

Minutes of Parkwood Residents Association Winter Meeting, February 22, 2021, via Zoom

Jeff Griffith, vice president, opened the meeting, at 7:35 p.m. He welcomed participants, said that the meeting was being recorded, and outlined the agenda. The election of officers and chairpersons as well as the vote on the budget will occur after the speakers' presentations. A discussion and vote on special projects such as the proposed memorial for Tommy Raskin, son of MD Congressperson Jamie Raskin, will take place at the end of the meeting.

Jeff then turned the meeting over to Kira Lueders, president, who introduced the speakers: Jason Gedeik, Manager of Adult Education at Montgomery Parks, and Montgomery Councilmember-At-Large Evan Glass.

Presentation by Jason Gedeik

Mr. Gedeik spoke of the importance of nature for mental health. He then presented Zoom participants with evidence of the wonders of nature via slides of beautiful gardens and landscapes at Brookside Gardens

Brookside Gardens, operated by Montgomery County Parks, is located on Glenallen Road, off Randolph Rd. within Wheaton Regional Park. It is open daily sunrise to sunset, although the Visitor Center and conservatories are temporarily closed. It is a 50 acre public garden employing 15 horticulturalists and many volunteers, including Kira. It offers adult education, children's education, and numerous seminars. It is available for weddings, funerals and other events. The annual Wings of Fancy butterfly exhibit and December Garden of Lights are family favorites. Renovations include a new parking lot and expanded gardens. In addition to the Visitor Center and conservatories, there's a gift shop, rest rooms, and a new greenhouse.

Mr. Gedeik treated Zoom participants to gorgeous slides, including a rose garden with hundreds of varieties of roses in bloom mid-May to the first frost, a children's garden, Japanese tea house, perennial garden, trial garden (where new seeds are

tested), and a labyrinth. New additions include a cherry tree grove. Brookside Gardens also sponsors speakers and classes on topics such as rainscapes and orchid re-potting.

The GreenFest in April will be virtual this year. The Spring and Summer Program Guide has just been published on-line. The website is www.brooksidegardens.org.

In answer to questions, Mr. Gedeik said that there are over 600 volunteers, though fewer come during the pandemic. They welcome volunteers; anyone may apply. Brookside Gardens does not offer a Master Gardener class, though they work with the University of Maryland. Brookside Gardens has a relationship with the Nature Center, which is more focused on wildlife and children's education programs. There's also a bee exhibit.

Presentation by Montgomery County Councilmember-at-Large Evan Glass

Councilmember Evan Glass was introduced and welcomed. As a member of Montgomery County Council, Councilmember Glass serves on the Health and Human Services Committee and the Transportation and Environment Committee. He noted that part of his role is dealing with homelessness and keeping the public transportation system moving even in a pandemic and economic downtimes.

Most importantly, all areas of the county government have been working on Covid 19-- getting people tested for the virus and getting access to vaccines for county residents. Councilmember Glass stated his belief that the way the Covid vaccine has been rolled out here in Maryland has been less than ideal.

He explained: We have a very decentralized approach. Governor Hogan is in charge of the distribution of vaccine doses, which are given to each of the 24 counties in the state. The counties then administer the doses based on their own criteria. MC is in class 1A and 1B. The state is already down to 1C. In MC we don't have enough doses for 1A and 1B, which is why we haven't yet

gone to 1C. The Governor has also given vaccine doses to pharmacies and hospital systems causing some confusion. As we stand now, about 12% of our residents have received a first dose and almost 5% have received 2 doses. Councilmember Glass believes we must do better, and he shared his frustration with the county's inability to get more vaccines and to get them with enough notice to schedule appointments in advance. He pointed out that the football stadium in Baltimore is now a mass vaccination site in addition to the Baltimore Convention Center. Six Flags in Prince Georges County is another mass distribution point.

Mr. Glass pointed out that the jurisdiction noticeably absent from this list is Montgomery County, the largest jurisdiction in the state. The county has been requesting a mass vaccination site and has proposed the fairgrounds in Gaithersburg, but the Governor does not seem interested.

Councilmember Glass posted a link to a new State of Maryland dashboard specifically for vaccine information: COVID-19 Vaccine – Montgomery County, MD.

He then invited questions and comments from Zoom participants and many did have questions, most of them critical of the vaccine roll-out and the amount of time residents need to spend trying to find a vaccine.

In answer to a questions regarding wasted vaccines, Councilmember Glass questioned that assumption. The county does not get near enough vaccines from the state. The county team monitors vaccine distribution every morning. One problem with both distribution and communication is that the county is not informed in advance how many doses they will receive and when. Because of the way the county receives doses from the state, leaders don't know how many doses to expect and plan for.

In answer to a question: why not just pitch the vaccine roll-out back to the state? Mr. Glass responded that he wishes the Governor would take control. The governor maintains that vaccines are being distributed equitably based on population, but

that doesn't work for us. MC is the most populous in the state and has the top 10 zip codes with the highest incidence of the virus. Mr. Glass does not believe we should be treated like Calvert and Anne Arundel counties that have much different populations and Covid rates.

In regard to a suggestion of establishing wait lists for unused vaccines as used by some hospitals and other sites, Mr. Glass responded that wait lists are a good idea and hospitals such as Suburban and Holy Cross notify people on their lists when they have some doses left. The county, however, doesn't have that many doses and few are wasted. They carefully monitor vaccine distribution.

Councilmember Glass agreed with a questioner that we need a centralized source, but he said that the state has not created a statewide system despite requests. In response to the question: Then why can't the county set up a county-wide system? Councilmember Glass responded: The problem is that the County does not control the doses. We are not told how many vaccines pharmacies and hospitals are going to get, and we're only told how much the county will receive on a week-by-week basis. The county does not have the information or even the statutory authority to combine the MC HHS with CVS, Giant, Walgreens and Johns Hopkins. Only the state has the capacity to manage that.

In response to a comment about out-of-county residents getting vaccinated here, Mr. Glass said that all of the DC regions have an agreement whereby people can be vaccinated either in the jurisdiction where they live or where they work.

Montgomery County's need is greater than in other counties, it has a highest number of people over the age of 75 and the highest number of minorities. The county is dedicated to making sure that the information goes out to communities where people are underserved and may be skeptical. We are working with community groups for outreach efforts to share information re: the vaccine, especially in minority communities, which is why we have a distribution site in White Oak.

In answer to a question about why teachers are not in one of the top tiers for vaccination, possibly ahead of the elderly, Mr. Glass agreed that we need to get our kids back to school. MC has worked with Johns Hopkins to get teachers' vaccinated. One example of the problem is that when there was a mass vaccination scheduled for Richard Montgomery HS, word leaked out, the line went around the block, and some persons with appointments may have given up.

Councilmember Glass was thanked by Kira for his presentation and willingness to listen to and respond to participants.

PRA Business Meeting

Kira turned the voting portion of the meeting over to Jeff.

Election of PRA Officers and Committee Chairpersons

There being no dissent or alternative candidates, the current slate of officers was re-elected by consensus for a two-year term, ending June 2022. [Note: This term actually began in June 2020, which is when election of officers should have occurred. However, we did not have procedures in place at that time for online voting. The current officers agreed to stay on, beginning in June 2020 through June 2022, subject to a vote of the membership at the next meeting when voting could take place.]

PRA Budget

The issue of special projects will not be part of the budget vote but will be discussed later in tonight's meeting.

Gerald Sharp, PRA Treasurer, presented the Treasurer's Report and Proposed Budget for 2021, using tables presented as Zoom slides.

He began by showing growth and changes in the PRA in the past years. A total of 368 residents renewed or became new members in 2020. This number, 40% of the number of homes in Parkwood, is the highest membership figure in the 40 years of

PRA history. Twice as many persons used PayPal to pay their dues in 2020 than in 2019

Expenses for the past year were down as activities were limited due to the pandemic. We couldn't print and distribute a newsletter, except for a few that we print for members who don't have email. That saved on printing costs. We saved the reservation fees at Kensington Parkwood ES, as we could not reserve meeting space as school buildings were closed. Zoom software fees, an increased Survey Monkey fee, welcome committee expenses, and an increase to cover maintenance in the 5 Parkwood gardens have been added to the recommended 2021 budget. Other Expenses are: doggy potty bags, needed bench repairs, and repainting Parkwood signs.

Gerald's 2nd slide listed 2019 and 2020 receipts. \$3660 was collected in dues in 2020--up from \$3350 In 2019 as more people signed up. More members paid by PayPal. The total of PayPal paying members was 116 in 2020. Only 72 used this payment method in 2019. The total income for 2019 was \$7038.52. In 2020 it was \$8576.55

Gerald displayed a graph of when people pay membership dues each year. The largest number, about 2/3 of members, paid between January and April. Another group paid after a survey was sent out regarding preferences keeping Beach Drive closed to traffic.

Gail Dalferes, Beautification Committee Chair, requested a change in the budget: changing "daffodil planting project" to "planting perennials including daffodils." There was a motion, accepted by membership, to change this line. The Beautification Committee's report has been published in the PRA newsletter. Gail clarified the financial arrangements for paying Bailey Condrey, landscaper: All landscaping budget decisions are made by the Beautification Committee; all invoices and payments are handled by Gerald, treasurer.

A motion was made to accept the budget. Members were asked if there was any discussion or

objections. There were none, and the budget was approved by consensus.

Special Projects

The question of whether the Beautification Committee of the PRA should authorize a memorial for Tommy Raskin, son of Congressman, Jamie Raskin, was discussed. It was proposed that the Beautification Committee plant a tree in the Parkwood Triangle and place a plaque nearby. Objections were made that doing so could be seen as starting a precedent that might be seen as a commitment to make similar gestures in the future. A motion was made to have the PRA manage the tribute, but it was tabled. After additional discussion, it was agreed that a large group would meet for the purpose of making recommendations.

The meeting was adjourned at about 9:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Judith Dighe, secretary