

# The Echo

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



December, 1991

## TOWN AUDITOR'S REPORT DOCUMENTS IRREGULARITIES

By Carlotta Anderson

A report by the town's auditor for the 1990-91 fiscal year itemized "material weaknesses" in the town's accounts. It stated that the town clerk-treasurer had not kept complete and accurate records, receipts were not "timely deposited," official town business correspondence had been "ignored and delayed" and personal property taxes had not been billed.

The Oct. 15 letter from the auditing firm of Cohen & Smith, which accompanied the audit, concluded that the town clerk-treasurer, who resigned in September, was "negligent in the performance of her duties."

Among the items noted were the following:

- Current real estate taxes were collected in duplicate from Mondale, Levin and Grant/Sutter (sic)
- Real estate taxes from the previous year "remain unpaid, have not been rebilled, and are still not completely determinable because of poor record keeping by the Town Clerk"
- Services with Waste Management were threatened to be discontinued because of late payment
- A post office rental payment from the previous year was missing and no letter was sent raising this issue until Aug. 16, 1991, at a time when the auditors were examining town records
- Four checks received in January and April were deposited on Aug. 16, 1991. A deposit of \$2,805 in 1990 was not documented and it was not possible to reconstruct what it represented. A highway fund check for \$766 was lost. No deposits were made for six months during the year.

The report also noted that former Clerk-Treasurer Ilona Almsy had overpaid her own salary by one month, not paid her own real estate tax, and not documented \$200, for which she was reimbursed, by receipts. It stated that on Sept. 24 she paid her real estate tax and \$100 of the salary overpayment and provided receipts for \$151 of the expense reimbursement.

—continued on page 4

Mayor George Borsari circulated a letter to "Dear Neighbors" dated Nov. 15 discussing the audit for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1991.

In it, he outlined problems the auditors had found in the town's financial affairs and corrective actions that had been taken. He stated that he had consulted with the town's attorney, who advised him that no further action should be taken other than seeking restitution from the clerk treasurer.

He discussed his appointment of the new clerk treasurer, as well as a proposal to divide the functions of that position between two people, a clerk and a treasurer, in the future.

## THE ECHO

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## TOWN OF GLEN ECHO MARYLAND

208 12

Town Office 320-4041

6106 Harvard Avenue or Box 498, Glen Echo, MD.

208 12

Office Hours: Call to arrange an appointment.

### MAYOR

George Borsari, Jr. 229-4555

### COUNCIL MEMBERS

Debbie Beers 229-7308  
Nancy Long 334-2865 or 229-1369  
Harry Odell 229-4494  
Bill Shultz 229-1269

### CLERK-TREASURER

Paula Wolff (h) 229-2378  
(w) 299-2920

### ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER

### ANIMAL CONTROL BOARD

Mary Masulla 229-6521  
Daryl Kuster 229-2070  
Susan Shultz 229-1269

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.

## NEW BUS ROUTES BEGIN DECEMBER 29

On Dec. 29, the new experimental N7 bus route will replace routes N5, which runs from the Glen Echo shopping center directly downtown, and N9, which currently runs from Montgomery Mall downtown. The new combined route will not be an express service and will require a \$1 surcharge in each direction.

This route was devised after massive public protests against a proposal to eliminate the N5. Originally, it was proposed that the surcharge from Glen Echo be 50 cents.

Mayor Borsari speculated at the last council meeting that rider dissatisfaction with the new, more expensive route will "kill it, probably within a year or two."

Since both the route and the fare are considered experimental, another public hearing will be held in a few months.

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## LETTER TO THE EDITOR AND CITIZENS OF GLEN ECHO

On Nov. 15, the mayor wrote to the town with his comments on the recently completed audit of the town's finances for the fiscal year ended June 30, 1991. That letter, however, is more notable for the information omitted than for the information conveyed.

The mayor was informed by the auditors of inadequacies in the town's financial practices almost two years ago. He received at least two letters from the auditors in 1989 and 1990 which set forth in some detail recommendations for remedying obvious deficiencies and irregularities in those practices. Neither of these letters was distributed to the Town Council, despite being addressed to the council as well as the mayor. The council was not given copies of the current (Oct. 15, 1991) auditor's letter, which detailed serious acts and omissions by the clerk-treasurer with respect to the performance of her duties, until after the letter was discovered by other means. The letter was not entered into the correspondence log maintained by the town.

At the October council meeting, the new clerk-treasurer reported, presumably on the mayor's instructions, that: "town administrative affairs were in order". The audit was not an agenda item at the November council meeting. No executive session of the council was ever called by the mayor to discuss the legal issues raised by the audit.

The clerk-treasurer is appointed, and serves at the pleasure of, the mayor. The mayor appointed Ms. Almsy over two years ago, and continued her in office despite a rising tide of complaints about her performance from council members, town citizens and others. He defended her conduct of her office to the town in a "Dear Neighbors" letter dated Dec. 28, 1990, at which time he was already in receipt of the both the 1989 and 1990 auditor's letters referred to above. Despite ample knowledge of her inadequacies, the mayor neither replaced Ms. Almsy, nor closely supervised her conduct of town financial affairs. The result was inevitable.

The mayor now suggests that these defalcations are not attributable to the negligence of the clerk-treasurer (or her supervisor), but are merely the result of an overwhelming workload. As a remedy, he proposes that the clerk-treasurer position be shared by two people. This is an insult to all of those people who have served as clerk-treasurer in the past (for much less money), and who performed their duties conscientiously and without financial embarrassment to the town. It is also ludicrous to suggest that Glen Echo, which is the smallest municipality in Montgomery County, needs two people in this position, when many other municipalities with much larger populations (and budgets) make do with one, part-time clerk-treasurer.

The auditors have been invited to the Dec. 9, 1991 town meeting to answer questions from the council and the citizens regarding town finances. I urge everyone to attend. This is your money. More importantly, this is your town.

**Deborah Beers, Town Councilwoman**

### FLAT TIRES CONTINUING PUZZLE

Reports about automobile flat tires continue to come from residents.

Michael Rodemeyer of Harvard Ave. found a very flat tire with a nail in it the morning after Halloween. He said he is "assuming it was intentional."

Gloria Levin of University Ave. said there was a nail in one of her tires six months ago.

Five residents have now complained about flat tires caused by nails in the last year.

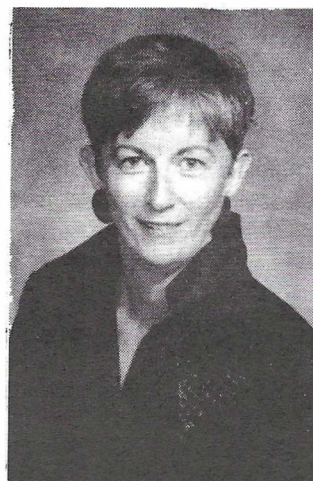
Merchants Tire told the editor that they have repaired many flats this year caused by nails. They said the main reason is increased construction in the area.

#### NEXT TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

Monday, December 9---8:00 p.m.

Glen Echo Town Hall

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



*Eleanor*

Let's talk about what's happening up and down MacArthur Blvd."

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## AUDIT (from page 1)

The audit and the accompanying letter were given to Mayor George Borsari in the auditor's office on October 28. Current Clerk-Treasurer Paula Wolff was also present and also received a copy. The letter was addressed to "The Town Council and Mayor" but was not passed on to councilmembers. Ms. Wolff said she did not notice the address and expected, in any case, that it would be presented at the November council meeting. "I felt the way the mayor wanted to discuss it with the council was his call," she said.

Ms. Wolff put the audit on the table at the Nov. 11 Town Council meeting. After the meeting was officially adjourned, Councilwoman Debbie Beers noticed the audit, picked it up and the auditor's letter fell out. After quickly reading it, she photocopied it for the other councilmembers and gave a copy to the Echo reporter, who had not yet left the council chambers.

None of the councilmembers had previously seen the letter or the audit itself. Mayor Borsari told this reporter that he did not officially bring up the audit at the November council meeting because he had "a full agenda," and that in any case he did not think it appropriate to discuss the subject the same night the council received it.

According to Councilwoman Long, she stopped by the mayor's house after the Oct. 14 council meeting, which he had not attended, to give him "an overview." He mentioned then the clerk-treasurer's salary overpayment and non-payment of property taxes. He told Councilwoman Long that he had talked with town attorney Tom Craven about those matters, that Mr. Craven felt there was no reason for legal action, and this reassured her, she said.

She said she asked the mayor if he was sending copies of the letter to the council, and he assured her he was. She did not pass the information on to the other councilmembers, she said, because "I felt it was George's responsibility." The mayor had not told her of previous problems which had been brought to his attention by the auditors, she said, and she does not recall his discussing the matter with her in mid-August, as he related in his four-page Nov. 15 letter, which he distributed to townspeople. (See also Councilwoman Beers' letter, p. 3)

In fact, the audits of 1989 and 1990 also had been accompanied by letters noting "deficiencies" and a "lack of adequate internal accounting controls." The Dec. 26, 1989 letter noted that no general ledger was being kept and that other records were incomplete and unorganized. It recommended better maintenance of cash receipts and disbursements. The following year, the auditor noted in a letter dated Oct. 29, that "the lack of internal control was commented upon the previous year, and many of the deficiencies noted then have remained the same." He cited two month delays in depositing \$22,111, personal property taxes totalling \$1,300 which had not been billed, and suggested that "inquiries, request for information and written communications be responded to in a timely fashion."

These two letters, addressed to the mayor and council, were not made known to councilmembers.

However, in February, 1990, Mayor Borsari recommended that the town accept a proposal from the auditors to review the town books on a quarterly basis. This raised the cost of the town audit from \$2,500 to \$4,000. Councilmembers Shultz and Beers were reported in The Echo as favoring this course on a one year basis. However, quarterly reports were never presented to the council.

Mayor Borsari appointed Ms. Almsy to replace Don Dworsky as town clerk-treasurer in June, 1989, the month after he took office. Within a few months, complaints began about the non-payment of bills, unreturned telephone messages, late or inadequate minutes and other matters. After The Echo reported complaints made a year ago at the November council meeting about problems with the billing of town taxes, getting dog licenses and having telephone calls answered, Mayor Borsari circulated a letter to townspeople dated Dec. 28, 1990, stating that "In almost every instance, a simple phone call to the clerk/treasurer would have resolved the matter."

The amount budgeted for this year's auditing and accounting expenses is \$4,500. To date, the town has been billed for \$4,985.

## SNOW REMOVAL PLANS?

By David Sproul

Town resident Gloria Levin asked the mayor at the November council meeting if firm plans were in hand to deal with any snow that might fall in the coming months. She said she would feel better knowing there was a contract with meaningful penalties for inadequate performance.

Mayor Borsari said that it is virtually impossible to get a vendor to sign such a contract. He said that the only way is to prevail on one of several candidates with the proper equipment when the need arises. He left the impression that he accepts this responsibility.

### LETTER TO THE EDITOR

John Morrow of Harvard Ave. takes conservation and recycling to heart. He was working on a job where some cedar trees were to be cut and burned. He knew this was wasteful, so he trucked the logs to town, cut and split them (by hand!) and put the wood on the sidewalk.

He then went around the neighborhood telling us to take and use what we could. This is the kind of community spirit for which Glen Echo is famous, but unfortunately only a few of us were able to benefit from John's generosity before he was forced to move the wood inside his house.

Tom Kenney

## TOWN READIES REQUESTS FOR RECYCLING BIDS

By David Sproul

Requests for bids for comprehensive recycling in Glen Echo are being typed and will be sent to at least five recycling contractors shortly. The target starting date is January 1, 1992, although Councilwoman Beers conceded that in view of the coming holiday season, it might not be possible for that date to be met.

Councilwoman Debbie Beers told the council last month that of 22 municipalities and special taxing districts in Montgomery County, 13 have already signed recycling programs and three or four are about to sign.

Responding to a letter to the council from Councilman Harry Odell, which asked that the town take a more relaxed pace on the recycling issue and suggested there was no need to be on the cutting edge, Councilwoman Beers clarified the reasons for the hoped-for January starting date.

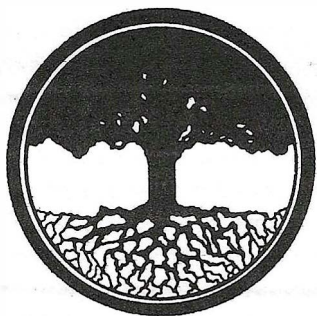
She said that deadline was self-imposed because the present newspaper recycling contract expires at the end of the year. She also pointed to citizen enthusiasm for the action. Twelve town families are participating in comprehensive recycling on a cooperative, voluntary basis, she said. Additionally, she noted, a town survey in September, 1990 showed a two to one vote in favor of the town paying for newspaper recycling.

Answering Councilman Odell's letter, she said the county was encouraging, but not demanding that municipalities come up with recycling plans.

Several of those present urged her to go ahead with the next step in the process and not submit to any unnecessary delays. David Loveland suggested that in the spirit of recycling, the town make an effort to buy recycled products. He also suggested eventually buying composting bins for townspeople who preferred not to throw away yard wastes.

Mayor Borsari said he was concerned with rocking the boat when the present trash collection is so satisfactory. He emphasized that he would like the recycling pickup to be on Thursdays, the present day for newspaper pickups. He said a less desirable alternate would be Wednesdays. Councilwoman Beers estimated that the newly configured service might cost less than the present arrangement with Waste Management, Inc., depending on whether yard wastes are to be recycled. Additionally, once recycling begins the town will be reimbursed by the county at the rate of \$2.93 per month per household (around \$3,290 per year). If yard wastes are included, the reimbursement jumps to \$3.11.

If the town had signed a recycling contract with the county by May 30 this year, it would have received the reimbursement retroactive to Jan. 1 simply on the basis of having newspaper recycling alone.



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EVENING SERVICE 7:00 p.m.

**Wednesday** PRAYER TIME 7:00 p.m.

**Friday** COMMUNITY BIBLE STUDY AT ANNEX  
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## BRIEFLY NOTED

WSSC did a major excavation on the lower block of Bryn Mawr Ave. last month because of a **serious connection problem** between the private sewer line at 6003 Bryn Mawr Ave. and the street sewer pipe. It was discovered after resident Eleanor Balaban had three sewer backups in her bathtub. Plumbers cleaned and cut roots from her sewer system before it was determined that the problem was in the pipes under the street. WSSC has reimbursed her for her expenses and has promised to replace the brick wall that was demolished to do the work...

The Cabin John Citizens Association is asking the Board of Appeals to **overturn a permit for a variance** for a new office and retail building in MacArthur Plaza, according to the Bethesda Almanac. It maintains that the building is too close to Seven Locks Rd. and does not fit in with the neighborhood. However, the builders, Garrett and Smith, had already nearly completed construction before the appeal was filed, so if it is granted, they would have to tear the building down...

## NEXT COUNTRY DANCE DEC. 19

Another English County Dance will take place at the Glen Echo Town Hall on Thursday, Dec. 19, from 7:30-10:00 p.m.

No experience or partner is needed. All dances will be taught.

There will be live music and refreshments provided. The suggested donation is \$4.

## ANNUAL HOLIDAY PARTY FOR GLEN ECHO ADULTS

Saturday, December 28, 7:30 p.m.

Glen Echo Town Hall

Light buffet and beverages

A disk jockey will provide music for dancing

## HOLIDAY PARTY FOR CHILDREN

PANCAKE BREAKFAST

Saturday, December 21

9:00 a.m. till noon

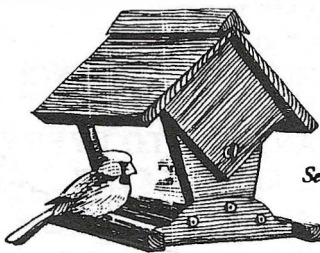
Glen Echo Town Hall

All town children invited!

## COME TO CAROLING PARTY

Kate and Jim Horwitz invite all townspeople to go a'caroling with them on December 21. The group will meet at the Town Hall at 5:30 p.m. Hot chocolate and cookies will be provided after the caroling.

## Cardinal Bird Feeder Gift Set



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## THE KEYHOLE

By Tillie McNoldy

Congratulations to **Betty Briggs** of 6103 Bryn Mawr Ave. She recently retired and is now a member of the "Glen Echo Retirees Club." On Friday, Nov. 15, she bid farewell to the Defense Mapping Agency, where she worked for 30 years.

Betty also worked for several years at the Glen Echo Post Office.

The day before her retirement, Betty was honored at a party at Chatters in Bethesda, hosted by her friends and co-workers.

To ease her into the "retirement transition," her husband Bill took her to Myrtle Beach for a week of R&R. Welcome Back, Betty! May you enjoy your retirement.

## STOLEN BICYCLES SHOULD BE REPORTED

By Jim Anderson

*(Jim Anderson, Glen Echo's representative on the Bethesda Police Advisory Board, was elected its chairman on Nov. 19. The board, consisting of 13 representatives from towns, business associations and communities, is designed to act as a contact between the Bethesda police precinct and the various communities, helping to prevent problems before they occur and to help resolve them when they do.)*

In the first two meetings of the board, the representatives began to hear about specific problems and some ways that police, who often find themselves undermanned, are dealing with them.

One issue that is troubling Glen Echo and Cabin John—the theft of expensive bicycles—appears to be the work of a local person, who knows the area and perhaps uses a rental truck. The stolen bikes are often sold at places like the College Park campus of the University of Maryland at a fraction of their value.

Frequently, stolen bikes are recovered but the owner can't be traced because the theft was not reported and the serial number not recorded. It is important to report the theft by using the Montgomery Police non-emergency number (279-8000). Eventually, an officer will come on the line, take the information and give you a case number which you can use to make a claim on your householder's insurance. It is even more important to keep your bike locked, even at home. The Bethesda police are serious about pursuing such apparently petty crimes on the grounds that they affect the quality of life in a community.

Consumer tip: Watch the classified ads for police department sales of unclaimed bikes and get some great buys. Bethesda now has an average "response rate" of five minutes: within five minutes of a 911 call which is an emergency, an officer in one car and another in a backup will be on the scene; That may be changed in the future as police manpower in our district is re-distributed to reflect the enormous social, economic and population changes that are taking place in Montgomery county, especially to the north of us.

Community residents who have suggestions about the Police Department they would like taken up in this new forum should call or write Jim Anderson at 38 Wellesley Circle, 229-3748.

## GLEN ECHO Pharmacy

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Bethesda, MD 20816

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## OUTAGES DAMAGE EQUIPMENT; RESIDENT SENDS COMPLAINT

By David Sproul and Carlotta Anderson

At least two VCRs and some surge protectors were destroyed last month when Glen Echo suffered five power outages in a period of five days.

John Barrett and Councilwoman Debbie Beers reported damaged VCRs during three outages the afternoon of Nov. 22. Four surge protectors at Brockie Stevenson's and a whole house surge protector at John Barrett's blew up in the same incident.

There was also a three minute power failure the morning of Nov. 20, and a one minute one at 7:00 a.m. on Nov. 24.

Councilwoman Beers and resident Gloria Levin reported to the council at the Nov. 11 meeting that they had separately asked PEPCO for a printed record of power outages in the Glen Echo area. They received a document noting 17 outages in the last year, most of them characterized as "momentary."

PEPCO blamed most on tree or animal interference with wiring. A need to turn off power for quick repairs was cited in one case. None was noted to be more than 10 minutes long.

Resident Victor Gilinsky, who in October presented the council with a draft of a letter of complaint he wanted the town to send to the Public Service Commission, speculated that outages for just parts of the town might not appear on the list. He asked that the town officially request from the commission records comparing Glen Echo's outages with other area jurisdictions.

The mayor said instead that he would phone the appropriate person at the Public Service Commission. However, Mr. Gilinsky decided to send a letter himself. In it, he cited equipment damages from the surges associated with the power outages.

He stated in his letter that he had recorded at least one outage which didn't appear on PEPCO's list. Writing that he felt the frequency of power failures "is far beyond what we should reasonably have to expect," he urged the commission to investigate to determine if PEPCO is meeting its obligations to provide reliable power in this area.

When Mr. Gilinsky called PEPCO to report the latest outages, he was told that since the three failures on Nov. 29 were only a minute or two apart, it should be counted as only one outage. "However, the equipment doesn't know that," he commented.

When John Barrett had equipment damage last year he filed a claim and was reimbursed by PEPCO. He suggested that affected residents call the claims department at (202) 872-2452.



# GLEN ECHO PARK ACTIVITIES

## ADVENTURE THEATRE

### The Fir Tree

Through December 15

### Goldilocks and the Christmas Bears

December 21-24 & 26-31

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Tickets: \$4..50 Call 320-5331

## THE PUPPET COMPANY

To December 22

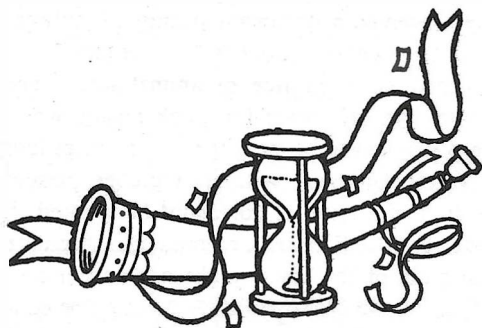
### The Nutcracker

December 26-January 30:

### The Three Billy Goats Gruff

Call for performance times.

Tickets: \$4. Call 320-6668



## TOWN ACTIONS PENDING

--Ordinance making *The Echo* an official organ of Glen Echo (since 7/89)

--Installation of stop signs at Harvard and Columbia (since 10/1990) --Organization of town records by Information Management (since 6/89)

--Sound system at Town Hall (since 6/89)

--New chairs at the Town Hall (since 6/90)

## CLASSIFIED ADS

**FOR SALE**—French Provincial oval shaped table 42 x 58 (70 w/12 in. leaf); like new, \$100. Custom made pad included. Call: 229-0780 (Glen Echo).

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*Classified ads are free to Glen Echo residents. Fee to non-residents: \$.75 per line. Display ads, \$3 per column inch. Ads may be left with or mailed to the editor at 38 Wellesley Circle, Glen Echo, MD 20812. Make checks payable to: Town of Glen Echo. Deadline: 24th of each month.*

## PROPERTIES ON THE MARKET

13 Vassar Circle	\$439,000
15 Vassar Circle	\$417,000
5 Radcliffe Lane	\$299,000
41 Wellesley Circle	\$299,000
6103 Princeton Avenue	\$225,000



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