

9411 Connecticut Avenue, Kensington, MD
Grace Episcopal Day School

Spring Meeting
Thursday, May 8th, 7:30-9:00

NOTE: NEW LOCATION
SEE REVERSE FOR MAP

Rock Creek Hills Citizens' Association
9909 East Bexhill Drive
Kensington, MD 20895



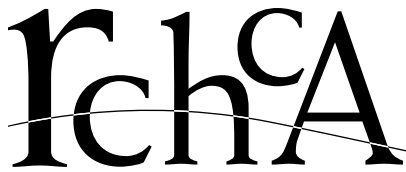
New Location for Spring General Meeting

Grace Episcopal Day School
9411 Connecticut Avenue,
Kensington, MD



RCHCA SPRING MEETING THURSDAY, MAY 8TH, 7:30-9:00





Rock Creek Hills Citizens' Association
rchca.org

Your Neighborhood
News and Information
Spring 2008

Message from the Board

We hope that by now residents have long put away our unused snow shovels and have begun enjoying springtime.

As many of you know, we have had considerable turnover RCHCA leadership since last year. I'm pleased to report that the new Board members have stepped into their positions with dedication and enthusiasm. Our new Treasurer, Karyl Kramer has gotten up to speed and is successfully managing our finances, including the not-fun but necessary tasks of dues solicitation and collection. Our new Vice President, Bill Casson, has stepped up to assist in identifying topics for upcoming meetings and is responsible for obtaining our next guest speaker. At our Spring General Meeting, Bill has lined up Mr. Thomas L. Autrey of the Montgomery County Department of Planning. Mr. Autrey will update us on the Purple Line project, including a brief discussion of its history, the various alternative routes under consideration, and its current status.

A second topic to be addressed at our Spring meeting involves Traffic Triangle Improvement. We will be considering two additional projects for association funding, and also a possible change in RCHCA policy regarding support for annual maintenance. Please refer to articles elsewhere in this newsletter for details.

Also, please note that starting with our Spring General Meeting on May 8, we are returning to our old, longtime location at Grace Episcopal Day School, 9411 Connecticut Avenue, in the multipurpose room. Various restrictions on the facility usage at our most recent venue caused us to look elsewhere. We had left Grace over a year ago because the multipurpose room for no longer free for holding our Wednesday evening meetings in May and October and our Saturday annual meeting in January.

Instead, now our General Meeting nights will be held on **Thursdays**, and our annual meeting will be held on a **Sunday** evening.

I also am especially pleased to report that the **Concert in the Park** will be back this year after a one-year hiatus. This year, thanks to the efforts of Lyle Farmer, working with our new Special Events Chair, Laura Cihra, we will again hold a concert, with food provided by RCHCA, from 5-8 pm on May 11. We broke tradition again and chose to hold the concert in the spring, and May 11 just so happens to be **Mother's Day**.

Although in the recent past, these concerts have been held at the end of summer, our thinking was that it would be nice to give mom a day off from cooking and being able to spend time being entertained with family and friends. This also more evenly spreads out our two calendar year non-meeting events, considering that the other one is our traditional Halloween Parade and Potluck.

Although a number of new volunteers have stepped up to the plate this year, we can always use more people who want to get involved. It's a great way to get to know your neighbors and build a greater sense of community.

We hope that you will join us at 7:30 pm on **Thursday, May 8.**

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|-----------------------|---------------|
| <i>President</i> | Joe Rosenberg |
| <i>Vice President</i> | Bill Casson |
| <i>Treasurer</i> | Karyl Kramer |
| <i>Secretary</i> | Alexa Freeman |

Next Meeting

The RCHCA Spring Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 8, 2008 at Grace Episcopal Day School, 9411 Connecticut Ave, in the multipurpose room.

Please note: The meeting location has changed to our longtime prior location

The meeting will run from 7:30 – 9:00 pm. Babysitting will be provided.

Agenda items include:

- Treasurer's Report
- Guest Speaker on Purple Line Project
- Traffic Triangle/Circle Improvement
 - Exec. Committee proposal to modify
 - Proposals to fund two new traffic triangles
- Proposal to fund and install Rock Creek Hills signage
- Train Noise update

We welcome volunteers to help in set-up and clean-up of the event.

Please contact Joe Rosenberg at 301-495-9821 or jrosenberg@comcast.net if you are interested in helping.

Traffic Triangle (or Traffic Circle) Improvement

A few weeks ago, the RCHCA Executive Committee discussed the topic of "Traffic Triangle Improvement" in some detail. We concurred in making some changes to the existing policy in order to clarify certain ambiguities, and also to better balance the overall desire for community beautification with the distribution of beneficial impacts affected by each resident's proximity to such projects. (All newsletters and meeting notes referenced below can be accessed directly from our website at www.rchca.org.)

Background: The McNeely Triangle at Elrod and Saul Roads was the first and only such project in Rock Creek Hills for many years. It was initially funded entirely by voluntary donations and dedicated in October 1982 as a memorial to Ms. Lee McNeely, who was killed in a tragic airline accident. The county provided the electrical service and the WSSC the water source. After several years, RCHCA assumed some of the annual expenses for this triangle.

In January 2004, RCHCA created a Community Improvement Committee to investigate and recommend various improvement projects to be funded via RCHCA. At the Spring General Meeting in May, a proposal was made to fund four additional traffic triangles for a total cost of \$7,650 with a combined estimated yearly maintenance cost of between \$650 and \$750. While this proposal was rejected, a substitute proposal for one triangle was passed: **"RCHCA shall fund the cost of hardscaping, landscaping, and maintenance of the triangle at Littledale and Haverhill up to \$1,500."**

Although no action was taken for a year, the same level of funding was re-iterated for this one location by a vote in May 2005, but stipulating that if a detailed plan was not presented to the Board within a month, the obligation of the association would be null and void. Finally, after another year, in May 2006 the association approved a motion to **"...spend \$2,000 to install a garden and \$500 a year to maintain it"** at the Littledale and Haverhill triangle.

Existing Policy: In the spring 2006 newsletter, a large article entitled "Renovation of Rock Creek Hills Triangles" noted that a new request was being made for Littledale and Haverhill. In addition to publicizing the estimated costs for that project, which was to be voted on at the May meeting, the article solicited requests for additional triangle projects, noting that a total of seven are within Rock Creek Hills boundaries. Besides the McNeely and Littledale and Haverhill triangles, these include:

- Saul and Haverhill
- East Bexhill and Hawick Ct
- Elrod and Hawick Ct
- Elrod and Old Spring
- Kent and East Bexhill

The Board's overall policy was also described in the same newsletter article. Regarding the remaining five traffic triangles, it said that the Board would **"... prioritize requests for renovations both by the order of their requests as well as the commitment from nearby residents on continued upkeep..."** No overall funding guidance for the remaining triangles was given in the article, although it did reference the cost

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triangles, continued

estimates for Littledale and Haverhill.

In the Spring 2007 newsletter, RCHCA policy was formally spelled out. Without reiterating what it said, perhaps the most ambiguous and controversial of the policy components was that of annual maintenance costs. On that point, it states: **“The Board will support maintenance of mulching, new plants, etc. on a 3-5 year basis, but not to exceed \$500”**. The policy language may imply this ceiling on maintenance costs every 3-5 years; however, since Littledale and Haverhill was approved to have the association fund annual maintenance costs of “\$500 a year”, one might interpret the policy language as offering to fund the same amount of **annual** costs at all other prospective triangle projects.

Where we are now: Most recently, annual maintenance costs for the McNeely Triangle was less than \$200, including WSSC, while for the Littledale and Haverhill Triangle it was \$260. Extrapolating to the future, it is easy to see how it is necessary to clarify the ambiguity over how much annual maintenance costs the association is committed to.

In addition, two additional triangle improvement projects are expected to be proposed at our Spring 2008 meeting. Given the potential financial impact of fully funding both initial and annual costs of such projects, and the uneven benefits flowing to residents based on proximity to each triangle, the RCHCA Executive Board has had in-depth discussions of this topic over the last few weeks. **The committee proposes to modify our traffic triangle improvement or beautification policy to clarify our financial commitment, and to institute a policy of annual maintenance cost sharing.** Below is the proposed new policy that the Executive Board wishes to submit to our members for approval at the May 8 General Meeting:

Proposal to revise RCHCA “Traffic Triangle Improvement/Beautification Policy”, as follows (unanimously approved by Executive Committee of RCHCA):

“RCHCA understands the community interest and value of supporting traffic triangle improvement projects, and wishes to assist residents committed to maintaining the esthetic values associated with them. To this end, RCHCA will consider individual traffic triangle (or traffic circle) improvement or beautification projects to be approved for full initial funding only at any of our association General Meetings.

Each project request for initial funding should be submitted to the RCHCA President or his/her designate five weeks before any General Meeting at which it is to be considered so that it may be described sufficiently within the newsletter that precedes the General Meeting, and that interested residents may have an informed opportunity to vote for or against approval. Each project request should include a detailed description of the work to be done, accompanied by at least two professional landscaper bids and a recommendation as to which one should be accepted. The work proposed to be funded in full by RCHCA may include hardscaping, landscaping and initial plantings.

Consistent with our prior Traffic Triangle policy, the association expects a strong commitment from nearby residents for continued upkeep and maintenance. To this end, and in recognition of the largely locational benefits of such projects, all subsequent annual maintenance expenses are expected to be shared by RCHCA with interested residents on a 50/50 basis up to a sum of \$500, meaning that up to \$250 per year per triangle will be borne by RCHCA. The Executive Board’s opinion is that cost sharing in this manner is both fair and reasonable, given the asymmetric benefits associated with traffic triangle improvement.

This represents a policy change. The only proposed exception to this policy in terms of annual maintenance support is requested for the existing McNeely Triangle. That is because it is a memorial triangle that was initially funded by voluntary donations, not by the RCHCA general treasury. As a memorial, the McNeely Triangle has a granite stone and bronze marker, and for which the County had originally funded maintenance for a number of years. Later on, RCHCA funded brickwork improvements and eventually assumed annual maintenance costs via reimbursement of one local resident who oversees and assists in this effort.”

As a final note, residents not in close proximity to traffic triangles may wonder how they may benefit from such expenditures. Not unlike governmental spending, there is always a fine line in linking shared expenses with shared benefits. Since RCHCA dues are voluntary, unlike taxes, it is all the more important that our members feel that association spending has mutually-shared benefits. Given that traffic triangle improvement policy resulted from various ideas considered by a Community Improvement

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Traffic Triangle/Circle Proposals

East Bexhill - Kent traffic calming circle:

A broad (4 ft.) border of liriope surrounding a mulched center with yucca, lavender, rosemary, and/or stone crop will cost less than \$500. The plantings will be very low maintenance and drought-resistant.

Visibility will be improved compared to the shrubs previously in the circle.

Old Spring/Elrod Traffic Triangle:

Proposal to install plantings at previously undeveloped triangle. Plans and bids will be presented at the upcoming general meeting. The expected initial planting cost will be approximately \$2,390.

Rock Creek Hills Entry Point Signage

Following up from the initial proposal at our Winter meeting, Jed Dinger will be presenting a design and budget proposal for signage at four entry points to the Rock Creek Hills Neighborhood.

triangles, continued

Committee, other ideas of community benefit may be equally valid, such as having Rock Creek Hill signage, which is also under consideration. Residents with other reasonably-sized capital projects (e.g., playground equipment, footbridges, RCH signage) may wish to submit them for consideration to the association as a whole for future funding consideration, with Executive Board input as to feasibility and appropriateness.

Annual Concert in the Park

On Mother's Day May 11th RCHCA will host a very special event. This year the concert has two unique features that will make it special and fun for the entire family. The headline act will be The RTT's! <http://cdbaby.com/cd/rttp> The RTT's are a local group described as:

"This wholesome, rootsy and americana-styled album charts the fine balance between an album that's fun, catchy, kid-friendly and yet classic, respectable and considerate of grown-ups. This is no less than kid's music with adult integrity." *The Washington Post. Friday, May 14, 2004; Page WE07.*

The RTT's "grown up side" are the Rhodes Tavern Troubadours! The Washington Post writes: The quartet pays homage to the past by playing roots rock, country, swing and R&B with more flair than any band in town. They can strut through a Ray Price shuffle, break your heart on the soul standard "The Dark End of the Street" or get your feet moving with originals that sound like tracks from a long-lost NRBQ record. <http://cdbaby.com/cd/rttroubadours>.

The second unique feature of this year's event is a catered dinner!

The menu features for adults: Fajita station with chicken and carne asada, vegetarian black beans and a romaine tomato and hearts of palm salad; For Kids (up to age 12) Grilled Hot Dogs and Hamburgers with all the fixins. The menu is all presented by Dish Caterers (Red Dog Cafe). People are expected to bring their own drinks and desserts.

PLEASE RSVP and indicate how many adults (13 and over) and how many kids. Tell mom to relax, bring a blanket and enjoy a great concert and dinner on us! Please, no glass containers and no alcoholic beverages.

Where: Rock Creek Hills Park: Saul & Haverhill

When: May 11 5-8 pm. Dinner served at 6.

RSVP: Please reply by **Sunday, May 4** with the number of adults and kids for dinner only, via email (no attachments) to Laura Cihra at lcihra@comcast.net

Train Noise Update

After the January 24 meeting at the County Council's Transportation Committee, Councilmembers Floreen and Ervin requested that County Executive Leggett find a way to resolve this longstanding issue. Many individuals and groups wrote letters to Mr. Leggett urging him to follow up in a timely manner, including one letter from our entire District 18 State Delegation, initiated by Delegate Al Carr and Senator Madaleno, as well as a separate letter from Rep. Van Hollen. Copies of the RCHCA letter to Mr. Leggett and his response may be found on our website at www.rchca.org

Since then, Joe Rosenberg has had several discussions with DPWT Traffic Chief Emil Wolanin. DPWT is now scoping out a more directed study of this problem than the one completed early in 2006. Specifically, it will consider how well safety concerns would be satisfied by installing low-cost mountable median barriers, an FRA-approved technology used in Quiet Zones throughout the country. This study will likely include an assessment of the experience with this technology elsewhere, and may include establishing a baseline for motorists currently driving around gates at Forest Glen Crossing from which the impact of installing medians afterwards may then be measured. If the installation of medians proves to be effective in deterring motorists, which has been observed by FRA in its nationwide tests, then DPWT may be in a position to opine as to the likelihood of achieving improved safety when using this device in lieu of train horns within a Quiet Zone.

Guest Speaker on Purple Line Project

Mr. Thomas L. Autrey will update us on the status of the Purple Line project. Mr. Autrey is currently Supervisor of the Transportation Division for the Montgomery County Department of Planning, which is part of the Park & Planning Commission. He is the County's point man for the Purple Line Project.

The advantage of a light rail transit facility, running east-west and utilizing the existing "Georgetown Branch" right-of-way, has been considered by the County since 1970. (The historical Georgetown Branch right-of-way was used by the B&O railroad as far back as 1889, and as recent as 1960 by various trains and trolleys.) The Purple Line has been under formal study since 1992, and has been in the Montgomery County Master Plan for twenty years.

The currently proposed Purple Line is a 16-mile rapid transit route from Bethesda to New Carrollton. The plan provides direct connections to the Metrorail Red, Green and Orange lines, and to the MARK, AMTRAK and local bus services. Twelve initial station locations have been identified, with additional stations under consideration. The Purple Line will utilize some type of light rail (or possibly rapid bus) operating at street level with a minimum of tunnels and/or bridges where necessary.

As time allows, Mr. Autrey hopes to cover a brief discussion of the history of the right-of way; the currently planned route and connections; some details on the rolling gear; safety measures; major problems; the current status of the project; and estimates of time and cost to complete the Project.

RCHCA Treasurer's Report

(As of 3/31/08)

Income

(12/01/07 - 3/31/08)

\$7,320.00

Expenses

(12/01/07 - 3/31/08)

\$2,365.72

Account Balance

(As of 11/30/07)

\$29,053.67

Account Balance

(As of 3/31/08)

\$34,499.09