



NEWSLETTER

Black History Month

The Town of Bladensburg Celebrates



*The Historic
Free Hope Baptist Church*

The Town hosted its Black History Month Celebration on February 13th; kicking off with a tour of historic sites significant to Black History in Bladensburg. Following tour guide, Town Administrator Doris Samuri, eager participants disembarked from the bus at Historic Free Hope Baptist Church, founded in 1866 by freed slave Sara Plummer from “Riversdale”. Greeted by Pastor Luckett, the group entered the sanctuary and were soon captivated by Rev. Luckett’s talk on the history of Free Hope and its part in the Underground Railroad.

Next stop was the George Washington House, also site of the Indian Queen Tavern,

whose first innkeeper was African American Margaret Adams. John Lyons, enlightening the participants on the history of that site. He posed a question: “there is a cellar in the tavern; could it also have been part of the Underground Railroad?”

At the Waterfront Park, Park Naturalist Bernadine Sandy had us imagining what the Port was like during the bustling market days of the eighteenth century. We then passed Magruder and Market Master’s Houses, hearing “on board” histories of the homes. The group then stopped outside Bostwick and Evergreen Cemetery, both significant sites of the African American contributions to our Town’s history.

Back at Town Hall, a feast like “Sunday dinner from the past”, including fried chicken, fish and oysters, grits and greens, crackling and corn breads, and fruit cobblers, awaited the group. cont. on pg 2

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Contact Us

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C.E. R. T. Team News



Prince Georges County graduated its first Teen C.E.R.T., (Community Emergency Response Team), class in January. Graduates of the class will be incorporated into existing local C.E.R.T. groups. Bladensburg has its own C.E.R.T. team and is still looking for volunteers. We can now offer membership to both our adults and youth. Interested residents may contact Sgt. Scott Davis at 301-927-8126 for further information and future training dates.

In February members of the Bladensburg C.E.R.T. team attended a Teen C.E.R.T. instructor course sponsored by the Prince Georges County Office of Emergency Preparedness and Eastern Michigan University. The Bladensburg C.E.R.T. team now boasts having over eight trained Teen C.E.R.T. instructors.

TEEN CERT TRAINING- EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

A skit on Drunk Driving: can you handle it?

Back-seat drivers often talk and demand attention.

the front seat passenger is rarely watching for oncoming problems



Often, the ones who get hurt are the ones who had nothing to do with the drinking.

the diver is inattentive as she tries to drink

BLACK HISTORY MONTH CONT.

Following greetings by Council Member Cris Mendoza, Rev. Dockett blessed our bountiful food. During lunch, all were entertained by Bostwick Curator Kathy Manicke’s entertaining discourse on her research on the African American slaves at Bostwick and in the community. She was followed by Patrick Gilchrist who talked about “A Piece of the Dream” Foundation, a local foundation that preserves the memories of the famous 1963 March on Washington, and Cris Needham, who reminisced about growing up in our community and the importance of embracing the history of all who contributed to our Town.

Everyone had a wonderful time and there were many requests to have this tour a regular event on the Town’s calendar. Special thanks goes to Chris Needham and Council Member Mendoza who loaned memorabilia and artifacts for our Black History display, and to Diane Griffin, who “pulled it all together” with their assistance.



The Life of Donna Godfrey

We hope that this New Year finds you all well. This year, we are doing something a little different with the “Town of Bladensburg’s Newsletter”. I’m going to share with you some of my experiences. I started working for the police department as a dispatcher about 17 years ago. When I first started working at the police department, I was told that the people I work with were to become my second family and to keep them safe. I have made that commitment and truly think of every one there as my family away from home.

I want to dedicate this article to one of the most dedicated and respected people of my family away from home. Mrs. Donna Godfrey. Mrs. Godfrey worked for the Bladensburg Police Department for about 21 years. She was Chief Zidek’s Assistant, and gave 100% of herself to the Town and its community. Aside from her daily task of writing letters, keeping personnel records up to date, etc... Mrs. Godfrey was very much into Crime Prevention. She was presented with a Maryland State Crime Prevention Award, and a Governors Award for the work she did on a “Teenagers Room”. This helped parent’s identify signs that their child or teen might be doing illegal drugs. She gave lec-

tures and self-defense classes at the Emerson House for the seniors. Mrs. Godfrey was also very active in planning Bladensburg Day/Port Towns Day, National Night-Out, haunted houses in Town Hall on Halloween, Christmas parties for employee’s of the Town, Employee picnics, and Bike Rodeo’s for the children in the community. She truly loved doing all that she did. She and Chief Zidek retired from the Bladensburg Police Department in 2003. She left some pretty big shoes to fill and I aspire to one day be only half as good of an Assistant as she was. Much too often do we take for granted the good in people, only to realize it after they are gone.

-Candice Ortiz

It saddens me to tell you, that on January 23, 2007, Mrs. Donna Godfrey passed away due to injuries sustained in an automobile accident. All of us here at the Bladensburg Police Department will miss her dearly and our hearts and thoughts are with her family.

-Bladensburg Chief Moss



FROM PAT MCAULEY THE TOWN CLERK

Learning How Your Town Government Works
First in a Series of Articles

OPEN MEETINGS ACT



The Open Meetings Act is based on the Maryland General Assembly’s policy determination in favor of open decision making by government bodies including the Town of

Bladensburg. It is essential in a democratic society, except in special and appropriate circumstances, that public business be performed in an open and public manner and that citizens be allowed to observe both the performance of public officials and the deliberations and decisions that involve the making of public policy.

The Open Meetings Act applies to the Town when three or more elected officials (a quorum) meet to discuss public business. In Bladensburg, this is regularly at the monthly Worksessions (first Monday) and Council Meetings (second Monday).

Other meetings can be called by the Mayor or two or more Council Members. Notice of these meetings must be posted as soon as possible after they are scheduled. The law states that both formal and informal meetings fall under the Open Meeting Act.

However, the fact that a quorum of the elected Town officials is together at the same time does not necessarily make the gathering a “meeting”. For example, the Mayor and Council may be at a social event at the George Washington House; here the Act would not apply.

Certain Subjects are not subject to the **Open Meetings Act**. These include Legal and Personnel Issues and Contract Negotiations.

In closing, remember that the **Open Meetings Act** allows you as a citizen to be present when Town business, such as budget expenditures, new laws, and other important issues affecting your Town, are discussed. We encourage everyone to attend the public meetings. Your input is important as part of the Mayor and Council’s decision making process.

Town Signs cable television franchise

At the February Council Meeting, the Mayor and Council approved an agreement with Verizon Maryland, Inc. with a supporting ordinance. These actions will allow Verizon Maryland to offer an alternative cable television service to our citizens. This will introduce competition into the market and can result in lower monthly cable service prices for consumers. In addition,

competition provides consumers with an alternative, resulting in increased pressure on competing companies to provide high quality customer care.

Verizon Maryland’s proposed cable service offering will be feature rich, including the analog channel tier, digital channel tiers, premium channel tiers, Pay Per View, and HDTV Channels. In

addition, it will offer digital music channels, Digital Video Recorders and an Interactive programming guide and will offer extensive multicultural content.

We are expecting that Verizon Maryland will be able to offer this cable television service within the year. For more information please call 301-927-7048



Town Moves Forward on Town Center Project

On February 27th, the **Public Hearing was held on the Bladensburg Town Center Sector Plan and Section Map Amendment.**

The Hearing was before the County Council and the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission Planning Board. Councilmember (& former Bladensburg Mayor) David Harrington led the discussion. This was followed by statements by Bladensburg Mayor James and Edmonston Mayor Ortiz, and a number of interested individuals whose positions included support for increased pedestrian/bike access and reinforcement of the unique historic attributes of the Town and retention of flexible, industrial/commercial zoning.

The purpose of the plan is to create a quality civic Town Center that includes a future Town Hall that provides municipal resources and serves as a focal point for the community. It will establish Annapolis Road as the Town's "main street" and provide mixed-used development to support pedestrian and transit oriented corridors, as well as walkways and a pedestrian bridge between the Town Center and Bladensburg Waterfront Park. It promotes mixed use retail, office and residential development and establishes gateway elements at the Bladensburg Waterfront Park and the Public Playhouse to define the east and west entries into Bladensburg.

The final plan will be brought before the County Council in

Calendar

Town Council Meeting
Second Monday of Every Month

Worksession of Mayor & Council
First Monday of Every Month

Recreation Council
Third Wed. of Every month, 6pm - Bladensburg Community Center

Mayor's Breakfast
Quarterly, 8:30am, Date and Time TBA

Apartment Manager's Assoc.
Third Wed. of every Month, noon

Neighborhood Watch Meeting
Every Fri. Evening,
Meet at EZ Mart in Autumn Woods

Regular Trash/Recycling Yard Pickup
Every Monday

Regular Trash Pickup
Every Thursday

Bulk Trash Pick-Up
Third Sat of Every Month. You Must Call Ahead at 301-927-1552

May for a vote of approval. Copies of the draft plan are still available at the Town Hall.

Financial analysis of town funds

TOWN TREASURER REPORTS SOUND FISCAL PICTURE

The Town ended Fiscal Year 2006 with a general fund balance of \$1,664,840. The fund balance was \$330,327 higher than Fiscal Year 2005.

Revenues increased by \$320,705 from the prior fiscal year. Real Estate taxes increased by \$83,538 from the prior year due to rising real property assessed values.

Personal property taxes increased by \$30,967. Other major revenue categories included Admission and Amusement taxes. Our investment strategy was modified which resulted in interest revenue tripling from \$21,655 in Fiscal Year 2005 to \$62,148.

Expenses increased by \$202,022 for ongoing public services and

budget amendments for the Town Center project and a much needed new roof for the Public Works building.

Revenues increased by 10% from the prior year, expenses increased by 7%, leading to the improvement in the year-end fund balance, leaving the highest level of fund balance in ten years.



Important Information from Code Enforcement

If you have a vehicle on your property without tags or not in operating condition, you are in violation of the Town of Bladensburg's Code and you may be facing a fine and having your vehicle impounded.

The Code Enforcement Officers are making efforts to have vehicles in violation removed from Town. These vehicles become attractive to rats and other small animals as nesting places. If you require assistance in getting vehicles removed from your property, call our office at 301-927-0330.

Vermin are also attracted to firewood stored on property. All firewood must be 18 inches off the ground.

The Code Enforcement Office continues to receive complaints concerning barking dogs and dogs running loose. Fines for these infractions are \$50-\$500!

Contributors

PAT MCAULEY



Pat McAuley currently is the clerk for the town of Bladensburg. She has served in

Maryland Municipal Government for 20 years.

SGT SCOTT DAVIS



Sgt. Davis currently heads the Community Resources & Crime Prevention Unit of the Bladensburg

Police thirty-two years of experience in Law Enforcement

*Town of Bladensburg
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