

Park Improvements

The Board wrote to the Montgomery County Budget and Planning Office in 2001 in order to be considered for a county improvement project for the park at Haverhill and Saul Road.

The Board received a call in November from Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission that they want to build a pavilion and install a water fountain at our park. Shannon Hamm is working with staff at MNCPPC to develop the plans.

It is not clear when construction will take place and to what extent MNCPPC can accommodate the full request, which also include building a privacy screen for the porta potty, additional trash cans, and installation and up keep of the disposable dog bag dispenser. We have also requested picnic tables for the pavilion.

If any residents are interested in working with Shannon, please email her at shannonhamm@comcast.net.



9711 East Bexhill Drive
Kensington, MD 20895

Covenants Approval Request to Montgomery County Council

The Board submitted a letter, posted to the RCHCA website in November 2005. The letter requests the Montgomery County Council to consider changing the rules for building permits to require that properties with covenants have the approval of the local citizens association's covenants board prior to receiving approval for a building permit.

The Board would also like the council to consider supporting legislation that would require all titles and deeds having any restrictive covenants attached have those covenants presented to buyers at the time of closing. To date, the council has not responded to the letter.

RCHCA Treasurer's Annual Report

(Summary)

January 1 - December 31, 2005

Acct. bal. (Jan 1, 2005)	18,813.73
Total income (2005)	13,135.00
Total Expenses (2005)	8,024.40
Acct. bal. (Dec 31, 2005)	23,924.33
Reserves	\$10,000.00
Balance - reserves	\$13,924.33

Robert J. MacDowall, Treasurer

Annual Dues Due

Enclosed in this newsletter is an annual dues payment envelope.

Your \$35.00 annual dues payment helps pay for our expenses such as annual events, the newsletter, meeting room costs, and Rock Creek Hills directory production.

If the envelope is missing or lost, the mailing address is:

RCHCA Treasurer
Robert MacDowall
9909 East Bexhill Dr.
Kensington, MD 20895-3202



Rock Creek Hills Citizens' Association
rchca.org

Your Neighborhood
News and Information
Winter 2006

Message from the Board

By now we trust that everyone has recovered from holiday festivities, although hopefully still feeling the afterglow. As we begin the new year, we should consider all of the things we are thankful for. Among those should be living in a beautiful community where neighbors are aware and active.

RCHCA represents our community in matters where collective participation is beneficial. Over the years, we have been successful in keeping our members informed and bringing our views to bear on issues of common interest. Guest speakers on subjects like the Safeway renovation, the WSSC's "Big Dig", and on crime prevention by the Montgomery Co. Police Dept. have helped keep us informed while giving voice to our concerns. And past examples of RCHCA-organized initiatives that have borne fruit include:

- Having traffic surveys in which solutions were locally voted upon and implemented;
- Restoring trash cans in our neighborhood parks, something done selectively in the county upon organized request;
- Gaining approval for funding and construction of a pavilion and water fountain at Rock Creek Hills Park;
- Addressing the issue of train noise, now in the diagnostic field review stage before a Quiet Zone can be formally requested.

We also usually hold a few events each year to get to know our neighbors better. A special thanks to Eden Durbin for organizing our recent Halloween Potluck and Parade, which made a gorgeous fall day come alive with kids (and adults) having fun.

The best way to keep the Rock Creek Hills strong, and as a great way to know our neighbors better, is for members to participate in some capacity. We are asking people to volunteer to do something they already are interested in, spending as little or as much time as desired. There are several standing committees that afford such opportunities, whether in planning, legislation, environment, transportation, covenants, or transportation (see side box). For special events like the Halloween Parade and the Concert in the Park (the latter, unfortunately missed this year), we welcome and need volunteers, perhaps just to organize a single event, or even to suggest a new event that may be of community interest.

Please come to our **January 28 Annual Election Meeting**, preceded by a potluck dinner with pizza and chicken provided by the Association (see details inside). We will be voting for RCHCA Board members to serve another year. All officers are willing to stay on, but anyone may be nominated from the floor, and contested elections are welcome (UN observers usually being unnecessary). Hope to see you there.

<i>President</i>	Joe Rosenberg
<i>Vice President</i>	Shannon Hamm
<i>Treasurer</i>	Bob MacDowall
<i>Secretary</i>	Mike Baker
<i>Past President</i>	David Hall

Annual Dues Envelope Enclosed

Winter Meeting and Pot-Luck

Saturday, January 28th
Potluck 6:30 Meeting 7:30-9:00

Grace Episcopal Day School
9411 Connecticut Avenue, Kensington, MD

Get Involved With Neighbors Who Enjoy Making a Difference

Consider participating as much or as little as your time and interest permit: Join or lead one of our 6 standing committees:

- Building & Covenants
- Communications
- Legislative Planning & Zoning
- Health & Environment
- Special Events
- Transportation

Next RCHCA Meeting & Pot-Luck Dinner

The RCHCA Pot-Luck Dinner/Annual Meeting is scheduled for Saturday, January 28, 2006 at Grace Episcopal Day School. The traditional pot-luck dinner will begin at 6:30 p.m., with our annual meeting scheduled to begin at 7:30 p.m. RCHCA will provide the main dishes (e.g., pizza and fried chicken) beverages, and foodservice items (plates/cups/napkins/cutlery). We ask everyone to please bring a side dish, salad, or dessert. Babysitting will be provided during the meeting.

The pot-luck has proven to be a great opportunity to meet and introduce new neighbors, as well as an opportunity to re-connect with friends during the winter months when we tend not to see one another as often. The meeting to follow will include a presentation by Parviz Izadjoo, Project Manager for park and development division for the Montgomery County Department of Park and Planning, along with John Boyd, Park Manager for Montgomery County Park and Planning and the election of all RCHCA Board members; nominations from the floor are welcome. Other topics will include the Treasurer's report and updates on issues like the request for traffic surveys, beautification of traffic triangles, and the Quiet Zone initiative. New issues of interest to members are always solicited. Please plan on attending.

We welcome volunteers to help in planning, set-up, and clean up of the event. Please contact Joe Rosenberg at

Traffic Committee Report

Alexa Freeman, chair of Traffic Committee

Traffic Committee Survey

Thanks to all who completed the traffic survey we circulated last winter. While not statistically reliable, it was extremely helpful in gauging the depth of the community's concerns about traffic in our neighborhood.

Most respondents said that speeding is a serious problem. People are worried about walking on streets with heavy traffic because there is so much speeding. Many said that they won't let their children play in front yards, walk to school or friend's houses, and ride bikes in the streets. Others mentioned that they think that the problem is largely commuter cut-through traffic rather than local traffic.

There was less agreement on solutions. Survey responses were grouped according to whether the respondent lived on a busy, moderately busy or quiet street. Generally, residents of busy streets were more interested in traffic-calming strategies than residents of quieter streets. They were also more interested in having sidewalks. Residents of quieter streets were more likely to oppose traffic-calming measures, especially speed-bumps. The most agreement was to limit cut-through traffic during the rush hours. There was strong support for a bike path on Kensington Parkway, and also some support for having bike paths in other neighborhoods. Finally, we should note that not all residents thought that there is a traffic safety problem.

Montgomery County Traffic Survey

The Montgomery County Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPWT) manages traffic safety programs. Its strategies include:

- Speed bumps
- Edge lines to narrow wide roadway to create parking lane or shoulder
- Traffic circles
- Curb extensions
- Median or Pedestrian Refuge Islands
- SMART trailers (flashing speed display)
- Speed Watch (citizen radar program)
- Sidewalks

The type of traffic survey that DPWT agrees to conduct depends upon whether a community is willing to consider all traffic calming methods. For the most comprehensive traffic survey, a community must agree in advance not to oppose speed bumps. This is because they are both the most effective safety technique, and also the most controversial. The DPWT does not want to go to the trouble and expense of doing this type of survey, identifying hazards and analyzing from among the full range of solutions only to have this strategy foreclosed.

There are 2 types of speed bumps:

1. Standard (slows traffic to 15 mph)
2. Flattened (slows traffic to 20 mph). Flattened are used for Primary Residential streets and would be the only option for Rock Creek Hills.

Flattened speed bumps are approved by police and fire departments because they do not slow emergency response time. As well, they do not cause injury to drivers and passengers if the vehicle is driven the speed limit. 80% of the houses on a street must agree to speed bumps, and the neighborhood association must not oppose them.

The DPWT also studies the other traffic calming measures listed above. These are easier to achieve, but less effective. The traffic specialists at DPWT are willing, however, to study the impact of some of these in lieu of speed bumps or as an initial strategy to see if they alone they alone might be effective. Again, the proviso is that the community be willing not to oppose speed bumps if these other strategies are ineffective.

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Several suggestions offered by respondents to our traffic survey are either ineffective or unavailable:

1. Enhanced (non-routine) police enforcement is available only on arterial roads (Connecticut).
2. Stop signs where not warranted are ineffective because people learn that they aren't for directing traffic and roll through or speed in between signs.
3. Traffic cameras such as those used in DC are not a possibility because Governor Ehrlich opposes them on privacy grounds.

Access restrictions, the most popular strategy mentioned in the survey, is a long and involved process, taking about 2 years. Restrictions apply to everyone, residents included. (Neighborhoods where residents are exempted are independent towns where police can enforce.) Nevertheless, restrictions are extremely effective in reducing traffic if done properly. Like speed bumps, DPWT will assess the possibility and impact of traffic access restrictions only if the community indicates in advance that it will not oppose them.

Finally, sidewalks are a good way of providing traffic safety. They also must be supported by a majority of residents on the street, although the County reserves the right to install them regardless of community support if it determines the situation is dangerous enough.

Where does RCHCA fit in this picture?

Upon request by organizations such as RCHCA, DPWT will agree to conduct the most appropriate type of traffic survey to identify safety problems and to propose solutions. DWPT wants such requests to be specific as to: (a) location (e.g., name of street between two cross streets); (b) nature of problem (e.g., speeding); and (c) whether or not all possible solutions, including speed bumps and/or access restrictions, are deemed acceptable. Agreeing to have the most comprehensive traffic survey does not mean that speed bumps or access restrictions are the inevitable outcome. The only proviso is that if RCHCA were to indicate in its survey request that such measures are acceptable solutions, and then, say, if speed bumps are recommended following the survey and approved by 80% of the impacted houses on the block, RCHCA cannot come back later and say that speed bumps at that location are not acceptable.

The January meeting agenda will include a discussion of these issues and, if possible, obtain a consensus of what next steps should be taken..

Train Noise Update

A Diagnostic Field Review of the Forest Glen/Linden Lane rail grade crossing was completed in November by a consultant to the County's Department of Public Works and Transportation, (DWPT). A final report will be submitted to DWPT. Based on that report, DWPT, together with the State Highway Administration, will consider whether a formal application should be submitted to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) with the objective of establishing a Quiet Zone at that location. Prime considerations will be what type of supplemental safety measures should be employed in order to provide the same safety as the audible sounding of train horns, and where funding for such measures would come from. An update will be provided at the January 28 RCHCA meeting.

Election of RCHCA Board Members

All Board members from 2005 have agreed to serve again in 2006 if elected. Nominations for other candidates from the floor are welcome.

Current officers standing for re-election are:

<i>President</i>	Joe Rosenberg
<i>Vice-President</i>	Shannon Hamm
<i>Treasurer</i>	Bob MacDowall
<i>Secretary</i>	Mike Baker

Directory Advertising

We are beginning our biennial update of the RCHCA Community Directory for 2006, and are once again accepting advertisements!

Our directory includes ads in order to help defray production costs, as well as to make our members aware of community-based business and professional services. We are asking interested parties to provide their advertisement layout to us by February 28, 2006. Price and size/location guidelines are as follows:

Size/location	Per Ad
One-third page	\$55
One-half page	\$75
Full page	\$115
Inside back cover	\$120 min. *
Outside back cover	\$150 min. *

** Given that the inside and outside back covers offer unique, more prominent placements, in fairness to all prospective advertisers and our members, RCHCA will be accepting one-time only bids for these two directory locations. Bids can be submitted either by e-mail, regular ("snail") mail, or by a sealed envelope delivered at our annual meeting or sent to Joe Rosenberg at the address below by Tuesday, February 21, 2006. If either mail option is used, please provide a telephone number for us to confirm bid receipt. Also, we assume unsuccessful bidders would still like to have a directory advertisement, so please indicate your alternative preference (i.e., full, half, or 1/3 page).*

All prospective advertisers should get in touch with RCHCA President Joe Rosenberg either by e-mail (jrosenberg@comcast.net), or by regular mail (9821 La Duke Drive, Kensington, MD 20895). If you haven't heard back from an RCHCA official within 10 days of either mailing, please call me to confirm that your mailing was received (301-495-9821).

Thank you for your interest in serving our community.