

WEST END CITIZEN'S ASSOCIATION

Rockville, Maryland



VOLUME XLVI, NUMBER II

OCTOBER 2018

West End Citizens Association
GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

YOU ARE INVITED!

Join us for a glass of wine

Meet new neighbors

Meet our new:

Police Chief - Victor Brito

Director of Planning - Ricky Barker

**Featured Topic:
Widening of I-270**

Mayor Bridget Newton and
Councilman, Mark Pierzchala will speak
Kate Ostell will discuss citizen participation

Thursday, October 11th, 2018

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

By Noreen Bryan

Many of you know that my husband and I spend summers in Vermont. As I sat down to write this message from my chair beside the pond, images came to mind of my favorite things in the West End and Rockville. At the top of my list is walkability. Nearly everyday, whatever the season, I find myself heading to Town Center or the Metro or just stretching my legs by walking through our residential neighborhood. Architecturally, it is a wonderful mix of styles and eras, houses large and small. When I need an item for a new recipe, I head to Dawson's or Giant. On those days when I can't face cooking I head to one of the many restaurants for a quick bite or a savory, slow meal with friends. Most of the services that I need – the post office, the bank, the library, and even my eye doctor – are within an easy walk. When I desperately need a treat, the pastries and coffee at Fresh Baguette bring delight every time.

As you can see, it is not just walkability, but the destinations that make the experience worthwhile and pleasurable. The West End is so fortunate to have the shops and services of Town Center within easy reach. When you come home from a long day away, there is a wonderful range of amenities: restaurants, gyms, the library, the skating rink, home town holidays, and personal services right around the corner. Having visited many of the neighborhoods within the County, I find that the West End stands out for its great mix of houses and shops. You don't have to drive miles to meet your needs.

Supporting these local businesses and helping them thrive is one of WECA's goals. They are essential to the rich life of our neighborhood. In the year ahead, the Executive Board of the West End Citizens Association hopes to feature individual businesses at our monthly meetings. Come and



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sample their wares or hear about their services. We will also try to feature newly opened businesses on the WECA Facebook page and in our email newsletters. (If you haven't signed up for these important methods of communication, please see page 9 for instructions on how to do so!) These great new offerings are worth exploring and some will undoubtedly end up being favorites.

On-going Topics of Interest/Concern to the Community

Soccer Fields at Julius West Middle School – New Lights for Night Games and Artificial Turf

Issue: As part of the settlement of a lawsuit, Montgomery County Board of Education (BOE) agreed to allow Montgomery Soccer Inc. (MSI) to install lighted soccer fields with artificial turf at three locations in the county, including Julius West Middle School (JWMS). On June 12, 2018, Montgomery County Board of Education approved award of the contract to install the artificial turf field and lights at JWMS. Many neighbors remain concerned about the adverse impacts of the bright lights, noise, increased traffic and overflow parking in the neighborhood.

Citizen Action: A group of concerned citizens has appealed the decision to the Maryland State Board of Education. In response, Montgomery County Public Schools submitted an objection to the appeal. Through the appeal process, citizens have learned that the Board of Education never voted to approve the settlement with MSI. No settlement agreement has ever been made public. The terms of the Board of Education's arrangement with MSI for the Julius West MS lighted artificial turf stadiums are unknown.

Status: As of the writing of this newsletter, the Maryland State Board of Education has not ruled on the appeal. Citizens await the outcome.

Pedestrian Safety at Maryland Avenue & South Washington Street

Issue: The intersection at Maryland Avenue and South Washington Street has long been of great concern because of the dangers it poses to pedestrians, particularly children on their way to and from school.

WECA Involvement: For many years WECA has led a campaign of appeals to the City to fix this problem.

Status: A new, safer crosswalk has been completed. There is an island in the middle to give pedestrians a safe waypoint and blinking lights at the ends of the crosswalk to alert drivers of pedestrians in the crosswalk. Nearby residents are very pleased that they and their children can cross this intersection with much greater safety. Our thanks go to Mr. DiSpirito, City Manager, for his leadership and diligence that has led to this solution and thank you to the staff for their expert execution of the project.

Small Cell Antennas for 5G Service

Issue: As reported previously, telecommunication companies continue to press to allow equipment for the next generation, 5G, to be located everywhere including residential neighborhoods. Federal regulations prohibit opposition based on health concerns and allow little local participation from local governments. To the disappointment of many, Montgomery County has proposed a zoning text amendment that would allow Mini Cell Towers in front of our homes. The Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) favors the wireless telecommunications developers. If passed by the Council it would:

- **Allow short Cell Towers and antennas in front of our homes, on utility poles and streetlamps.**
- **Allow (next to these poles) cabinets holding the electronic equipment so large that a person could stand inside the cabinet. Some of the equipment produces noise and vibrations.**

WECA Involvement: WECA has persistently opposed placement of small cell antennas and equipment in neighborhoods. Developments on this issue are sent to neighbors via the WECA Listserv and Facebook. If you are not on our listserv or connected via Facebook, please see page 9 of this newsletter for information on how you can connect.

Status: As this newsletter is being written, a public hearing before the Montgomery County Council has been scheduled for September 25, 2018. If action is taken by the Council in advance of our General Meeting on October 11th, we will report the results at the meeting.



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Open House Dates

Friday, Nov. 16 9:00-11:00
Saturday, Nov. 17 9:00-11:00
Friday, Jan. 25 9:00-11:00

 

Inspiring minds to learn, hearts to love and hands to serve

Chestnut Lodge – Naming the Park

Issue: In 2017, the City purchased the land where the Chestnut Lodge Main Building stood before it was destroyed by fire in 2009. This land and adjacent parcels along West Montgomery Avenue were combined to create a park of 6.4 acres.

WECA Involvement: WECA strongly supported the name, Chestnut Lodge Park, through testimony before the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board and the Mayor and Council.

Status: In case you missed it, the Mayor and Council selected the name, “Chestnut Lodge Park.” WECA supports the selection because it commemorates all who lived and served there, namely the body of physicians and the many patients.

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, housing, transportation, etc. Included in the Master Plan 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 it was created in 1989.

WECA Involvement: As reported in previous editions of this newsletter, WECA representatives have developed a new Neighborhood Plan, which was submitted to the city in December 2017. The Plan is based on the results of the May 2016 survey that was sent to all households, more than 1800, in the neighborhood. The overwhelming view expressed by respondents to the survey was the goal to preserve the residential character of the neighborhood in the face of increased development. Specifically, neighbors do not want to see commercial, institutional or office uses expanding in the neighborhood. Currently, the WECA committee is working closely with City staff to integrate the Neighborhood Plan into the greater Master Plan. Preserving the residential character of the neighborhood is at the forefront of these discussions.

Status: At the August 8, 2018 meeting of the Planning Commission, submission of our Neighborhood Plan with the Updated Elements of the Master Plan was approved. The WECA committee will continue working with City staff to get the Plan ready for submission to the Planning Commission. If there are topics or issues where the neighborhood differs from City staff, these will be presented independently to the Planning Commission.

Luckett House – Preserving a West End Historic Residence

Issue: Recently, the owner of the Luckett House located at 107 West Jefferson Street across from the Rockville Academy has initiated a project to build a four-bay garage behind the house. In 1974, the West Montgomery Avenue Historic District was created to preserve the history and residential character of some of the oldest portions of the West End along West Montgomery Avenue and abutting side streets. The Luckett House is within this district.

This garage would be in addition to recent rehabilitation of the house, a new, expanded parking lot for 14 cars, a circular drive and new landscaping. For years, this property was used for law offices. Currently, a property management company owns the property and operates its business on the site. The property owner has indicated that a fleet of 14 cars and trucks will be coming and going from the site. The Lockett House has a very visible location on West Jefferson Street and is the farthest reach into the neighborhood of a business use within an historic house.

WECA Involvement: In the face of an expanded commercial presence on the property, WECA is concerned to preserve the residential, historic character of the property and not change the historic district to commercial use when it was specifically created to preserve the residential character of the area. Of concern is the potential use of the site to store and maintain commercial vehicles and equipment, such as snow blowers and plows, and vehicles with commercial logos. The Lockett property is of particular significance because it is a potential precedent setter that will slowly turn the neighborhood into a commercial district.

Status: As of the writing of this newsletter, a public hearing before the Planning Commission is scheduled for September 12, 2018. Results of that meeting and any decisions of the Planning Commission will be reported at the WECA General Meeting on October 11th.

Christ Episcopal Church – Planning a New School Building

Issue: Currently the Christ Episcopal School is housed in the brick office building at 22 West Jefferson Street. The School is selling this building and proposing to build a new school building 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.

WECA Involvement: The Head Mistress of Christ Episcopal School reached out to WECA in the fall

of 2017 with the goal of making this project a win for the school and a win for the neighborhood. Schools can be built on residential property through a Special Exception.

Status: On August 1, 2018, a pre-application area meeting was held. The on-going concerns for adequate parking and preservation of the residential character of the street were presented to the applicant. Specifically, information on parking and zoning were not presented at the meeting.



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HOW YOU CAN HELP THE WEST END!

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. It truly does take a village! Here are a few current needs and ways you can help.

Communications: Please make it easier for WECA to communicate with you about important issues and neighborhood events and opportunities.

- *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).
- *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 concern or interest to West End residents.
- Inform your WECA Block Captain if you would like to share issues or concerns with the Association's Board. Your Block Captain's name appears on the front of your newsletter.

Additionally, if you have content that you think may be useful to share with the West End community, or you would like to help with WECA communications, please contact Donna Sprague (donna.sprague16@gmail.com).

Block Captains: Block Captains are members of WECA's Executive Board. They 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 by extension, the City) aware of concerns right where you live. We currently need Block Captains for:

- Block 3B: Roxboro Road and Adclare Road (38 houses)
- Block 7B: Anderson Avenue (40 houses)
- Block 12D: Winding Rose Drive and Fire Princess Court (58 houses)

If you live in any of these blocks and would consider serving your neighbors as Block Captain, please contact Jen Timmick at jentimmick@gmail.com.

Historic Preservation: WECA has established a standing committee, to be headed by Andrew Sellman, that will focus on historic preservation issues in the West End. If you have an interest in historic preservation and would like to join this

committee, please contact Andrew at sellmana@verizon.net.

Safety: Please protect your neighbors by driving carefully through our neighborhoods. Keep sidewalks clear and safe by trimming trees and bushes and removing your trash and recycling bins promptly. You can also report burnt out or malfunctioning street lights: lights on wooden poles are typically Pepco at:

<https://pepco.streetlightoutages.com>

Note the number on the pole if possible. For City-owned metal poles, file a report at www.rockvillemd.gov/reportaconcern.

Engage in your community: Throughout the year, we communicate with WECA members through this newsletter, by email, and on Facebook. At times, we need help sharing important information, signing a petition, giving testimony at a hearing, and the like. Elsewhere in this newsletter, you will find updates on current issues of concern to WECA. Please help in whatever way you can to support our efforts to keep the West End a wonderful, welcoming place to live.



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Widening I-270

The “495-270-p3 Program,” (p3 for Public-Private-partnership), proposes 15 alternatives from “no build” to four new lanes on both interstates. Under some of the alternatives, we estimate as many as 200 homes in Rockville alone could be taken by the State through eminent domain. Places of work, worship and other institutions would also be potentially taken. Even if your home is not adjacent, many more will be affected by the destruction of buffers, increased noise and air pollution, and negative impacts to businesses and community gathering places we currently enjoy.

The State is fast tracking this project, announced in Fall 2017 by Governor Hogan. Here is a summary of the process to date:

- Last Winter, Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) put out Requests for Information (RFI) from private sector firms, nationally and internationally, and received 27 responses.
- The State initiated the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Process which requires federal agencies to evaluate the environmental effects of their proposed actions. Part of the “I-495 & I-270 Managed Lanes [tolls] Study” will include development of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to document the potential natural, cultural, and socioeconomic effects of the alternatives.
- In Spring 2018, the State held four open houses to describe the Scoping of the EIS, Step 1. Public comments were accepted through May 1, 2018.
- Over this summer, the State held four open houses to describe Step 2, the Preliminary Range of Alternatives and Screening. The public comment period closed Aug. 27, 2018. At no point in the process through August has the State made any indication of what properties would be taken for which alternatives. See the Alternatives here: http://495-270-p3.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/julyworkshops_wide_screen.pdf

Interestingly, the alternatives do not differentiate between the portion of I-270 where it is currently twelve lanes and where it is four. There is no alternative to widen only the current four-lane section, nor to address other bottlenecks. Mass transit alternatives are not thoughtfully addressed and appear to be an afterthought.

- In the Fall/Winter 2018-19, the State expects to complete Step 3, the Alternatives Retained for Detailed Study (ARDS). The number of alternatives will be narrowed to 5 or 6 from the 15 considered this summer. Presumably at this point, the public will be given some idea which properties could be subject to taking by eminent domain under specific alternatives.
- Step 4 will be the Draft EIS Statement, and by Fall 2019/Winter 2020 the combined Final EIS/Record of Decision (ROD), Step 5. Construction could begin as soon as 2021.

Opposed to Widening I-270?



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The Governor claims this \$9 billion project to relieve traffic congestion will not cost the taxpayers, as the construction will be paid for by tolls. This contention has been disputed by many local politicians, transit experts, and even one of the companies submitting a response to the RFI. Experience in VA with the tolled/managed lanes have indicated a drop in number of drivers using the toll lanes and a decline in revenue to levels below operating costs.

<https://www.transitformaryland.org/latest-news>
Many are concerned that even widening the highway will provide no lasting congestion relief. After previous widenings of I-270, more development occurred, and the road filled right back up. “In Houston, TX, commuters have discovered that having the world’s widest expressway that includes HOT lanes is not permanent congestion cure. The Katy Freeway is now a staggering 23 lanes wide, but three years after the state allocated \$2.8 billion to expand it, congestion returned to its original level and continues to grow. But no expressway or HOT lane can deliver drivers directly to their destination, and at some point there will be a bottleneck. This is the scenario now playing out in northern Virginia, just as it has after every previous expansion of I-95.”

<https://usa.streetsblog.org/2016/09/27/the-mythology-of-hot-lanes/>

Rockville has already provided significant opposition to the alternatives that would widen I-270. The Mayor and Council of Rockville sent a letter May 14, 2018 to MDOT opposing any alternative that would widen the footprint of I-270. In August, Councilmember Mark Pierzchala led an effort to submit comments to MDOT by the August 27 deadline. More than a hundred Rockville neighbors, many from the West End, participated in preparing that mailing. There is also discussion of forming an umbrella group across the City in opposition, as other communities along I-270 and I-495 have done. WECA has formed a committee (see below) to follow this on-going issue, and we will continue to keep you informed through WECA Email and the WECA Facebook page. (Please see page 9 for information on how to sign up for these important methods of timely communication about issues impacting the West End.)

WECA I-270 Committee

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Dennis Cain dennis.cain@verizon.net
Don Kettlestrings daket@verizon.net
Jane Pontius jane.m.pontius@gmail.com

Note: This article was written for the newsletter on Aug. 28, 2018. There may have been new developments by the time you read this. WECA will provide an update at the October 11 General Meeting. Please attend to learn more and ask questions.

New Year at a New School

This year, some West End elementary school students are not only starting a new school year, but they are also attending a brand new school. Bayard Rustin Elementary School is located at 332 West Edmonston Road, in the Hungerford neighborhood.



Photo credit: Melissa Scales

While City residents welcome the additional capacity, urgently needed to help relieve significant school overcrowding, the redrawing of school boundaries galvanized many Rockville parents last year, including West End families whose children would have to leave their neighborhood schools. Kindergartners through fifth graders attending the new school were previously within the Beall and Ritchie Park boundaries. (Fifth graders within the new Bayard Rustin boundary will finish their last elementary school year at their previous school.)

The final redistricting decisions disappointed some members of our community, but West End parents who became engaged during the boundary hearings

are committed to the success of their new school. Bayard Rustin Principal Rachel DuBois shares that determination. “Our biggest goal is to build relationships with the community, build relationships with our kids, and build relationships with our staff,” she says. “We are building a culture and a community from the ground up. The best part of opening a new school is that it’s a blank slate. It’s a kid-centered approach of when you’re a kid in a classroom, what kind of space do you want to be in every day.”

In addition to a traditional curriculum, the school will house the Richard Montgomery cluster’s Chinese Immersion program, which was previously at College Gardens Elementary School. In addition, Rustin will be a World Language School, meaning that all students will learn another language as part of their curriculum. The new school is named after Bayard Rustin, a civil rights pioneer and openly gay man who was the chief architect of the 1963 March

on Washington, where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. gave his “I have a dream” speech. The new students are excited to become “Rustin Red Foxes!”

Learn more about the school at:

<https://montgomeryschoolsmd.org/schools/rustines/>



Stay connected with your community!

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Go to <https://www.facebook.com/WECARockville/> or search @WECARockville while on Facebook
- *Join WECA's Email list:*
Go to the website <https://westendrockvillemd.org/> and click on the link “Signup for WECA Email Updates”
- Inform your WECA Block Captain if you would like to share issues or concerns with the Association’s Board

West End Citizens Association

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

BUSINESS ADVERTISING

	Per Year
Full page (7½” w x 10” h)	\$400
Half page inside front cover (7½” w x 4¾” h)	\$300
Half page (7½” w x 4¾” h)	\$250
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