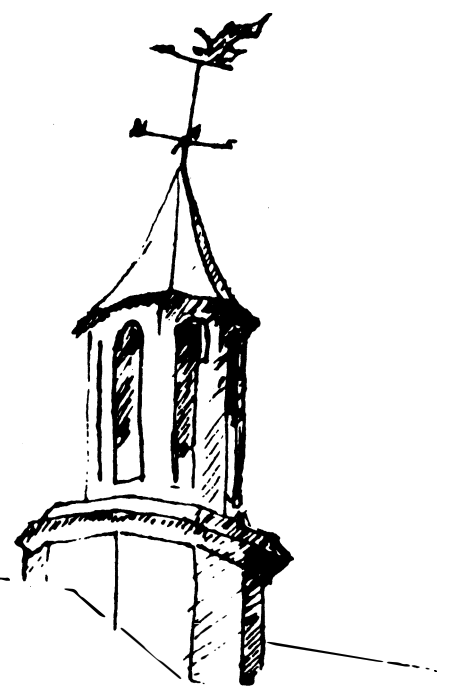


The Echo

The Town of GLEN ECHO, MARYLAND Chartered, 1904



November, 1989

COUNCIL DISLIKES SOME MASTER PLAN PROPOSALS

By Anne Lewis

Of a half-dozen items in the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Master Plan for the Palisades area, the town of Glen Echo will oppose four—and has deferred decision on another until it has more information.

Actions taken at the Oct. 9 town council meeting included:

- Opposition to a proposal to zone the area adjacent to the Inn at Glen Echo for non-residential professional use. The action would affect three houses.

Councilmember Debbie Beers moved that the town comment adversely to the county. The rezoning, she said, was bound to increase parking problems there.

Councilmember Bill Shultz agreed that the parking problem was serious: "Right now, it is anarchy over there. People are putting up their own barriers." But he contended that the property owners wanted the rezoning, and that with it, the peak use would be on weekdays and could be controlled.

Councilmember Nancy Long argued that rezoning would set a precedent for assigning use of residential property.

Mayor George Borsari broke a tie vote (Beers and Long opposing the rezoning; Shultz and Odell favoring it), saying he believed it might set a precedent and create parking problems.

- Opposition to a proposal to build tennis courts on open land on the east side of town.

The council voted to oppose any reference to specific use of the land, which is owned by the town. Possible recreational use of the property is under study and the town is not ready to discuss a specific idea, Councilman Shultz said.

- Opposition to a proposal for townhouse development on the slopes above Glen Echo Park.

—continued on page 2

COUNCIL TROUBLED THAT TEARING DOWN HOUSE WOULD SET PRECEDENT

By Anne Lewis and Carlotta Anderson

What if anything the town should do about a proposed re-subdivision which would allow a resident to tear down an existing house in order to replace it with two new ones was discussed without resolution by the town council at its October meeting.

At issue was the property at 5900 Oxford Rd. owned by Chris Papadopolus, which has a total of nearly 11,500 sq. ft. Mr. Papadopolus would like to re-subdivide his land to create two semi-triangular lots, one facing Oxford Rd., the other facing University Ave. In order to build two new houses on the property, however, he would have to demolish the present house.

—continued on page 3

THE ECHO

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208 12

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Letters to the editor are welcomed. Letters are printed exactly as received except that the editor reserves the right to shorten them. Articles for publication are also solicited. Volunteer reporters are always needed. Call the editor at 229-3748.

MASTER PLAN (from page 1)

The council voted unanimously against any development of the Palisades area, cluster or single family, and to preserve the areas as open space.

- Opposition to use of the Glen Echo parking lot for fringe parking. The town has a strong say on this issue, Mayor Borsari pointed out, because Oxford Rd. would have to be used as an access road. "Fringe parking should be on the fringe," he said. "not in a close-in area." Council members unanimously agreed that fringe parking would create additional traffic in town and result in overflow parking on town streets.

- Postponed a decision on the proposed designation of MacArthur Blvd. as a scenic highway.

The council felt it was not ready to take a position because the impact of such designation is not yet known.

Councilmember Long was charged with developing a draft statement based on the council's actions to circulate to members. Mayor Borsari was scheduled to present the town's position at hearings on the master plan at the end of October.

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RECYCLING (from page 1)

At a previous meeting, Mr. Papadopolus said he had no specific plans to build there, but was merely exploring his options.

In addition to expressing concern about the possibility of a house being torn down to build two new ones, councilmembers noted that both newly-created lots would be under the normal R-60 zoning minimum of 6,000 sq. ft.

Mayor Borsari maintained that the county zoning code had "grandfathered" Glen Echo lots back to the 5,000 sq. ft. minimum that once was law. Councilwoman Beers said that in her opinion that minimum applied to existing uses, and was not intended to create new development opportunities. She said the law outlines certain requirements which must be met for the smaller lots and allows for interpretation. She questioned whether it could be interpreted to permit the tearing down of an existing house to make new sub-standard sized lots.

Other councilmembers indicated that they were concerned by the precedent-setting nature of such a re-subdivision and wondered what means the town might have to oppose it.

Councilman Odell, who had written the mayor a letter asking for clarification on how the town could take a position, said he wondered whether the town should go to the county and say that it is concerned about any change that would increase the number of houses that could be built here.

Mayor Borsari questioned why the town should take such a position, and said the reasons being given were "a whim." His view was that the law simply allows anyone with a 5,000 sq. ft. Glen Echo property to build a house. He said the town had given up its zoning authority in 1947 and no longer had any authority in that area.

Councilman Odell pointed out that the town still has building permit authority, and wondered "why don't we get out of the business of issuing building permits" if there are no adopted standards regarding what size a house should be in relation to the lot or no way to prevent the destruction of an existing house to build two in its place.

There was no vote, with the question remaining whether the town should oppose the Papadopolus proposal or possibly give up all efforts to control building in Glen Echo.

The mayor promised to let councilmembers know as soon as he received notice of a county hearing on the proposal so that they could decide whether to take some action at that time.

NEXT TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

Monday, November 13—8:00 p.m.

Glen Echo Town Hall

Contact the mayor if you wish to add an item to the agenda

PARKWAY TO BE RENAMED FOR CLARA BARTON

By Eric Anderson

The House of Representatives last month unanimously approved a proposal to rename a portion of the George Washington Memorial Parkway in honor of Glen Echo's most famous resident.

The plan, which was sponsored by area U.S. Rep. Constance A. Morella, would redesignate a 7.8 mile stretch of the road the Clara Barton Parkway. The proposed section extends from the road's intersection with MacArthur Blvd. at the Navy Model Basin to where it joins Canal Road at Chain Bridge.

As Glen Echo residents know, Clara Barton, the founder of the American Red Cross, lived in a house at 5801 Oxford Rd., which now overlooks the parkway.

Rep. Morella's bill passed in the House, 353-0 on Oct. 16. The measure now awaits action in the Senate.

Speaking on behalf of the plan on the House floor, Rep. Morella said she came up with the name change idea after a constituent complained about confusion caused by the existence of George Washington Parkways on both sides of the Potomac River.

Rep. Morella said the proposed parkway name is a "fitting" tribute to the "most decorated woman in American history."

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THE TROLLEY RIGHT-OF-WAY: An Enduring Enigma

By David Sproul

Glen Echo. Mention the words to almost anyone in the Washington metropolitan area and you will hear: "That was the old amusement park, right?" or "Isn't that where the restored carousel runs in the summer?" You might even hear: "I used to ride the trolley out there."

Ah, the trolley. Actually designated the Cabin John line of the urban street car system, the trolley has been gone since 1959, when the last car to Glen Echo carried the young Fred Kuster (former mayor), then a boy, as a paying fare.

When O. Roy Chalk bought most of Washington's transportation industry in the late '50s, he was given a deadline for dismantling the street car system and the Cabin John line was among the first to be discontinued. The rails were pulled in 1961. It was reported at the time that owners of an abandoned rail line could enjoy tax advantages if they were to irrevocably convert the land away from potential rail use. The eight-mile strip has remained in gentle repose for 28 years.

WHAT'S TO BE DONE WITH THE OLD RIGHT-OF-WAY?

In the last few years, town officials have discussed with representatives of O. Roy Chalk the possible town acquisition of the former trolley right-of-way that runs alongside MacArthur Blvd. adjacent to Glen Echo.

Originally, there was some talk of Mr. Chalk donating the land, but the donation did not materialize.

A year ago, a representative of Mr. Chalk's offered the town the land at a price of \$12 per square foot, the same price quoted to town property owners whose land abuts the right-of-way. In March of this year, former mayor Fred Kuster said he had approached Chalk representatives about the possibility of buying the sections alongside the town and was told to make an offer.

Two months later town attorney Tom Craven reported to the council that his research to date had revealed multiple deed transactions with no conclusive proof as to the current ownership of the property. He said the right-of-way may have been an easement that could be lost if abandoned, in which case the property would revert to the original owners and their successors.

The town council has not discussed the subject in recent months. Meanwhile, a number of residents whose property lies alongside the right-of-way are questioning what rights they might have to acquire the land.

If a right-of-way had been granted for use for a trolley, and that use ceased, might the land revert to the original owner or his successors?

Might an adjoining property owner who has been using the land for more than 20 years be able to take it over by the law of adverse possession?

Or is the land owned outright, in which case it would have to be purchased directly from Mr. Chalk?

Such cases often can be resolved only by litigation. No such case involving the right-of-way, which runs through Brookmont and the D.C. Palisades area, has come to *The Echo's* attention, nor is it known if any private person has bought any sections of the land.

—Carlotta Anderson

Not that people don't regularly get it in their heads that something is about to change. This correspondent has lived in Glen Echo for six years and it seems that every year brings a new rumor.

Three years ago we were among the adjoining landowners (who number around a dozen in Glen Echo) visited by William Treadwell, Mr. Chalk's personal representative at the time. He invited us to buy our slab of the right-of-way for around \$12 per square foot. This would have come to a cool \$35,000.

We countered with an offer to buy the land for what it would cost to transact the necessary paperwork. His reply was that even though the land was only minimally useful, selling for such a low price would set a detrimental precedent for other sales negotiations he was conducting in the metro area. The matter was dropped.

Later, others were approached by Henry Obst, a subsequent representative. Apparently town officials and some townspeople suggested that Chalk donate the land to the town but nothing seems to have materialized on this front.

Some hold out hope that legal maneuvering can settle the issue once and for all. The principle of "adverse possession" has been invoked by those who think they might be able to take title by demonstrating they have used the land for more than the required 20 years. In Glen Echo, only Maxine Canada of Yale Ave. appears to have gone so far as documenting her use with a notarized affidavit.

There is also some speculation that such a long lapse in use by a railroad owner justifies "reversion" to the original landowners. In any event, a legal assessment would require many hours of expensive research by a lawyer well-schooled in the field, a discouraging prospect if undertaken by an individual landowner.

On the other hand, someone attempting to buy the land from Chalk would have to convince a title insurance company that the property lines are reliable. Then there is the matter of price. There

—continued on page 5

HALLOWEEN PARTY ONE OF TOWN'S BIGGEST

By Jan Shaut

Glen Echo had its biggest Halloween party in years last month, with over 60 residents of all ages attending.

The high point of the evening was the haunted room up the stairs from the town hall kitchen, where the "Hunchback of Harvard Ave." told the children "tales from the crypt." They heard about how years ago "Bill" fell off the roller coaster at the amusement park and became the ghost of Glen Echo. In the darkened room they screamed as they touched "hundred-year-old eyeballs, vile monkey guts, and disgusting earthworms."

Also popular were the apple bobs, decorating of pumpkins and musical chairs, which was played by both tots and adults to the piano accompaniment of Kristen Wilder.

The evening was organized by Debbie Beers, Kate Horwitz and Dorrit Green; Dorrit made the invitational flyer. For the decorating, they were assisted by Don, Emily and Laura Beers and Michael Rodemeyer.

Kate Horwitz supervised the games. The haunted room was created by Dorrit Green and Michael Rodemeyer, and Bill Kuster organized the lineup of kids waiting to visit it. Former mayor Fred Kuster tended bar, and current mayor George Borsari swept up after the party.

Debbie Beers, who has taken over social events for the year, said she needs more volunteers to help with future parties. She would like anyone willing to help out to contact her at 229-7308 so she can set up an entertainment committee.



TROLLEY (from page 4)

are few, if any, sales of right-of-way segments on the real estate books to cite as guidance in judging fair value. The Montgomery County government bought easements for a proposed bus stop near Oxford Rd. (a project since abandoned), and the federal government took title to some of the land at some point, possibly through a trade for land elsewhere. These aren't "fee simple" transactions, however.

Many have allowed themselves to daydream about what they would do if ownership suddenly flopped into their laps. These daydreams rarely get beyond improvised parking spaces, vegetable gardens or volleyball courts.

With all the recent coverage of the planned light rail service between Bethesda and Silver Spring, it could only be a matter of time until someone suggests light rail service on the old trolley right-of-way to connect with the Metro subway system, perhaps at the Foggy Bottom station. The entire eight-mile route is still intact between Glen Echo and the Georgetown University campus, although several of the bridges were recently removed.

A few homeowners in the District palisades neighborhood have enclosed their segments with fences and driveways. In Glen Echo, the restaurant appears to be using some of the right-of-way for parking, some residents have landscaped and are maintaining sections next to their homes, and the town has done maintenance on the land for years.

It may be that little will change and we will just keep glancing at that trench and visualizing what it was like when "Presidential" street cars were bustling up and down the twin rails, clanging their bells at each Glen Echo intersection.

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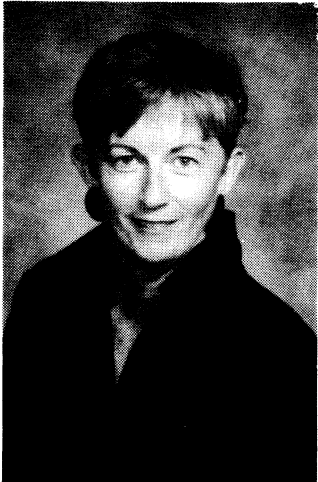
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BRIEFLY NOTED

- The washout of the Glen Echo Park parking lot yielded "buried treasure," described by resident **Susan Tamulevich** in an article in *The Washington Post Magazine* of October 8. Fragments of a stone arch, column and steps of the stone amphitheater built in 1891 for the Glen Echo Chautauqua were revealed as the dirt lining the gorge washed away. The amphitheater, which could seat 6,000, had an elaborate pipe organ which was powered by Minnehaha Creek. By 1956 the amphitheater was rotting, and "the decision was made to burn the building, bury the stone framework under sand and gravel and pave the area as a parking lot."
- The **Nighthawks**, a legendary local rhythm-and-blues band, which has played at many well-known clubs and theaters as well as toured nationwide, performed in Glen Echo Town Hall on October 14. It is probably the most famous musical group ever to grace that stage. The occasion was an "alternative" wedding reception for Catherine Anne Helmig, daughter of Walter Helmig of University Ave., and James (Jay) Snyder, which followed their more formal one at Congressional Country Club.
- The **upstairs of the town hall** has been getting more use in the past six months than she can recall any time in the past, according to Councilwoman Nancy Long. Included have been number of receptions, a Red Cross dinner, and three paid uses. "It is nice to hear comments from people who live elsewhere about how much they liked the atmosphere, how charming it is, how Glen Echo is like a New England town," she said.
- Discussion of the **paving problem on Bryn Mawr Ave.** created by construction of parking places for the photography studio was postponed until the November town council meeting because Peter Garfield, owner of the studio, was unable to attend last month's meeting.
- A **low-curb problem on Wellesley Circle** that creates water problems for nearby homes will be included in an overall study by an engineer of various street problems, Mayor Borsari said.
- Resident **Henry Barrow** of Yale Ave. and **Carol J. Barton** are the curators of an exhibition of unusual books and bookends at the Strathmore Hall Arts Center at 10701 Rockville Pike in Rockville. The show, which represents 70 artists, features artist-made books with some type of dimensional feature—pop-ups, metal bindings, molded covers—and pairs of sculptures that can be used as bookends. Dates of the exhibit are Dec. 1 - Jan. 6, Monday through Saturday, 10 am - 3 pm.

RECYCLING CENTER PROMISES TO DO BETTER

Two missed newspaper pickup and a handy telephone number listed in last month's *Echo* prompted several town residents to complain to Silver Spring Newspaper Recycling Center that their bagged papers were sitting outside several days after their scheduled removal, an increasingly waterlogged eyesore.

After the first complaints, the recycling center said it had dispatched a driver, who claimed there were no papers there. "Something is wrong that must be rectified," plant manager Dallas Fowler's secretary acknowledged.

She discounted the idea that, with newsprint prices down, the company might be losing interest in collecting the town's papers. She said newspaper recycling is still quite profitable for the company, since it represents the only mill in the area and serves a large clientele.

Let's hope the problem will be solved, but just in case, here's the telephone number again: 589-4002.

—**Carlotta Anderson**

TRASH COLLECTION DAYS TO STAY THE SAME

Mayor Borsari has prevailed upon Waste Management, Inc. to keep Tuesday and Friday as Glen Echo trash pickup days, rather than rescheduling the town for Monday and Thursday.

He said he told them a Monday pickup was too confusing because so many holidays occur on that day.

He also asked the company to continue to schedule the pickups for early morning so the trash would not sit out all day.

NEIGHBORHOOD CRIME WATCH

The following information is from the Montgomery County police:

- Video cameras are a very good way of recording household belongings. If you take a video tape of the entire house and contents, it can be used in case of theft or fire to help provide positive identification of items taken or destroyed. A good place to keep the tape is a safety deposit box.
- Always separate car and house keys when you leave your car on a lot or in a garage. It is easy for an attendant to make duplicate keys of your residence and obtain your address from papers in the glove compartment.
- State Dept. of Motor Vehicle enforcement agents will be working in the Bethesda area to enforce the law on proper state registration. You have 30 days to get Maryland license plates after establishing residence.

NO FIRM PLANS FOR GLEN ECHO BUS STOP

By Nancy Helmig

The county transportation department is still awaiting cost studies for a new bus terminal on the upper parking lot of Glen Echo Park, according to Edward A. Daniel of the county transportation department. This was the location of the bus stop originally, many years ago.

Since the maneuver of backing up by buses is no longer allowed, this site would involve considerable fill dirt and engineering work, Mr. Daniel said.

The original plan to utilize MacArthur Blvd. and the old trolley line footage along Oxford Rd. has been abandoned because of cost factors.

Last in consideration would be siting the terminal at its present location, which would depend on Gen. Dawson, owner of the land fronting Goldsboro Rd. granting an easement. Mr. Daniel said. However, he admitted that this would still leave a problem for riders in front of the Exxon station.

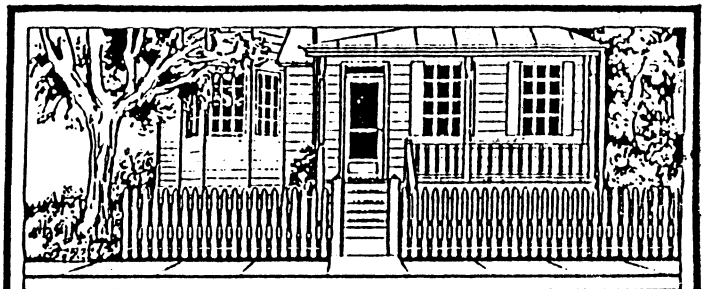
On a related matter, Mr. Daniel said that he had been unaware until recently of the suggestion in the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Master Plan to locate a commuter parking lot on park land at Oxford and MacArthur. He said this had been proposed years ago but never materialized.

He also said he would look into the traffic problem at MacArthur Blvd. and the George Washington Parkway in Cabin John, where rush hour traffic experiences great difficulty entering and leaving MacArthur. He said he had been unaware that this presented a problem.

MAYOR SEEKS VOLUNTEER FOR ANIMAL OFFICER

Do you like both pets and people? The town has a vacancy for someone who understands both animals and their owners.

Most of the work of the Animal Control Officer involves licensing cats and dogs, but past officers have had exciting times helping town residents deal with raccoons, bats and even a fox. Deer have been seen recently on the outskirts of town, but have posed no problems. If you might like to serve as Glen Echo Animal Control Officer, give Mayor Borsari a call at 229-4555.



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GLEN ECHO PARK ACTIVITIES

PARK CALENDARS FOR SALE

Calendars featuring historic photographs of Glen Echo Park are now available from The Glen Echo Park Foundation. The 1990 calendars have a color cover of a architect's rendering of the Spanish Ballroom made in 1933.

Calendars are \$10. If ordering by mail, include \$1.50 for postage. The address of the foundation is 7300 Macarthur Blvd., Glen Echo, MD 20812.

For more information, please call 320-2330.

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If you have any questions, please call Barbara McCoy, 320-4322.

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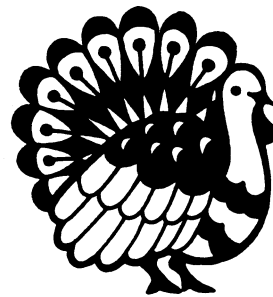
SIDEWALKS AND STREETS SHOULD BE KEPT CLEAR

By Kathleen Horwitz

Councilman Harry Odell expressed concern at last month's town council meeting over the problem of building materials for home construction or improvements being stored on town sidewalks and streets.

Mayor Borsari emphatically stated that nobody has the right to block sidewalks and streets. Once again he reiterated his hope that neighbors with complaints will rectify this kind of problem face-to-face whenever possible.

If all else fails, he said, such problems should be brought to his attention in writing and he will speak directly to the offending residents.



PROPERTIES ON THE MARKET

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