

College Gardens Civic Association  
2011 Fall Meeting  
November 16, 2011

Minutes

**Welcome:** CGCA President Tom Miner welcomed several special guests to the meeting: Rockville Planning Director and College Gardens resident Susan Swift, Magruders store manager Joseph Vallee, Rockville City Council member and College Gardens resident Mark Pierzchala, Rockville Neighborhood Coordinator Orlando Heyliger, and Kevin Mack from Dewberry, the firm working on redevelopment of the former Shell station property in front of College Plaza.

**National Night Out Recap:** Susan VanGrack thanked the volunteers who turned out in greater numbers than last year to make NNO a big success. She said ours is one of the most successful NNOs in the city and local officials are eager to attend. The CGCA spent less money on the event this year than last year.

**Development Proposal for old Shell station site at front of College Plaza:** Landscape architect Kevin Mack of Dewberry, the firm working on redeveloping the former Shell station property, said retailer Auto Zone will submit a plan to tear down the gas station and car wash structures and build a single-story retail space on the property, with parking on the north side and in front. The existing pine trees would remain, and considerably more landscaping would be added, along with two bioretention ponds for storm water management and a small public area with benches.

City Planning Director Susan Swift explained that Auto Zone has not yet submitted a formal application to the city. Once it does, residents will have opportunities to testify at a public hearing held by the applicant and at a Planning Commission hearing. The Planning department has not yet analyzed the proposal nor made any recommendation. To follow the progress of the application, go to the city's website, [www.rockvillemd.gov](http://www.rockvillemd.gov), click on Development Projects in Rockville and go to the project called Auto Zone. The city planner handling the project is Nicole Walters, 240-314-8215, [nwalters@rockvillemd.gov](mailto:nwalters@rockvillemd.gov) and she welcomes inquiries or concerns. The city cannot approve or deny an application based on the type of business or specific retailer applying, but must base a decision on compliance with the city's master plan and zoning ordinance.

Mr. Mack answered questions about the proposed project:

- He believes the underground gasoline tanks were removed when the gas station closed.
- He believes Auto Zone's market research indicated this was a good site for the company, even though there is a Trak Auto store in College Plaza.
- He expects Auto Zone to maintain the access road that is on its property.
- If the plan wins approval, the company hopes to break ground in spring 2012 and open the store next November.
- Auto Zone's traffic projection shows lower morning and evening peak use than the gas station had.

**Garden Club of College Gardens:** Virginia Render said the club planted 150 daffodils on The Hill (at the intersection of College Parkway and Nelson Street) and is collecting money for Manna food bank. Anyone interested in donating should make a check out to Manna and give it to a garden club officer. The checks will be delivered after January 1. The Garden Club has also started an advisory committee of

members who will advise other members on designing plantings for their garden. The Garden Club meets on the second Thursday of the month at 7:30 p.m. and membership is \$20 per year.

**Treasurer's Report:** CGCA Treasurer Don Mann reported that the association has \$10,171 in the bank and spent \$54 to rent the CG Elementary School media center for the meeting. City Council member Mark Pierzchala noted that ours is the most flush civic association in the city – most others have a few hundred dollars in the bank.

It was noted that some funds in the CGCA account are targeted for the second half of the Pond study. Treasure Don Mann will research the issue and report back the cost of the pond park study, sources of the funding, money spent thus far, and the remaining funds for the concluding study.

**Hearing to amend Rockville city code to clarify “family”:** The city is considering updating the zoning ordinance to clarify the definition of family for purposes of enforcement. The change would make the language in the zoning code and the enforcement code consistent. (This pertains to rules about what constitutes a family and how many unrelated people may live together in a single family home.) State-licensed group homes are permitted in Rockville, but boarding houses are not. Adding a separate or “accessory” apartment to a single family home requires special approval from the city. The Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on the proposed clarification on December 12, and will also accept written testimony. Orlando Heyliger reported that the city had investigated complaints from the last CGCA meeting about a house on College Parkway with many cars parked on the street, and found that the residents were not in violation of the City code.

**Crime and security:** CGCA President Tom Miner recalled the bike thefts and armed robbery that occurred over the summer and reminded residents to call the Rockville Police Department’s non-emergency number (240-314-8900) if they see anything at all suspicious. He also encouraged residents to report any thefts to the police and to carry a cell phone when walking in the neighborhood to call in any unusual or suspicious people or vehicles. Police will also come to your house to do a home security evaluation. Rockville Police Chief Terry Treschuk attended an August CGCA meeting on neighborhood security and the minutes from that meeting are attached on page 3.

**Other Business:** PEPCO will come to your house to do an energy audit.

Meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Kathy Goldgeier, Secretary

**College Gardens Civic Association**  
**August 24, 2011**  
**Minutes of Special Security Meeting**

Civic Association President Tom Miner welcomed a crowd of 44 people to the meeting, including city council members Mark Pierzchala and Piotr Gajewski, Rockville Police Chief Terry Treschuk and Lt. Eric Over. Additionally representatives from the Plymouth Woods HOA, Tais Szpanderfer and Gerry Cashin, and from the Americana HOA, Virginia Olney were in attendance.

Chief Treschuk congratulated College Gardens for having the biggest turnout for National Night Out of any community in the city and said the neighborhood has largely been problem-free.

The events that prompted the Civic Association's invitation to the chief were three:

1. In early June there was a rash of stolen bikes across the city, including in College Gardens. Five juveniles from the neighborhood were taking bikes from front yards. The chief said 13 bikes were recovered, but only 5 have been returned. If you did not report your stolen bike but want it back, call the police department and ask for Max Crago. The youths are now in the juvenile justice system.
2. In June a woman reported that while she was out walking, a man exposed himself to her. The chief said she looked away and was not able to describe him, so the police don't have any clues about whom or why.
3. On July 27, in the 700 block of Fordham, around 9 p.m., a man from Plymouth Woods was out walking when he was approached by three young people who forced him to the ground and took some of his possessions. The youths, believed to be 14-18 years old, fled on foot and the man reported that they'd had a weapon, though police do not know what kind. Chief Treschuk said investigators are focusing on a couple of individuals of interest in an active investigation of the incident.

Advice from the chief:

- Don't be afraid to out by yourself during the day
- Be aware of your surroundings and watch out for each other

Resident asked questions about specific concerns and the chief responded:

Q. We're concerned about youths who hang out in front of College Plaza. Can the police do anything?

A. That problem exists at every shopping center in Rockville. There is no law against congregating, but youths don't have the right to stop public access. The chief said the police check frequently and work closely with the merchants.

Q. What do you recommend to make a home as safe as possible?

A. Rockville police will perform a free home security survey and leave you with a written report of their recommendations for things such as locks, lights, bushes, etc. The chief said he's a fan of outdoor motion-sensor lights, and using a timer for lights and even a radio when you're on vacation.

Q. Should we carry pepper spray?

A. Chief Treschuk doesn't condone carrying any weapon unless you're fully trained/capable in using it because it could be used against you. He said the best weapon is to have your wits about you, to be aware of your surroundings, and to have a contingency plan for what to do in an unsafe or suspicious situation.

Q. What should I do if I'm home alone for long periods?

A. Develop a trusting relationship with your neighbors and then tell them you're alone so they can watch out for you, and never let anyone in your house who may come to your door. If someone asks to use your phone, tell them you'll call the police for them.

Q. When should I call 911 versus the non-emergency police number?

A. In a life-threatening situation, call 911 because the dispatcher can see your phone number and address. For instance, if a suspicious car pulls into your driveway, call 911.

Q. There are people hanging out in the alcove behind College Plaza every night. Is there anything we can do about that?

A. The chief said he will ask the street crimes unit to investigate.

Q. Are there plans to put lights in College Gardens Park, where it's very dark at night?

A. The park closes at dusk. The question of whether to add lights and thereby invite night-time use is one to take up with the city council.

In addition to crime, Chief Treschuk said, his department handles complaints about dogs and other animals, enforcement of the speed camera program, code enforcement on property maintenance, home inspections to be sure renters are there legally and Homeland Security for the city, which includes things like preparing for hurricanes.

Chief Treschuk encouraged residents not to hesitate to call the police if they're concerned about suspicious activity. He invited residents to call him with questions at his direct number, 240-314-8912. He also invited residents to set up a ride-along with police to learn more about the city. Anyone who is interested should call Lt. Over at 240-314-8967.

#### Neighborhood Watch

Lt. Over said the city recently joined the national Suspicious Activity Reporting program, whose slogan is "If you see something, say something." He stressed that without calls from citizens, the police are ineffective, and said it is up to College Gardens as a community to tell the police if we see something odd or suspicious. He said effective crime control is a partnership and encouraged residents to know what's going on in the neighborhood and to be familiar with the patterns of activity – and to trust their instincts.

In the event of an incident, the police inform the Civic Association, which sends out the information through its listserv. Civic Association President Tom Miner noted that the CGCA has email addresses from about 75 percent of the 330 homes in the neighborhood. To add your email to the list, contact Tom at [TOM.MINER@longandfoster.com](mailto:TOM.MINER@longandfoster.com).

College Gardens used to have an active Neighborhood Watch program, and some streets still have the signs up. The goal of the program is to reduce the incidence of crime by training residents in property security and developing an action plan through which residents watch each other's property and report suspicious persons and activities to law enforcement. With or without a formal program, Chief Treschuk encouraged residents to watch out for each other. Tom Miner said Neighborhood Watch will be a topic for discussion at the next civic association general meeting.