

SPARKS-GLENCOE COMMUNITY PLANNING COUNCIL



Preserving our rural heritage

Spring 2009 Newsletter

Dear Neighbor,

The last few months have reminded us that the Sparks area is very fortunate to be populated by thoughtful and responsive residents who care deeply about protecting the rural character of the area. We were gratified that so many of you took the time and effort to respond to our survey about growth management and quality of life. The responses were revealing, and we worked hard to have the results ready in time for this newsletter (see "Survey Results" opposite). They express a remarkably consistent picture of how our residents feel about living here.

So far, 2009 promises its share of challenging issues: cell tower location, large wind turbines on rural residential lots, expansion of farming into processing operations. These issues affect everyone who lives in the area, and we want to know how you feel about them.

Lastly, please remember to visit our website at www.sgpc.org. There you will find more extensive information about what we do and how you can become involved. As a reminder, our annual meeting is just around the corner: April 22 (see back page for more information.) Hope to see you there!



The SGPC Board

SURVEY RESULTS ON QUALITY OF LIFE AND GROWTH

In last fall's newsletter, SGPC included a survey designed to obtain residents' opinions on the management of growth and quality of life in the area. A significant number of you completed and returned your surveys and provided us with a concise picture of where you stand on these issues.

The majority of respondents (75%) consider the rate of growth and development to be fast. (51% said it is 'too fast'.) Most residents note the negative effect on traffic congestion (93%) and road safety (79%). *"The traffic in this area has gotten significantly worse every year; in fact, it has gotten to the point that I have altered my schedule to avoid traffic."*

A number of you also cited negative impacts on the amount of open space (68%), affordable housing (55%) and air/water quality (43%). *"We miss the openness [fields, horses] ... developers have taken over nearly ALL open spaces..."* was a typical comment.

On the other hand, many of you noted positive impacts on your quality of life, including appreciating property values (69%), convenience of local shopping (65%) the quality of the schools (42%) and libraries (46%).

However, the majority of residents feel that Baltimore County is doing a poor job of managing growth (52%). In the last election, residents disclosed, they considered growth management a significant factor in their decision to support a candidate (66%); only a

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SPARKS ELEMENTARY TO HOLD ENVIRONMENTAL FAIR

Students of Sparks Elementary will enjoy a day of ecology-minded activities during their Environmental Fair on April 24th, appropriately Arbor Day. Representatives from local organizations including SGPCPC, Halten Garden Club, Irvine Nature Center, Team DNR, and naturalist Bob Stanhope will provide programs to help kids learn about the environment and ways to be better stewards of our natural resources. Rain barrel-making demonstrations, recycled art contests, native tree plantings and bird/animal observations are just some of the many activities planned for the day-long event.

Sparks Elementary has been recognized by the State of Maryland as a 'Green School' since 2001. SGPCPC continues to be an active volunteer in supporting these efforts and programs.

For more information or volunteer opportunities, please contact Renae Olver: info@sgcpc.org.



Survey Results *(continued from page 1)*

minority (34%) did not consider it. Most of those who didn't consider growth management in their voting decision said it was due to a lack of information on the

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candidate's position (60%). Only 30% of responders were 'neutral' and just 18% feel Baltimore County is doing a good job.

Overwhelmingly, residents (89%) say that growth management will influence their vote in the next election, more so among those residents who feel that Baltimore County is doing a less than satisfactory job in managing growth (96%). *"We must try to influence not only Baltimore County Government to slow growth but also York County, PA to do the same."*

Although the vast majority of survey responses supported efforts to manage growth and development, a few expressed concern: *"I have extremely mixed feelings about 'growth management'. While I love the beauty of the area, it disturbs me that organizations are able to recommend zoning restrictions on property..."*

Over all, managed growth is important to residents who feel that development is proceeding too fast and has a negative impact on traffic, road safety, open space, affordable housing, and air and water quality. Most feel Baltimore County could do a better job of managing growth, and plan to remember this when choosing whom to support in the next, local election.

The survey questionnaire was designed to collect representative data, and was sent via mail to our entire mailing list. Results were tabulated and include significance tests at the 95%/90% confidence levels.

THE FACE OF CHANGE

Even as SGPC strives to preserve the natural beauty of our area, we are cognizant that we live in a world of advancing technology. One of the challenges we face is properly balancing the protection of the area's rural character with modern conveniences. These are some of the more pressing issues SGPC is confronting this spring:

- ◆ **Cell towers.** They are necessary to the transmission of signals so we can use our cell phones, but should they be located outside historic districts and designed to blend in with the rural landscape?
- ◆ **Wind turbines.** They can provide clean electricity, but should they be allowed to be so tall that they are three times the height of most mature trees in the area? Should it be automatically permissible to build more than one turbine on a single acre of land in a residential neighborhood?
- ◆ **Flashing Neon Signs.** They are springing up in commercial urban areas, but do they belong out here? Some business owners say their advertising must keep up with modern standards.
- ◆ **Creameries and other commercial facilities.** Local farmers need to be able to make a profit, but should they be allowed to build a large manufacturing facility without a review process?

Drawing the line in cases like these can determine what our area will look like in the future. We need more people to discuss these issues and help us resolve the ongoing conflict between the demands of modern life and the protection of our natural resources and rural character. Please join us during our monthly meetings at Sparks School on Belfast Road, on the second Wednesday of the month, at 7 in the evening. To see the comments filed by Sparks-Glencoe on some of these issues, visit our web site.

SAFEGUARDING THE WATER QUALITY IN YOUR WELL

Taken from "A Homeowner's Guide to Improving our Environment and Drinking Water," provided by Baltimore County Soil Conservation District.

Most North County residents are not on public water and sewer but instead rely on their own residential wells for their water supply. The groundwater that supplies our wells is replenished by rainfall which finds its way to your water system through the up gradient of the well, within approximately two to four hundred feet of the well.

The way you and your neighbors use the land in the vicinity of your well can affect the quality of your water. It is important to be aware of possible sources of well water contamination, such as runoff from large areas of impervious surface, faulty septic systems, overuse of fertilizers and inappropriate use of pesticides.

Prolonged periods of heavy rain can flush contaminants into groundwater supplies. Detection of groundwater contamination requires regular testing. At a minimum, you should have your well water tested if you notice unusual odor, color, cloudiness, sediment, or if there is an interrupted water supply.

For help with well water problems, contact the Groundwater Management Section of the Baltimore County Department of Environmental Protection and Resource Management (DEPREM) at 410-887-2762. DEPREM can also be accessed online at: <http://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/Agencies/environment/groundwater/mgt/index.html>.



CALLING ALL ARTISTS!



Third Annual Gunpowder Falls Plein Air Competition



Thursday June 4th through
Saturday, June 6th 2009.



For the third year, this landscape painting competition celebrates the beauty of the Gunpowder Falls River and the rural countryside of Baltimore County. Artists from all over the region will join our local artists in painting “plein air” or “outdoors” for two days.

Paintings will be hung at Diddywopps and Keeffers, www.diddywopps.com, in Monkton on Saturday, June 6th. They will be judged in the afternoon. In the evening, there will be a reception and an opportunity to meet the artists and buy these newly created works of art of the local area.

Maceo Mitchell and his wife **Patricia Wynne**, two artists who live and work in New York City will be judging this year. Maceo Mitchell, www.maceoarts.com, taught art at the college level for many years until 1990, when he began his life as a solo artist, exhibiting in the United States and Europe. Patricia Wynne,

www.PatriciaWynne.com, an artist and illustrator since 2003, has had her work published and purchased by well known publications, scientific institutions and prestigious art collections as well as often exhibiting her work. This accomplished couple, who really fit the description of ‘working artists’ will judge the show and present the four awards, including \$500 for “Best in Show”.

Each year, over 50 artists have participated in this event. It has proved popular among both artists and the public, who have enjoyed seeing the artists working along the roadside, or at a scenic vista. Please welcome them when you see them and go over and admire their work!

Visit www.gunpowderfallspleinair.com for more information on how to participate and to get registration information and the prospectus, or call Laura Wilke at 410 472-2415. This event is open to all artists and all mediums.

Remembering a Friend



On a cold, damp day this past December, Sparks-Glencoe’s Board of Directors and some of his friends planted a white oak in honor of Paul Hupfer who passed away last spring. The beautiful, native white oak - a symbol of strength - is a fitting tribute to Paul who worked for many years to protect the rural character of our community. There will be a dedication for family and friends on Sunday, April 26, at 2 pm. We hope that as it grows, the tree will provide food and habitat for wildlife and enhance the natural beauty of our area. Look for it on Belfast Road near the entrance to Sparks Elementary School.

GOALS

- ◆ Educating residents and land use representatives about the natural resources in northern Baltimore County;
- ◆ Encouraging the protection and preservation of the rural, historical, and agricultural environment of northern Baltimore County;
- ◆ Promoting responsible community planning which maintains the rural character of the area;
- ◆ Advocating growth in keeping with the level of public services available in the area.

**SGCPC
Community Meetings
are held on the
2nd Wednesday of the month,
Sparks School
Belfast Road
at 7:00 pm.
Please join us!**

SGCPC BOARD 2009-2010

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Wendy McIver
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New Board Member: Theaux Le Gardeur

Theaux Le Gardeur operates Backwater Angler, located steps from the Big Gunpowder Falls River in Monkton. He is interested in promoting stewardship of natural resources, protecting the Gunpowder river, creating awareness of invasive species and is perhaps best known for his fly fishing blog, backwaterangler.com.

Officers and Directors may be contacted at our website:
www.sgcpc.org at **info@sgcpc.org**.

BE A MEMBER OF SGCPC

We need your support to carry on our mission of protecting our rural environment. We are a tax-exempt organization, so your contribution beyond the cost of membership is tax-deductible. Please be as generous as you can! **Remember: we accept matching contributions from your employer.** Our tax ID# is 20-3888970.

Basic membership: ___ (\$35) **Family** (2 adults in the same household): ___ (\$50)

I wish to make an additional donation of: ___ \$50 ___ \$100 ___ \$200 ___ Other

Please make check out to SGCPC and mail to: P.O. Box 937, Sparks, MD 21152

If you'd like to get more involved with our work, choose a committee that interests you:
_____ zoning; _____ land preservation; _____ membership & fundraising;
_____ communications; _____ web site; _____ monitoring county hearings,
or let us know how you can help: _____

Name _____

Telephone (day) _____ (eve) _____

E-mail address _____

Street address _____

City, state, zip _____

Thank you for your support.

**SGCPC ANNUAL SPRING MEETING
APRIL 22, 7 P.M.**

**SPARKS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
BELFAST ROAD**

Commemorate Earth Day by participating
in our spring meeting.

Featured speaker: **Joan Maloof**, author of *Teaching the Trees: Lessons from the Forest*, a story of the interconnectedness of species of trees, animals and insects. Joan teaches biology and environmental studies at Salisbury University.



Hear from Councilman **Bryan McIntire** and Representative **Wade Kach** about county and state legislation of environmental significance.

Catch up on Sparks-Glencoe activities and find out how you can help us protect our beautiful part of the world with just a few hours a month.

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