

# e-Bugle

## Garrett Bugle Internet Edition

Volume 66

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No. 1

### Calendar

Tues. Jan 1	Town Office Closed	Mon. Jan 14	Art at Penn Place, showing the works of Nachin Bone, through Feb 9 Town Council Meeting, 7:30 pm, Town Hall
Sat. Jan 5	<b>Large Item Pickup</b> Farmers Market, Penn Place 10 am-1 pm; Gives Collection, PO Lobby 9 am – 12 pm	Thurs. Jan 17	GPJams, 8:00 pm, Town Hall
Tues. Jan 8	Lunch Bunch, 12:30 pm, Town Hall Communications Advisory Committee Meeting, 8 pm, Town Office	Fri. Jan 18	Film Society presents <i>Hell or High Water</i> Dinner at 7 pm, Film at 8 pm
Wed. Jan 9	Historic Preservation Committee Meeting, 7:30 pm, Town Office	Sat. Jan 19	Farmers Market, Penn Place 10 am-1 pm
Sat. Jan 12	Farmers Market, Penn Place 10 am-1 pm	Sun. Jan 20	Art at Penn Place, Meet the Artist Reception for Nachin Bone, 3 – 5 pm, Penn Place Gallery
		Sat. Jan 26	Town Dinner, Town Hall

### Town Council Meeting Notes

December 10, 2018—Your reporter walked into the Town Hall feeling good and eager to take notes. But within 36 hours he was in excruciating pain, about to sit in the dentist's chair to undergo a grueling two-and-a-half hour root canal operation. Was the Town Council meeting so traumatic that it triggered this dental problem? Naw. But I could not pass up the chance to use the possible causal connection for a humorous start. Much of this meeting was routine, but there were a couple of developments of real significance and some disagreement.

The meeting began with the usual Mayor's remarks, in which she once again introduced Andrea Fox, our new Town Manager who was in her first day of work, and Dan Simons the new council member. This was followed by the residents' presentations part of the meeting, in which William Elwood pressed for the need to increase the budget for the Archives, since over time it has been given responsibilities beyond what it once had (a plea then endorsed by Charlie Snyder). Moving right along, the agenda for the meeting and the minutes of the November were approved with little change.

The action agenda for the evening had two items: a tree removal and the hiring of a new town maintenance person. The tree removal was simple and quickly approved; a resident wants to remove (at their own cost) a tulip poplar by their driveway, a removal that the Arboretum Committee does not object to. The other item required serious and prolonged discussion and involved essential elements of budgeting. Recall from last month that the Mayor and then-Town Manager Swearingen asked for approval to hire George Miller to be a third member of the town maintenance crew. The Council had asked for information on how much money the town expected to save by having George replace outside contractors. The quick answer (remember that the new Town Manager had begun her job only since that morning) was around \$41,000. If reasonably correct (and the Mayor pointed out that these estimates of cost saving may be low), the implication was that the town would incur a permanent increase in expenditures of perhaps \$100,000 (\$80,000 salary plus benefits), with an offset of the \$10,000 his firm has been receiving as a contractor to the tow plus the \$41,000 in savings. That would imply a net increase on the order of \$50,000, a sizable amount (roughly a four percent increase in total town expenditures,

*Continued next page*

based on the current budget). The main questions for the Council to grapple with were: a) is there enough additional essential maintenance work currently not being accomplished to justify this additional personnel expenditure, and b) can the town budget stand this increase in expenditure? These were the two issues that the Council and Mayor debated for a considerable period of time. For example, some said, George would be in a good position as a licensed contractor himself to supervise and review the work done by outside contractors (implying a quality improvement in town management). Along that line, new Councilmember Simons noted that what one really needs to make this decision is a more detailed business assessment of how maintenance work is done by the town and how this hiring would improve efficiency and needed capacity—information that the Council did not have. On the affordability issue, the Mayor noted that for the past two years the town has underspent its budget, so there is a surplus and can cover this increased expenditure, although there was not as much follow-up discussion on this (e.g. no discussion of what happens if the U.S. economy heads into recession and tax revenues drop). This gives you a flavor of the really important issues that were discussed (as an economist, your reporter finds this kind of stuff to be at the heart of what elected government bodies are supposed to debate and decide). After all was said and done, the vote was four in favor, one opposed (Councilmember Wegner). So, George Miller will become part of the maintenance crew and the town will incur the increased expenditure.

New business for the evening consisted of three items: small cell towers, timing of a budget workshop, and possible banishment of plastic straws. Disposing of the easiest first: the Council agreed to have two workshops in January to discuss mid-year changes to the current budget and formulation of the budget for FY2030 (that begins July 1, 2019).

The cell tower issue involves the roll-out of the next (5G) cell phone system. Yes, folks, within a couple years your 4G phones will be out of date. Apparently 5G signals do not travel as far as 4G, meaning that some transmission equipment might have to be located in Garrett Park. What the town (or county) can do about this is severely limited by the Federal government's Federal Communications Commission. For example, we cannot ban the presence of transmission equipment or base restrictions on health concerns. But the county has some options in creating regulations for these towers and the town could have an overlay on county rules. Council members McClintock and Schulp are looking into these issues, but for the moment this is just a warning of what might be coming as the 4G to 5G network shift is implemented.

The final new business item came from Councilmember Simons, asking that the Council consider a ban on use of plastic straws for environmental reasons. Such a ban would affect mainly Black Market, but also use of straws at town functions or by people renting the Town Hall. The discussion was about both the issue (Councilmember Simons works with a non-profit that is pressing this issue and he gave some background), and how he might proceed in presenting the issue to the Council

as an action item. Councilmembers Wegner and Schulp cautioned that one danger is the town getting overwhelmed by such bans, each of which might seem good but which in totality are difficult to administer.

Next came the usual updates. Most of the six updates can be dealt with quickly. The leveling of the sidewalk on Waverly is underway and will be finished soon. The Traffic and Parking Committee is continuing its work, now looking at parking issues at the end of Weymouth, where some residents of Parkside leave their cars. The roof of the Town Hall has now been re-shingled, a necessary maintenance regardless of how the plans for renovation evolve. The inventory of trees on town property is now completed and the contractor will provide a draft plan of action in the next month or so. Councilmember McClintock added to her report on this that the Arboretum Committee is looking into what kind of management regulations or procedures (regarding removal and planting trees) might be appropriate, and is looking at what other towns have done. On street repaving, parts of several streets have now been selected for work in the spring, all to fit within the \$200,000 budget for this.

That leaves the big update issue: the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) sidewalk project. The Mayor informed the Council that the compendium/catalogue/matrix of written communications by "consulting parties" (i.e. people who objected to the sidewalk project) and town responses required by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) was completed by her and sent to FHWA the previous week. This is supposed to result in a final determination by FHWA about historic preservation issues (please see the Mayor's update letter to the town on November 26 for more detail on this complicated and much delayed process) by December 17, since the person responsible for this review is going on extended vacation after that. There was some concern, expressed by Councilmember Wegner, that he and other members of the Council were not given a chance to see this compendium before the Mayor sent it in (she pleaded time constraints, having stayed up late each night of the previous weekend to get the thing finished in time for FHWA's deadline). Councilmember McClintock noted that there exists a supplemental document prepared by Councilmember Wegner and then-Town Manager Swearingen that would help FHWA to see how the various pieces of the compendium fit together, and that this would be of use to FHWA. The Mayor felt that FHWA did not want such a document, but Councilmembers persuaded her to send it in with a note explaining its supplemental role. At this point there was an outburst by resident Charlie Snyder. Apparently encouraged by the idea of the Council submitting to FHWA a supplemental document that they did not ask for, he shouted out that he had managed to stop the project for six years and with this unwanted submission, he would find a way to continue blocking the project. This outburst pretty much took everyone's breath away, and led Mayor Kacky to put in a quiet plea with him to come together with the rest of the town on this issue. So, business as usual on the sidewalk project.

The Town Manager's report finished the evening. Both expenditures and receipts are within expectations. With that, your reporter headed home, little knowing that by morning he would be in pain. Ah, the sacrifices we reporters make for our jobs.

The **Garrett Bugle** is a newsletter publication by the Citizens Association of Garrett Park and published 10 times a year. Publication is supported by member dues. All residents of Garrett Park are members of the Citizens Association. Yearly dues (\$25 per family or \$15 per individual per address) can be sent to Citizens Association, Box 456, Garrett Park, MD 20896. Articles, ads and other content for the *Garrett Bugle* can be emailed to [garrettbugle@gmail.com](mailto:garrettbugle@gmail.com)\*

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\*Editor and staff reserve the right to edit submissions for length and clarity. Unsigned Letters to the Editor will not be printed.

## Town Manager's Notes

Hello and Happy New Year! For those I have not yet met, I am Andrea Fox, your new Town Manager as of December 10, 2018. I look forward to meeting each of you.

**Natural Gas Odor** – Some of you may have read this already in the Garrett Park Mailing List (GPML), but the long and short of it is if you smell gas, immediately call 703-750-1400. This number is also on the Town's Emergency Contacts webpage. After you call Wash Gas, you can also make the Town office aware by calling us at 301-933-7488 or emailing [managerandrea@garrettparkmd.gov](mailto:managerandrea@garrettparkmd.gov). Even if you have called about a gas odor in the past at a similar location, Wash Gas encourages you to call again since it may be a new problem.

**Holiday Gifts** – Thank you to those who contributed to the crew members who take away our trash, recycling, and yard waste. If you would like to contribute, please mail your check to the Town of Garrett Park, PO Box 84, or drop it off at the Town Office. Checks should be made payable to the Town of Garrett Park with "Holiday Fund" written as the memo. The town will send each contributor an acknowledgement and will see that the funds are properly distributed. The Town Office will collect contributions through mid-January.

**Large Item Pickup** – The next large item pickup is Saturday, January 5, 2019.

Lastly, thank you for the warm welcome to Garrett Park. Your closeness, pride in community, and appreciation of the Town's history and natural beauty is apparent. I look forward to getting to know you and am in turn proud to be your Town Manager. Please reach out to the Town Office with any questions or concerns, 301-933-7488.

Andrea Fox, Town Manager

## Citizens Association Notes

### Town Dinner

The 2019 Town Dinner, presented by the Garrett Park Citizens Association, is on **Saturday, January 26, 2019**. The theme for this year is "Kitchen Disasters." Bring your stories about baking gone wrong, cooking calamity and that one time you misread the recipe. The doors of the Town Hall (Kenilworth Avenue) will open at 6:00pm and we will sit down at 6:30pm. As always, this is a pot luck dinner. Please bring one of the following: appetizer, salad and bread, main dish, or dessert (enough for 8 to 10 people). We will provide disposable plates/forks/knives. However, as an environmentally-friendly alternative, please consider bringing your own reusable plates, silverware, and serving utensils. Please RSVP to Sean ([sconlan@gmail.com](mailto:sconlan@gmail.com)) or Darshini ([darshinibtrivedi@gmail.com](mailto:darshinibtrivedi@gmail.com)) and let us know what you'll be bringing. Alcoholic beverages will not be provided, however, please feel free to BYOB. A fee of **\$5/per person** will be collected at the door to cover the cost of decorations, non-alcoholic drinks, and paper goods. This is a convenient time to pay your annual CA dues (\$15 for individual or \$25 per family) and we'll be voting for this year's slate of CA officers (see below). Please invite your neighbors and friends who haven't been to a town dinner. The Citizens Association is nothing without you!

### CA Elections in January

The 2019 CA elections will be held during the 2019 Town Dinner on January 26. The current CA President and CA Secretary will be stepping down from their official roles and therefore, we are specifically looking for enthusiastic individuals who are willing to step up and fill those roles. Nominations for other CA roles (VP and Treasurer) are welcome as well.

### CA Dues

The annual CA fees for 2019 will be due in January. The fee is \$25 for individuals and \$25 per family. These dues go towards paying for the Bugle printing, and the annual CA events such as the July 4<sup>th</sup> cookout, Wine Tasting, and Spooky Woods. If you are planning on attending the Town Dinner in January, you can pay your dues then or you can mail your check to the GPCA at PO BOX 456, Garrett Park, MD 20896.

## Arboretum Notes

The Arboretum Committee is pleased to announce that field work for the comprehensive inventory of all town trees (street trees, parks, etc.) was completed in early-December by the staff of Natural Resources Design (NRD), whose staff you have probably noticed walking around town with I pads and clip boards cataloging all of the trees in the Town's Right of Way and marking them for identification with tree friendly small aluminum tags.

Natural Resources Design is preparing both the

inventory and a proposed Town Tree Plan. The Arboretum Committee will be reviewing the work of NRD on the inventory, and we look forward to receiving a first draft of the Tree Plan early in the new year. These are key steps in the continuing process of organizing the town's Arboretum database, and will undoubtedly lead to improvements in the policies and procedures surrounding tree maintenance, care and planting in Garrett Park.

Michael Spekter, Chair, Arboretum Committee

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## Letter from the Mayor

After saying our goodbyes last month to Town Manager Gene Swearingen and Councilwoman Joanna Welch, we coincidentally start the new year with our new Town Manager Andrea Fox and Councilman Dan Simons. If you attended the December 10 Town Council Meeting, you had the opportunity to meet both Andrea and Dan who assumed their official roles that evening. If you didn't attend, we produced a video recording of the entire Town Council meeting that you can watch on YouTube. This is the second consecutive meeting that we have videotaped.

As we bid adieu to the calendar year 2018, I hope you will look positively upon all that we've accomplished these past six months. Here is a retrospective of what we did as a Town and for the Town:

We purchased a long overdue wood chipper; refurbished all the teak benches around Town; re-started regular tree pruning of dead limbs as well as removal of dead or diseased trees; cold-patched pot holes; filled the third maintenance position that's been vacant for a few years with our own Town resident George Miller; completed overdue repairs to the Town Hall roof, the roof on Penn Place, as well as the exterior emergency stairway of Penn Place; re-leveled the very slanted sidewalk along Waverly Ave next to the tennis courts; and recently completed a Town-wide tree inventory (contracted with Natural Resources Design). We submitted the final project plans and bid package for our Safe Routes to School (SRTS) sidewalks to the State Highway Administration. And we just completed an arduous, time-consuming effort to review and catalog relevant documentation requested by the Federal Highway Administration for their compliance review of the Section 106 process related to our SRTS grant-funded sidewalks.

With Council approval, we also established parking regulations, which we hope to put into action this spring

with input from our new ad hoc traffic & parking committee of town volunteers. We also have an ad hoc committee of residents reviewing prospective and current Town communication modes and web content (such as our GP website and "GPML" email announcements) for greater efficiencies and user-friendly interfaces. The Historic Preservation Committee held an open house to present the architectural history of the Town Hall and solicit input for renovation ideas from residents. In the next few months we hope to hear more about these various ideas and plans for renovating the Town Hall.

While this is a fair summary of what we've accomplished to date, much of this work will continue over the next several months. Looking ahead, we anticipate constructing the SRTS sidewalks, painting the Town Hall and Penn Place, repaving some of our streets, improving traffic flow and parking at Penn Place, installing additional Town benches, and resolving some pressing storm water runoff problems around Town.

As we prepare for this upcoming work, it's worth emphasizing that our success is a shared success. –Due in no small measure to your volunteer time on committees, groups, and task force teams, your commitment to work together to produce meaningful results, and your general interest and participation in issues and activities around Town. The fact that you care and are involved makes all the difference! We can't succeed without you. So on behalf of our Town employees, contract staff and council members, I thank you for all your efforts in making our Town a great place to live.

Wishing you all a happy and successful new year,  
Mayor Kacky