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Beltway Widening Update

By Anna Priddy

Governor Hogan’s 11 billion dollar proposal to add toll lanes to the Beltway and I-270 through a public-private partnership (P3) continues to move forward. FECA opposes the proposed expansion because it will cause irreversible damage to Forest Estates and our larger community.

Last summer, the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) State Highway Administration (SHA) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) issued a 19,000 page Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). The DEIS is a federally-mandated document that describes the significant environmental impacts of the proposed action and alternatives (including a “no build” alternative). The DEIS indicated major issues that will directly affect our neighborhood should an expansion occur, including:

- Increased congestion on Georgia Avenue
- Destruction of portions of Sligo Creek and Rock Creek parklands, including increased stormwater runoff and flood risks
- Increase in harmful air emissions
- Direct impact on approximately 1,500 private properties, including numerous homes and Holy Cross Hospital
- Potential “decking” of an expanded Beltway in Silver Spring due to limited right-of-way, complicating construction and increasing noise and pollution levels when complete.

Although the purpose of the planned expansion is to reduce travel times, the tolled lanes will require high tolls at peak travel times to allow cars to move freely, preventing most travelers from using the toll lanes and leaving them in congested traffic. The state did not release their toll estimates publicly, likely due to the high cost; independent planners speculate that the peak one-way tolls could be \$50. Other options to reduce traffic on the Beltway and I-270, such as utilizing traffic management improvements on the highways and expanding service on the MARC Brunswick rail line, were not considered. Further, the DEIS is premised on congestion and traffic patterns that pre-date COVID-19 and the state has not taken new commuting patterns into account.

Cont. on Page 8

Do Better Than Survive the Pandemic

by Sujata Emani

The pandemic has created extensive difficulties. Yet, some opportunities are more available and more accessible now than ever before. During the early months of the pandemic I evaluated what I’d been putting off. Why were these items on this list?

Cont. on Page 5

Thank You Traffic Circle Gardeners!

By Sandra Marquardt

Many years ago, Montgomery County created two traffic circles on Forest Grove at Belvedere Boulevard and Sanford Road to help to slow traffic.

The County planted a Korean dogwood in the middle, Korean boxwoods in a circle around it, and some liriope, leaving a lot of bare ground - a lure to any gardener.

Enter Helen Gray and Marge Gills. For more than 20 years, Helen – a Master Gardener – has taken care of the circle at Belvedere Boulevard while Marge took care of the one at Sanford Road. Each of them began building the soil to hold more water and planting a variety of flowers, mostly from neighbors or their own gardens - orange poppies and tulips, black-eyed Susans, day lilies, verbena, azaleas - you name it. Working on making the circle attractive was a labor of love.

Cont. on Page 3



Photo By Sandra Marquardt

Racial Justice Grows in Forest Estates
By Karen Maricheau
Forest Estates Task Force for Racial Justice

The untimely death of George Floyd and a neighbor's conversation with a Montgomery County police officer sparked plans to hold a virtual vigil in Forest Estates. On June 7, 2020, over 63 neighbors joined to express sadness, anger, and concern over this racial injustice. The Zoom event uncovered a desire to create a safe, just neighborhood for Black and Brown neighbors. Forest Estates Task Force for Racial Justice was born. Led by a multi-generational neighborhood group of volunteers, its mission is to become a welcoming, inclusive, respectful community concerned with each other's safety and well-being. All neighbors whose values align with our mission are welcome to join meetings.

Our Task Force for Racial Justice is focused on creating neighborly connections, unlearning falsehoods, re-teaching ourselves about history and its consequences, stimulating dialogue on racial equity, and identifying strategic opportunities for advocacy and action.

We can't look out for our neighbors if we don't know each other. Currently, we're seeking neighbors to assist with a "Neighborly Connections" planning committee. Some projects are short term, some longer. Just sign up for whatever your schedule permits. Examples of projects are helping with a welcoming initiative for new neighbors who purchase or rent, as well as planning "socials" for safe group activities. For more information or to help, please contact Karen at Kmaricheau@aol.com or Mary at srliepolds@verizon.net.

We've been busy since our inception in June! Here are some other examples of what we've done and what's in the pipeline so far.

September to November had us in full swing with reminding neighbors to vote! October saw our first book group meetings on *Lies My Teacher Told Me*. It spurred us towards creating advocacy and action plans around having factual textbooks and supplemental reading in MCPS. To learn more about the book group or the Education Committee, please contact Janet at jfoxdreamart@aol.com.

In November we declared "Random Acts of Neighborly Kindness Week." We invited neighbors to be kind to neighbors they don't know, may not think they share things in common with, or may not ordinarily talk with. On December 6 is a presentation, *Stop and Frisk*, by neighbor Shelley Stokes and her son, Brett Hammond, Esq., from 4 PM to 5:15 PM. They shared significant legislation from

the 1960s. All are invited to learn about its history, its relevance, and parallels to where we are today on racial injustice.

For January, in partnership with our Task Force, FECA is funding a special MLK Day presentation by Willie King, secretary to Martin Luther King, Jr.

More is coming your way. Stay tuned to the list serv and follow Facebook regarding future offerings!

Forest Estates is a rich petri dish of human beings striving to improve our neighborhood, to create a more caring, equitable, microcosm of the world. Every day, in every way, we have opportunities for choosing to be wiser and better,

because Black Lives Do Matter.



Photo: Forest Grove Holiday Train
By Raymond Heinsman

Thank You Traffic Circle Gardeners! (Cont. from Page 1)

Both women have spent umpteen hours weeding, planting, trimming the bushes, and even removing discarded bottles and cans. It can be back-breaking work, but is rewarding when neighbors stop to thank them for their efforts, often remarking on the beauty of the flowers' color combinations or taking a moment to notice the birds and bees sipping the nectar or pollinating the plants.

Several neighbors have helped Helen and Marge over the years. Marsha Summers, Karen Maricheau, Heather Cassidy, Gayle Miller and I have all helped plant, water, and weed, but Helen and Marge have been the mainstays behind the beauty.

Marge has had to give up working in the Sanford Circle, and Esther Kaufman has since taken over. Helen would appreciate assistance with the Belvedere Circle. If any of you would like to lend a hand for an hour or two when needed throughout the year(s), please contact me at smarquardt2@gmail.com and I can connect you.

As a result of their work, these are no longer just circles in the middle of a road. Helen and Marge have created welcoming mini-sanctuaries to neighbors and visitors alike. Helen and Marge, on behalf of the Forest Estates Community Association and all the neighbors, thank you. We appreciate all that you have done for so many.



Photo By Sandra Marquardt

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Photo By Sandra Marquardt

Riding Bikes and Eating Ice Cream By Raymond And Jacob Heinsman

This past summer, on Thursdays at 6pm, families rode their bicycles on Sligo Creek Trail to get Ice Cream. Some weeks there were 6 of us, some weeks there were 30. We kept our distance and enjoyed the 2 mile ride from Forest Grove Neighborhood Park to Ben Yahuda Pizzeria to enjoy their delicious food, Ices and a smart selection of delicious ice cream.

It all started in 2017. My 5 year old son, Jacob, was learning to ride his bike but needed a little encouragement to practice. Ice cream and friends were the answer. We invited his pre-K classmates and their parents from Silver Spring Day School to join us. "I really like riding with my friends," Jacob told me. "I also really like racing and going fast and seeing who is the fastest." Their involvement has led to Jacob having long term friends he sees even though he now attends Flora Singer Elementary School.

In 2018, we invited other friends from my bicycle club M.O.R.E. (Mid-Atlantic Off-Road Enthusiasts: www.more-mtb.org). M.O.R.E. is a great club that has given so much back to our community like working with Maryland-National Capital Parks and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) and Maryland State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to design, build and maintain most of our

area's natural surface trails to be used by hikers, equestrians and mountain bikers. There is also a great facility in Germantown we build and maintain to learn bike handling skills called the South Germantown Bike Park.

<https://more-mtb.org/products/germantown-bike-park>

We also have mountain bike rides for families on Tuesday nights: <https://more-mtb.org/pages/smores> Feel free to contact me at rayheinsman@gmail.com to join us.

Then Jacob asked, "Can we invite the whole neighborhood?" and we made our first list serv announcement. We were so happy to be able to meet new neighbors and make new friends that live close by. We also get to see them at the new playground at Getty Park. That year, some friends from M-NCPPC and the county council joined us as well!

Besides learning to ride our bikes, we also learned a lot about how to use the Sligo Creek Trail. I asked Jacob, "What are the rules when we pass someone on the trail?" He said, "Ring your bell and say 'on your left!' and if the trail is too crowded (to pass), we need to wait our turn." What other rules are there? "We ride on the right side," he said. Were there any new rules we needed to follow in 2020? "I don't know," he said. So I pointed to my face. "Oh," he said, "Wear a mask!"

Do Better Than Survive..... (Cont. from Page 1)

"I lacked time." I would bet that you can relate to this and the pandemic left us time to get to these items. I used a technique from Laura Vanderkam's book "168 Hours: You Have More Time Than You Think." The techniques she shares provide a systematic way to evaluate how we spend the hours in our week. In evaluating the way I spent my time, I found that I could tackle the items on my list, and also found extra time. Here are some ways that I've been working on personal development, while still keeping "Netflix and Chill" time.

1. Public Speaking – As a long-time Toastmasters International member, I felt progress was slower than I wanted. During this pandemic, all Toastmasters meetings have moved online providing a perfect chance to go to meetings outside my own club. Exploring other clubs allowed me to improve more quickly! I gave speeches and received evaluations (a specialty of Toastmasters Clubs) from numerous different perspectives. I could measurably see improvements in recordings. I am seeing rapid improvement! Moreover, I'm looking for an advanced club to get more detailed constructive feedback. Check out Toastmasters.org to find a club and visit as a guest any time before you join.
2. Consistent Meditation Practice – While I was training in meditation through a spiritual teacher, I was not practicing it consistently. This pandemic had my nerves on edge and I knew that I wanted, and needed, to practice

more meditation to get better and to help deal with the stress of this time. To develop consistency, I used my Fitbit's built in "Relax" programs for 3 – 10 minutes a day in March. After about 2 weeks, I advanced to using my teacher's videos on YouTube (Acharya Vivek Gupta). He starts with a guided imagery session of walking through a sunflower field (10-minutes) and then has more advanced videos (15 and 30-minutes). It took me 2 months to build up to sitting on the floor for the 30-minute meditation. This single practice has helped me to slow down, quiet chaotic thoughts, and find a thread of calmness in this stressful time.

3. Journaling – Don't confuse this with keeping a diary. I used directed journaling when I was in graduate school. I wanted to begin again to find focus in my career development. The book I used is "Discover your Dharma" by Shivani Singh. Singh shares techniques for directed journaling that are simple, effective, and relatable. After relearning and practicing the methods for 6 months, I've noticed a considerable improvement in creativity in my work, also noted by supervisors and colleagues. It's synergistic, too, because I'm using journaling to maintain consistency in the other practices.

This pandemic will end, and I will look back and say that I got better. I think that our neighborhood got better, more conscientious, more dedicated to the community, more aware, and more loving. It's why I love this neighborhood. I hope you find that small things done consistently will lead to noticeable differences for the better.



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Highest Aspirations By Rob Horn

Whether you call us Forest Estates, Forest Hollow, or Forest Dale, you have found a lovely, comfortable home near a Metro stop and a skinny creek.

When I bought into the neighborhood 23 years ago, I brought along with me all the highest aspirations that America has told me to demand in our democratic experiment.

What I encountered are hundreds of super citizens doing acts of super citizenship to make and keep Forest Estates neighborhood a great place to live.

Do you need fresh vegetables, a tree replacement, a little free library, a bird house, a free-cycle of some wonderful merchandise I have hardly used? Do you need a face covering during the pandemic or do you need me to pick up some groceries for you? For our nurses and doctors, do you want to know how much we love you?

Did I tell you that if you need a product, service, place of dining, or repair, your neighbors will gladly make a recommendation?

In the end I can only speak of my personal welcome to the neighborhood. Do I know the experience of others that are different from me in skin color, ethnicity, sexual orientation, faith or culture? The more I check up on myself the less I realize that I know. I am willing to put myself out there and to experience some awkwardness to learn.

I joined the Forest Estates Task Force for Racial Justice to talk it over and I serve on the Education Committee. In my front yard and I have displayed printed signs of my aspirations for a better society. The highest aspirations of the American experiment are how I want to welcome you to Forest Estates, where we neither have a forest nor estate-sized homes.

For our beloved children, I believe in providing great parks, playgrounds, schools, sports fields and teachers. I advocate for our wild animals and the rights of children to experience the same natural environment we have been blessed to experience. My dream for my child and yours is to grow up healthy, strong, and well-educated and to have a family of the type they choose. For young families, the elders of us will gladly sell our homes to you someday.

While I have those perfect days when the American eagle flies over the neighborhood and lands in the trees, I accept the community has broken places. I have been lucky to look into the eyes of hundreds of the people of Forest Estates—I hope you will find the level of empathy here that I have.

Our neighborhood is not perfect and neither am I, but I am aspirational just like you, my lovely Forest Estates neighbors.



Photo: New Getty Park Playground
By Raymond Heinsman

Forest Estates Mosquito Program by Lisa Rigazio

The Forest Estates Mosquito Control Program is a volunteer community effort to reduce the local population of the invasive tiger mosquito (*Aedes albopictus*) without the use of pesticides. Participation includes removing standing water and deploying non chemical mosquito traps in our yards. We are one of the growing number of community-based volunteer mosquito control projects in the region.

Research has shown that deployment of traps in just HALF of the yards in a community can reduce the number of urban *Aedes* mosquitoes by over 80%! Traps attract and kill females looking for wet places to lay their eggs. Mosquitoes have a range of 300 feet so when immediate neighbors all use these traps they can make a big impact on their local environment.

We began our program in the spring of 2019 with informational presentations at the Getty Park farmers market over several Saturday mornings. We also created a website as a resource which includes a community forum where neighbors can connect. A map shows the location of participants to indicate areas of program coverage. That first season we had great interest and signed up over 130 participants within the first few weeks! We have grown a bit since then

and even partnered with a Girl Scout troop in 2020 to provide free trap maintenance in the summer.

Participating and volunteering are the key elements in our program to reduce mosquito populations without resorting to harmful pesticides. We currently have almost 25% of our neighborhood signed up but our goal is to get 50% active participation. We are looking for volunteer block captains to help support their neighbors in continuing to be active participants during mosquito season as well as to help encourage new participants. We hope to hear from you!

Interested in volunteering? Email us at femp.gat@gmail.com. For more information on FEMP visit: <https://sites.google.com/view/femp-gat/>



Happy Holidays!

Here's to a different kind of holiday season.

Let's try to spread good cheer, worry a little less and remember where the real magic of the season lives - in each of us.

Stay Safe Neighbors.

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(Please make sure you put the 20915 ZIP code in the address.)

Forest Estates January Calendar of Upcoming Events

Mrs. Willie King Presentation Sponsored by FECA! Monday, January 18, @ 4:00 PM-5:15 PM

Mrs. Willie Pearl Mackey King served as secretary to the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (no relation) during the time when he was arrested and held in the Birmingham, AL, jail. Among other significant tasks, she helped compile Dr. King's famous "Letter from Birmingham Jail" from text written on scraps of paper and given to her by Dr. King's attorney, following his visits with Dr. King in the jail. Join us as she recounts this inspirational story. Learn why it was so important that Dr. King's letter be written and published, the changes it inspired, and why it still inspires many today.

"The Gentleman from Ohio" Book Club Meeting When: Jan 31, @ 3-4 PM

The Task Force for Racial Justice Education Group will be reading, then meeting for review and conversation on *The Gentleman from Ohio*. This book was written by the late Congressman Louis Stokes and David Chanoff. *The Gentleman from Ohio* chronicles this and other momentous events in the life and legacy of Ohio's first black representative—a man who, whether in law or politics, continually fought for the principles he believed in and helped lead the way for African Americans in the world of mainstream American politics. Interested? Please reply to jfoxdreamart@aol.com if you'd like to join in reading and conversation.

Other Events We Hope We'll Be Able To Continue in 2021:

Weekly Farmers Market
Ice Cream Bicycle Rides
4th of July BBQ
Ice Cream Social/National Night Out
Neighborhood Scavenger Hunt
Halloween Parade
New Years Eve Lantern Walk

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Beltway Widening Update Cont. From Page 1

On November 9, the DEIS comment period closed with overwhelming community resistance to the project. Our state and local elected officials, including Senator Jeff Waldstreicher and Delegates Al Carr, Emily Shetty, and Jared Solomon, and County Executive Marc Elrich and the entire County Council, as well as representatives from other districts in Montgomery County, spoke out in strong opposition to this project. Further, the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission and a large number of representatives from Prince George's County and Frederick County also objected to the project.

FECA submitted a comment of opposition on behalf of Forest Estates, as did numerous other neighbors and civic and religious groups. FECA's comment opposed the planned expansion due to the high cost to taxpayers and the negative impact on local communities and the environment. FECA supports the "no build" option and requests that the state consider alternative proposals to alleviate traffic and promote mobility in our region. To increase awareness of the DEIS comment period, FECA partnered with Citizens Against Beltway Expansion (CABE) and distributed 400 door hangers to approximately half the homes in our neighborhood, part of a larger outreach effort by CABE and Dontwiden270.org that contacted 13,000 residences and business along the I-495 and I-270 corridor. Thank you to the volunteers who helped increase awareness and to all the neighbors in Forest Estates who took the time to submit a comment on the DEIS!

In Spring 2021, MDOT and FHWA will issue a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), taking into account the comments received on the DEIS. MDOT is expected to determine the Recommended Preferred Alternative for the project and issue a Record of Decision before summer. If the state decides to move forward with widening, legal challenges are certain. Governor Larry Hogan is term-limited and will not see this project through to completion. Instead, our next governor, to be elected in 2022, will be faced with the financial and environmental consequences of this misguided effort.

MDOT project site: www.495-270-p3.com

Citizens Against Beltway Expansion: www.cabe495.com

Don't Widen 270: www.dontwiden270.org

Maryland Sierra Club: www.sierraclub.org/maryland