

WEST END CITIZENS ASSOCIATION

Rockville, Maryland



VOLUME XLVII, NUMBER II

OCTOBER 2019

YOU ARE INVITED!

To the West End Citizens Association CANDIDATES' FORUM – ELECTION 2019

Want to be a more informed voter in Rockville's 2019 Mayor & Council election in November? Join your neighbors at our Candidates' Forum and General Membership Meeting to learn about the candidates and ask questions about issues of concern to West End voters. We hope to see you there!



Invited Candidates:

For Mayor:

Bridget Donnell Newton
Virginia Onley

For City Council:

Monique Ashton
Beryl Feinberg
Cynthia Cotte Griffiths
Richard A. Gottfried
James Hedrick
Kuan Lee
Charles Littlefield
Donald A. Masters
Brigitta Mullican
David Myles
Matthew Perkins
Mark Pierzchala
Suzan Pitman

Thursday, October 17, 2019 – 7:00 p.m.

Rockville Presbyterian Church
215 West Montgomery Avenue
(Parking available behind church off Harrison Street)

Any resident of the West End who is over 18 years of age is a member of the West End Citizens Association (WECA). If this newsletter was delivered to your door, YOU ARE A MEMBER OF WECA.

This newsletter was delivered by _____, your WECA Block Captain.

PRESIDENT'S NOTE

-Brian Shipley

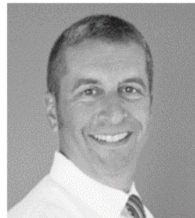


As your newly elected President of WECA, I'm looking forward to serving the community this coming year. I hope to meet many of you at our upcoming WECA meetings and events. For those who don't know me, I've lived in Rockville my entire life – the first 35 years in Woodley Gardens, and the last 20 in the West End. I attended our neighborhood schools – Woodley Gardens Elementary (now the Rockville Senior Center), Julius West, Richard Montgomery, and Montgomery College - and even lived at home while I attended the University of Maryland. After getting married, I attended John Hopkins University earning my Master's degree. My wife, Carla, and I are currently raising our two children - a son 21 and a daughter 17 – (hardly children anymore) on South Washington Street, just blocks from Town Center.

It's always a pleasant surprise to run into former classmates who still live in the area, many of whom went off to college and came back to make a home and start a family in Rockville. I don't need to tell you, but I do believe that Rockville is a wonderful place to live, work and play! We are lucky to hang onto the Hometown feel with the benefits that come being the County Seat. We are a big little city. The same Memorial Day Parade that I rode my bike in at 6 years of age is the same parade that my wife and I took our kids to and will one day be the same parade we take our grandchildren to with pride. From street to street and neighborhood to neighborhood, I find Rockville is a city where the residents know and care about each other and the community they share. I'm proud to call Rockville my home and look forward to working with the community to champion issues that are important to the West End.

I invite you to attend our Monthly Meetings, as I did a few years ago at the suggestion of a neighbor. If you live in the West End, you are a member of WECA and have a voice in how we advocate for West End residents. Help ensure that WECA

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includes your voice. Get to know your WECA Block Captain, join WECA on Facebook or through our email list, or volunteer on one of our many committees. As you will see in the articles represented in this newsletter, the summer has been full of issues that are of interest to West End residents. Please join me, the WECA Board, and fellow residents to ensure the views of West End residents are represented in the initiatives ahead of us this year.

Whatever your level of involvement, do what's best for you and your family, but be involved - your community needs you! Be a part of a greater goal of shaping the future of Rockville.

My Best,

Brian Shipley

President, West End Citizen's Association

THANK YOU to Kathy Smeltzer for all her efforts to publish this newsletter twice a year for so many years!



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NEW, MORE CONVENIENT VOTING Rockville City Elections: Vote by Mail

Rockville is the very first jurisdiction in Maryland to conduct a Vote by Mail election for Mayor and four councilmembers. City officials have a 4-year term and the Vote by Mail will provide more and better options for all Rockville voters.

- **All registered voters will receive their ballot by mail.**
 - Every U.S. citizen living within Rockville city limits and over the age of 18 by November 5, 2019 is eligible to vote in the city election.
- **You may also register to vote:**
 - In-person at Rockville City Hall, a public library, a U.S. Post Office or a Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration Office.
 - By phone at 240-777-VOTE or 240-777-8500.
- **On Election Day, Tuesday, November 5,** a vote center will be available to Rockville Voters at City Hall, 7:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Key Dates

Friday, September 20:

- Deadline to register to vote
- Deadline for the city to receive alternative ballot delivery requests for a change of address.

On or before October 11:

- Ballots mailed to all registered voters.
- You will be able to track your ballot by visiting the city's website: www.rockvillemd.gov/election.
- If you don't receive your ballot by October 18, call 240-314-8280.

Monday, October 14:

- Accessible ballot marking device available at Rockville City Hall.

No later than 8:00pm, Tuesday, Nov. 5:

- Ballots must be returned by postage-paid mail, or at the secure City Hall drop box or in person.

*Sign up for text alerts about the Vote by Mail Mayor and Council election by texting **ROCKVOTES** to 888777.*

ISSUES OF INTEREST TO THE COMMUNITY

-Noreen Bryan

Master Plan Update for Planning Area 4

Issue: Approximately every ten years the City reviews and revises Rockville's Comprehensive Master Plan, which lays out the framework for the future of the City: land use, transportation, housing, etc. Included are sections devoted to individual neighborhoods whose boundaries are defined by Planning Areas. The West End and Woodley Gardens East/West make up Planning Area 4. The neighborhood plan for Planning Area 4 has not been updated since 1989.

WECA Involvement: As reported previously, WECA representatives drafted a new Neighborhood Plan, which was submitted to the city in December 2017. The Draft reflected feedback collected from 1800+ households in the 2016 neighborhood survey indicating that the top priority of respondents was preservation of the residential character of the neighborhood in the face of increased development pressure. Specifically, neighbors do not want to see commercial, institutional or office uses expanding in the neighborhood. The WECA Master Plan committee has been working closely with City staff to achieve that goal through this planning process.

Status: Over the past, WECA's committee has been working closely with staff to resolve outstanding issues and develop a consolidated Neighborhood Plan. As of the writing of this article we are close to completion. The next step is presentation of the consolidated draft to the residents of Planning Area 4. That meeting is planned to occur in October. Based on comments from residents, changes may be made to the Neighborhood Plan. Thereafter, it will be forwarded to the Planning Commission for their

review and possible revision. At this point there will be the opportunity for residents to testify at a public hearing. After work sessions and taking into account residents' testimony, the Planning Commission will finalize the draft Neighborhood Plan and forward it to the Mayor and Council for their review and approval. The tentative schedule for submission to the Mayor and Council is early in 2020.

Christ Episcopal Church – Planning a New School Building

Issue: Currently most of the Christ Episcopal School (CES) is housed in the brick office building at 22 West Jefferson Street. Christ Episcopal is selling this building and proposing to build a new school on the vacant lot just south of the church on South Washington Street. The Church and the Parsonage, which houses the church offices, are historic structures. The architectural design, the size of the proposed building, parking and other issues are of concern to the West End because of the school's location in our residential neighborhood. Schools can be built on residential property through a Special Exception.

WECA Involvement: WECA has been working closely with CES and City staff to encourage a well-reasoned review process and an outcome that is mutually beneficial to all.

Status: Substantive discussions of staff, CES representatives and WECA representatives were held in the spring. As a result, a compromise that would meet parking demands and zoning standards were reached. From here CES is finalizing its application which will be reviewed as a special exception by the Board of Appeals. The schedule for the review will depend on when the application is submitted by CES.



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**Soccer Fields at Julius West Middle School -
New Lights for Night Games and Artificial
Turf: Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)**

Issue: To settle a lawsuit, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) agreed to allow Montgomery Soccer Inc. (MSI) to install lighted soccer fields with artificial turf at three County locations, including Julius West Middle School (JWMS), and approved the installation contract in 2018. Many neighbors are concerned about the adverse impacts of the bright lights, noise, increased traffic and overflow parking in the neighborhood. MCPS agreed to create a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the City of Rockville to address these concerns by establishing rules of operation for the fields.

Citizen Action: Representatives of WECA and Rose Hill Falls Homeowners Association have continued to monitor the progress of the MOU and requested the opportunity to participate in its development.



Status: As of the writing of this newsletter, the construction of the fields is nearing completion. Further, MCPS has agreed to present a draft MOU to residents on 18 September 2019. Through our listserv and Facebook, WECA will continue to keep you informed on the content of the MOU and steps that need to be taken to ensure that operation of the fields is safe and provides essential protections for the neighborhood, particularly the residents of Rose Hill Falls. These protections include reasonable times of operation including curfews for the lights, parking restrictions and traffic management.

(Photo: montgomerycountymd.gov)

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Paul provided sound guidance throughout the process. From what to fix, how to stage, open house process, contract review and the closing. His reputation and experience proved to be a huge success for us.

Gloria & Randy 3/17/2019

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MEET CINDY STEWART

Executive Director
Rockville Economic Development, Inc.



Cindy joined Rockville Economic Development, Inc. (REDI) in 2018 following City Manager and economic development roles in Florida and California. WECA interviewed Cindy to learn more about the organization and its goals.

WECA: *What is REDI and how does it impact the West End?*

Cindy: REDI is a separate non-profit economic development organization funded by the City and operated by a Board representing a broad section of Rockville businesses. Unlike a membership-based organization such as a Chamber of Commerce, REDI works to foster strong economic development across the entire business community by providing site selection assistance, development coordination, data and demographic information, business funding and incentive connections, networking and referrals, and workforce referrals to resources including education, training and placement services. REDI helps the City cultivate the commercial tax base, which in turn alleviates some of the taxes and governmental service costs on residents. In the West End, REDI is working with Federal Realty, the City and other business owners to help to ensure a viable and thriving Town Center.

WECA: *What is REDI's vision for West End economic development in the next 5 years or so?*

Cindy: While REDI provides services to the overall Rockville Business community, we also pay close attention to what's happening in Town Center. REDI works with the City on issues that impact the business community to enhance the overall quality of life for the City. For example, REDI administers the grant that was provided to Dawson's Market and Cottage Monet. We believe the Town Square needs a strong anchor for the success of the project and to provide

amenities to the neighboring communities. Another example of our involvement is working with Duball during construction of their project in front of Regal Cinema to identify nearby parking alternatives to ensure visitors find their way. One of REDI's goals is to help create an environment where employees want to live, work and play, and where employers can find the employees they need.

WECA: *What strategies are you putting in place to achieve those goals?*

Cindy: REDI works with businesses considering relocation to Rockville, as well as businesses that are trying to solve issues to stay in Rockville or grow here. We convene discussions with appropriate City staff. For example, we had an office building owner come in with questions about parking and public art requirements as they applied to changing tenants within their building. We were able to schedule a meeting with City staff to look at such business needs to find solutions within City regulations that still allow businesses to thrive. Our strategies involve working individually with businesses as well as creating partnerships with the City, Montgomery County, Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation (MCEDC), the State Department of Commerce, Visit Montgomery, Montgomery Workforce, etc.

WECA: *How can West End residents participate in helping REDI and our local businesses thrive?*

Cindy: Residents can help by welcoming new businesses, supporting them with your patronage and expressing appreciation to those that have chosen to locate in Rockville. Rockville is a wonderfully diverse and hospitable City, and the more we create neighborly relationships with our local businesses, the more they want to stay here. REDI will present its FY 2019 report to the City Council on September 16th. Information is available on our website at www.rockvilleredi.org. We look forward to working with residents on commercial business issues that affect the West End.

You can reach Cindy at Stewart@RockvilleREDI.org

It Takes a Village!

Like any great place to live, Rockville's West End is thriving due in no small measure to the efforts of many members of our community. WECA works to promote, protect, and foster the interests, character, and appearance of our community, and every resident of the West End can help to further our goals. Here are a few current needs and ways you can help.

Block Captains are members of WECA's Executive Board, deliver WECA's twice-annual newsletters and serve as liaison between your "block" (2-3 streets) and the Board. It's a great way to get to know your neighbors and to make WECA (and the City) aware of concerns right where you live. We currently need Captains for:

- Block 1A - Mannakee and Wilson (31 houses)
- Block 14B - Rose Hill - Summer Garden and Autumn Wind Way (43 houses)
- Block 3A - Thirty Oaks/W. Montgomery Avenue (30 houses)

If you live on/near any of these blocks and would consider serving your neighbors as Block Captain, please contact Jen Timmick at jentimmick@gmail.com. If you have an issue or concern to share with the Association's Board, inform your WECA Block Captain, whose name appears on the front of your newsletter.

Communications: WECA shares time-sensitive information about issues impacting our schools, roads, Town Center, Mayor & Council actions, and other important issues and neighborhood events? You can be in the know, too:

- *Join WECA's Email list:* Go to: <http://eepurl.com/b6oWgX> and fill in the simple sign-up form. Your email will be used **only** to send you occasional emails about issues of interest to West End residents.
- *Join WECA's Facebook page:* Go to <https://www.facebook.com/WECARockville/> or search WECARockville while on Facebook. Once on the WECA page, click on "Like" and "Follow" (must have a Facebook account).

CHECK OUT our **MONTHLY EVENTS**

MEET THE LOCALS
2nd TUESDAY of the month
5-7PM • FREE
Meet some of our local vendors and learn about their products, all produced within 100 miles. Sample local dairy, wines, baked goods, health and beauty care products, and MORE.

HAPPY HOUR
MONDAY TO FRIDAY • 4-7PM
Enjoy \$2 off a glass of wine or beer with some appetizers on the hot bar. And check out our great LOCAL selection! Shop, eat, and enjoy some great company while you have a drink.

JAZZ BRUNCH
LAST SUNDAY of the month
11AM-2PM • \$16.99
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DEER MANAGEMENT: TIME TO ACT!

-Brian Shipley



Most West End residents are increasingly concerned about the number of white-tailed deer they are seeing and their increasing boldness in terms of roaming during the day and coming up very close to people's homes. Neighbors report deer bedding adjacent to homes, destruction of plants and property, jumping fences to access backyards, and accounts of deer fawn being born in yards. Two of my most disconcerting encounters include a deer running into and shattering our French door, and another getting its neck stuck in the gate of our backyard fence. I've had as many as 11 deer at once in my yard; what's your number? Regardless of where you live in the West End, you have likely experienced the destruction left by the deer – they are everywhere, and the destruction to personal property can be devastating.

Aside from the personal property destruction, residents express concerns regarding public health and the fear of Lyme disease from deer ticks. While the City does not research nor participate in gathering Lyme disease data exclusive to Rockville, the City's Deer Management Plan (April 2012) acknowledges that deer and other mammals, such as raccoons and foxes, serve as hosts for the adult stage of the tick but states, "a direct relationship between numbers of deer and the incidence of Lyme disease remains unresolved". As a result, the City does not use Lyme disease as a major factor in determining deer management strategies and only offers common methods (repellents, self-checks, and avoiding favorable tick habitats) as methods of prevention.

Bottom line, what is the City doing about our deep problem? To get a better understanding of the City is planning, WECA contacted Tim Chesnutt, Director of Recreation and Parks for

the City. Mr. Chesnutt stated that since 2009, the City has been exploring and monitoring white-tailed deer management practices throughout the region but acknowledged that there is no 'silver bullet' when it comes to managing deer, which is supported by simple Google searches that come up with many studies, home remedies and varying opinions. He explained that complicating matters is the ability of deer to adapt to urban settings, the availability of food, and encroachment of development into their habitat. He indicated that one of the very first City of Rockville attempts at developing a strategy for managing the deer population resulted in 1,500 angry emails from around the globe. Trapping and relocating deer is not an option approved by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, according to Mr. Chesnutt, and trapping is considered by many to be inhumane due to the trauma caused to the deer.

Mr. Chesnutt explained that the most recent management decision regarding deer was made on January 8, 2019, when the Mayor and Council received background information and options related to white-tailed deer management, discussed next steps, and provided instructions to Staff. Presentations to the Mayor and Council, which have informed their decision-making process, included: Maryland Department of Natural Resources-Heritage and Wildlife Service (MD-DNR); Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, United States Department of Agriculture, University of Maryland, Animal Connection Deer Management Team, and the Humane Society of the United States. Based on these presentations and the options discussed on January 8th, the Mayor and Council directed staff to move forward with developing a pilot project. This pilot will be in conjunction with the

County Working Group, and will include collecting/reporting data, and developing a pilot culling program. This will be planned and prepared over the next year and a half, with implementation planned in calendar year 2020. Mr. Chesnutt assured that public information and input will be incorporated into the planning and implementation steps.

Mr. Chesnutt also offered that the City is at a “pause” in the culling pilot process because there are code changes required by the City Attorney's office before the pilot can go much further. The pilot is anticipated to propose a single location for the controlled culling, with all appropriate safety measures. Following the resolution of the legal items, the new Mayor and Council will need to weigh in on the whole concept and, assuming they concur with proceeding, the City's goal will be to implement in the plot the Fall of 2020.

Whatever the solution, something has to done about the white-tailed deer problem in Rockville. And given the City's research of alternatives and recommendation for a culling pilot, I encourage residents to contact the Mayor and Council and support the swift implementation of the pilot.

Large groups of deer roaming day and night – very close to homes as shown here on Great Falls Road, and along busy roads as shown in the photo on the prior page (taken on West Montgomery Avenue -- have become a too-common sight in the West End.



REMINDER: MEET MAYOR & COUNCIL CANDIDATES AT WECA'S FALL GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING, OCTOBER 17th!

May General Membership Meeting (Clockwise from right): Neighbors enjoy catching up during the meeting's social hour (thanks Karan Gill and Pour Vino 'n Hops for the libations!); Past President Noreen Bryan chats with a West End neighbor; City Staff and members of the Rockville Mayor & Council – such as Mayor Newton and Councilmember Feinberg, shown here –often attend WECA meetings to listen to residents' concerns and provide information; WECA Recording Secretary Jen Timmick (left) and Treasurer Dennis Cain (center) join the crowd in recognizing outgoing President Noreen Bryan (right) for her decades of commitment and service to WECA.



I-270 WIDENING

The latest on the State's proposals to relieve traffic congestion and possible impacts on West End Communities

- Kate Ostell



There has been much activity regarding Gov. Hogan's plan to widen I-270 and the Beltway since the Spring. In brief, widening I-270 up to I-370 has been prioritized over widening the Beltway, and a new alternative plan has been introduced that would never widen the Beltway: to relieve congestion on the Beltway between Bethesda and I-95, traffic would be diverted from Virginia up I-270 on toll lanes to the ICC and back down I-95 to continue east on the Beltway, with the reverse for westbound traffic headed from Prince George's towards Virginia.

Background:

In September 2017, Gov. Hogan announced his "Traffic Relief Plan," the largest Public-Private Partnership (P3) in the nation, estimated at \$9-11 billion. Such projects do not require funding by the State Legislature and thus have few oversight mechanisms. The original plan consisted of 15 alternatives to widen the roads by up to 4 lanes and included many options with toll lanes. Despite significant public opposition to toll alternatives in favor of increasing transit, reversible lanes and other options that would not widen the roads, Maryland Dept. of Transportation (MDOT) narrowed the list to 7 alternatives -- all of which included toll lanes (except for the No Build option required by law).

Since the last newsletter:

There was a push to enact State legislation to give local Counties a voice in whether and/or how to implement toll roads in their jurisdictions, and also to require the State to complete the Environmental Impact Study (EIS) prior to awarding bids or approving P3 projects. Unfortunately, the General Assembly adjourned without any law passing, though residents' efforts did help the legislation progress as far as it did. Another round of Public Workshops was held by MDOT in April, but many attendees felt like these were not set up for public input.

With no laws to require more oversight, it remained up to the Board of Public Works (BPW) -- consisting of Gov. Hogan, Treasurer Nancy Kopp and

Comptroller Peter Franchot -- to approve the project. At the BPW meeting, Gov. Hogan's plan was passed (Hogan, Franchot for, Kopp opposed) but included a last minute "compromise," reportedly worked out with County Executive Elrich and Councilmember Tom Hucker. Initially, Beltway widening, including the American Legion Bridge, was to be tackled first, followed by I-270 from the Beltway to I-370. The approved P3 switched the phasing and put the widening of I-270 first. This change apparently pleased Montgomery County officials, even though the biggest bottlenecks (I-270 north of I-370 and along with the American Legion Bridge) would not be addressed in the first phase. A number of other amendments were also included in the plan passed by the BPW, involving free bus use of toll lanes, percentage allotment of State revenues to transit, a feasibility study of monorail along I-270, and approval process to buying private properties under eminent domain. While reportedly there has been collaboration with neighborhoods along the Beltway to develop this plan, none, to this writer's knowledge, has occurred with residents along I-270.

The day after the BPW meeting, the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (MNCPPC) voted 9-1 to reject the plan based on reasons including MDOT's insufficient supporting documentation and the limited array of options presented. Carol Rubin, Sr. Project Manager with the Montgomery County Planning Department said, "Their environmental impact statement has to be complete and comprehensive, and that's what we're trying to get them to do." There was also discussion around a 1930s law that prevents the re-use or transfer of parkland -- including that along the Beltway -- for any purpose other than parkland or recreation. This law could potentially prohibit the State from taking that land for Beltway widening.

A New Alternative to be Studied:

In July, the Montgomery County DOT announced that State transportation officials voted at a meeting of the Metropolitan Washington Council of

Governments' Transportation Planning Board (which includes representation from MD, VA and DC) to study a new alternative that would not widen the Beltway, even at a later phase of the P3. The concept is to divert traffic from the congested portion of the Beltway between I-95 and Bethesda to I-270 and the ICC. Express toll lanes would extend from the Virginia Beltway across the American Legion Bridge, along the Beltway connecting to I-270, and up I-270 to the ICC interchange. Traffic would then use the ICC toll road to I-95, and travel on another toll lane south on I-95 to the Beltway to continue east, thus avoiding the busiest portion of the Beltway. There would also be improvements to MARC, Bus Rapid Transit and reversible lanes on I-270 between Frederick and Montgomery County. It remains to be seen if the MDOT takes this alternative seriously, although the environmental and legal issues surrounding Beltway widening may be an incentive.

This new alternative raises many questions: How many drivers would add significant mileage to their trips and be willing to pay a toll that could reach \$40? How bad would the congestion in the free lanes have to be to incent drivers to do that? How many lanes would have to be added to I-270 to

accommodate the diversion, and would I-270 congestion get worse despite new lanes? And what would the impacts of that be to our neighborhoods? There is also vagueness around the term "managed lanes," which seems to include variable toll lanes, Express Toll Lanes, HOV, HOV toll lanes.

While this alternative is being touted as the State finally working with Montgomery County on traffic congestion solutions, there appears to have been no collaboration between the State and neighborhoods such as our own along the lower segment of I-270, nor between County Executive Elrich or other County Councilmembers and these residents. The BPW has charged ahead, despite public outcry, to move the P3 forward, but there remain many steps in this process.

West End residents should contact their County elected officials with questions about all of the alternatives. They can also contact their State Legislative representatives regarding what new State law might be enacted to protect neighborhoods along I-270. WECA will keep you informed of developments as they occur.

Photo: I-270 Local and Express sign by formulanone licensed under [Creative Commons](#).

West End Citizens Association

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Approximately 1600 West End households per distribution. Two distributions per year.

BUSINESS ADVERTISING

	Per Year
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