



Calendar

Sat Oct 1	Large Item Pick-up	Tues Oct 18	Parks and Open Space Committee Meeting, Town Hall, 7:30a
Sat Oct 1	Chicano Sol Farm Stand, Penn Place, 9a – 1p	Wed Oct 19	Arboretum Committee Meeting, Town Hall, 7p
Wed Oct 5	GP Historic Preservation Committee Meeting, Town Hall, 7:30p	Sat Oct 22	Chicano Sol Farm Stand, Penn Place, 9a – 1p
Sat Oct 8	Chicano Sol Farm Stand, Penn Place, 9a – 1p	Sat Oct 29	Chicano Sol Farm Stand, Penn Place, 9a – 1p
Mon Oct 10	GP Town Council Meeting, Virtual, 7:30p	Sat Oct 29	Halloween Parade, 6p; Spooky Woods, 7p
Sat Oct 15	Chicano Sol Farm Stand, Penn Place, 9a – 1p	Sun Oct 30	Pumpkin Carving, 2p
		Mon Oct 31	Halloween!

Town Council Meeting Notes

July Council meeting

Let’s begin with two important items that occurred prior to the town council meeting, but were not part of the meeting itself. As readers know, the town has been searching for a new town manager (since Andrea Fox left in December) and for the newly created position of deputy manager. Subscribers to the town listserv know that mayor Welch announced that Barbara Matthews, our interim town manager since December, is the choice for the permanent post. In addition, Kayla Buker came on board in August as the deputy town manager. Congratulations to both!

The meeting itself was quiet—mostly a matter of existing topics moving along. But there was one presentation by a resident. Lesley Maloney made a plea for doing something with the informal dog park (i.e., the former town tennis court on Cambria next to the pool). She said that some folks think it is run down, an eyesore, unsafe for the dogs, etc. So, she called on the town government to put repairing, replacing, or repurposing the dog park on the town agenda. Her plea was duly noted, and the mayor recommended that she discuss the issue with the parks and open spaces committee. Your reporter recalls that this issue came up several years ago, and the town hired a firm to come up with ideas. The consultant’s proposal was for a park with exercise equipment along a path, which was rejected on the grounds that there is not really sufficient space for

such a use. At that point, the issue faded from the agenda.

There was one item of unfinished business on the agenda: repair of the nursery school sidewalk and other repair to the pavement in front of the building. Councilmember Schulp explained that the town engineer, Azar Consulting Engineering, met with councilmember Schulp at the location and will develop a design for \$7,200.

New business consisted of four items: an archives committee appointment, a proposal for birthday awards to children, extension of the temporary surcharge for trash and recycling pickup, and further developments concerning the Yeandle property on Montrose.

Archives appointment. The mayor announced the reappointment of Lilian del Priore, whose term was expiring, to the archives committee. The council approved it unanimously.

Birthday presents. Mayor Welch suggested that the town offer to Garrett Park children birthday pencils with “Happy Birthday” and “From the Town of Garrett Park” stamped on them. The idea was to have the children visit the town office to pick them up. There was no vote on this proposal (the expenditure would be quite minor), but the council encouraged the mayor to move forward with it.

Sanitation surcharge. In March, the council agreed to a six-month surcharge for Montgomery County Sanitation (the firm that picks up our trash and recycling) due to the rise in diesel fuel costs. The firm would like to extend the surcharge to the end of

the fiscal year (June 30, 2023). The council unanimously approved the extension, under the same tiered system as before, enabling adjustments up or down depending on fuel price fluctuations.

Yeandle property. Councilmember Schulp and town manager Matthews provided an extensive explanation of recent developments. Ms. Yeandle's agreement about giving the property to the town dates back to 2006, with the transfer of ownership to occur in the future. According to the agreement, the house was to be removed and the property returned to a natural state or park. The transfer occurred several months ago and the property is now under town ownership. Several items have been removed from the house for the town archives. The next steps will be removal of the remainder of the contents of the house, demolition of the house, and filling in the basement hole. A topographical survey, hazardous building materials survey, and environmental survey are all underway. The issue for the council meeting was funding. Town manager Matthews estimated a total project cost of \$350,000, depending on the actual design for developing the property as a park. The council voted unanimously to shift some funds from "contingency" and from "parks and open spaces" to the line item for the Yeandle property. This would cover the immediate work, and leave the funding of the redevelopment as a park for later.

Having dealt with these items of new business, the meeting moved on to regular town updates.

ARPA task force. The task force was set up to recommend to the council possible projects to spend the million dollars the town has received from the federal government under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Councilmember Dobosz reviewed what the committee had recommended to the council last month (see the June *Bugle*). She added that the task force was not in a position to recommend to the council how much to spend on the preferred projects (town hall renovations and stormwater abatement projects). She also added that under the ARPA rules, expenditures must be completed by 2006.

Archives committee. Councilmember Max noted that the space for the archives in Penn Place is rather cramped, so that either tossing some items or relocation (possibly to a renovated town hall) might be necessary. She also noted that the archivist is returning some documents of Munro Leaf to his family (the former town resident, who was perhaps best known for his 1936 children's book *The Story of Ferdinand*). There was no documentation of the town ownership of these items, so they are being returned.

Land use committee. Councilmember Paczkowski indicated that there are some issues about front setbacks that may need to be looked at. For example, the county's 30-foot front set back creates a hardship for owners of older houses with a shorter setback who want to put a second floor on the house.

Stormwater management. Councilmember Schulp indicated that stormwater abatement issues are moving forward, but there were no major developments to report.

Town manager Matthews then made her monthly report. She noted that the fiscal year is now over (as of June 30). Final numbers for revenue and

expenditures will take some time. However, the preliminary figures show that revenues for fiscal 2022 exceeded the budget by \$125,091, and operating expenses were below the budget by \$204,050. On that note, the meeting adjourned.

September Council Meetings

Busy, busy! The town council did not have a regular meeting in August due to the usual summer break, but held a work session at the end of the month, and a regular meeting on September 12. Let us begin with the work session.

The purpose of the work session was to have a discussion of the range of possibilities for renovation of the Town Hall. The idea was to give some guidance to town manager Matthews about what to put into a request for proposals (RFP) for architectural design firms to bid on. The meeting was a free-wheeling discussion of various things that could be done. For example, should the kitchen be renovated, and, if so, should it be upgraded from a "warming" kitchen to a full-service kitchen (which involves various county design and maintenance regulations)? Other options put forward included upgrading/relocating the bathrooms, digging a basement, and moving the building closer to the front of the lot to make more space for outdoor events behind the building. At the very high end, there was even the possibility of relocating the building to town-owned space near Penn Place. The original concept for the town's design back in the 1890s had included more of a town center than what finally evolved, so moving the town hall would fit in that concept. That final extravagant suggestion had little or no support among council members, but some thought it would be interesting to know what a ballpark estimate of cost might be. By the end of the two-hour discussion, town manager Matthews felt she had enough to go on for the purpose of drafting an RFP.

Now, on to the regular September meeting. Mayor Welch began the meeting with a statement about the active discussion on the town listserv about plans for the town hall and the proposed changes concerning so-called abate violations. She felt that the listserv is not the best medium for such discussion, as its unstructured format leads to false statements, misinterpretations, and personal attacks. Concerning the town hall, she reiterated that the point of the work session was not to make any decisions, but simply to lay out possibilities ranging from small renovations, to probably unrealistic pie-in-the-sky renovations. She likened the process to teenagers applying to college—putting in applications to a number of schools, ranging from "safeties" to "reach" schools. At this early point in the discussion of town hall renovation, she emphasized, there is no reason to categorically leave out some ideas.

The next step in this process is for town manager Matthews to write a draft RFP for the town council to discuss and approve. That draft was not ready for the September town council meeting, but will be fairly soon. Stay tuned.

The September meeting had a full agenda of five action items.

Abate violations. The county and the town have rules for intervening with individual property owner in cases ranging from un-approved construction to excessive trash or high weeds on the property. The proposed ordinance would not change those rules, but would update some of the language and give the town government the right to take action on its own, at the owner's expense, in the case of failure of the property owner to remediate the problem, rather than relying on action by the county. After some discussion, the council decided to wait until October to vote on introducing this ordinance, so that a final vote on adoption would be in November.

Budget amendment. At the July council meeting there had been agreement on provision of financing for the upcoming work on the former Yeandle property on Kenilworth, now owned by the town. The budget amendment makes changes in line items in the budget to reflect that decision. The measure was introduced by unanimous vote, and the vote for adoption will occur at the October meeting.

Resident agent. The town is required to have a person designated as the recipient of "process, notice, and subpoenas." The designation of that person being out of date (a former town manager), the resolution appoints the town attorney, Ronald Bolt, to fill this position. This was quickly passed unanimously.

Membership in Montgomery Municipal Cable (MMC). The town used to belong to MMC, a cable TV channel run by the county, but dropped out a number of years ago. This resolution was to rejoin the channel. At present, the town has been doing its own broadcasting (via You Tube) of town council meetings, using money it receives from MMC. By rejoining, MMC would provide recording equipment, editing and upload of council meetings and possibly other town events. This was approved unanimously.

Leaf removal. The town should have solicited bids on a new three-year contract for leaf removal last spring, as the current contract period was coming to an end. However, due to the transition from one town manager to a new one, this did not happen. There being insufficient time now to collect bids on a new three-year contract, the town manager got two bids for a one-year contract. The firm that had the previous three-year contract submitted the lower price bid of the two, so this vote was to approve the contract, which was done unanimously. The town will carry out the solicitation of three-year bids next spring.

Whew! That was a lot of action. Having finished all these items, the meeting moved on to updates. Well, dear reader, it appears that not much happened over the summer, so there is relatively little to report. Let me just pick up two items.

First, councilmember Bennett explained that the arboretum committee may get involved with trees on state property along Strathmore Avenue (Strathmore is a state road). The state planted the trees along Strathmore during the big renovation over 20 years ago. There was, apparently, a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the town and the state about maintenance and replacement of these trees, calling for consultation with the town. However, the state often prunes trees without consultation with the

town. The state government is unable to locate the MOU, as it turns out, so a new one needs to be established. The idea is to write one that gives the town total control over pruning and replacement, but this probably means that the town would have to pay for the work.

Second, councilmember Paczkowski brought up an issue concerning accessory dwellings. The town opted-out of county rules on Air B&B type rentals several years ago. Now it turns out that this could be a problem for renting accessory dwellings longer term (to relatives or others). No doubt this will come up at a future council meeting.

The town manager's report was the final item on the agenda. Town manager Matthews indicated that we now have the final figures for the fiscal year that ended June 30 (not much different from the preliminary figures she had at the July meeting). If you are interested, take a look at the financial report on the town's website.

Ed Lincoln
Bugle Reporter

The *Garrett Bugle* is a newsletter publication by the Citizens Association of Garrett Park and published 10 times a year. Publication is supported by member dues. All residents of Garrett Park are members of the Citizens Association. Yearly dues (\$25 per family or \$15 per individual per address) can be sent to Citizens Association, Box 456, Garrett Park, MD 20896. Articles, ads and other content for the *Garrett Bugle* can be emailed to garrettbugle@gmail.com*

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*Editor and staff reserve the right to edit submissions for length and clarity. Unsigned Letters to the Editor will not be printed.

Town Manager's Notes

Important Important Dates:

- Saturday, October 1, 2022 – Large item pick up
- Monday, October 10, 2022 –Town Council meeting (virtual) – 7:30 pm

Leaf Collection – The Town has contracted with Bethke Landscaping to provide once a week collection of leaves beginning the week of October 17 and continuing through the end of December. Leaves will be collected as early in the week as possible, but rain or inclement weather will delay their pickup.

Leaves should be placed in rows alongside the street side of the curb so that they are accessible for pickup by truck. Please be mindful of the placement of the leaves to avoid blocking storm drains.

Any sticks, rocks, trash, and other debris should be removed from the leave piles as they can damage machinery and will not be collected by Bethke.

Shredded leaves and grass clippings should be bagged and put out for the regular yard waste collection on Mondays.

Parents, please discourage your children from playing in the leaves along the curb.

Tree Work – The Town Arborist recently compiled a list of trees in need of pruning, deadwood removal, and

elevation above the street. The Town has contracted with Bartlett Tree Experts for this work, which will likely be completed in the next 30 – 45 days.

Landscaping and Town Code Provisions – The Town office has recently received calls from residents about plantings obstructing site lines at street intersections as well as plantings obstructing the sidewalk. Provided below are certain standards and regulations outlined in Section 715 of the Town Code:

- *“On corner lots, no shrubs or planting of any kind exceeding 3 feet in height when fully grown shall be planted within 20 feet of the return of the curb line on said corner.”*
- *“In no case shall the unpaved street area of any Town street be landscaped in any manner that will inhibit or impede pedestrian use of a 5-foot-wide walkway, sidewalk or pathway; provided, however, that this restriction shall not preclude the planting of grass or the laying of a brick walk or flagstone in such area.”*

Please be a good neighbor by ensuring that your landscaping complies with these requirements.

ARPA Funding – In August, the Town received the second and final tranche of federal funding under the American Rescue Plan Act. In total, the Town received \$1,033,924. ARPA monies can be used for a wide variety of governmental purposes.

Former Yeandle Property – In 2006, Laetitia Yeandle gifted the property located at 11321 Kenilworth Avenue to the Town of Garrett Park. In accordance with the associated Deed of Conservation Easement, the property can be used as an active or passive park and/or wildlife habitat. The Town has contracted for the removal of the contents of the single-family home on the property – a necessary first step before the structure can be demolished.

Work is scheduled to begin on Thursday, September 29. Given the volume of items in the home and garage, it is anticipated to continue through Saturday and possibly into Sunday. Due to the nature of the work and for everyone’s safety, no one will be allowed on the property while the crews are working.

Town Hall Renovation and Town Office Renovation – At a Special Town Council Meeting on August 31, 2022, the Mayor and Town Council authorized staff to proceed with the issuance of a Request for Proposals for architectural services associated with the future renovation of Town Hall. The architectural firm that is retained will assist the Town in developing a renovation plan that addresses code deficiencies, storage needs, and system upgrades while enhancing the usability of the building footprint.

At the meeting, the Mayor and Town Council also agreed to expand the Town Office footprint into one of the two vacant tenant spaces at Penn Place. The project will also entail the purchase of new office furnishings and improving the lighting and appearance of the third-floor lobby.

Work in the Historic District – If you live in the County-designated [Historic District](#), please keep in mind that some exterior projects require a [Historic Area Work Permit](#) (HAWP). HAWPs are issued by the County, not the Town. Projects requiring a HAWP include, but are not limited to, home additions; demolishing or altering exterior materials; installation

of fences, walkways, retaining walls, decks, window/siding/roof replacement; and, tree removal. See the full list of historic Garrett Park properties [here](#).

Regular Reminders:

Communication. Are you new to Town? Contact the Town Office at (301) 933-7488 so we can get you up to speed with what you need to know about living in Garrett Park.

We also encourage all residents to sign up for the resident’s portal, as it provides the Town Office with one more way to reach you. You can register at garrettparkmd.gov/residents-portal

Permits. A Garrett Park building permit is required when a new structure is to be built, including houses, additions, sheds, garages, decks, porches, and driveways. A Montgomery County permit is required in addition to the Garrett Park permit. Be sure to complete your Garrett Park permit application and submit along with your plat and drawings to the Town Office before submitting your County permit application. Town permit applications and payment can be completed at: garrettparkmd.gov/government/operations/permits.

As always, please reach out to the Town Office with any questions or concerns. You can reach me at (301) 933-7488 or at Barbara.Matthews@garrettparkmd.gov.

Barb Matthews, Town Manager

9am-9pm Mon-Sat
9am-7pm Sunday
301-493-6217
www.grosvenormarket.com

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Find us on Facebook

Meal Train

If you or one of your Garrett Park neighbors would benefit from receiving some meals due to a life change (e.g., giving birth, adopting, illness, surgery, or loss), please contact Nikki Forry (nikki.forry@gmail.com, 202-641-7389). She will be happy to set up a Meal Train and send it out to the neighborhood listservs.

Pencils for Birthdays!

Please bring or send your children to the Garrett Park Town Office on or near their birthdays! The Town Office is in Penn Place (3rd Floor). Take the stairs or the elevator to come visit and ask Elizabeth, Kayla, Barb or Mayor Joanna for your special pencil. We’d like to wish your children a happy birthday and answer any questions they or you may have about our Town government.

-Elizabeth Henley

Call Todd today, your local neighborhood realtor!



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Get to Know Your Neighbor

The "Get to Know Your Neighbor" feature is a creation of the Bugle's Audience Engagement Editor, Meg Wendt. All neighbors are worth getting to know, but if you have someone in mind, let us know! This month's feature is on Dini McCullough Amozurrutia.

Where do you live? I'm pretty centrally located, in perfect proximity to all that the town has to offer.

How long have you lived here? I've lived here about three years.

Why did you choose to live in Garrett Park? I've always loved the hometown feel of Garrett Park, the train station and Black Market Bistro, Rock Creek Park, the bungalows and Victorians. It's quaint and comfortable.

Tell us about Dini's Divine Homemade Pies...and where we can find your pies if we're interested in ordering them. I started baking for loved ones last fall out of my home. More and more, friends began to ask for and order pies from me and I quickly realized that there's a market for my product. People love pie! After the New Year, I pitched the idea of having a regular pie stand at our Saturday farmer's market, but the Town wasn't interested. So, I approached Rocklands Farm Winery in Poolesville. They invited me out for a tasting and gave me the greenlight to launch on Mother's Day this year. I formed an LLC, obtained all the necessary licenses and certifications and rented commercial space nearby. I've had regular

pie stands at Rocklands all summer and now have wholesale arrangements with Vignola's and a new cafe in D.C. slated to open later this fall. I'm also planning to take pre-orders for the holidays and will announce those options soon. I also have customers interested in hiring us to supply wedding pie for their upcoming nuptials. The company is growing and it's all very exciting!

Anyone who's interested can find more information on my website, www.dinisdivinepies.com, or follow on Instagram: @dinisdivinepies.

What is your proudest career accomplishment and why? I am attorney by trade and have mainly worked in the public interest sector. I still work full-time for a legal non-profit that serves indigent clients. I'm certainly proud of this work. I'm also very proud of my creative endeavors, as a writer, an artist, and now entre-pie-neur. :)



What do you like most about living/working in Garrett Park? I have very kind and considerate neighbors and I'm grateful to live in such a welcoming community.

What are your favorite local shops, restaurants or hangouts? Like everyone else, I haven't done much hanging out these past few years, and my two jobs keep me pretty occupied. But I do like all the cool places popping up in the area. There's a new brewery coming to Kensington that I'm excited to try. If you were to suddenly find yourself with a free afternoon on a beautiful day, where could we most likely find you? On a drive, probably through wine country or along some pretty farm roads.

What is your current recommendation for streaming? Mo on Netflix and The Bear on Hulu. I'm also a big fan of Taika Waititi and Reservation Dogs on Hulu.

GP Conservation Action Network (GPCAN)

Tennis Ball Recycling is going strong!

As previously announced, we have started tennis ball recycling at the Garrett Park courts. We've collected 272 balls so far and sent them to be recycled into a Green Gold, a non-toxic footing for horse arenas. Tennis balls take 400 years to decompose so keep them coming! You'll find the recycling container on the outside of court by the entrance door. Please put only tennis balls in the bin, no pickleballs or trash. One small green step for our Town!

The Garrett Park Conservation Action Network is a group of residents concerned about environmental issues and committed taking action locally. To get involved and join the GPCAN listserv, contact Joanne Schmader at JSchmader@protonmail.com.



Letters to the Editor

Summertime fun

GP men and women of all ages enjoyed many competitive but fun volleyball matches this summer. There was a huge upgrade on the volleyball net and posts (shout out to Steve Welker and Donna Callejon who led the effort between the pool board and the volleyball regulars to make this happen)!

Parents of younger kids tend to have little time leftover for their own fun after organizing and chauffeuring kids around to a constant stream of sports and activities, all while the work correspondence keeps flowing. I, and many others, greatly enjoyed playing volleyball weekends and evenings while the kids had plenty of activities of their own nearby.

We are grateful that the GP pool and the adjacent parks provide such an opportunity for busy parents, and look forward to many more volleyball games, water polo games and other possible fun games for all in the future! Many of the volleyball regulars also took part in the series of softball matches at GPES starting in spring and still going into the fall. My husband has been out there getting exercise and having fun at that.

Chuan Luo, volleyballer, Cambria Ave.



Town Hall – What's going on?

Garrett Park still has some difficult questions to solve for Town Hall. Throughout the process of seeking answers to those questions, I've wanted to keep it as an open process, and one that is open to all views within town. All 360+ households in town have an equal share in the visioning for the facility for decades to come.

Parts of this will be repeats of information I presented in community meetings held October 2018 and March 2021. Presentations are available on the town website:

<https://www.garrettparkmd.gov/government/operations/town-hall-renovation>.

In the 2018 presentation, Pg. 12 highlights the original 1,350 square foot chapel from 1897 in green, with later additions totaling a little over 1,000 square feet, shaded in brown.

Figuring the scale of renovation that makes the most sense will be perhaps the largest challenge for Town Hall. The scale could range from:

1. A small scope that rehabilitates the historic exterior and improves finishes and infrastructure inside.
2. A medium sized scope that takes it further with either a heavy reconfiguration, or a replacement of the rear addition.
3. A larger scope could have a building mover lift the historic structure so a new basement could be built below, likely in tandem with a new addition.

If money was unlimited, we could just jump in and start on the large scope, checking off all the boxes on residents' wish lists, but with a project that could be in the \$2 to 3 million range. A small scope might be in the \$1-2 million range. Some residents have shared feedback that they rarely go to Town Hall, and some have said they never do. Who knows the answer to which of those scopes should be done? Yes, I know, opinions abound.

To crack this nut, the town needs to hire an architectural firm with historic preservation expertise to develop a concept level report. A concept level is generally a design that is at the 15% stage, which is very preliminary in relation to a 100% design which is permits and construction ready. The report would include chapters on existing conditions, historic preservation analysis, infrastructure, and facility programming. Those chapters feed as information into multiple concept designs that can be cost estimated. The goal of such a concept report with alternates is to study the problem from all angles to find the best balance of cost and benefit. The project

can then narrow down to one well-informed concept, or perhaps a hybrid of some concepts.

Parts of an architectural program and concept level design are shown on Pg. 23 of the 2018 presentation. I developed those documents and concept design about a decade ago, for a historic building in Kensington. I do these studies for my day job. In fact, I'm writing part of this article on a plane returning from a site assessment for a small midwestern city's municipal owned convention center.

In meetings about Town Hall, participants were nearly unanimous in preference of low or no-cost facility fees. Town Hall brings in a modest amount of revenue which covers utility, maintenance, and cleaning costs, but the facility operates in the red when the full costs are considered. The place doesn't operate itself; it relies on the hard work of town staff. Town maintenance did a wonderful job patching up and painting the façade, by the way. That work is extremely helpful, in tandem with a 2018 roof, buttoning up the exterior so there is no emergency need for Town Hall.

So, we have a problem to solve where a renovation could range from maybe a little over \$1 million, up to pushing \$3 million. The town has roughly \$1.5 million available, if all the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding of about \$1 million is used for Town Hall. The small scope might be easily doable. The large scope could need to seek a substantial amount of additional funding. Note, the costs are round numbers to illustrate. We need the concept report to find out how various pieces of projects add up to total costs.

We're in much better shape than we were in 2018, due to those ARPA funds. Back when the 2018 presentation was made, there was a little over 100k budgeted to 'fix' Town Hall, when costs to do that were likely 10 times as much, if not more. That's a big budget gap and some head scratching about it led to the outside the box idea I originally threw out there back then: consider the pros and cons of relocating the historic parts of the structure to town owned land and sell the property to add a half million or more to the renovation budget. That scenario would be a 4th design concept/ estimate. Having such an alternate that stretches thinking can be very helpful on a project like this. Benefits and drawbacks of options on the existing site can be looked at critically in comparison with the up and down-sides of an alternate site. The existing site is wedged between three residences on a quiet block. An alternate site adjacent to Penn Place is apart from residences, but noisier near the trains. Many other things could be looked at for comparables: does the alternate site allow for more usage and therefore more justification of a larger spend... does stacking town hall over a lower-level town office (opposite the PO) provide benefits to residents and make the 2nd floor of Penn Place leasable again... maybe there's a back porch on that ground level office where those officials can have casual conversations with residents... and serves as a hub on the 4th of July. Those are just some examples that come to mind. There's a benefit to stretched thinking. Even if this project doesn't go

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down a relocation route, things that are beneficial to the town come to the surface and maybe are just done in a different way in the future.

A lot of work has been done toward figuring this out. We can do this, Garrett Park. Let's refocus, and work together, with open minds. If we all had the same view, and there was an obvious answer, this would be easy.

Councilmember Stephen Paczkowski, Strathmore Ave.

Don't Move Town Hall

The town is considering moving Town Hall from its current location to land the town owns in the middle of the block bounded by Waverly from the 4-way stop sign past the tennis courts and Penn Place to the train station parking lot, through that lot along the tracks to Rokeby, then Rokeby and Argyle along Wells Park to Montrose, and finally Montrose back to the 4-way stop intersection at Waverly. This is a terrible idea for several reasons.

This block already bears a hugely disproportionate share of the town's vehicle traffic. All day long, and into the evening, cars from the Post Office, Black Market Bistro, the tennis courts, the train station, and the Farmers Market drive - often much too fast - on these streets. It is simply unfair to make this one block of town bear even more of the town's traffic.

Second, when a train goes by and blows its whistle, it is extremely loud on this block. If you are outside, you cannot hear someone standing two feet away even if they are shouting; you've probably experienced this yourself while chatting with neighbors outside the Post Office. If you are inside, it's difficult to hear someone talking to you at a normal volume until the whistle stops. And if your windows are open, it's just like being outside; in over 20 years here, we have never once slept with our windows open because the whistle is ear shattering at this distance. That doesn't sound like a great venue for yoga classes, Film Society movies, musical recitals, and certainly not for weddings or memorial services. Town Hall will be a less useful venue the closer it is to the train tracks.

Third, the move will probably cost hundreds of thousands of dollars, at least. It cost \$750,000 to move an historic 124-year-old house in Detroit, and that house was only moved around the corner. Spending even a fraction of that to move an old, historic building from a perfectly good location to a location that is worse in every way is fiscally irresponsible.

Fourth, in its current location, Town Hall directly abuts only two properties, three or four if you count the houses across Kenilworth from it. The Holy Cross School parking lot is behind Town Hall's backyard, not more houses, and that lessens the impact of noise from events at the venue. In the proposed location, Town Hall will abut 15 properties, so the noise from events there will affect far more people.

Lastly, there are at least 10 beautiful, tall mature trees on the land in question, many of which would

have to be cut down to make room for Town Hall. Remember how hard Mayor Kacky and others worked to protect trees during the planning of the sidewalk project? In several places, the sidewalk was moved over to keep a tree, and in others, special flex paving material was used where the sidewalk had to be near a tree. As I recall, in the end only one tree had to be removed. Far more than that would have to be removed for this project.

I encourage you all to go to the Town website (garrettparkmd.gov), and under the Government section, find the email addresses of the Mayor and Town Council members, and let them know that:

- Moving Town Hall to a block that is already overburdened with traffic is a disservice and unfair to the residents there;
- Moving it to a much noisier location will make Town Hall a less useful venue for everyone;
- Moving it to a location where its noise will affect far more people is, frankly, rude;
- Spending gobs of money to move a building from a perfectly good location is a dereliction of their duty to spend the town's money responsibly.
- Clearing land of many mature, beautiful trees is completely at odds with Garrett Park's decades-long effort to make the entire town an arboretum.

Thank you. Jim Cole, Rokeby Ave

Another Perspective on Town Hall

Dear town officials and residents:

Perhaps it's time for another perspective on the burgeoning debate over how to fix Town Hall.

In the shadow of the existential questions facing the world right now, our decision is of course a tiny one, but it's pretty important to the future of the town and its identity, and I urge that, before moving ahead, we thoroughly consider all the possibilities, including relocating the building.

We fortunate residents of today's Garrett Park may not always take note of how much of our pleasant lifestyle is owed to the town visionaries of the 1950s and 1960s. Their collective and often bold decisions enabled GP to preserve its unique status as a cohesive community, despite the oncoming development and homogenization of the surrounding suburbs, not to mention the disappearance of green space. Try to imagine how things would be if our forebears hadn't built the swimming pools; hadn't succeeded in sealing off local streets to through traffic (state and county officials had proposed to open up Kenilworth, Weymouth, Rokeby, Raleigh); hadn't beaten back several attempts by the Post Office to shut our branch. And of course, we wouldn't be discussing this today if they hadn't stepped in to buy the chapel on Kenilworth that is now the Town Hall.

All of these projects, by the way, were controversial at the time, viewed as overly ambitious, too difficult, and/or too costly. Much of the town didn't believe the pool would attract enough members. But "as the pool took shape, doubters began to be convinced," according to the official town history. Many thought, at first, it would be too

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expensive and complicated to turn the chapel into a town hall; the plan went to a referendum, and in 1968 GP voters -- nearly as divided as the present U.S. Senate -- approved the \$38,000 expenditure by a tiny margin.

Much later, in the 1990s, there was widespread angst about the cost and value of renovating Penn Place, but I would imagine that most of us are now pleased and proud to have it there in great shape.

That latest project helped reinforce the 120-year-plus tradition of the Penn Place area as our town center. (It's worth a reminder that while the Town Hall is an old historic property, its life as a town building only dates to the late 1960s.) Between the train station, Post Office, town offices, restaurant, and playing courts, we've all had the fun of serendipitous meetings with friends and neighbors, often leading to spontaneous plans or ideas. The courts and lawns host the July 4th picnic (where my band Border State has played for two decades) sports clinics, fitness classes and other events.

Like most of you, I've traveled a fair amount for work (as a journalist) and pleasure, and also like most of you I've always admired the villages here and abroad that have preserved their identities with a unified town center. Most have their public functions in one dedicated area that defines who they are. In fact, relocations of historic town halls have taken place in Maine, Iowa, and elsewhere, meeting the requirements of historic commissions.

I can imagine improving our town center by relocating Town Hall. We might end up with a creative revamping of our village green, a more suitable setup for public events, and even more frequent face-to-face interactions, both casual and formal. That could become even more important over the years as a counterbalance to remote life and work online.

Others have raised thoughtful objections to moving the building, and certainly there are logistical challenges and hurdles. Relocating meetings might be less convenient for some, and more convenient for others. Some events on the south side of town might be held at the elementary school or nursery school. Parking issues would need to be addressed. A preliminary assessment of a possible move would have to be done soon to ensure it doesn't delay the process.

But nothing comes without tradeoffs. Mayor Welch said at the public meeting on the topic, "it's important to have our minds open to what's possible even if it seems radical." And as councilmember Paczkowski put it, people might have an initial aversion to a major change before they are shown what could be done. "It's hard for people to think about it until they really see it," he said.

So, it would seem to be a small risk and expense to explore relocation as part of a preliminary study of the Town Hall options. If we are thorough in our review, perhaps in another fifty years the people who sustain this as a different kind of town will appreciate what we've done.

Sincerely, Larry Roberts, Weymouth St.