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## TOWN COUNCIL NOTES

The May 11 Council meeting was held once again virtually via Zoom. The Mayor, the Town Clerk, all four Council Members, advisor-to-the-Mayor Jean Sperling, and Town engineer Joe Toomey were all on the line. More than a dozen residents also joined the call, a high turnout due to the budget hearing that was held as part of the meeting.

### Construction Updates

Town Clerk Beth Boa said that she had received three more bids to raise the sidewalks on lower Wellesley Circle to deal with the impacts of stormwater runoff on a home there. The bids were all in the \$16k to \$22k range. Mr. Toomey and Mayor Polak pushed for Chamberlain Contractors for the job, but since its bid was slightly higher than that from A.B. Veirs, another reputable company, the Council opted for the lower bid. Council Member Costello cited recent calls from residents to cut costs where possible. That work will be scheduled, and the bid is a little under \$16k (though

the actual was over \$17k).

Mr. Toomey also spoke about the status of the paving of Vassar Circle. While there were issues during construction, the finished work is good, according to Mr. Toomey. Resident and developer of the Vassar Circle properties Aaron Hirsch was requesting that the Town release the \$100k performance bond for the work (as well as allow the County to release its \$100k bond), but there was debate about how complete the performance was, since the curb cuts and gutters for the remaining three properties haven't been done (and won't be until those homes have been

built). The Mayor proposed releasing \$65k and keeping a \$45k performance bond, which he said would cover the Town if the work was not completed or if damage was done to the roads during the process. Mr. Hirsch argued that this was in essence a new bond requirement and should therefore be required of anyone building a home or doing new curb cuts. He said the Council needed to treat his project like any other and added that \$45k

was way more than the cost of finishing driveways and doing gutters. The Mayor and Mr. Toomey felt that the bond was still necessary because the Town isn't covered as long as building permits haven't been granted for those other three houses, which they haven't. Mr. Toomey said that there were major issues with the site in terms of sedimentation control and grading. The \$45k bond was sounding less like a performance bond for the completion of the roadway and more like insurance in case something happens between permitting. Mr. Hirsch pointed out that he already had a sediment control bond with the County. Council Member Stiglitz said that he trusted the Mayor and Ms. Boa to determine if the work had been completed and the performance bond satisfied, and likewise if it had not, and that any issues could be worked out with Mr. Hirsch and Mr. Toomey. But



The new signs recently installed on both sides of Vassar Circle have caused confusion and probably need to be modified.

# THE ECHO

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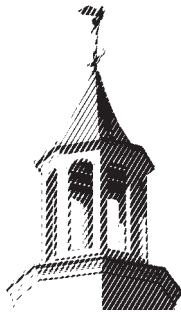
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Letters to the editor are welcome. They must be signed. Articles for publication are also solicited. Please send comments about *The Echo* to the editor, the Mayor, or any Council Member. Volunteer reporters are always needed.



## TOWN OF GLEN ECHO

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### CLERK-TREASURER

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Next (Virtual) Council Meeting: June 8, 2020, 7 PM

when the Council asked if the Mayor needed them to act on this issue, they didn't feel comfortable releasing the \$100k performance bond and instituting a new \$45k bond, because that did appear like a new requirement that needed more discussion.

After this long back and forth, the Mayor said he was happy to not release the \$100k performance bond until this was resolved. The Council said it didn't want this to wait until the June meeting, so the Mayor said he would discuss options with Town lawyer Ron Bolt and that the Council could take action between meetings if needed. The Council agreed that Mayor Polak, Mr. Hirsch, and Mr. Bolt should hash this out.

### Budget Hearing

No resident comments were taken as part of this hearing, but many people had written letters either on the Town listserv or directly to the Council asking for belt-tightening, so Members came ready to do some

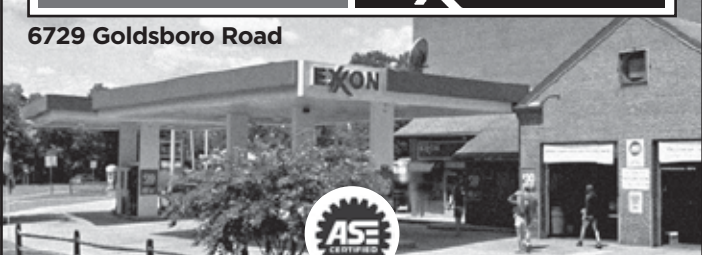
cutting. They went through the budget nearly line-by-line over the course of about three hours. This report will cover the highlights.

The first matter for discussion was the proposed increase to the property tax rate from \$.15 to \$.16. Mayor Polak said that the revenue rates go up every year on their own, so he was now proposing that the tax rate remain the same for fiscal year 2020-2021. Mr. Stiglitz reintroduced Resolution 20-03 amended to keep the current tax rate, and it was passed unanimously.

The Council Members all agreed that the realistic revenue from Town Hall rentals was much lower than the \$12k listed. They adjusted it to \$3k. Then the budget cuts began. Every Council Member voiced support for the new full-time professionalized position of the Town Clerk. They said that past clerks worked far more hours than they were paid for, and because they didn't have the experience and connections that

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our current Clerk has, many things simply didn't get done as they should have been. Everyone agreed that as Town Clerk Ms. Boa is doing outstanding work for the Town. They also agreed that, at this time, the line for staff training could be reduced.

The debate about whether the Town needs to have a layer of professionals for regular consultation (Ron Bolt, Joe Toomey, Wayne Fowler) didn't really happen, but each line saw modest cuts. It was agreed that the Council didn't want to underbudget and have to come back and amend it later. Council Member Spealman said that while we certainly need specialists occasionally, perhaps we haven't struck the right balance yet. He added that the Council should take time to evaluate how this is going halfway through the fiscal year.

Street signs got some debate. What was in the budget wouldn't really cover what the Council thought would be the cost in the end.

Most Members seemed to agree that when the time comes, the Town would want to keep the "charming" scrollwork brackets for the signs—a custom design that will run more than \$12k all told. The Council decided in the end though that these uncertain times allowed for this project to be pushed off to the next fiscal year.

The section pertaining to town streets got some discussion, but no cuts. The Mayor said that he's talking to the County about installing drains along roads into town along MacArthur Boulevard. That would be expensive, and hopefully offset by some County money, but would go a long way to mitigating the Town's stormwater runoff issues. Under Landscaping, the Council questioned \$4,500 for storm cleanup and a storm service retainer. This was discussed at the March Council meeting when the Mayor proposed having Rolling Acres on retainer for a quick response in the event of a catastrophic

weather event that would leave trees in the streets. The Council rejected it at the time, and at this meeting removed those line items.

Resident and Secretary of the Glen Echo Fire Department Board Gloria Levin asked the Council to reconsider its proposed donation to the GEFD set at \$0. The Council did and changed it to \$2k, same as the Town gives to the Glen Echo Park Partnership. Mr. Stiglitz asked that this donation be discussed again next year and not become an automatic or expected donation.

All in all, cuts were made in the following areas: staff training (\$2k); lawyer (\$5k); traffic study (\$1k); engineer (\$4k); software (\$500); dues, subscriptions, conferences (\$2,500); Town Hall improvement—new AV equipment (\$3k); street signs (\$3k); bird and butterfly garden (\$500); storm cleanup services (\$4,500); and reducing leaf collection from 8 to 7 pickups (almost \$2k). After factoring in the \$9k decrease in Town Hall rental revenue and the

added \$2k donation to GEFD, the Council saw nearly \$17k in savings. The Council passed the amended budget, and Mr. Stiglitz thanked Mayor Polak and Ms. Boa for all their efforts. He said, in normal times, the budget likely would have been passed as it had been, but the Council understood and responded to resident concerns in these unusual times.

### Looking Ahead

Ms. Boa reported that the Town is hopeful that the summer picnic will happen July 19—and not on Zoom! She's looking into a Maryland-style buffet as a possible change from the traditional California Tortilla. Also, Ms. Boa has signed up for a free cost/benefit analysis of a town-wide switch to LED streetlights.

### Town Expenses

In May, the Town paid \$17,107 to A.B. Viers (sidewalk work on Wellesley Circle), \$3,200 to Key Sanitation, and \$1,575 to Joseph Toomey Associates. —EMILY PARSONS



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**G**rowing healthy, bountiful tomatoes takes some specialized knowledge and care. For example, it is important to wait until the soil is warm before planting. Also, I recommend planting tomato plants deep into the soil because they have the ability to produce roots from their stems. As a result, your plants will grow stronger and be more drought resistant. Mulch your tomato plants to lessen their susceptibility to disease, conserve moisture, and increase yield. Two of the best mulches for tomatoes are either straw or dried leaves. For good air circulation, allow plants plenty of space when planting. A good, well-drained soil will also help produce healthy, productive plants.

For the first month, energy goes into producing leaves and in two to three weeks the fruits begin to form. It is time to prune your tomato plants when you see the first fruit ripening. While pruning think about exposing as many of the tomato

## HOLLY IN THE IVY



leaves to the sunlight as possible. A pruned tomato plant will be stronger. The best method for pruning is different depending on whether you have determinate or indeterminate tomatoes. Determinate tomato plants are also called "bush" tomatoes. These tend to be compact plants which grow to around 3–4 feet tall. This determinate type is good for containers, needs less staking, and very little pruning—usually just the suckers is enough.

Indeterminate tomato plants grow very tall (6–12 feet) and continue to grow and produce throughout the growing season. Training, trellising, and pruning your plants will help allow

for good air circulation and can prevent the fruit from lying on the ground which can lead to disease. When you see suckers appear in the leaf axil (also called the crotch) and they are shorter than 3 inches, pinch them off. If longer, use pruning shears to cut them out.

Here are some tips to minimize disease:

- ☛ Only water plants at the ground level and in the morning.
- ☛ Remove lower, diseased, or yellowing leaves.
- ☛ Periodically fertilize with fish emulsion.
- ☛ Do not plant near black walnut trees.

Heirloom tomatoes are older varieties that are open pollinated and known

to have great flavor, although some do not have good disease resistance. Some recommended cultivars are: **Brandywine**, an heirloom dating back to 1885; **Mortgage Lifter**, developed in the 1930's in West Virginia; **Cherokee Purple**, a pre-1890 heirloom; and **Amish Paste**, an heirloom that is good for cooking as well as eating.



I asked Carol Barton, who brings her mini farm stand to Glen Echo each summer, for some of her tips for successfully growing tomatoes. She writes:

*"I only grow heirloom tomatoes because I find their taste far superior to any others, but it's hard to find heirloom seedlings at the garden centers so you normally have to grow them*

TOP PHOTO: STEFANO CARELLA / UNSPLASH



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Tomato plants supported using the Florida Weave method



Tomato cage

from seed. I save seed from the best specimens each year for the next year's growing season. The one problem with heirlooms is they are more prone to disease, and it's highly recommended that you rotate their growing location every year in three-year cycles. Most people don't have that luxury of space in small home gardens. In any case, the hybrid tomato seedlings you can buy at garden centers are also much better than anything found in the grocery stores unless you want to pay a fortune for local produce at Whole Foods,

and it's fun to grow your own. When planting, I usually dig a 6-inch hole, pinch off several sets of lower leaves from the plant and bury about 5 inches of the stem underground. The plant will spout roots along this underground length, providing it more nourishment and support. Also, I've made it a practice to slide a chopstick down into the ground right next to the plant's stem to prevent cutworms from killing it. Cutworms are like little boa constrictors, squeezing the tomato's stem until it breaks off. When I first started grow-

ing tomatoes, I thought birds were killing them and built cages around them. Little did I know that the culprits were unseen critters underground. At the farm we use the Florida Weave support system, putting stakes between every third plant, then weaving garden string between the plants and the stakes to keep the tomatoes upright as they grow. Of course, we plant forty tomato plants, so this works best. I've seen it done on a smaller scale with, say, a half dozen plants. Otherwise, cages work well, though often aren't tall enough. I'd buy the

heavy-duty 6-foot cages, not the smaller decorative ones—they provide more support and last longer." For the space-restricted home gardener getting started, Carol recommends the small-fruited cherry, grape, and pear tomatoes, which are more compact plants that are sometimes grown in large containers. Because, there's nothing like a fresh tomato right out of the garden to remind you of the joys of summer, even in the midst of a pandemic. —**HOLLY SHIMIZU** and **CAROL BARTON**

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# SHELTER IN PLACE



*A fox in the front yard / photo by Bill Vincent*



*(Just to orient you, this is the Hirsches' classic Citroën)*

*A spotted fawn heading towards the Park on University Avenue / photo by Dawn Tanner*



*A pileated woodpecker at the suet feeder / photo by Maire Hewitt*



*A fox in the garden / photos by Dawn Tanner*

**W**e've heard that wildlife has started reasserting itself in quarantined communities around the globe. Could it be happening here in Glen Echo, too? Or could it be that pandemic work-from-home orders are just providing more nature-watchers? Perhaps we're just all starving for a diversion: The listserv has been full of fox and deer sightings lately!



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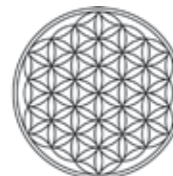
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**G**len Echo Park is staying in line with the County Executive mandates and remains closed to public classes and other programs. However, the Park and the various arts program presenters are actively serving us via online programs. The Park will remain closed in the evenings from 8 PM to 6 AM. Safety is paramount. The playground is closed. You will see yellow tape blocking access, and other buildings are off limits for now. All of our arts programs and the aquarium are discussing options for when we can offer in-person programs. Please stay tuned and check the website for news. Event rentals are be-

## OUR TOWN PARK



ing considered on a limited basis as long as they are in line with state and County mandates.

A new program just announced is an online juried

art show entitled Moving Forward. The theme is to reflect "voices of the future." Entries will be accepted until June 12. Note: We do not intend to have the tradition-

al Labor Day Art Show. The Carousel will remain closed as well. The Park is moving forward with planning for future programs that would coincide with opening of schools and easing of social distancing restrictions.

As with many other nonprofit and arts organizations, the Park has experienced financial losses and is actively working to raise funds from federal, state, and County programs as well as from individuals. On behalf of the board and staff, I want to say thank you to the Town of Glen Echo and to individuals who have generously supported the Park in this difficult time. —**MARTHA SHANNON**



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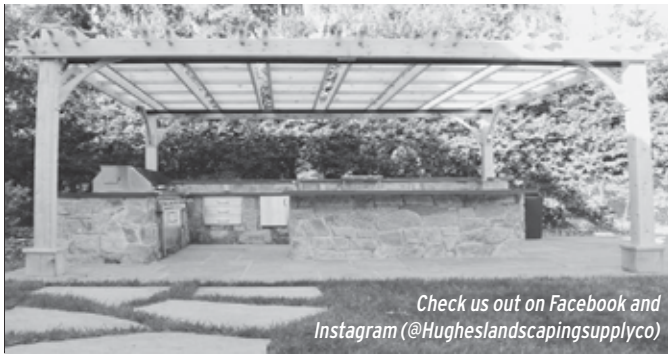
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## HAVE YOU HEARD?

This year's **Mini Farm Stand** promises to be filled with an abundance of produce, much of which has already been planted at our farm in Howard County.

Beets and rhubarb should be available soon, with cucumbers, squash, tomatoes, and peppers to follow. We will have a new look, with a green-and-white checkered oil cloth covering the table and specially-cast

concrete chalkboard blocks indicating prices. As usual, sales will be on the honor system with a cash box on the table. The mini farm stand will be located in the usual spot, on the west side of University Avenue between Harvard and Yale. There is no set schedule. Rather, the farm stand magically appears when we return from the farm with a harvest and I send out an email notice that the table is

up. If you don't yet receive farm stand notices and want to be added to the list, email me at [cbarton@mindspring.com](mailto:cbarton@mindspring.com) or text 301-312-2966.

—CAROL BARTON



*Carol and Henry's farm*

Even with plants and participants socially distanced, this year's **plant exchange** was a notable success. Everyone's looking forward to a summer full of blooming Mexican sunflowers, oak leaf hydrangeas, coleus, and hellebores. Thanks to all who came.

.....  
There's a **new emergency care facility** at the Glen Echo shopping center called AllCare. It's



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.....

**F**rom a neighbor who stepped in it: Please **pick up after your dogs** in the right-of-way along MacArthur. It's getting a lot of foot traffic these days.



.....

**T**he next **Zoom Ladies Night** will be Wednesday, June 24, at 8 PM.

.....

**T**he **Nancy Long Bird and Butterfly Garden** has been planted, although some additional plants will be added by the Environmental Committee, when appropriate, to complete the design at no further cost. The bench that will be placed near the garden has been ordered as well as some of the plaques. One plaque will go on the bench to acknowledge **Speke and Julia Wilson**, who donated it. The other plaque identifies the garden as honoring **Nancy Long**. The general donation plaque has intentionally not been or-

dered because there is hope there will be further donations and we do not want to make the plaque twice. Residents interested in making a donation can drop a check off with the Town Clerk. The Environmental Committee hopes to plant some trees along the right-of-way, adjacent to the new garden (and hopes to get them for free through PEPCO). The new trees will replace some of the trees that have been removed and are needed to help soak up some of the excess water that runs into the area during heavy rains.

**Real Estate Report**

22 Wellesley Circle went under contract in two days. The owners renovated the kitchen and baths and were asking \$1,295,000. 4 Vassar



Circle will soon be listed at \$1,449,000. Finally, 32 Wellesley Circle is available for rent at \$2,400 a month.

**CLASS OF 2020**



*Renz Johnson*



*Ben Malmgren*



*Hannah Niles*



*Justin Niles*

**S**ome much-needed happy news in town: the 2020 graduates!

**Renz Johnson** will be going to Lewis & Clark College in Portland, Oregon. He plans to study anthropology and sociology.

**Ben Malmgren** graduated with honors from St. Mary's College of Maryland with a dual major in Economics and Environmental Studies. He is interested in sustainable food production and environmental restoration and will be working this summer at Horn Point Oyster Hatchery in Cambridge, Maryland.

**Hannah Niles** graduated from Loyola University Maryland with a Bachelor of Business Administration.

**Justin Niles** graduated from Walt Whitman High School and is heading to James Madison University in the fall.

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**KENWOOD SUNOCO CENTER**

(formerly Kenwood Mobil)

5201 RIVER ROAD

BETHESDA, MARYLAND 20816

PH: (301) 652-9527 • FAX: (301) 652-1138

James Spicer  
OWNER

James Spicer III  
SERVICE MANAGER

AUTO REPAIR • FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC  
FACTORY SCHEDULED MAINTENANCE

# Coming Soon!

**4 VASSAR CIRCLE, the first of four custom homes in Glen Echo, is nearing completion.**

Look for a new listing and open house dates. Every design detail has been painstakingly considered, from the house number and door bell to room layouts and more. Excellent workmanship is backed by a warranty. 4 Vassar offers luxury living in a flexible, manageable space. **\$1,449,000**

And Glen Echo has it all: a fantastic community of neighbors you want to know, convenient access to Bethesda, DC and Virginia, and top public schools.

- Luminous living spaces throughout
- Thermidor appliances in a welcoming open kitchen
- One-car garage and off-street parking with Pinterest-worthy mudroom entrance
- Spacious master suite with marble double shower, double walk-in closets, and treetop views
- Two additional upper bedrooms and second floor laundry room
- Light-filled lower level rec room, bedroom and bath
- Bonus room for storage, home office, or gym



Basement



First Floor



Second Floor



**LAND DEVELOPMENT AND SALES:** Kingman Development. Aaron Hirsch, Principal. An award-winning developer and Glen Echo resident with 20 years of experience in residential property development, design, and construction management.

**GENERAL CONTRACTOR:** Welty Homes, Inc., builders of more than 300 new homes in the greater Bethesda area since 1983.

**ARCHITECTURE:** Claude C. Lapp Architects, an award-winning firm with more than 35 years in the business.

Equal Housing Opportunity 

