



**GREATER OLNEY CIVIC ASSOCIATION, INC.**  
**2024-9-09 Representatives Meeting**  
**DRAFT Minutes**  
**APPROVED:**

The 2024-9-09 Representatives Meeting of the Greater Olney Civic Association (GOCA) was conducted in-person in the Oak Ballroom, Sandy Spring Fire Dept, Sandy Spring, MD and online via Zoom Web Teleconference. President Irina Norrell called the meeting to order at 7:06 pm EST.

A quorum was present.. Those attending virtually are denoted by a V.:

**Officers**

- Irina Norell, President (Norbeck Meadows)(Transportation Committee)
- Curtis Chappell, First Vice President (Olney Square)
- Matt Quinn, Second Vice President (V)
- Tina Craun, Treasurer (Individual) - V
- Helene Rosenheim, Recording Secretary (Highlands of Olney)
- Kristen Quinn, Corresponding Secretary (Norbeck Meadows) V

**Members**

- Mindy Baden (Transportation Committee Chair)(Olney Mill) - V
- Bill Becker (Past President)
- Maria Bender (Brookeville Knolls) - V
- Alden English (SEROCA)
- Howie Greif (Lake Hallowell) - V

- Lee Kidd (Cherrywood)- V
- Carolyn Knight (Olney Oaks)- V
- Diana Littlefield (Olney Acres) - V
- Hilary Milla (Christie Estates) - V
- Jim Smith (Oatland Farm) - V
- Kate Thorton (Brighton Knolls) -V

**Guests**

- Jason Eustale (Tall Timbers) - V
- Owen Farris - V
- Aaron Kraut, Chief of Staff, Dawn Leudtke, Montgomery County Council, District 7
- Dashel Lewis – Councilmember Sayles Legislative Aid
- Jennifer Rusiecki (Environmental Subcommittee, Chair) (Olney Green) - V
- County Council member, Laurie-Anne Sayles, At-Large - V
- Craig Thorton (Brighton Knolls) - V

**Approval of the September 9, 2024 Agenda** - Agenda was approved as presented

**Approval of July 11, 2024 Minutes** - The minutes of the July meeting were approved as presented.

**Announcements - None**

**Voting on Nominee for GOCA Corresponding Secretary**

Irina N. introduced Kristen Quinn, the nominee for the GOCA officers position of Corresponding Secretary. After telling us about herself and her interest in environmental issues, **her appointment to the Corresponding Secretary position for the remainder of 2024 was approved unanimously.**

**Legislative Update by County Councilmember, At Large, Laura-Anne Sayles**

During her presentation, Councilmember Sayles noted:

- The school system is still recovering from the pandemic.
- The County, as is many parts of the country, is experiencing a housing crisis.
- Some Federal funding for addressing problems created by the pandemic have been exhausted, so there have been some budget shortages that lead to having to make some budget cuts. The new superintendent of Montgomery County Public Schools is devoted to addressing the impacts of the shortages.
- The Council is working on a JOBS initiative to increase businesses and employment available to County residents.
- Because Montgomery County is experiencing the worst ER waiting room response time in the area, the Council is working on legislation to hold ERs accountable so residents get the timely care they need. The State has a task force looking into the response time issue also.
- The Council is looking at other medical and health issues, including developing a map within the map system on the County's website that will ensure that youth can access resources to address their mental health needs. .
- With respect to the minority business sector, the Council is looking at disparities in the distribution of funds to find better ways to ensure that funding gets to businesses that need them.
- She established the S.M.A.R.T. Youth Advisory Council that is in its 4th year, addressing a variety of youth initiatives.
- The Council issued a proclamation to increase awareness of Sickle-Cell disease.
- The Council is working on a variety of housing crisis issues:
  - Interest rates are a burden
  - Renters need to have more stability in their rents
  - The need to expand affordable housing supply, noting the open ZTA that would cut processing time for an approval to a year for developers if they meet the threshold for MPDU's, which saves developers money; and they are looking for resources to refurbish the current 6.000 unlivable units in the County to make them available affordably.

During the Q & A's, Councilmember Sayles noted:

- The summer job program helps teens as a part of the solution to juvenile delinquency.
- The market place is changing and we need to adapt
- The upcoming Affordable Housing Initiative listening sessions and encouraged people to send emails with their thoughts and ideas. The Council needs to listen more to the community before they make any decisions.

**Attainable Housing Strategic Initiative**

Irina N. described the process we will go through to arrive at a GOCA position on the initiative and she encouraged people to write down their pros and cons and send them to her. Maria Bender noted that the Civic Federation supports the goals of the Initiative and suggested we draw on what they have presented. There was some discussion of ways to publicize this initiative including articles in the Greater Olney News, Irina added that Lisa Givens, the project manager on this effort for the Maryland National Capital Parks and Planning Commission (MNCPPC) had told her the County is looking for better ways to communicate with residents. Aaron Kraut, Councilmember Luedtke's Chief of Staff, noted that no decisions have been made, but some feel it may not be worthy of the expense of taxpayer dollars.

Following a brief discussion, Irina noted that the October agenda will consist exclusively of a discussion of this Initiative as it impacts Olney, with a goal of presenting a motion in our November meeting stating GOCA's position, concerns and possibly suggested changes to the proposal.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Treasurer Tina Craun reported that:

- The It's Olney Time put on by GOCA, the Olney Civic Fund, and the Chamber of Commerce had been a very successful event. And, that we had received a grant from the County's Regional Services Centers to cover the costs of putting on this event. Irina added that several people had expressed an interest in getting involved.
- The Banner space (on the northeast corner of the Rte 97/108 intersection) is filling up for the Fall, adding that people who want to use the space should reach out to her and that people can pay online now.

### **Transportation Committee Report**

Chair Mindy Baden reported that:

- She had participated in a Capital Hill hearing concerned with safe roads and pedestrian walkways as a part of the Smart Growth America Team. The other members were a representative of an insurance institute and the mayor of Atlanta.
- Now that schools have started, there is some confusion about when to stop for a school bus. If there is no median, cars have to stop when the lights on the bus are flashing. If there is a median, only cars on the side the bus is on have to stop. And, all buses have cameras photographing cars that do not stop. The fine is \$250, but if you are stopped by a police officer, not just by a camera, the fine is \$570 and 3 points.
- On October 11th, the County will be collecting old bicycles, helmets and bicycle parts from 9:00 am and 2:00 pm in the parking lot of the County Council Building.

Carolyn Knight noted that there is going to be a Mandatory Referral hearing before the MNCPPC's Planning Board. Helene R. noted that she was representing GOCA and Jim Smith was representing the Olney Town Center Advisory Committee at the hearing. This is not a hearing for approving the project which is already scheduled for construction in FY26, but for the staff and the public to provide comments to the Planning Board about the 35% design plans.

### **New Subcommittee under GOCA's Public Policy and Community Affairs Committee**

Irina announced that GOCA will be forming a new Subcommittee, that has not been named yet and that will focus on "green" issues to be a voice for concerns of the community with elected officials, among other things. We invited Green Olney to work on this with us and their Director, Jennifer Rusiecki, will chair the Subcommittee. The Subcommittee will initially work on waste conscious practices and reducing food waste. We hope to gain more progress in dealing with local, State, and Federal governments. Could include an effort to make Olney a plastic free area, especially at events, schools, churches, etc. The Subcommittee can discuss issues that go beyond what Green Olney has been addressing. There was some discussion of trying to locate a site in the town center for collection of food scraps from the community. Anyone interested in working on the Subcommittee should contact Irina.

### **Adjournment**

Adjourned: 8:51 pm EST

Submitted by Recording Secretary Helene Rosenheim