

# The Echo

The Town of  
**GLEN ECHO, MARYLAND**  
Chartered, 1904



**JULY 1985**

## **Council Increases Town Income by Raising Proposed Tax Rate**

By Jane Eldredge and Becky Dennis

The Town Council at its June 17 budget hearing unanimously voted to raise the tax rate proposed by the Mayor from \$.69 to \$.75 per \$100 real property valuation. According to the "constant yield" figures provided by the state, the lower amount would have provided the town with approximately the same number of dollars as the 1985 real property tax yield. Thus, even though the \$.75 figure is the same rate as the current rate, it will increase the income to the town by approximately \$900.

The motion to raise the rate was made by Councilwoman Long, seconded by Councilman Shultz and was passed with no discussion. When asked how this would benefit the property owner, the Mayor replied, "more road work."

After the meeting was adjourned, Councilwoman Long told an Echo reporter that the town was headed into a year of heavy expenses and needed the extra income. She cited the roadwork, the heating system and other repairs of the Town Hall and the costs of furnishing the Mayor's office as unusual expenses that would draw down our surplus.

### **NEXT TOWN COUNCIL MEETING**

Monday, July 8 -- 8:00 p.m.  
Glen Echo Town Hall

All residents encouraged to  
attend

Contact the Clerk-Treasurer  
if you wish to add an item  
to the agenda.

# The Echo

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## TOWN OFFICIALS

(Town Office: 320-4041)

### MAYOR:

Fred Kuster 229-2070

### COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Debbie Beers 229-7308  
Nancy Long 229-0196  
Harry Odell 229-4494  
Bill Shultz 229-1269

### CLERK-TREASURER:

Lois Carroll 229-3780

### ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER:

Daryl Kuster 229-2070

### ANIMAL CONTROL BOARD:

Edd Barrows 229-3193  
Nancy Helmig 229-0893  
Julie Milstien 229-9274  
Jane Eldredge (alternate) 229-4110

DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE—July 26



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

In response to Miss Levin's letter to the editor in the last Echo, I would like to clarify some facts left out of her letter.

At the time she made the offer (of a rug for the town office), she was in the process of establishing an accessory apartment in her home. Because of the Town Council's prior position on the apartment issue, and Miss Levin's own statements about this issue before the County Council, I felt it unwise to accept any favors from her. The acceptance of such favors by the town from her could have been construed by others still obtaining their "apartments" in a detrimental light.

I am available at any time to discuss any issue with any "taxpayer" including Miss Levin.

Fred Kuster  
Mayor, Town of Glen Echo

## BUDGET (from page 1)

The town ended this fiscal year with a surplus of about \$85,000. With the 1986 expenses projected at over \$71,000 more than in 1985, the surplus at the end of the 1986 fiscal year would be only around \$44,000.

Apart from the two Echo reporters, no Glen Echo resident was present at the hearing. Councilman Odell thanked the reporters and said he was pleased that at least someone had been in the audience.

With an income of over \$80,000 in 1985, Glen Echo had a good year, Clerk-Treasurer Lois Carroll noted. She indicated the town had even received tax monies from High's and Exxon, which are not located within town borders.

Mayor Kuster later told The Echo that as far as he knows, the town has not yet received the money, which was levied on personal property owned by the two businesses. He said about six months ago we received certificates of assessment from the State and at that time he informed the owner of Exxon so he could look into the matter.

The County sent out the bill, although it is supposed to let the town do it, the Mayor said, "which is confusing the issue entirely." He said he told the Clerk-Treasurer to write the State Assessment and Taxation Department about it several months ago.

The amount in question is about \$120, the Mayor said.

The town's accountant attended the budget hearing to discuss making the budget more clearly reflective of town expenditures. Councilman Shultz had complained that the budget "is a mystery to town residents-- people don't know how their tax money is being spent."



## COUNCIL OPPOSES NON-CONFORMING USE REQUEST

The Town Council unanimously agreed at its June 10 meeting that approval of an appeal by the owner of 6113 Tulane Avenue for non-conforming use of the house would set a bad precedent and be inconsistent with other actions it had taken recently.

The owner submitted a zoning appeal to the county's Board of Appeals for approval of the house as a multiple (two apartment) residence. The house cannot qualify for the accessory apartment law because the owner does not reside in the house.

The County had investigated and rejected as invalid the claims of the property owner; the law requires that the property have been occupied as a two-family \*continually since 1928 with no more than a six-month lapse in order to be "grandfathered."

---Gloria Levin  
\*dwelling

As a result, several categories were broken down to indicate more clearly what the money was budgeted for, and the information will be put on a computer.

Councilman Shultz noted that the \$500 obtained from rental of the Town Hall, plus the income from post office rental did not meet the expenses of the building. He felt the Hall ought to pay for itself, and Councilwoman Long agreed to review the rental fee structure. She said, however, that she opposes charging residents or non-profit groups a fee.

--Gloria Levin and Carlotta Anderson also contributed to this report.

## Council Authorizes Long-Postponed Street, Sidewalk Work

By Gloria Levin

Repairs to town streets, curbs and sidewalks, and the construction of a sidewalk segment along Wellesley Circle, should begin early in July. Completion date is projected as August 1, the Town Council was told at its June 10 meeting.

Street work began at the intersection of Cornell Avenue and Wellesley Circle in late June. That entrance to Glen Echo will be closed approximately four weeks.

Two representatives of Nova Associates, the town's engineering consultant, estimated that the expenditure should not exceed \$40,000.

As reported in last month's Echo, the town received no bids from contractors in an earlier advertised offering and Councilman Shultz was authorized to identify potential contractors to get the street repair plan implemented swiftly.

Demonstrating exceptional resourcefulness, Councilman Schultz contacted a Hagerstown paving firm whose truck he noticed while stuck in a traffic jam. After verifying the qualifications of that and another (concrete) firm, the Nova firm recommended that the asphalt and concrete work be awarded separately and coordinated between the two firms.

The Council was faced with a difficult decision regarding a method for running the 254-foot sidewalk along a segment of Wellesley Circle which is heavily overgrown. The excavation needed could harm the roots of the large box elder tree while protection of the tree would require construction of an interrupted sidewalk--forcing pedestrians into the roadway and thereby negating the original purpose of a sidewalk in that area.

The other alternative considered--elevating the sidewalk over the roots by a ramp or footbridge with handrails--was considered equally undesirable.

Although Councilwoman Long requested further time to examine the box elder tree, which is on her family property, the rest of the Council felt that too many months had been spent already in discussion. Therefore, the Council voted 3-0 to authorize an expenditure not to exceed \$40,000 for repairs to streets, curbs and sidewalks contained in Phase II of the overall plan for street repairs, to include the construction of an uninterrupted, unelevated sidewalk along that portion of Wellesley Circle--although possibly risking damage to the box elder. Councilwoman Long abstained due to her conflict of interest in the decision.

All Council members agreed that the old willow oak on the property must be preserved.

The town's contract will include removal of obstructing vegetation on the town's easement along Wellesley Circle; after the sidewalk has been constructed, the property owner will be responsible for clearing the vegetation.



## RESIDENT CALLS FOR ABOLISHING TOWN GOVERNMENT

(The following letter was published in The Montgomery Journal on June 19 and is reprinted here with the permission of the editors.)

Editor, The Journal:

Most of us living here in Glen Echo enjoy its unique status, removed from the sprawl and anonymity of the Bethesda, Rockville suburbs. The sense of small-town, old-fashioned, all-American community seems preserved here.

The myth is that the Glen Echo municipal government preserves that feeling of community. It is the combination of the people living here and Glen Echo's geographical position that makes this place special. The local municipal government is, at best, superficial; at its worst, an expensive and unacceptable interference in our lives. It should be abolished.

Think about our neighbor, Cabin John. Is that town any less unique, are its citizens any less involved, is their quality of life any lower because there is no local municipal government? Of course not. All that's lower in Cabin John is the tax bill.

Cabin John manages to get the snow removed, keep animals under control, even enjoy the free use of a fancy swimming pool, without the extra tax burden of another layer of government. Their community identity is not lost. Does anyone ever call Cabin John simply part of Bethesda or Montgomery County? Of course not.

It is natural, as American as Chevys and apple pie, to want to maintain as grass roots a government as possible. But historically, local governments can lose sight of their mandate, become too provincial and oppressive. That danger is extreme in places like Glen Echo where so many of us are so busy we cannot often find time to keep watch on

elected officials. The Glen Echo municipal government has outlived its usefulness and has become a burden. It is time to get rid of it.

We do not need a telephone-book thick list of local laws; Montgomery County laws cover all our needs and are quite adequate. The speed limit is a perfect example. It is a waste of money, foolish, and even embarrassing for Glen Echo to insist on posting 20 mph signs when the county police repeatedly refuse to enforce a limit that does not conform to the 25 mph limit considered quite proper in all other residential neighborhoods.

What do we do next, raise taxes and hire our own cop? We do not need a dog catcher so aggressive that she's become famous for yelling in the streets at families walking with their dogs, looking like scenes straight out of a Norman Rockwell painting.

We do not need our tax dollars subsidizing a newspaper that refuses to print letters to the editor like this one. We certainly do not need to contract out for independent snow removal and then find ourselves without plowed streets the few times it snows. And the icing on the cake must be the audacity of our tax money being spent for the remodeling of the mayor's office.

With the signatures of only 20 percent of \_\_\_\_\_ of Glen Echo residents qualified to vote in municipal elections, a special election must be called on the issue of abolishing the municipal government.

Peter Laufer  
Glen Echo.

(From the Editor of The Echo:

Mr. Laufer bases his arguments predominantly on factual errors. Some of them are, briefly:

--continued on next page

## RESPONSES TO LETTER ATTACKING GLEN ECHO'S GOVERNMENT

1. Taxes are not only not higher in Glen Echo than in Cabin John, but somewhat lower, owing to lower priced trash collection. County taxes for town property owners are calculated minus services paid for directly by the town. It is probably because Mr. Laufer is not a town taxpayer that he is unfamiliar with the tax structure.
2. Loose and menacing dogs are a notorious problem in Cabin John, but not in Glen Echo.
3. The so-called free swimming pool privileges in Cabin John are limited to residents of an adjacent, state-funded, low-income housing development, who may use the pool for a two-hour period twice a week as a good will gesture by the private Palisades Club.
4. Although Mr. Laufer does not attend town council meetings nor volunteer for town activities, he should be able to "keep watch on town activities" by reading the reports of more than a half dozen competent and reliable reporters in The Echo.
5. The "mayor's office" is, in reality, a room in which the Clerk-Treasurer works and records are filed. Before the remodeling, the room was nothing but a cinder block cell. Public funds are routinely used for the redecorating of administrative offices.
6. If it were not for the town government, we would have highrises where Glen Echo Park now stands, to mention but one relatively recent example of the importance of local government.
7. This editor has never refused to print a letter from Mr. Laufer, nor indeed ever received one. Unfortunately, it is impossible to attempt

to clarify the matter, since Mr. Laufer left town for the summer just before his letter was printed in The Journal. It is the policy of this paper to print all letters it receives.

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To the Editor:

I am one of those mentioned in Mr. Laufer's letter to The Montgomery Journal 19 June 1985 as I enjoy the unique status of the Town of Glen Echo. Having been a resident for over 65 years, I have seen the Town change-- sometimes for the better and sometimes for the worse but it still is an outstanding friendly community.....

I can't agree with some of the statements made in the letter to the Journal. One item being the higher tax resulting in Glen Echo because we pay the county tax and also Glen Echo real estate tax. True, we in Glen Echo pay the Town tax but we do not pay for (county) tax collection. The amount of trash collection billed to county residents equals and sometimes exceeds the Glen Echo tax. In addition, the Town is not operated solely by taxes received from the residents, as the Town receives money from the state and federal government revenue sharing, traders' licenses, rental of town hall, highway fund, municipal share of State income tax, etc. In fact, more than half of the revenue used to operate the Town comes from other sources than the Town real estate taxes.

True, in Cabin John the snow is removed, but I think our streets were cleared soon after

---continued on next page

**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR (cont.)**

snowfall and this past year, the sidewalks were cleared as well. If Cabin John has a problem with snow removal, pot holes in streets, broken sidewalks, street lights out, trash collection, they have to call various county offices and talk to computers in some cases and hope for an answer to their problem. We in Glen Echo can make one call to the Mayor or the responsible council member and the problem is taken care of. I know from experience - I tried for over a year to get the street and sidewalk repaired after WSSC made repairs outside my home. The Town took a survey of WSSC repairs needed in Town and within one week, work was completed. It seems to me the Town representatives have much more clout with the county and their organizations than an individual taxpayer.

I realize I am very prejudiced having been in this Town all my life, but I think I can speak for some of the new neighbors - they seem to like the Town and how it operates because they have become active on various committees, helping with the Town paper, and attending elections and Town functions...

I feel that the pluses of having an incorporated town outweigh the so-called pluses of being fully governed by the county.

Paul H. Alban

(Mr. Alban is a former Mayor of Glen Echo.)

**Enjoyable Town Picnic**

By Norma McCaig

Thirty-one people gathered on Sunday, June 9 at the town park for the Annual Town Picnic. Threatening weather seemed held at bay by the sheer force of the conviviality of the assembled, enhanced by the presence of Rex Borsari, visiting after a three-year absence.

Newcomers to the town, Lynn and Don Dworsky, introduced themselves and quickly became "old shoe," chatting with folks between sips and bites.

Glen Echo's pastry chef, Brockie Stevenson, presented his usual unusual culinary masterpiece-- a commemorative cake complete with a puzzle of tantalizingly obscure photos of our very own homes--and issued to all gathered the challenge of identifying them. Twarn't easy!

The stuff below the pics, however, looked delicious as did all the offerings put forth on the groaning board. Many thanks to all who made it such an enjoyable event!



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**EXCERPTS FROM THE TREASURER'S REPORT—May 1985**

Lynott & Craven (town attorney), monthly retainer.....	\$100.00
Abar Plastics, town trash bags .....	229.00
Waste Management of Northern Virginia, trash removal.....	1558.66
Lois Carroll, Clerk-Treasurer.....	300.00

## CONSUMER BE AWARE!

By Jim Shaut

The old adage of strength in numbers has proven true once again. The Buyers Up Oil Cooperative (founded in 1983 as an organization formed under Ralph Nader's Public Citizen) went to a few heating oil distributors in the metropolitan area with a proposal. This was to provide a group of 2,000 oil-buying consumers, provided they received a discount rate. Several oil companies bought the idea, and the cooperative membership has grown to 3,600.

Members from the Town of Glen Echo presently number 13. They receive their oil from Tri-Con, a company located in Northeast Washington. In interviewing a majority of these members, I found a unanimous satisfaction with the amount of savings on each gallon of oil. Everyone also agreed they would use the service next year. Anne Lewis said she was "glad to save the money and it was a big help." Fred Kuster said the Buyers Up people were responsible when called, and this observation was seconded by Elizabeth Adams.

There was a complaint from Edd Barrows about his tank being over-filled and leaking out the air vent. Also, Elizabeth Adams and Jay McNair voiced a complaint concerning the delivery during the cold spell. Unfortunately, they were on a "will call" basis, while the others interviewed were on automatic delivery. McNair and Adams both let the oil get to roughly one-eighth full and then called for delivery. With a "will call" setup, they unfortunately were at the end of the delivery line. Adams also developed air in the line, which took a service call to have bled out. Concerning service, everyone was basically satisfied, if they, in fact, required service last year.

A Buyers Up representative told this reporter that on a "will call" delivery you'd best order early, with no less than one-quarter tank full, especially as oil tank gauges aren't completely accurate. Additionally, "will call" customers are last on the list of deliveries.

The Buyers Up representative stated that for the five-month period from October 1984 through February 1985, the average cost of non-member oil distributors was between \$1.16 and \$1.17 per gallon, while Buyers Up distributors averaged \$.96 or less per gallon. This amounted to a net savings of almost \$.21 per gallon of oil, and that 21¢



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## Town Council Highlights

The Glen Echo Town Council, Mayor and Clerk-Treasurer met in executive session just prior to the regularly-scheduled monthly meeting. Whatever transpired during that closed session appeared to generate a new and heightened spirit of cooperation, and considerable work was accomplished at the open, public session.

Using samples collected from the Maryland Municipal League, Councilman Harry Odell drafted a proposed municipal infractions code to be reviewed by the Council and the town's attorney and discussed at a later meeting. Sixty municipal areas in Maryland currently use the municipal code promulgated in 1978 in order to simplify the process and decrease the burden on the court system.

Councilman Odell's plan is to prevent recourse to the courts by the issuance of warning letters; however, once a citation would be issued, the state's law would take over.....

Councilwoman Debbie Beers circulated her draft of a Tree (or Arbor Day Committee) Ordinance. The Council indicated its interest in incorporating this into the environmental ordinance and changing the name to the Open Space Committee Ordinance. The revised draft ordinance will be introduced at the July 8 Council meeting.....

The Council considered the complaint by town resident Willem Polak that the construction of a furnace house for the Clara Barton House obstructed his view and caused environmental dangers. Councilwoman Long had investigated the complaint and determined that the Park Service had considered all possible facts in siting the much-needed furnace house,

June 10

completed in November, 1984. The height of the stack for the expulsion of particulate matter is six inches above the county's regulations.....

Resident Rene Springuel expressed concern at automobiles turning left onto Vassar Circle from University Avenue, against one-way traffic. He was authorized to place the one-way street sign on the stop sign at that corner in hopes that would be a more visible placement....

Complaints were made regarding two residents blocking access to sidewalks on Harvard Avenue with a refrigerator and construction materials, both of which have been problems of several months standing. The Mayor indicated he had given ultimatums to both residents to remove the offending materials...

Recent activities at Glen Echo Park were very well-attended; the Irish Festival was estimated to have drawn a crowd of 7,000 and the Folk Festival 17,500.....

---Gloria Levin

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### BUYERS UP (from page 8)

was the bottom line in everyone's mind. All those interviewed recommended the service and said they would use it again next year. The volume discount is a good concept. I may use it myself.

In the future, Buyers Up plans to set up an Energy Conservation Service. If you are interested in what they have to offer, you can call them at 328-3800.

## At GLEN ECHO PARK

### EVENING CAROUSEL RIDE

Saturday, July 27, 7-11 p.m.

25¢ a ride. Bring a date or the family and picnic lunch, attend the ballroom dance or play on the playground and ride the carousel.

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### MEDIEVAL MILITARY & MUSIC FEST

Sunday, July 28, 12-6 p.m.

The Markland Medieval Mercenary Militia, madrigal singers, a parade of costumes, dance demonstrations and mock fighting.

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### CAROUSEL DAY

Sunday, August 11, 12-6 p.m.  
The Boarding Party will perform songs throughout the afternoon.

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### INTRODUCTION TO JAPANESE PAPER MAKING

July 27 & 28, 10-4 p.m.  
Tuition: \$51

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### DANCES

Friday Nights--Square and  
Contra. 8:30 p.m., \$3.50  
Saturday Nights--Ballroom  
9 p.m., \$5, Live Band  
Sunday Nights--Folkdancing  
8 p.m., \$4

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### THE PUPPET COMPANY

July 11, 18, 25 - The Magic  
Mirror

7 p.m., \$3, reservations not  
necessary



### **Adventure Theatre**

Toby Tyler--July 13-August 11  
Weekends, 1:30 & 3:30, \$3  
Call 320-5331 for reservations

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### WORK WORKS

July 20, 5 p.m., three word and  
dance environments  
August 3, 5 p.m., poet James Wine  
and composer/musician Charles  
Wine perform "A Peace in Progress"  
August 10, 5 p.m., poet/dancer Rod  
Force and composer Darrell Hunt

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\$2 admission includes refreshments

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### **At the CLARA BARTON SITE**

Sunday, July 14, 1-5  
Victorian Bicycles on Exhibit

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Sunday, July 28, 3-4 p.m.  
Children's Day  
Reservations Required - 492-6245

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### **Resident's Sunken Garden Featured in *Post* Article**

The unique and fanciful gardens laid out by Osamu Shimizu around his house at 6102 Bryn Mawr Avenue were portrayed in photos and text in the June 2 issue of The Washington Post Magazine.

Depicted are the miniature pine trees that line the steps to the front porch, the sunken garden and the round brick garden pungently populated by 85 varieties of herbs. This is the province of Holly Shimizu, Osamu's wife and the curator of the National Herb Garden at the National Arboretum.

Osamu, who is a Japanese-born and European-trained landscape designer, has also created a brick garden with pond beside Brockie and Jane Stevenson's house at 6106 Yale Avenue.