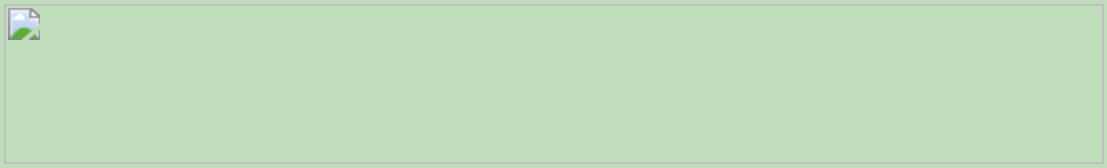

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JUNE 2016

Newsletter of the Kensington Heights Civic Association

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KHCA NEWS BULLETINS

>>June 15 Executive Committee Meeting -- All Are Welcome

The monthly KHCA Executive Committee will be held Wednesday June 15 at 7:30 pm in the home of Mike and Christine Taylor, 10805 Torrance Drive.

>>KHCA Notes That Villages of Kensington Fully Opens for Membership July 1

Please see the article below in Community News & Calendar for information about this important contribution to our community.

>>KHCA Meeting with Westfield Mall Representatives

On May 17, several representatives of KHCA (Karen Cordry, President; Mark Meszaros, Vice-President; Andy Fraser, Traffic Chair; and Dan Sheveiko, Immediate Past President) as well as Virginia Sheard from the Kensington View Civic Association met with the Mall's General Manager, Emily Brophy, and her Operations Manager to discuss a variety of traffic and pedestrian safety issues with them and to get an update on ongoing construction at the Mall.

As we can see, they are continuing to move forward with building the connecting walkway and staircase between the upper and lower levels on the Party City/South Office Tower building. There will be a Bar Louie on the upper level and a new movie theatre opening on the lower level. At least one more restaurant will be going into that area although we don't have the information yet on who it will be. The lastest information is that they were planning for a June opening – that may be optimistic but there's still several weeks left in the month so we can hope! The other restaurant that we know will be opening is the Tilted Kilt Pub in the main mall area near the DSW entrance. According to their Facebook page, they are now expecting to open in early July (pushed back from early June), so we'll see when it happens. Ms. Brophy told us that the Pub claims to primarily cater to a "Happy Hour" crowd and that it will not be open in the wee hours of the morning.

Most of our discussion with the Mall representatives, however, focused on safety issues. Starting with the area near the Tilted Kilt, we pointed out the obvious – that there is no safe way to walk from the parking under the Costco warehouse to either Dick's or the rest of the Mall and the same goes for the parking by the Sear's Outlet store. There is no sidewalk now and the two-way roadway between the garage and the Mall entrance is too narrow to add one. We suggested that they make the segment of the road from after the Penney's entrance around to the Dick's entrance one-way, which would then allow them to install a sidewalk. This would not only give safe passage for pedestrians (which will be even more important when many people using that

area will have been drinking in the Pub) but will also make the parking areas more useful and help accommodate the additional traffic that will be generated in that corner area.

We also noted several other concerns that had been raised with Mall management before but had largely been put on the back burner due to Costco's veto while it continue to appeal the denial of the gas station. Those included the promised sidewalk around the outside of the Ring Road from Torrance Court up to the Target store; the need for a crosswalk in the main parking area so that patrons do not need to walk in the main east-west drive aisle and the noise wall that had also been promised to protect those whose homes are closest to the Mall in general and the Costco loading docks, in particular. We discussed trying to set up a joint meeting with Westfield and the local Costco management to see if Costco might finally be willing to start making changes since it seems increasingly unlikely that they will prevail on their appeals. We hope we can make them see that many of our suggestions are in their best interests as well.

We also urged/demanded that the Mall security patrol insist that trucks not park and idle along the Ring Road, particularly overnight. The trucks should not be idling at all but if they are, at a minimum, they should be required to pull into the parking lots well away from houses where residents are trying to sleep.

Finally, we also again raised the need for them to actually have cameras in place on the pedestrian exits from the mall (and have those cameras monitored along just as with the interior cameras). There are signs that indicate that the Torrance steps, for instance, are under camera surveillance but that has not yet been put into place and it's not clear when, or if, the Mall intends to do so. We intend to keep pressuring them, though, to ensure that those exits do not become a haven for those fleeing from the Mall.

Overall, it was a pleasant discussion and management seemed willing to consider our suggestions. Our job now is to continue to follow up with them to make sure that these matters actually get acted upon and not just put over for the next change in management. We'll keep you posted..

KHCA UPDATES

>>June 9: Montgomery County Civic Federation To Honor Costco Opposition

The Montgomery County Civic Federation (MCCF), an umbrella organization for the civic associations throughout the County, will be bestowing its prestigious Sentinel award on the Stop Costco Gas Coalition and KHCA for their years of work in opposing the proposed Costco gas station at the Westfield Wheaton Mall. The reception and awards ceremony will be held at McGinty's at 911 Ellsworth Place in downtown Silver Spring, from 6:30 to 9:00 pm on Thursday, June 9. Council Member Marc Elrich will present the award and KHCA President Karen Cordry and Coalition Chair Abigail Adelman will speak.

We welcome any of you who would like to come join us, celebrate the victory, and help support the good work done by MCCF. Tickets are $40 at the door and cover the hors d'oeuvres, soft drinks, and wine. It should be a great night for our community. (As for Costco itself, their appeals brief will be filed June 10 – so we go from celebration to back to the fight the very next day. At least it was fun while it lasted!).

>>Public Safety

There have been a number of reports recently about packages being stolen from homes in the area of Jutland, Bentley, Maybrook and surrounding streets. Some people have contacted the police about getting extra patrols in the area to try to catch the thief(s) and have been told that the more people who call in the more the police will be aware of the problem and the need to target our streets.

The number to call if you lose a package is 301-279-8000. They will take your name and number and then have someone call you back within 2 hours to take the report via phone. Your other option is to have an officer come to your house to take the report in person. That's the police non-emergency number and you could also use it to report if you see someone acting suspiciously. (Or you can, of course, call 911 if you think you see someone "in the act." In any case, this is the type of crime that is likely to be solved if we all keep our eyes

open especially now that it's summer and lots more people will be home during the day. Let's all keep an eye out – we all are doing so much online now that we need to make sure our deliveries are safe. If you do have a problem and make a report, you could also drop a line to KHCA President Karen Cordry (karenc425@aol.com) so we can have an accurate picture if we talk to the police as an association.

[Submitted by Karen Cordry, President, KHCA]

>>Education

Issue of Underage Drinking and Substance Use Requires the Attention of All of Us in the MCPS Community

The head of the Montgomery County Board of Education has pledged that the school system would work with schools and parents to combat underage drinking and substance abuse by students and to develop consistent rules governing infractions. More info.

Investing to Reduce Class Size and Close the Achievement Gap

The Montgomery County Council's tentative approval of the Montgomery County Public Schools operating budget for next year provides $37.9 million of additional funding that will allow reduced class sizes in many classrooms across the district and accelerate efforts to close the achievement gap. More info.

Council Passes Creative Solution to Help Solve our Construction Funding Shortfall

The County Council approved an increase in the school increment portion of the recordation tax—the tax paid when a house or building is sold, or if the mortgage on a house or building is refinanced. By taking this bold step, the County Council has helped prevent delays to key school projects. Read about the County Council's Recordation Tax Bill here.

An Update on the FY 2017 Operating Budget

New information about the operating budget is available here.

Donate to Drive for Supplies

Donate usable school supplies to families in need through the annual Drive for Supplies campaign. This is an opportunity to educate students about recycling. The collected supplies are donated to MCPS schools and to local and international nonprofit groups. More info.

Support the 2016 Give BACKpacks Campaign

The Give BACKpacks campaign is an initiative to address a growing need in Montgomery County. Many families are facing financial struggles and need help providing their children with school supplies. More info.

Graduation Season Is Here

KHCA congratulates all high school and college students on their graduation and wishes them all the best for their future endeavors.

Wishing everyone a relaxing and fun summer!!

[Submitted by Shruti Bhatnagar, Chair, Education Committee]

COMMUNITY NEWS & CALENDAR

>> July 1--Villages of Kensington Fully Open

Our neighbor-helping-neighbor, nonprofit, volunteer-run organization opened February 1, 2016, for Charter Members to get free transportation plus one social event per month through June 30. As of July 1, the Charter membership period is over and VoK will be offering annual memberships in the following categories:

- Full member (all services + events), individual: $250
- Full member (all services + events), 2 persons at same address: $350
- Associate member (events only), individual: $125
- Associate members (events only), 2 persons at same address: $175

Anyone living in the 20895 ZIP code is welcome to join. We may also offer a 3-month temporary membership for individuals who need full services but only temporarily (for example, if a person breaks an arm or is recovering at home from an illness or hospital stay).

The VoK is 100% volunteer-run. Our membership fees and any donations help pay our operating expenses, which include insurance, background checks for volunteers, volunteer training, expenses for social & educational events, website & other technology expenses, telephone, and copying & printing. VoK is a 501(c)3 organization, so all donations are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

The Villages of Kensington is committed to access to our services for Kensington residents of all income levels. For those who are unable to afford the full membership fee, we may have financial assistance available. There is no specific means test; we ask that individuals contact our Membership Coordinator to discuss options. In addition, all applicants are invited to contribute more than the usual membership fee to help defray the cost of financial assistance to Kensington neighbors on limited incomes.

For more info about membership, services offered, and volunteering, go to VoK website. Or you can contact the three Board members who live in Kensington Heights: Jennifer Ivory (McComas Ave.) at sportgirls116@yahoo.com, Carolyn Lichtenstein (Drumm Ave.) at carolyn.lichtenstein@gmail.com, or Donna Savage (McComas Ct.) at donnarsavage@gmail.com.

>>June 14 -- Town of Kensington Historic Buildings Meeting

The MNCPPC is working with Kensington citizens to active and enhance three historic buildings: Kensington Cabin, Noyes Library, and Warner Circle. The meeting will take place at 7:30 pm at St. Paul's United Methodist Church. More info.

>>June 18 -- Third Great Montgomery Bike Summit

The Summit's goal is to identify the County's greatest needs for improving bicycle experiences in the County, and to seek innovative ideas on how to improve bicycle infrastructure. The event begins at 9:00 am with a group bike ride from Grosvenor Metro to the Council Office Building in Rockville; the meeting begins at 10:00 am. More info.

>>MCDOT to Provide Supplemental Bus Services during "SafeTrack" Surges

SafeTrack is WMATA's year-long effort to improve the sfety and reliability of the Metrorail system. Three planned line segment repairs and around-the-clock single tracking projects (referred to as Safety Surges) will affect Red Line service in Montgomery County. Montgomery County's DOT is developing plans to supplement the WMATA's efforts to assist travelers during SafeTrack. More info.

>>Resource Guide for "Welcoming Our New Neighbors"

In response to the increasing number of refugees and immigrants, the County Executive's Faith Community Advisory Council has prepared a guide to describe ways people can connect with the heart of their faith, learn about the needs of their neighbors, and work with nonprofits and government agencies to make Montgomery County the most welcoming county in America. More info.

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Kensington Heights Civic Association

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