

The Bugle



Published by the Strathmore-Bel Pre Civic Association

March 2013

Volume 45 #1

The President's Corner

by Nancy Bechtol

This has been the winter of the small nuisance storms, many little amounts of snow that all fall around rush hour. Just enough to make it difficult to maneuver around town to work and school. We are all very happy that we live here, and not in New England, where they haven't been as fortunate with the weather. Our hearts go out to all who live in that region of our country.

The challenge, however, for our neighborhood has been a recent string of home burglaries. It certainly shakes our confidence that our homes will be safe when we leave them.



Most of these burglaries have occurred without anyone at home, which is very good. But the loss of your personal property is really upsetting. My husband and I have suffered our home being broken into twice over the past 23 years, and can speak from experience that it is very distressing.

The police ask us to make sure that our homes and vehicles are secure when we leave them. They encourage us to put several lights on timers in various rooms. Another great idea is to leave a radio on loud enough that someone can hear it from outside your home. We each need to be observant when walking and driving through our neighborhood. Report to the police anything that just doesn't look right. We have an amazing police department, and they have been most responsive to our calls. We can help each other out most of all just by being observant, and by being good neighbors.

If you have not joined our neighborhood listserve, I recommend that you do immediately. John Bogasky manages this listserve, which currently has around 225 members. The recent rash of burglaries was reported on the listserve almost immediately after they occurred. The listserve is an excellent way for you to find out fast what is happening in our neighborhood.

I hate to sound doom and gloom in my message this issue, but it is very important that we all watch out for each other. I sincerely feel for all of our neighbors who have suffered from a break in, and hope they are managing in dealing with their losses. We are very much looking forward to springtime!

Contents:

President's Message	1
SBPCA & BPRA Boards	2
Gleanings from Meetings	3
Election Results	4
BPRA Notes	5
50s Plus	6
Strathmore-Bel Pre Website	12
Library News	13
Yard Sale	14
Investment Club	14
Miss Utility	17
Street Lights Out?	18
July 4 Planning	19

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Chris Swan, Editor 301-871-113

Assistant Editor: Elliot Chabot	301 871-1113	Advertising: Harry Klapper	301 460-9645
North Circulation : Louisa Hoar	301 871-2954	South Circulation: Dan Mann	301 460-3330

Strathmore Bel Pre Civic Association (SBPCA)

P.O. Box 6836, Silver Spring, MD 20906

e-mail: Strathmo@strathmore-belpre.org

Web site: www.strathmore-belpre.org

Annual SBPCA membership: \$15.00

The SBPCA is a voluntary association, funded by membership dues, that represents our community to County Government and various other groups such as the Montgomery County Civic Federation. The SBPCA also publishes *The Bugle* and organizes the annual Yard Sale and 4th of July festivities. The SBPCA Board of Directors meets on the fourth Tuesday of each month at 7:30 pm at the Genesis Center Nursing Home on Bel Pre Road. The Civic Association's annual meeting is in November just before the BPRA annual meeting.

Civic Association Officers

President:	Nancy Bechtol	301 871-3679	Secretary:	Linda Bea	301 460-0497
Vice President:	Bill Hammond	301 871-5074	Webmasters:	Bill Hammond	301 871-5074
Treasurer:	John Bogasky	301 460-1604		Adam Shepard	727 871-0393

Civic Association Directors

Charlie Bea	301 460-0497	Ron Daub	301 460-0929	Chris Swan	301 871-1113
Max Bronstein	301 460-3117	Lilla Hammond	301 871-5074	Dan Thomas	301 871-2624
Elliot Chabot	301 871-1113	Harry Klapper	301 460-9645		
Frank Corrigan	301 460-1011	Maurice Potosky	301 460-9008		

Bel Pre Recreational Association (BPRA)

The Bel Pre Recreational Association (BPRA) is the homeowner's association for the Strathmore Bel Pre properties. Your annual assessment is paid to the BPRA to pay for your pool, tennis courts, volleyball, playground, picnic area, bath house, snack bar and pavilion open from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day. BPRA Board Meetings are held the 4th Monday of each month at 7:30 pm at Georgian Forest Elementary School and during summer months at the Pool Pavilion. The BPRA's annual meeting is in November.

Bel Pre Recreation Association Officers

President:	Dan Keating	301 603-8162	dtkeats@gmail.com
Vice President:	Karen Potocki	609 947-1256	karenpotocki@yahoo.com
Treasurer:	Ed Frantz	301 603-8055	ed_frantz@comcast.net
Secretary:	Paulette Ladas	301 674-7742	pauletteladas@remax.net

Bel Pre Recreation Association Trustees/Directors

Robert Bowser	301 460-3444	r.bowser@verizon.net	Kim Watters	301 460-0054	kimwatters@live.com
Dan Entwisle	301-871-9363	twisles@msn.com			
Lou Ann Rector	301-603-8805	louann.rector@fsis.usda.gov	Anthony Wormack	202 468-3565	awwormack@gmail.com

Bel Pre Recreation Association Volunteers

Admin Asst:	Brenda Henry	301 871-6298	Pavilion Usage:	Louisa Hoar	301 871-2954
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Gleanings From Meetings + More

By Frank Corrigan

Montgomery County Civic Federation – November Meeting

The November 12, 2012, meeting of the Montgomery County Civic Federation (MCCF) consisted of a general discussion of topics of concern to the members.


A Four Corners (1500 homes) representative shared her concerns about a County proposal to establish a soccer field in lieu of retaining an open parkland area. She also noted that the County has been repeatedly replacing sidewalks and curb cuts. Jim Humphrey, Chair of the MCCF Planning and Land Use Committee, will contact County personnel about this. He also will check as to sidewalk work being done in the Clarksburg area, that does not seem to be connecting sidewalks together so as to enable high school students to walk to school. Additionally, he will explore whether the County is adhering to its Master Plans, or is making changes with impunity, especially in Goshen. Another member noted that State and County agencies can abrogate all Master Plan recommendations and even zoning provisions.

Another member indicated that Montgomery County Police is not providing timely information on crimes in some neighborhoods. He said that the D.C. Police Department provides crime information within 15 minutes of its occurrence and questioned why Montgomery County Police could not do likewise. Another concern expressed related to the County continuing to revise approved Master Plans to increase density without real plans for necessary infrastructure. It was noted that the County Council has exempted all Metro station areas from growth principles. Seven Council members approved this proposal, and only Phil Andrews and Mark Elrich opposed it.

– Continued on page 9 –

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Association Election Results



The November 15, 2012, annual general membership meetings of the Strathmore Bel Pre Civic Association and the Bel Pre Recreational Association included the election of the boards of both organizations. Board members serve on each board for staggered 3-year terms. Each year, 5 members are elected to the 15-member Civic Association Board and 3 members are elected to the 9-member Recreational Association Board.

Civic Association

Linda Bea, John Bogasky, Elliot Chabot, Lilla Hammond, and Chris Swan were re-elected by acclamation to the Civic Association Board. John currently serves as Treasurer of the Association. Linda and Lilla are both former Presidents of the Association, with Linda currently serving as Secretary. Chris and Elliot are the Editor and Assistant Editor, respectively, of *The Bugle*.

Recreation Association

The Recreational Association election featured 6 candidates for 3 seats. After spirited discussion – both in *The Bugle* and at the annual meeting – the general membership chose Dan Keating, Paulette Ladas, and Kim Watters to serve on the Board. Dan is a former President of the Association, and Paulette previously had served as Secretary. This is Kim's first time on the Board. She lived in the community from 1979-1993, and returned here in 2008. The other candidates were incumbent Board member Keith Yockelson, and longtime community members Kelcey Klass and Jim Rauch. Board Member Sue Hoye did not run for re-election, having served many years on the Board.

At its December meeting, the Recreational Association Board elected the following officers for 2012-13: President Dan Keating, Vice President Karen Potocki, Treasurer Ed Frantz, and Secretary Paulette Ladas.



Some snowdrops bloom, impatient for spring...

20 Questions for the BPRA

By Dan Keating

I'm Dan Keating, one of your neighbors. I am serving this year as President of the Bel Pre Recreational Association (BPRA). I've been on the board before, then off, and now I am back. I was re-elected to the board at the 2012 Annual Meeting in November. I served as Secretary last year.

I arrived in our neighborhood in 1999. When I bought our house on Deckman Terrace, off Layhill Road, I was told there was no homeowners association. So when the annual assessment letter arrived the following February, I threw it away. Eventually I got a phone call and an explanation. I paid my assessment, got familiar with the pool and swim team, and have been very glad that I learned about the BPRA.

Many people have been around here longer than I have. Others are newer. The annual assessment letters signed by our newly elected Treasurer Ed Frantz arrived early in February. For the veterans, the newcomers, and the folks in-between, here's 20 questions about the BPRA.

20) What is the BPRA?

I believe that BPRA is the successor to the developer of our subdivision (Levitt and Sons), and thus, functions as the homeowners association for the 709 households of the Strathmore Bel Pre community. BPRA functions as the recreation association. The BPRA Executive Board has nine members (trustees) elected at an annual meeting (generally held each November) for three-year terms. Three board positions are filled each year.

19) What does the BPRA do?

Its primary function has been managing the community recreation property, pursuant to the recreation covenants attached to people's land titles.

18) What's on the community recreation property?

The property at 13920 Bethpage Lane has a kiddie pool, a large pool, four tennis courts, a pavilion for picnics and meetings, a volleyball court, a playground with a large wooden pirate ship, another swing-set, picnic tables in the grass, a basketball court, a snack bar, table tennis and other games, and restrooms with showers for men and women.

17) Is the recreation property open year-round?

No. The association's governing documents specify that the pool property is open from the start of Memorial Day Weekend in May through the end of Labor Day Weekend in September. The tennis courts, however, can be used year-round since they are outside the fenced pool-pavilion area.

16) Is the community recreation property open to the public?

No. It is open to BPRA member families and their guests, only.

15) Are guests free?

Yes, on Memorial Day Weekend and Fourth of July. Otherwise the member has to pay \$2 for each guest weekdays and \$3 for each guest weekends. Guests must be accompanied by a member. Guests under age 3 are free.

– Continued on page 7 –

50s Plus

by Chris Swan and Charlotte Potosky

The 50s Plus Club formed about 17 some years ago, through the collaborative efforts of some of the early residents of Strathmore-Bel Pre. The group formed to continue the camaraderie created while keeping their kids and relatives company at the pool. The Club has been meeting each summer at the pool, and in various members homes during the rest of the year. The group also takes trips to museums, historic sites, and enjoys many dinner theater shows (especially at Tobys), and a yearly trip to see the Hexagon Players. While some club members have moved away to nearby communities, they remain active members of the club. Other club members are newer, having more recently moved into the community, or having just joined.

The December 2102 meeting was at the home of Bob and Arlene Wiseth.



50s plus members at the Wiseth's in December

The first meeting for 2013 was in February, at the home of Marilyn and Carl Kessler. We will be attending the Hexagon Players performance of **A Raucous Caucus**, at the Montgomery College Cultural Arts Center in Takoma Park, on Thursday evening, March 7. We will be seeing **A Fiddler on the Roof** at Toby's dinner theater, in Columbia, on Wednesday, March 20.

– Continued on page 8 –

BRPA Questions (Continued from page 5)

14) What if I don't want to use the pool?

Rather than using the pool and bringing guests along with them, members can opt to get two "passes" that can be shared with anyone. In that case, with a pass in hand, guests can go to the pool without a fee and without the presence of the member. But if a member opts for the passes that can be handed out, the member also must bring a pass to the pool. So a member cannot have the passes to hand out and then still have the right to bring all members of the household to the pool. When you pay the annual assessment, you can choose whether to get passes or have regular pool visiting rights.

13) What's the "Rolodex"?

To keep track of which families have opted to be able to visit the pool, those families are required to supply a family picture. It can be mailed with the assessment payment or brought to the pool. The pictures are kept in a Rolodex at the entrance desk. Members visiting the pool need to sign in. The pool staff member at the front desk can check the Rolodex to confirm that a picture is on file. We have had cases where people who were not members tried to come into the property. We asked their names and saw that their pictures were not in the Rolodex, and so they were not allowed in. Supplying your picture is important to make sure our property is available for actual members.

12) The tennis courts have a locked fence. How do I get in?

Longtime volunteer Louisa Hoar has a supply of keys and will supply it to anyone who requests it. She can be reached at 301-871-2954.

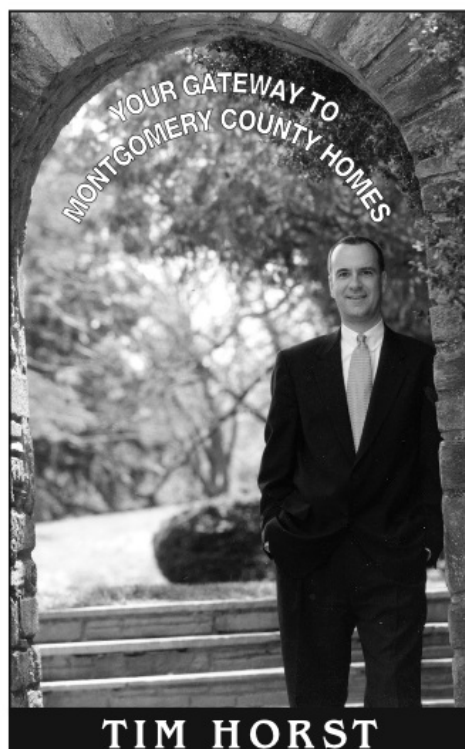
11) What if I want to have an event at the pavilion?

Any time you want to reserve space at the pavilion, or any time you want to bring more than 10 guests at a time, you need to make a reservation. With whom? Contact Louisa Hoar, at 301-871-2954. The pavilion and pool property are regularly used for birthday and graduation parties, end-of-season parties for sports teams, family reunions, group meetings, etc. If you have an event in the pavilion, or just eat a snack there, please clean up after yourself. We do not have busboys. The lifeguards' duty is to keep the pool safe, not clean up messy tables.

– Continued on page 11 –

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50s Plus News (Continued from page 6)

The April meeting will be at the home of Michael and Rikki Weiser on April 10. After that, we will hold our summer meetings at the pool pavilion, as soon as the pool opens in May.

Anyone interested in becoming affiliated with the 50s Plus Club, please contact Charlotte Potosky at 301 460-9008, or at char3505@aol.com.



A Dickens Village scene at the Wiseth's in December.

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Gleanings (Continued from page 3)

County Council Budget Planning Forum

On November 29, 2012, the County Council held a Budget Planning Forum for Fiscal Year 2014. Members of the public, the Montgomery County Taxpayers League, and several employee unions attended and participated in a colloquy with council members.

Major pressures for FY 2014 planning:

- Personnel compensation and benefits
- Continued phase-in of pre-funding retiree health insurance benefits
- Impact of new facilities – libraries, schools, college, recreation centers, fire stations
- Restoration of prior reductions to public safety staffing, health and human services programs, affordable housing
- Social Services – growth in income support programs since FY 2009
- Increasing student enrollment

Risks and uncertainties include:

- possible reductions in State income and sales tax revenue by as much as \$1 billion;
- reductions in Federal aid to the State of \$120 million, primarily funds for education, housing and social services
- reduction of up to 10,000 jobs in the County. Montgomery County lost some 5,000 jobs between 2000 and 2010, according to the Census..
- volatility in recent years in income tax receipts, and transfer and recordation taxes.

By function, FY 2013 tax supported expenditures

		<u>Appropriation</u>	
Public Schools	\$2,028,871,395	50.5%	(Statistics were provided at the County Council Planning Forum)
Public Safety	\$ 544,918,326	13.6%	
Debt Service	\$ 298,792,040	7.4%	
Montgomery College	\$ 218,786,599	5.4%	
Health & Human Svcs.	\$ 181,733,135	4.5%	
This comprises 81.4% of the County's expenditures.			

– Continued on page 10 –

Gleanings (Continued from page 9)

Statistics concerning the state law required public schools maintenance of effort on the distribution of funds to the County public schools and all other Montgomery County units:

State Aid, Fiscal Year 2003

All other County services: (Police, Road, Transit, Health, Libraries, College)	160 million	48%
Public Schools	\$177 million	52%

State Aid, Fiscal Year 2013

All other County services: (Police, Roads, Transit, Health, Libraries, College)	\$105 million	15%
Public Schools	\$588 million	85%

At the budget planning forum, county employee union representatives expressed concerns to the Council members about the detrimental impact of this requirement for schools on all the other County agencies. Approximately 31,000 individuals are employed by Montgomery County; 21,000 in the school system and 10,000 in the rest of the agencies. At this point in their planning for the FY 2014 budget, Council members project a shortfall of about \$136 million. The Council also noted that they have pledged to increase their reserve fund from 6% to 10% to satisfy the bond market.

County Council Executive Budget Forum – January

On January 10, 2013, there was a presentation by County Executive Leggett at the Mid-County Community Recreation Center on Queensguard Lane. Mr. Leggett and two staff members provided a budget overview similar to the November 29, 2012 County Council forum. Mr. Leggett fielded questions from students about increasing support for after school programs, and from other attendees regarding funding increases for libraries; abatement of traffic noise from neighbors who live close to the ICC; and the prospects for getting the FBI to relocate to Montgomery County. Mr. Leggett indicated that the FBI was particularly interested in having a campus like facility near a Metro station and that Prince George's County probably had more possibilities of meeting the FBI's specifications.

Mr. Leggett's presentation did reflect additional concerns, including the impact on the County of commercial properties that are not fully occupied, as well as the projected Federal budget cuts under sequestration, etc.

Montgomery County Civic Federation – January

On January 14, 2013, the monthly MCCF session featured a discussion with Council member Nancy Floreen and former County Council member Steve Silverman, now County Director of Economic Development .

Nancy Floreen pointed out that present property assessments totaled \$47 billion and that commercial properties totaled \$7 billion. She observed that this is not a very large commercial property tax base. With respect to demographics, it was noted that 12% of the County population is 65 or older, and the numbers of those 45 to 64 has increased by 28%.

– Continued on page 16 –

BRPA Questions (Continued from page 7)

10) In addition to the recreation property, the covenants on my property include land-use restrictions, such as prohibitions on sheds and limits on fences and limits on pets. What about those rules?

I believe that the BPRA is responsible for the land-use covenants, as well. Enforcement of the land-use covenants has been uneven throughout the history of the community. While some rules have been actively enforced, neither the developer nor any BPRA Board ever stopped people from building sheds or privacy fences. Other rules, such as limits on the number of pets people can have and requirements for metal trash cans, or the type of siding on a house, have been completely ignored.

This history of covenant enforcement has led us to today, where we have at least three sets of conflicting expectations:

- Some members point at the rules and say they expect them to be fully enforced by the BPRA Board.
- Other members say that they expect the practices of the past 45 years to be continued, with no enforcement.
- Yet other members allege that the only persons who can enforce the land covenants are their neighbors, not the BPRA Board.

While continuing to enforce rules on issues such as commercial signage and parking of oversized vehicles on properties, the current BPRA Board has been working to find a balance for other issues. The board is seeking to figure out

1. which rules are no longer relevant (such as trash cans and pets),
2. which rules can now be handled by code enforcement (such as overgrown lawns and other messes),
3. which rules have broad community support for continued enforcement (perhaps those such as commercial signage, commercial activities, and others).

The BPRA board also needs clear rules concerning the due process necessary for handling complaints, along with an assessment as to the costs of any additional enforcement. The Board continues to work on this process.

9) Is it okay to walk dogs in the pool parking lot when the pool is closed?

Yes, it's fine to walk on the parking lots. But it is not acceptable to toss baggies of dog poop over the wooden fence into the Dumpster area. The Dumpsters are not emptied during the winter. The wooden fence is built as a visual screen around the trash area. But when baggies of poop fester in there for many months, we have a terrible mess. Do not throw baggies of poop into the area. Do not.

8) Is the swim team run by the BPRA?

No. The swim team is a separate organization. It is run by the Strathmore Bel Pre Swim Team Association. You can find out about the team at sbpdolphins.org. The team has kids from under 5 to 18 and is active from Memorial Day through July. Generations of neighborhood families, including mine, have treasured their experiences with the Dolphins. The team does not receive funds from the BPRA. It does fundraising in the community.

– Continued on page 15 –

Strathmore-Bel Pre Website

Hopefully by now you've had a chance to visit the re-vamped Strathmore-Bel Pre website at www.strathmore-belpre.org . If you haven't, we highly recommend checking it out.

You can find information regarding the neighborhood, the covenants, the pool, the swim team, and upcoming events. Though it's still being updated, we're beginning to assemble quite the archive of past Bugle editions, and we're adding more content all the time.

If you have suggestions for the website, or would like to contribute in any way, please email Adam Shepard or Bill Hammond. We welcome your ideas, comments, and, yes, please, content!



Adam Shepard: awshepard@gmail.com

Bill Hammond: vze4bdqr@verizon.net

General Site questions: strathmo@strathmore-belpre.org

Thanks for checking it out!

Adam and Bill, webmasters

Getting your home insurance in order....Information for a smooth home sale:

Flood Coverage - Most policies cover water damage that occurs from above the ground, such as roof leakage, storm water pushed through window voids, and burst plumbing. Water that rises or seeps into a basement from the ground is considered a flood and is not insured. If you are concerned about ground water seepage & damage, you need a separate flood insurance policy.

Insurance companies share claim information with each other using the C.L.U.E. report, a standardized itemization of claims and, often, inquiries that a homeowner has made. Too many calls or claims can prevent the homebuyer from obtaining a new insurance policy or s/he may be quoted an outrageously high price. A savvy homeowner, in order to keep his policy intact and to have an acceptable C.L.U.E. report, will only make an inquiry or claim for major losses.

Deductibles - Since only large losses might be claimed, it may be economical to raise the deductible on your current policy to lower the annual premium.

Insurance When Selling - You should call your insurance company to let them know that you are putting your home on the market to be sure you are properly covered. After the sale, keep your policy in effect for a week or so until the buyer's deed has been recorded with the County.



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Library News

by Chris Swan & Elliot Chabot



Support Your Library

The Friends of the Aspen Hill Library is collecting postcards to support funding for Strathmore-Bel Pre's community library, the Aspen Hill Library. Postcards are available at the Library. Later in the spring, the Friends will hand-deliver them to County Council members. Our postcards do matter!! If you want the best access to books, e-books, even databases, let the County Council know .

Bio-Retention Garden and Parking Lot

The original drains in the bio-retention garden did not work properly, causing the demise of the original plants. The County Department of Environmental Protection is fixing the drains. Replacement plants will be put into the bio-retention garden once the drains are repaired. The Library parking lot has been restriped and re-signed. New arrows and signs indicating directions for the traffic flow have been installed.

Annual Meeting Day – April 20

Library meeting day, April 20, 2013, is the Annual Meeting of the Friends of the Library, held in the Community Room at the Aspen Hill Library. Everyone is welcome to attend! This is an excellent time to find out the state of the Aspen Hill Library, or to join the Aspen Hill Friends of the Library. Help us support your library. For more information, contact the Friends at aspenhill@folmc.org or call (301) 871-1113.

Spring Book Sale – May 18

The Spring Book Sale will be Saturday, May 18, 2013, from 10 am to 3 pm, at the Library. In addition to over 10,000 books, the sale has DVDs, CDs, and puzzles. The books are organized into over 30 subjects, including a large selection of History & Politics; and Science Fiction. Proceeds from the book sales are used to purchase books, programming, supplies, and equipment for the Aspen Hill Library. If you would like to donate used books, CDs, or puzzles for the book sale, contact the Friends at aspenhill@folmc.org or call (301) 871-1113. The Aspen Hill Friends is a 501(c)(3) organization, so donations are tax deductible.

Caribbean-American Heritage Celebration

Save the Date!!

The fifth annual Caribbean-American Heritage Celebration will be held at the Aspen Hill Library on Saturday, June 15th, from 1:30 pm to 4 pm. Good music, fun food, and dancing!



Some of the books at the Fall 2012 book sale.

Yard Sale!!

by Chris Swan

Save the date: The annual Civic Association Yard Sale will be held June 1, 2013!

Have extra stuff? Your treasures can find their way to new homes, with cash in your pocket. Or you may just find that special item you have been looking for. You can sell items, shop, and visit with your neighbors. All at the Pool parking lot in June!

Notice of Club Formation

By Maury Potosky

We are contemplating starting an Investment Club in Strathmore at Bel Pre in the coming months. If you are interested, and we get enough replies, we will set up an orientation and information meeting in the Spring or Summer. The club would meet monthly. Members would study stocks and make investment decisions accordingly. Expenses would be the monthly contributions to the Club. If you are interested please call Maurice Potosky at 301-460-9008 or send an e-mail to maury3505@aol.com.

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BPRA homeowners who need copies of the Bel Pre - Strathmore Covenants or other Bel Pre Rec. Assoc. Documents in order to sell their homes should either: 1) contact the Civil File room in person. There is a cost for duplication. This office can be found on the first floor of the Circuit Court Building in Rockville. Refer to Civil Desk: Homeowner Records, HOA 268 filed on March 28, 1989, or 2) call Community Paperworks and ask for a resale package - approximate cost \$75). Their phone number is (301) 309-8977.

BRPA Questions (Continued from page 11)

7) Are there special events at the pool?

The Strathmore Bel Pre Civic Association (which publishes *The Bugle*) runs a great Fourth of July event at the pool. There's a parade from Strathmore Elementary School through the neighborhood. There are games for kids. There is entertainment. And there is a community picnic. The swim team hosts some events for the entire community, such as an ice cream social. There are "raft nights" a few times a year on Tuesday nights at the pool. They can be a lot of fun, but are not the time to visit the pool if you treasure tranquility.

6) Is being a member of the BPRA optional?

Not if you are a member. Most of the households automatically became part of the association when they were built. Some subsequent neighborhoods were set up on an "opt-in" basis, in which households can choose to join the association. But the rules are clear that once a household joins, it stays.

5) How can I get involved?

The BPRA board volunteers meet monthly, usually the fourth Monday of the month. During the summer, it meets at the pool pavilion at 7:30 pm. Because Bel Pre Elementary School is being rebuilt, the winter meeting location is somewhat in flux. The next few meetings will be at Georgian Forest Elementary on Regina Drive off Georgia Avenue at 7:30 p.m. Since the fourth Monday of May is so close to Memorial Day Weekend and the opening of the property, the meeting is held on a Saturday morning earlier in the month. Similarly, the December meeting is done early in the month. The most important meeting is the Annual Meeting in mid-November when board members are elected, the budget is presented and the entire community can discuss pending issues. You can also contact BPRA board members with the information on page two of *The Bugle*.

4) When is the assessment due? It needs to be paid no later than March 31. After that, there's a late fee and interest charged.

3) What's the CCOC?

Montgomery County's Commission on Common Ownership Communities oversees management of condo associations and homeowners associations, providing members a place to turn if they feel a board is abusing its authority or mismanaging its money.

2) What is the BPRA board up to right now?

The board is working to modernize the financial operations (maybe assessments can be paid electronically or by credit card next year), get a better web presence, and make some repairs at the recreation property in the pump room under the pool and on the tennis courts.

1) What will make the BPRA better?

Get involved. Come to the pool. Play tennis. Have a picnic. Enjoy the snack bar. Come to meetings. Volunteer to work on pending issues. Shoot hoops. Spike the volleyball. Do not ever, ever throw baggies of dog poop into the Dumpster area.

Gleanings (Continued from page 10)

Ms. Floreen indicated that revenue was very important and that until recently the County had not had to work hard on job development. The County's unemployment rate is 4.7%. This, however, might be misleading because of the number of individuals who may have retired early or are working part time. Two concerns expressed related to vacancies in commercial buildings, and how to make the County affordable for retirees. Expanding the tax base was mentioned as well. While noting the need to expand the tax base, Ms. Floreen said that some Chevy Chase residents indicated their willingness to have their taxes increased. She indicated that if the County doesn't support mass transit, development, and related revenue generators, the county Council will have to consider cuts. Without continued revitalization as seen in Silver Spring, taxes for properties and commercial buildings must rise, or budget cuts must be undertaken. Steve Silverman mentioned that real estate transfer taxes are currently one half of what they were in 2006. He sees that no one is currently building commercial properties or housing on speculation.

The County Economic Development office is focusing on cyber jobs in hubs such as Gaithersburg where the National Institute of Standards and Technology is located. Support for small businesses is another way they are addressing economic challenges in the County. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has 3,300 employees located in the Rockville area, which is important to the County.

Mr. Silverman described several other efforts to support current or future employers of County residents:

- A \$4 million subsidy to Westfield Shopping Center that is estimated will foster 400 to 500 jobs
- A \$6 million subsidy to bring Macy's to Wheaton

Nancy Floreen noted that there are a limited number of ways to reduce expenditures and that the Council is focusing on commercial development. She mentioned that 96% of jobs are in small businesses and that the County had provided \$12 million to Folger Pratt to help keep employees at NOAA in Silver Spring.

Montgomery County Taxpayers League – January

On January 24, 2013, Nancy Navarro, President of the County Council, met with Montgomery County Taxpayers League members on the topic of FY 2014 Budget and the Montgomery Taxpayer.

Ms. Navarro indicated that the Council is uncertain about revenue for the coming year and therefore is not anticipating new initiatives. Instead the Council is examining past activities that may need more support. She did not foresee eliminating the energy tax this term. She suggested "collaborating" with the School Board, the private sector, etc. in trying to deal with budget pressures and claims on dollars.

– Continued on page 17 –



The original
development
logo.

Gleanings (Continued from page16)

A Taxpayers' League member asked the Ms. Navarro about the possibility of equalizing the school employees contribution to their health benefits, since they currently pay from 5 to 10%, in contrast with those of other County employees, who pay from 25 to 30%. The County is apparently examining numerous budget and funding issues. Ms. Navarro indicated that "we want the best quality of life for the entire County."

One participant urged County Council President Navarro to consider comparisons with Fairfax and Howard Counties in addressing salaries, benefits and the like. She indicated that there are differences that are interesting but that she prefers to focus on Montgomery County.

Another question was posed about current part time employees working a 10-12 hour schedules who are receiving full health benefits and whether that should be changed. There was no resolution.

After the Council President's presentation ended, the Taxpayer League members discussed proposals such as Montgomery County 7-13, that would change the number of at-large school board members and involvement with external organizations, such as the Young Democrats and Young Republicans. The President of the Young Democrats indicated that he would like to see more attention given by the County to affordable housing, student achievement, and inefficiencies in government.



Miss Utility – locating our underground utilities

Taken from the Miss Utility website: <http://www.missutility.net/homeowners/>:

"Miss Utility is your partner when it comes to safe digging! Having a variety of utility services could mean you have lines and pipes running underground – do you know where they are? If you plan on any type of excavation or digging on your property, Miss Utility can help.

"Miss Utility is a one-call notification center that informs subscribing facility/utility owners of proposed excavation. So, if you plan to install a new mailbox or plant a garden, contact the Miss Utility Call Center at least two full working days in Maryland ... prior to your intended digging. We will notify our member facility/utility owners of your proposed plans to dig; they in turn will locate (mark your dig site or verify the site is clear) before you put that shovel in the ground."

"YOU HAVE A CHOICE ON HOW TO PROCESS YOUR LOCATE REQUEST!

You can CALL the Miss Utility Call Center at 800.257.7777 for Maryland ...OR use our new INTERNET option; ITIC Lite [www.missutility.net/iticlite/]. ITIC Lite offers homeowners a simple and convenient way to file a locate request; the process is easy and a great time saver!"

Street Lights Out?

From the County website

<http://www6.montgomerycountymd.gov/trstmpl.asp?url=/content/dot/traffic/Streetlight-mtc.asp> :

“Street Lighting: Maintenance

The County owns and maintains approximately 28,000 streetlights and leases another 40,000, owned by utility companies. The County lacks the resources to proactively perform inspections to identify malfunctioning lights and primarily relies on its residents to report them. Malfunctioning streetlights may be reported using one of the options described below. Please note that your contact information is desirable in case we need to reach you for additional information, but is required if you would like status updates.

- Report a streetlight malfunction using the County map

All County-owned lights are plotted and will display when the address and/or nearest intersection is entered in the “Search” field. It may take up to 20 seconds to display the lights.

The vast majorities of the leased lights are not plotted and will not display on the map. Please report these lights using the following options.

- Report a streetlight malfunction using the County Service Request Form

Please specify the malfunction type and provide pole number and/or pole address.

- Report a streetlight malfunction by calling 311

Call 311 and report the streetlight malfunction to the customer service representative.

Service requests are processed within one business day and maintenance crews are dispatched to the site within 5 business days. Repairs can range from simply replacing a light bulb to more extensive work, or even no power, which will require a longer time to repair. However, if a taped RED “X” appears on the streetlight pole, a “NO VOLTAGE” condition (no power) has been identified and the local utility company will be notified to restore power to the streetlight. This process may take several weeks or months to properly complete the repair.”



Volunteers Needed for July 4th Planning

by Lilla Hammond

The 2013 July 4th Planning Committee is looking for a few good neighbors.

We need your help to make this year's the best yet. The more volunteers, the better and greater will be our celebration. What are your interests? Activities include the Children's Parade, Afternoon Entertainment, Field Day Activities and the Picnic. Any and all help is welcomed.

Call or email to help, and to get more information!

Joe Story: joestory@mac.com

Harry Klapper: hjksbk@msn.com

You may also check Strathmore Bel Pre's community's website at www.strathmore-belpre.org . Updates will be posted as they are available. Thanks!!!

The Bugle is the best advertising opportunity in town!

You can place an advertisement in this section of the Bugle at very low cost.

Annual rates include four issues of the Bugle.

Rates are:

Business Card size ----- \$140

Quarter Page ----- \$200

Half Page ----- \$250

Full Page ----- \$295

**Contact Harry Klapper on 301-460-9645 or at
hjksbk@msn.com**