



East Silver Spring Citizens' Association, Inc.

NOVEMBER 2015

*Pedestrian and Traffic Safety Plus a Vote on ArtSpace will be the main topics
of our next*

EAST SILVER SPRING CITIZENS ASSOCIATION (ESSCA) MEETING • MEETING DATE: MONDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2015

MEETING LOCATION IS THE NEW SILVER SPRING LIBRARY

900 Wayne Avenue, at the corner of Wayne Ave. & Fenton St

NEW MEETING TIME: Third Monday of every other month (Sept - May) Doors open 6:45PM, Meeting starts 7:00PM

JOIN ESSCA'S LIST-SERVE: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/eastsilverspringcivic>

(Include your name and street name when you send your "join request")

VISIT ESSCA'S NEW WEBSITE: www.eastsilverspring.org EMAIL CONTACT: esscaprez@gmail.com

PLEASE NOTE THE LOCATION FOR OUR NOVEMBER MEETING: *THE NEW SILVER SPRING LIBRARY*

We hope to see you in the Large Meeting Room on the Third Floor at 7:00 on Monday November 16th. To learn more about the new Library facility you can visit their website at <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/library/branches/silverspring.html>.

TOPICS FOR OUR NOVEMBER 16TH MEETING

- *Discussion of Pedestrian & Automobile Safety In East Silver Spring*

As many of you know there was a single car accident resulting in the death of the driver recently at the intersection of Takoma & Gist Avenues and Ray Drive. How can we make this and other intersections safer, not only for vehicles, but also for pedestrians? We understand the County Department of Transportation is investigating several intersections in the ESSCA area to assess possible changes to make them safer. Many in the community also have concerns about pedestrian safety at several planned pedestrian interactions with the Purple Line at grade level, in particular at the intersections at Georgia & Bonifant, which are already dangerous without the addition of the light rail line, and at Dale & Wayne by the Silver Spring International School (where Wayne Avenue is planned to be enlarged to seven lanes). Please join us to discuss and share your concerns about pedestrian and traffic safety in the area.

- *Discussion & Vote on Rezoning for the Artspace Site*

We are sure by now that most are aware of the plan for ArtSpace to transform the old police station site on Sligo Avenue into a community for artists with housing, studios, townhouses

and gallery space. Plans are currently in early development and the next step in the process is for ArtSpace to apply for a zoning change to allow for these different uses on the site. We plan to address this topic at the November meeting with a discussion and vote on whether or not to support this zoning change.

A REPORT FROM OUR SEPTEMBER MEETING WITH OUR DISTRICT 5 COUNCIL MEMBER TOM HUCKER

Our guest for our first meeting of the 2015-16 ESSCA season was Councilmember Tom Hucker. Mr. Hucker represents the nearly 200,000 residents of District 5, which, in addition to our own East Silver Spring, includes the communities of Briggs Chaney, Burnt Mills, Burtonsville, Calverton, Cloverly, Colesville, Fairland, Four Corners, Hillandale, Lyttonsville, Takoma Park, and White Oak. Topics of discussion included Garage #4, assessment of the county's 311 information hotline, the county budget, affordable housing, the police substation on Georgia Avenue, the Purple Line and the vacant space in the new Library. Here is a synopsis by topic:

- *Garage #4*

This is the parking garage in the block bounded by Fenton Street, Georgia, Sligo and Silver Spring Avenues. For several years the upper levels have been closed and many wonder why the garage is not fully functional, especially since it is one of only two concentrated parking areas serving Fenton Village, the second of which will go out of commission for about two years when the Studio Plaza project starts construction in the block to the north. Others have noticed the largely vacant garage seems to attract vagrants during the day. The upper levels appear to be used in part as storage by the Urban District Staff (Red Shirts). Mr.

Hucker stated that the long term plan is for the site to be privately redeveloped, providing some measure of publicly accessible parking; however, this plan has been on the books for a very long time and it is unclear if and when that will happen. Mr. Hucker agreed to arrange a meeting with the County Parking Director to discuss the issue further.

- *311 County Information Hotline Assessment*

The central contact number for all inquiries to the County is now about eight years old. Mr. Hucker is leading an effort to better assess how it is working. While some topics/inquiries are well handled, such as permitting and pothole repair, others are not, either because of slow responses or obfuscation. In particular, there are concerns about inquiries that are complicated and/or involve several agencies or contacts not being answered at all. Also, others find it frustrating that the system does not allow for direct contact of particular county staff members, when doing so would clearly be easier and more efficient. Mr. Hucker stated that there is currently no performance data that is collected and maintained and he will be working on a plan to do so, such that it can be analyzed to figure out how to improve service.

- *Balancing the County Budget & Services*

Many are aware of the projected revenue shortfall resulting from the recent Supreme Court decision that limited the state's collection of income tax revenue from out of state sources. Mr. Hucker stated this shortfall will amount to approximately \$54 million annually. With what appears to be a serious maintenance backlog and with many of local county-maintained streets in particularly bad shape, several attendees stated their concerns about the apparent lack of maintenance of county-owned infrastructure and how this will be exacerbated by further revenue shortfalls. Many commented that they

want to see infrastructure maintenance made more of a priority in the county budget.

• *The Purple Line*

Mr. Hucker stated that funding for the Purple line will come from three main sources, the federal government, the county and a loan from the concessionaire (this is the private entity that will build and operate it—the loan is money fronted by them that will be reimbursed with annual payments). There is also a funding share to be covered by the state, but this was drastically cut recently with the affected counties agreeing to pick up further costs, amounting to approximately \$40 million for Montgomery County. Mr. Hucker clarified that this sum will not be required for another 5 years, lessening the impact to the county. Attendees stated they need assistance from Mr. Hucker's office getting results from issues raised at Purple Line meetings with both the county and state DOT's.

• *Affordable Housing*

Mr. Hucker said he is concerned that the county does not have enough affordable housing. He would like to see the percentage required in new developments increased. He also wants to work on a clear set of tenants' rights.

• *Police Substation*

We raised our concerns about the continued lack of signage for and staffing of the police substation in the fire station on Georgia Avenue. Many don't even know it is there, and even those who do understand it is not staffed with personnel who can assist with problems. While we have raised the issue before to the department, Mr. Hucker stated that the police are usually loathe to ask for additional resources and support. More advocacy will be needed to beef up the visibility and service of this station in one of the county's most populous urban areas.

• *Silver Spring Library*

With the new Library now fully operational, many have observed a few shortfalls in how the facility is serving the downtown area. Specifically, there does not appear to be a clear maintenance plan for the outdoor covered area; furthermore, the basement, ground and second levels are still vacant. There are concerns about the lack of activity at the street level. It was stated that the likely tenant for the basement level will be the Gandhi Brigade and that an RFP is going out for ground level tenants and that negotiations are underway for a tenant for the second level.

• *Abandoned Properties*

Mr. Hucker is working on a bill to require the county to maintain a property registry with

clear owner contact information (one flaw noted that will need to be addressed as part of this is that property addresses maintained by the Department of Permitting Services and Parks and Planning Department for the same properties often do not match). Additionally, the intended legislation will add penalty fees for owners who do not maintain their properties and will furthermore require inattentive owners to sell or rent abandoned properties. Mr. Hucker noted this kind of legislation exists in other municipalities, including Philadelphia and the District.

Other topics of discussion included better collection of trash at bus stops, pedestrian safety and quality of signalization at crosswalks, working to adjust the requirements to qualify for being an urban farm to get tax credits (this would affect Koiner Farm at the corner of Easley and Grove) and parking enforcement (use the police non-emergency number, 301-279-8000)

FENTON VILLAGE, INC.

Fenton Village, Inc., a new non-profit dedicated to the preservation, protection and growth of the small businesses in Fenton Village, is seeking Board members. Fenton Village, Inc. will raise funds to provide support for promotional events, including, but not limited to, Taste the World in Fenton Village and The Best of Fenton Village and encourage business-to-business cooperation to ensure that these small businesses have a continuing stake in the downtown Silver Spring area. If interested, send email to: Karen Roper, Karroper@aol.com, please include your street address. Current board members include:

- Karen Roper, co-organizer for Taste the World
- Solomon Abdella, owner of Abyssinia Restaurant
- Karen Burditt, organizer of The Best of Fenton Village
- Deborah Linn, co-organizer for Taste the World
- Lene Tsegaye, owner of Kefa Cafe

BEST OF FENTON

Speaking of Fenton Village, show your support for the small and independently owned businesses close to home. Vote for your favorite businesses in each of several categories from Shop Local Day on Saturday November 28th to December 31st 2015. Winners will be announced in early 2016. In addition to ESSCA, co-sponsors include the Silver Spring Regional Center, Fenton Village, Inc. and Buy Local Silver Spring. Thanks to Karen Burditt

for her efforts in coordinating Best of Fenton Village. You can vote online after November 28th at www.bestof.fentonvillage.org.

UPCOMING HOLIDAY EVENTS

SILVER SPRING

THANKSGIVING PARADE 2015

Don't forget about the annual parade in downtown Silver Spring!

Saturday, November 21st at 10 AM

The parade begins at Ellsworth Drive and Veterans Place and proceeds South on Georgia Avenue, ending at Silver Spring Avenue.

To learn more visit:

<http://dc.about.com/od/thanksgiving/a/SilverSprngThan.htm>

HOLIDAZE

A Holiday Pop-Up Shop in the Gallery Space of Pyramid Atlantic Art Center 8230 Georgia Ave • Silver Spring, MD

Featuring the work of local artists and makers, HOLIDAZE is Silver Spring's ONLY handmade holiday shop.

Open: December 4 - 23 • 11am-7pm

<http://www.fentonstreetmarket.com/holidaze/>

HOLIDAY ARTFEST

Local artists gather together to showcase their talents, just in time for the holiday season. Choose from a rich array of arts & crafts, jewelry, painting, photography, ceramics, mixed media, clocks, prints, home decor, woven bags and more!

749 Silver Spring Avenue

(3 blocks east of Georgia Avenue)

Opening reception with live music:

Friday, Dec. 4 from 6:30 to 9PM

Saturday sales, Dec. 5 from 10AM to 4PM

Sunday sales, Dec. 6 from 1 to 4PM

www.ssholidayartsfest.x10host.com

PLEASE JOIN OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP WITH ESSCA!

Annual ESSCA dues are \$10/family. Dues cover each meeting season, from September to May. Please pay at our next meeting, or send a check (payable to ESSCA) to Steve Knight, ESSCA Treasurer, 808 Violet Place, Silver Spring MD 20910. Please note that ESSCA is a 501(c)(4) non-profit corporation and that member dues are not tax-deductable. Thank you!

MEMBERS CAN NOW PAY THEIR DUES ONLINE THROUGH PAYPAL!

Visit the ESSCA Website:
<http://eastsilverspring.org/Membership.html>