentioned web site there is a list of all municipalities and what they do and how they do things – a good source for researching this possibility.

The County can flat out reject the proposal for any reason. It is very hard to get the County's approval.

Next Speaker: Kira introduced Liz Brennan to give a CKC report, but Liz suggested the discussion regarding municipality should continue. It was agreed to be open about the idea, and to gather more information, maybe bring in representatives from the other municipalities and have them talk to us if there is interest. Liz suggested – if we want/agree to continue to explore the municipality issue and to let the Gazette know, that is, make it widely public on the issues we are unhappy about, such as our services – i.e. Pepco, county tree service, etc., etc.

A major concern is the fact that many residents refuse to pay the \$10 membership fee, much less volunteer for the few positions we have now, so how can we expect to make this work?

Liz raised the next issue regarding questions we asked Pepco. She had sent an email about this on the listserv. Richard Madaleno, our State Delegate, got Pepco to do a verification of problems in our specific area, for which he needed exact addresses. Residents with concerns regarding Pepco were asked to contact Liz Brennan 301-530-3615 or by email: brennanhouse@verizon.net. Some discussion regarding trees and Pepco followed.

As the next topic, Kira presented the traffic issue and introduced Lara Akinbami, who is coordinating the issue with the County for PRA.

To move forward with traffic calming we as an organization will need to request studies on troubled traffic areas. The process is as follows:

- President of PRA would write a letter to Montgomery County asking for traffic studies on streets we list
- If section of road meets the strict criteria, county will do the study; make recommendations for engineering options to control traffic
 - either horizontal or vertical
- If study then goes forward there is no obligation on our part to accept their recommendation
- Lara made a list of roads that have been suggested, with a map
- Lara stated that a lot of neighbors suggested stop signs – however, the engineers do not use stop signs as a traffic control device

The main roads suggested are:

Parkwood Drive (between Puller Drive and Wildwood Road)

Saul Road (between Cedar Lane and Parkwood Drive)

Franklin Street (between Beach Drive and Cedar Lane)

mostly around the school and cut through streets to Beach Drive

80% of residents on specific street with calming will have to agree

and

50% of residents on affected streets have to agree for anything to go forward

(the community – does not have a say – just the specific resident homes affected by the calming)

A vote was taken for Kira to write a letter to the County officially making the request on behalf of PRA. A motion was made, seconded and approved

Kira next brought up the topic of vandalism in the neighborhood, which has been discussed on the listserv. This included car vandalism in which tires were slashed. She asked if anyone had other incidents to report and what had happened. One option is to have a neighborhood watch.

The best way is to get to know your neighbors, so you will know when and what if anything strange is going on, so you can then call the police and/or your neighbor first to make sure all is o.k. Mainly, be a good neighbor, for example: if you see newspapers collecting at the curb/yard, just pick them up, so it's not obvious that your neighbor may not be home.

Look for the residents directory to be coming soon

Liz gave a CKC report: Revitalization of Kensington starts this November. It's a good thing but will take some time to complete.

Kira mentioned an email she sent out on the listserv for a tax credit for which some residents may be eligible, as follows:

The Montgomery County Council has recently expanded the property credit eligibility to households that earn up to \$60,000. The credit averages nearly \$750. The application deadline is October 31. All those who believe they may qualify are encouraged to apply for the credit. Call 1-800-944-7403 or for more detailed information visit the County website at www.montgomerycountymd.gov. The program is the "Homeowners Property Tax Credit Program". An alternate web site is www.dat.state.md.us/sdatweb/htc.html

The December meeting will be held December 4th. The KPES chorus will sing holiday music, and there will be refreshments and an opportunity for residents to get to know one another.

Kira thanked everyone for coming.

Submitted by Brenda Marshall, PRA Secretary

Edited by Kira Lueders, PRA President

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