

Parkwood Residents Association

...working for our community...

Fall 2023 Newsletter

Next Meeting: Monday, November 6, 2023, at 7:30 pm on Zoom

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PRA FALL MEETING

The Parkwood Residents Association Fall Meeting will be held Monday, November 6, 2023, at 7:30 PM, via Zoom. Our speaker will be Larissa Johnson, the Residential Energy Program Manager of the County's Department of Environmental Protection, who will make a presentation on clean energy options. In addition, several Parkwood residents will share some of their experiences in obtaining clean energy.

To join this meeting, please send an email message to Jeff Griffith, PRA Vice President at jeff@pra@gmail.com He will send you the Zoom invite and information on how to link up a few days before the meeting.



When you saw this in the park,



did you think it would turn out to look like this?



To find out who did this and why and what's coming next, read the *Community Notes* article starting on the next page.



COMMUNITY NOTES

Puff and Jackie Paper

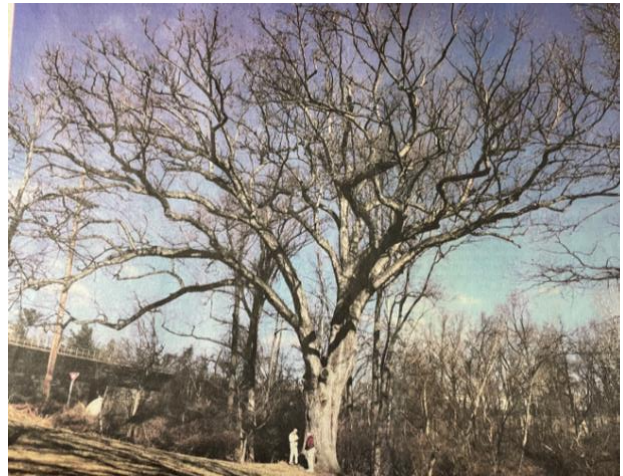
Talented local carver [Colin Vale](#) has created this sculpture from the remains of what was a County champion [overcup oak tree](#) before it was destroyed in a storm. The native environments for these trees are the edges of streams and wetlands, hence its location next to Rock Creek at the intersection of Cedar Lane and Beach Drive, SE corner. Colin said that personally to him, the sculpture was about the inner dragon in all of us that gives us our special strength and direction. Next up for Colin: he has started carving a piece of the historic Linden Oak in Ken-Gar Park [see next article]. The carvings are funded through a grant from the *Art in the Parks* program of the [Montgomery Parks Foundation](#).



Full view, taken right after the unveiling when the tarp was pulled off. Colin is introducing the sculpture to the audience. Some call it Puff the Magic Dragon and Jackie Paper. What name would you give it?

Linden White Oak

The Linden Oak, a white oak tree that had stood at the intersection of Beach Drive and Rockville Pike for over 300 years, is gone. The damage it sustained in a storm proved to be more than even its tremendous resilience could withstand. It was clearly dying, and the county finally cut it down on July 18, 2023.



Washington Post [July 18, 2023] photo of the Linden White Oak in 2018, taken by Joli McCathran.

“By taking down the tree now, before it rots away completely, we [were] able to salvage some of the wood and turn it into something beautiful to memorialize its long existence,” according to Montgomery Parks Senior Urban Forester Colter Burkes.

The usable wood from the tree has been taken to nearby Ken-Gar Local Park where Colin Vale [see previous story] is carving it into a sculpture.

The trunk of the Linden Oak will remain in place along with two existing memorial plaques. One plaque will commemorate the Linden Oak being named a Bicentennial Tree in 1976 for surviving the American Revolution. The other plaque will recognize the efforts of local citizens to save the tree from destruction during Metro construction in the 1970s.



Photo taken by a Parkwood resident before the tree was taken down.

Paul Snyder

Parkwood's centenarian was visited recently by Councilmember Stewart who had these words to share about him in her newsletter. "Recently, I presented a certificate of special recognition to a longtime resident of the Parkwood neighborhood, Paul Snyder. Paul's journey began before Parkwood's inception as a neighborhood. From serving in World War II to a career in finance, his life has been a testament to resilience. As a loyal Parkwood resident since 1951, he has observed the area's evolution. As he remains an active member of the community, Paul's positive impact continues to inspire us all."



Paul was also featured in the online [Washington Post](#) on Oct. 11, 2023 and in the paper edition of the Metro section on October 14. He is becoming famous!

New Little Libraries

Thanks to Mary Ellen Savarese and Rick Sniffin, two new little libraries are now part of the PRA garden on Wildwood, one with books for adults and one with books for kids. Rick built them and Mary Ellen has stocked them. PRA is refurbishing the green box which had been at Wildwood for several years and there will soon be a new little library at the Parkwood Triangle next to the new bench. Check out the new boxes to see Rick's great work.



Appeals of Zoning Requirements

Some good advice from the PRA treasurer about appeals of zoning requirements. "I get these notices from the county because I am an officer of the PRA. [A recent appeal] is interesting, because it tells us both that you can fight city hall (i.e., an appeal of code requirements can be successful), and because it gives us a good idea of what you need to do to be successful in appealing zoning requirements:

- 1) Talk to the neighbor most affected so you can confirm that they are in agreement about what you want to do.
- 2) Explain why it's important for you to do what you want to do.
- 3) Explain why your goals cannot be accomplished unless the variance is granted.
- 4) Explain that you posted your plans, and that no one objected, and that the change you are asking for is not detrimental to the neighborhood."

Dissing the school and the neighborhood

This from one of the officers of the Kensington Parkwood Elementary School just before school resumed in September [and worth repeating here.]

“We are counting down the last few days before school starts and I wanted to pass along some information from Kensington Parkwood.

“As in the past, staff have been finding a lot of trash on school property, including beer bottles/cans and condoms. People have also been observed on the school roof and entering the school. Please know that cameras have been installed around the property and are monitored 24hrs/day. Law enforcement has been called in the past, but that results in an unpleasant situation for everyone.

“Please take the party somewhere else and leave our neighborhood elementary school out of it!”

Safety

As safe as it is, crime never disappears from Parkwood completely. In September a car was stolen, and several unlocked cars were rifled. [Car theft is up in the entire County.] As our PRA Safety Committee reminds us often, the best defense is never to give the thieves a chance so they learn there is nothing to steal in Parkwood. We must check every night to make sure our cars are locked and that there is nothing of value inside them.

Train show

Once again, the annual train show came to the Kensington Town Hall in September. If you missed it, here are some videos from the [2023](#) and [2022](#) shows.

Paint the Town Art Exhibit

The Paint the Town Labor Day Show is the marquis event of the year for the Montgomery Art Association (MAA). The three-day event includes a judged art show of approximately 500 pieces, live demonstrations, a plein air competition, bin work and card sales, and a warm community reception. The Town of Kensington, a long-time MAA supporter, provides the historic Armory building for this show. If you missed it, [here is a short video clip](#) that will encourage you to come next year on the Labor Day Weekend.

KPES Green Team

Our Kensington Parkwood Elementary School has a Green Team Committee whose mission is to promote environmental sustainability and enhancement through awareness, education, and

action. The committee provides environmental education opportunities and learning tools for the students and community. This effort supports a teaching style focused on hands-on, active, and engaging lessons where the students participate in enhancement, restoration and science projects. The committee chair is Peihan Orestes. See this story on page 11 about its activities and **read about the school’s green roof.**

CURRENT ISSUES–FALL 2023

Jeff Griffith, Editor

This is the FALL 2023 update on issues and activities that could have a significant impact on the Parkwood community. As information about major developments becomes available, I will update the [Current Issues page on the PRA Website](#) and post brief summaries on the listserv, as warranted.

In accordance with the PRA Listserv Guidelines, the purpose is to **provide residents with information** about these issues and activities without taking a pro or con stand. Suggestions regarding items to be included are welcome.

The links on each major heading are to the full PRA website page on that topic. Links under major headings are to more detailed information, background, and status on the specific issue.

DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Warner Park. Montgomery County Parks Department, in conjunction with Montgomery County Government, has finally entered into an agreement to transfer the historic Circle Manor and Carriage House at [Warner Circle Park](#) to Washington Landmark Construction (WLC) to develop seventeen residential condominiums. Warner Circle Park itself will remain a public park managed by Montgomery Parks.

Flats at Knowles Station. The [Flats at Knowles Station](#) project – five stories, 100 units with parking and retail stores on the ground floor – has been approved and construction has begun.

Crossroads of Kensington: Construction has begun on this 11,000 sq ft retail development at 10619 Connecticut Ave. at the corner of Connecticut Ave and Plyers Mill Rd.

Noyes Children’s Library. The Noyes Children’s Library Foundation has fully funded its half of the cost of its proposed renovation project. The renovation will support an expanded early literacy mission, with room for more programs; resources for more outreach; and expertise for more training through the new Jan Jablonski Early Literacy Training Center. See [details including diagrams here](#). However, because of changes in the scheduling of the County’s Capital Improvement Program [CIP], the date that construction will begin has slipped to the spring of 2024.

ENVIRONMENT

County. The County’s **FY2024 budget** is enabling the County to expand a number of programs, including 1) Tree Montgomery to plant additional shade trees and increase the County’s tree canopy 2) RainScapes Rewards rebates to properties and 3) EV Purchasing Cooperative. For more details and for information about **other initiatives** supported by this year’s budget see [this report](#).

The County Council enacted legislation that will **prohibit the sale** [as of July 1, 2024] **and use of combustion engine-powered leaf blowers and leaf vacuums** [as of July 1, 2025] in most areas of the County. The vote was 10 – 1. See [Council press release here](#). The legislation also authorizes the creation of a grant program that will be established by regulation to partially offset the cost of replacing a combustion engine-powered leaf blower or leaf vacuum with an electric model.

State. The state [reports](#) that Maryland “**is already a leader** in addressing climate change. We have reduced climate pollution faster than almost any other state. Our climate change law has the country’s most ambitious reduction goal. **The goals are ...a 60% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2031 relative to 2006 levels and attain a net-zero economy by 2045...As of 2020, Maryland had already achieved half of the reductions needed to meet the 2031 target**”. However, additional policies and regulations will be needed to achieve the final goal.

National. The Federal Regulatory Commission finalized long-awaited new rules intended to reform how power generation projects get connected to the electric grid, seen as a major step in **smoothing the**

path for thousands of mostly renewable power projects currently waiting to plug in to the national grid.

Nation-wide the **cost of generating electricity from the sun and wind is falling fast** and in many areas is now cheaper than gas, oil or coal. Also, some states have been laying the groundwork to add **geothermal power to the electrical grid and pump underground heat into buildings**. A technological breakthrough could dramatically expand those ambitions — and perhaps unleash a new wave of policies to tap into geothermal sources.

Global. Despite these advances, the UN’s most recent [Global Stocktake](#) reports that the “**...window for keeping warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius... is “rapidly narrowing.”**

POLICIES AND POLITICS

State legislative plans for 2024. Our County’s state representatives are preparing for the upcoming 2024 legislative session that begins in January, including conducting a series of meetings to hear from state government departments and county citizens. [[See schedule here](#).] A major issue will be the budget deficits projected over the next four years that could significantly affect the government’s ability to fund some of its major commitments. [See next article.]

State budget 2024/2025. It is now projected that the fiscal 2025 budget will start with a \$418 million deficit. That represents a \$650 million decrease compared to the January estimate. In the next year, the deficit rises to \$572 million. This marks a significant difference of \$835 million compared to the January projection. The budget outlook for fiscal 2028, at the start of a new term, “deteriorates substantially,” according to [a recent report](#). Among other things, analysts attribute the sharp decline in 2028 to the costs of major education reforms, i.e., [the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future](#), which is projected to increase funding by almost \$4B over the next 10 years.

County legislative plans 2023/2024. Housing and the implementation of Thrive 2050 will be major challenges for the County, along with the continuing increase in hate crimes, police staffing,

and oversight of MCPS. Food insecurity is also emerging as a growing concern.

County revenue and budget 2024/2025. The County will face budget challenges similar to those of the state because of its lack of economic growth. From 2017-2021 GDP actually declined, while it grew in six other DMV jurisdictions over the same period.

TRANSPORTATION

Funding for transportation projects. Maryland is projected to have significant budget deficits through 2028, forcing lawmakers to set priorities among the major transportation projects. See [this summary](#) under *Policies and Politics*.

In light of a projected decline in state revenues, including revenue from the state gas tax as a result of more efficient cars, a new *Maryland Commission on Transportation Revenue and Infrastructure Needs* (the TRAIN Commission) has been established to review, evaluate, and make recommendations on the prioritization and funding of transportation projects.

I-495 Expansion. State transportation officials said they will seek more than \$3 billion in government funding to ease congestion around the American Legion Bridge, a move that could potentially provide traffic relief in the region without the use of *privately* managed toll lanes. The application submitted in August 2023 seeks a \$2.4 billion federal grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation. The application, however, does not preclude a public-private partnership model favored by former Gov. Larry Hogan (R).

The proposed project extends along a 6.5-mile stretch from the George Washington Memorial Parkway to the western spur of I-270. Future phases could be used to address congestion from the west spur of I-270 to I-370, north of Rockville.

The project, which has not yet been finalized, includes the rebuild of the American Legion Bridge and will likely include some form of toll lanes. Those lanes, if managed by state government, would likely be less expensive than what was

projected if the project was built and managed for the state by a private consortium.

The September 2023 newsletter of Representative Mark Korman, Chair of the House Environment and Transportation Committee, contains a significant number of comments on several state transportation projects that the General Assembly will have to consider in its 2024 session. See especially his analysis of the governor's plans re I-495 expansion.

Citizens Against Beltway Expansion [CABE], a coalition of community and environmental activists, said that Gov. Wes Moore (D) is "pursuing a flawed plan project" initiated by his predecessor. CABE cited a new [report on meeting Maryland's climate goals](#) by the Center for Global Sustainability at the University of Maryland, commissioned by the General Assembly. With respect to transportation policies, the **report recommends more smart growth development, increasing public transit and safe walking/biking paths, and incentivizing remote work.** While the report emphasizes the need to increase electric vehicles, it finds that this will not be enough to meet goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and that vehicle miles traveled must be reduced.

Purple Line. The opening of the long-awaited Purple Line has been delayed yet again and is now expected to **open in spring 2027.**

Old Georgetown Road Bike Lanes. [Data collected by the Maryland State Highway Administration](#) (SHA) indicates that the bike lanes along a two-mile stretch of the Old Georgetown Road have caused **little change in driving time and have reduced fatalities and tripled bike traffic.**

Pedestrian Master Plan. Montgomery County Council voted on October 10 to approve the Pedestrian Master Plan, which is Montgomery Planning's first comprehensive vision to improve accessibility and create safer, more comfortable experiences for people walking and rolling around the County. The plan can be found [here](#).

SAFETY

Police department staffing is down. MCPD currently has an authorized sworn complement of 1,282 officers, although only 1,106 are currently

filled (176 vacancies, or 14% vacancy rate). The Department's attrition projections estimate the Department will have up to 216 vacancies (17%) by July 2024 and 239 vacancies (19%) by July 2025. Currently, 41.7% of sworn officers are eligible for retirement. See this [County staff report](#).

A new report on policing, called the [Police Statistical Data Report](#) was submitted to the Council in February 2022. The Council held a public hearing on the report in July 2023. The report includes information about **complaints filed against police officers, as well as instances of use of force**. Initial questions at the hearing indicate that additional data is required for the report to be complete.

The Council formed an **Anti-Hate Task Force** to prioritize policies that promote safety and combat hate crimes. This includes, but is not limited to racism, anti-Black hate, AAPI hate, anti-Latino hate, antisemitism, Islamophobia, xenophobia, homophobia, or transphobia. The group is broken up into cohorts that include members from the African American and Black, Latino and Hispanic, Asian American Pacific Islander, LGBTQ+, Jewish, and Muslim communities. The Task Force held its kickoff on Tuesday, July 11, 2023, and will hold additional meetings through November. See Task Force website and schedule of meetings [here](#).

As of June 2023, the number of [reported car thefts is up](#) in the entire County.

[SCHOOLS AND THE MCPS](#)

The Montgomery County Public Schools system is facing a number of challenges. These include 1) calls for more budget transparency and oversight of MCPS 2) accountability for the implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, a multi-year \$4B funding plan 3) investigation of sexual harassment 4) LGBTQ+ and the optout policy and 5) a record number of hate crime incidents in the schools. See [this PRA website page](#) for more details.

[THRIVE 2050 and Housing](#)

While the [real estate market in Kensington](#) continues to be "hot" as reported in this article cited by Parkwood realtor Dana Scanlon, **the need for housing at all levels and at all price ranges**

continues to be great. Both the County Executive and the County Council have proposed a number of solutions but many of these have not had time to affect the pipeline of housing, although they should eventually have at least some effect. Meeting the **demand is complicated by a number of factors including the availability of government funding, rent control, tax abatements and limitations, and population control.** See this [PRA website page](#) for more details.

MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR *Barb Coufal*

When she was 16 and living in Lansing, Michigan, she joined a protest in front of a grocery store that was selling non-union grapes to support the [United Farm Workers Union](#) [UFW]**. She has been an activist ever since.



Meet Barbara [Barb] Coufal, a Parkwood Drive resident since 1999. Barb was born in Nebraska where her father, an attorney, worked for the federal government. He liked variety in his career, so they moved to Las Vegas, NV where he served as a hearing examiner for the Atomic Energy Commission, then to Lansing, MI where he worked for HEW [now Health and Human Services (HHS)] for a few years. Finally they moved here to Montgomery County when her father took a post with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and eventually with the Federal Communications Commission.

Being active in causes ran in the family. Her parents participated in the UFW boycott by not buying non-union produce like lettuce, and "...we never had grapes in the house." It was their "righteous cause". Later, when they moved to Maryland, her dad encouraged her to find out what the D.C. office of the UFW was doing. She ended up picketing a Giant store in White Oak that sold nonunion grapes and Gallo wine, which was also part of the boycott. She recruited ["dragged, actually"] her mother to join her on the picket lines, "But she was a stalwart" and joined Barb often.

The boycott was successful at the time – by the mid-70s, 50,000 farmworkers were protected by union contracts. But the struggles have continued and the UFW continues to advocate for them. See a [brief history here](#) and the main [union website here](#). [There is a brief description of working conditions for farm workers in California at the end of this article**]

Barb was hooked. She had developed a strong belief in the importance of helping workers achieve economic justice and improve their working conditions by gaining union rights, meaning, in effect, the right to organize.

After graduating from Paint Branch High School, she joined the UFW for 6 months, working full time on the boycott. At one point, all the boycott people went to California (in old Greyhound buses) for a conference where she met Caesar Chavez. She found him humble but approachable, even though he was the leader of the organization. He was also charismatic, and she thought him a terrific person. She saw him again when the producers of the Woody Guthrie biopic *Bound for Glory* agreed to have the opening in D.C. to serve as a fund raiser for the UFW. Among the celebrities present were David Carradine, who played Guthrie; Chip Carter, the President's son; and Pete Seeger.

After her brief stint with the UFW, Barb attended Montgomery College and then went to Penn State for her four year degree in labor studies and economics.

During her final semester in college she got an internship with the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees [[AFSCME](#)] headquartered in D.C. This eventually led to a full time job after she graduated. Because of her commitment to the right of workers to form a union, AFSCME was an attractive choice. At the time, fewer than half the states allowed public employees to bargain collectively. Also, AFSCME had been one of the organizations supporting the UFW in its struggles in the 60s and 70s.

Barb had a variety of positions with AFSCME, eventually becoming part of their legislative department where she became the assistant director. This led to a myriad of responsibilities. One of the

most challenging, important, and ultimately satisfying was helping to manage AFSCME's lobbying in support of the Affordable Care Act [ACA or Obamacare]. This included creating coalitions with other national organizations under the banner of the [Health Care for America NOW!](#) group to work at both the national level and local level. At the same time she was responsible for coordinating AFSCME's own grassroots teams to lobby their local congressional members. And, of course, to raise millions of dollars to support this effort. Final passage of the bill did not end Barb's work, however, because of the numerous efforts to overturn the bill or drastically change it by those who opposed the measure. This went on for several years. Key to their strategy was not only to lobby at the local level, but also to raise awareness in every state, even those where support was strong, so that it would be recognized by members of Congress as an issue that had national support. Having achieved that goal, at least for now, Barb sees the remaining goal as making the ACA more affordable.

Barb's one disappointment during this time was that labor organizations like AFSCME were not able to advance labor law reform as well when the Democrats held 60 seats in the Senate. However, because getting the ACA passed was such a heavy lift, the White House staff did not think it could do both at the same time.

After working with AFSCME for 34 years, with brief stints with the Service Employees International Union [[SEIU](#)], and with Handgun Control, Inc. (now the Brady Campaign), Barb retired from AFSCME in 2018. Her mother, who is 98 years-old and in an assisted living facility, needed more help, and Barb and two of her sisters who are in the area share that responsibility, spending afternoons with her seven days a week.

But retiring and caring for her mother has not slowed Barb down in terms of her activism for the community, which in this case encompasses both the county and the state. Barb is the Chair of the Citizens Against Beltway Expansion [[CABE](#)]

CABE opposes the expansion of the Beltway for a number of reasons, particularly the environmental impact on the area of construction, e.g., parkland, backyards of homes, etc.; the fact that previous

expansions of highways, e.g. I-270, have reduced congestion only temporarily, and that in a few years, traffic levels and the resulting congestion increase to even greater levels; and that to meet its climate goals, Maryland must reduce the number of vehicle miles travelled, not undertake projects that would maintain or even add to the number of vehicle miles travelled.

In addition, CABA argues that the P3 approach of the previous administration is not adequate for such a complex project, and that it has the risk of putting large unanticipated costs on taxpayers. CABA and other advocates met with Secretary of Transportation Wiedefeld and had hoped the new administration would consider better ways to address congestion. The state has submitted a proposal to the federal government to build the additional lanes using federal money instead of relying on private investors. If the proposal is rejected, CABA is concerned that the P3 model may be utilized. [Our own Delegate Jared Solomon has proposed legislation to give the legislature more control over future P3 processes; his bill has passed the House of Delegates twice but has met opposition in the Senate.]

CABA is also concerned that in 2022, MDOT began cooperating with the Virginia Dept. of Transportation (VDOT) on a plan to add private toll lanes to the Beltway from Springfield, VA, over the Woodrow Wilson Bridge up to Oxon Hill, MD. VDOT is leading the effort and VDOT, not MDOT, would manage the construction in Maryland. According to CABA, VDOT is not conducting a full environmental review of the project and will not study alternatives to toll lanes that would provide more sustainable and equitable ways to address transportation challenges.

CABA's proposed solution is to reduce traffic on the Beltway by 1) incentivizing telework 2) improving transit and 3) smoothing traffic flow by techniques such as ramp meters [already installed on the southern portion of I-270 with a concurrent [reduction in bottleneck](#).] The [Maryland Transit Institute](#) conducted a [study](#) during the pandemic that shows that if traffic on the Beltway is reduced by 5%, congestion would be eliminated by 32-58% during rush hour, depending on the highway. According to the study, a reduction of 15% would

reduce congestion almost entirely on all highways. CABA suggests that a Bus Rapid Transit [BRT] system as proposed by the County Executive for MD355 and for Veirs Mill Road could pull some of the traffic off the Beltway and I-270.

So Barb is still doing what she did for 30+ years – lobbying. She lobbies the County Council, the state legislature; and the state government, especially the governor, MDOT, and the Board of Public Works, pressing them all “to do the right thing”. She also works with Rockville, whose mayor and council are opposed to the expansion.

And on she goes, trying to do the best, as she sees it, for the county, the state, and our environment.

Barb likes living in Parkwood a lot, especially having a yard where she can do gardening. Before she moved to Parkwood Drive, she was living in a Grosvenor condominium and working downtown. “I looked for a house that was close to Metro and I walked to it most days for those 20 years but was often picked up by a neighbor driving to Metro.”

Barb likes to speed walk in Parkwood several days a week, so if you see someone walking very fast, say hello or at least wave. And if you do have a chance to chat, you will want to know that her last name is pronounced as “so full” as in she is so full of energy and good works.

Jeff Griffith, Newsletter Editor

***“Grape pickers [on farms in California] in 1965 were making an average of \$.90/hour, plus ten cents per ‘lug’ (basket) picked. State laws regarding working standards were simply ignored by growers. At one farm the boss made the workers all drink from the same cup, “a beer can”, in the field; at another ranch workers were forced to pay a quarter per cup. No ranches had portable field toilets. Workers’ temporary housing was strictly segregated by race, and they paid two dollars or more per day for unheated metal shacks-often infested with mosquitoes-with no indoor plumbing or cooking facilities.” [Source](#).

GOOD THINGS HAPPEN HERE

(All the time.)

Advice about brown water

In response to residents reporting brown water, Bill on Saul Road recounted his successful [at least in this case] experience with the problem last summer.

“If you have not called WSSC, please consider calling. This can help clear things up sooner. The more we report, the sooner they can send someone out. I called WSSC to report mine at 301-206-4002. They sent someone out in about 2 hours. After going over a couple of things they believed there was a disruption of the feed into the main. They opened up the nearest fire hydrant to my house to flush out the main on my street to mitigate others having brown water. They ran it for about 8 hrs. We ran our faucets after a while to check and flush out anything in our lines. It worked.”

Another lost dog found

It happens often in Parkwood. A frisky dog goes exploring, a neighbor spots and reports it, and all ends well, usually. In this instance, Joanna and Tom on Westbrook “...found [a dog] with a collar but without a tag on the Rock Creek Park path. We are hoping someone can identify him. We brought him back up the street to our house for now and he is doing well.”

And of course, someone did. Smiley on Oldfield reported that the dog was Leo and belonged to Colleen and Nick on Oldfield. We trust the story had a happy ending.

Lamp repaired

Jill followed up to report on her request for suggestions for repairing the socket/switch on her lamp. “Strosniders was suggested- not sure why I didn't think to check with them before... Long story short, I picked my lamp back up from [the company she had originally left it with] and dropped it off at Strosniders [on Monday] night. It was READY Wednesday and at half the price [quoted by the original company]. Mike at Strosniders does this kind of repair. This listserv is great!”

Bees

Kathleen reported bees next to her driveway and asked for advice. She received helpful suggestions

from nine residents, including one who went over to the house to take a look.

Suitcase needed

John Mesirow reported that his “...houseguests were going back to Kenya with a lot more than they brought and asked does anyone have a suitcase they would part with. The response: Suitcase procured. Thanks to everyone who responded!”

Math Tutor

Lisa Auerbach asked for a math tutor and followed up with a “Thank you to everyone who replied to my request for a math tutor. We have found someone to help us.”

Wet Vac

Caroline needed a wet vac “immediately”. The neighborhood responded and Caroline sent this to the listserv “Thank you Parkwood for the responses! What a helpful neighborhood. We are all set.”

House fire

And very recently, this message from Meredith. “Some of you may have heard that our neighbors at 9801 Wildwood Road had a recent house fire which damaged their home significantly. Thankfully, the family is safe, but the home’s interior is badly damaged and because of the smoke damage, they have lost all their belongings. The children (a boy who is 6 and a girl who is 8) have also lost all of their toys, so the family would greatly appreciate donations of used, age-appropriate toys to cheer the children up and show them that their neighbors care during this tough time.

“Some of the kids’ favorite things include: Our Generation-type dolls, anything with horses, art supplies, Lego sets, building toys, science kits, and old car/truck stuff. Please keep in mind that they are in the process of moving to a short-term rental so very large or outdoor toys are not needed. If you would like to help, toy donations can be left at the front door of 9801 Wildwood Road anytime over the next few weeks. Thank you!”

By the time this newsletter “went to press” there had not been time to see Parkwood’s response, but it is certain that it was caring and generous.

KPES GREEN TEAM

(Excerpts from the newsletter of the Kensington Parkwood Elementary School [KPES] Green Team, led by the volunteer PTA Green Team Committee Chair Peihan Orestes. (peihan@hotmail.com).



Acorns into Oak Trees

Green Team is off to a big start this year! Ms. Sears' class learned about our partnership with the Potomac Conservancy in a program called [Tomorrow's Trees](#). We're collecting acorns to grow into oak trees! We did a science experiment to learn which acorns will grow and which ones should be squirrel food and talked about why trees are so important to our environment. They'll also be helping me to count and sort the acorns!



KPES Green Roof

When the fifth grade Green Team met for the first time this year, our amazing building services managers, Mr. Castillo and Ms. Garcia gave us a tour of KP's green roof! During the school renovation in 2017, over 50% of the roof was set aside to be a Green Roof, a project funded by Montgomery County Public Schools and maintained by local contractors. We learned about the benefits of a green roof (rainwater diversion, cooling the school, cleaner air and more oxygen),

what types of plants grow there (very hardy succulents) and what a green roof needs to thrive. We look forward to seeing what it looks like in the winter. We'll be meeting every Monday at recess, so I'm very excited about the amazing things we'll get to do this year!

Food Waste at KP: Composting and Share Table

Last year, we began to compost food waste at lunchtime to reduce the amount of trash going to landfills. We quickly recognized how wasteful it was to put unopened food into compost, so we now have a Share Table, where unopened food can be shared with other students that may still be hungry. Both programs have been wildly successful - in just the month of September, we composted 1300lbs of food waste! Every week, hundreds of unopened food items like fruit, cheese sticks and yogurt are saved from the trash - either shared with other students at KP or donated to local food kitchens. While helping the students sort their trash, we're also recycling more, so it's a win all around! If you'd like to help with this project, sign up to help at lunch [here](#).



The composting program is funded by the Green Team. For more information about composting or the Share Table, please email Isaac Wedin (isaac@wedn.org) or Peihan Orestes (peihan@hotmail.com).

The Green Team will need a new volunteer leader next year. Peihan's daughter is a 5th grader and will attend middle school, so Peihan will no longer lead the group. She writes that "...if you like gardening (especially with native plants) or working with kids, and are interested in helping, please contact me." (peihan@hotmail.com).

In this world, nothing is certain except death and taxes.

A special report comparing local taxes in DMV jurisdictions

By Gerald Sharp, PRA Treasurer

Ben Franklin said it best, but taxes vary a lot depending on what state you live in and what state you die in. Of course taxes also depend on your salary, the value of your house, the amount of your total assets, and who you want to leave your money to when you do reach that certainty of death.

I compared taxes in three jurisdictions: Montgomery County, MD; Fairfax County, VA; and DC. One caution in reading this is to remember that tax rates and what is taxed are constantly changing, and the laws are definitely confusing and complicated, so my figures need to be considered as approximations that give a rough idea of what the taxes are now in fall 2023, and these estimates are likely to change once legislators meet again.

Sales taxes and taxes on cigarettes, alcohol & marijuana. Table 1a displays a comparison of sales and excise taxes for the three jurisdictions. Overall sales tax rates are slightly lower in Virginia, but they add a tax on groceries that DC and Maryland don't have. There are some differences in excise and other taxes.

Cigarette smokers do better in Virginia with its 60 cents a pack tax, compared to \$5.03 and \$3.75 a pack in DC and Maryland. Virginia joins several other states with the lowest cigarette taxes per pack of 20 cigarettes: Missouri (\$0.17); Georgia (\$0.37), North Dakota (\$0.44), North Carolina (\$0.45), Idaho (\$0.57); and South Carolina (\$0.57). Unlike other states in the South, Virginia does not have the highest lung cancer death rates in the US. DC's high cigarette tax is exceeded only by New York's (\$5.35 per pack). Maryland has the 5th highest cigarette tax in the country, exceeded only by NY, DC, Connecticut and Rhode Island

Table 1a. A comparison of sales and excise taxes in Montgomery County, Maryland; Fairfax County, Virginia; and Washington, D.C.

Sales & Excise Taxes	Virginia (Fairfax)	DC	Maryland (Montgomery)
Sales Tax on goods and services	5.3% 1% on food, no tax on prescription drugs	5.75% no tax on food or medicine	6.0% no tax on food or medicine
Cigarette tax	\$0.60 per pack	\$5.03 per pack	\$3.75 per pack
Alcohol tax	5.3% on alcohol;	10.2% on alcohol	9% on alcohol

Marijuana tax	26.3% on recreational marijuana; 5.3% on medical marijuana	17% on rec. marijuana 6% on med. Marijuana	9% on rec marijuana; No tax on med. Marijuana
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As shown in Table 1a, Virginia favors recreational alcohol (5.3% tax) over recreational marijuana (26.3% tax). Alcohol is taxed more in DC and Maryland, but recreational marijuana buyers do much better in Maryland with its 9% tax, compared to that 26.3% in Virginia and 17% in DC. Taxes on medical marijuana are much lower in all three jurisdictions (zero in MD). Virginia's high recreational marijuana tax is actually less than that for Washington state which charges 37%.

Table 1b. A comparison of taxes and incentives for gas, plug-in hybrid and electric cars in Montgomery County, Maryland; Fairfax County, Virginia; and Washington, D.C.

Car type	Virginia (Fairfax)	DC	Maryland (Montgomery)
Gas and hybrid cars (\$42k cost)	4.15% (\$43,743)	6% (\$44,520)*	6% (\$44,520)
Plug-in hybrid (\$42k cost)	4.15% sales tax, minus \$7,500 fed credit (\$36,243)	0% sales tax, no DC tax credit, \$7,500 fed credit (\$34,500)	6% sales tax, MD tax credit of \$3,000, fed credit of \$7,500 (\$34,020)
Electric cars (\$42k cost)#	4.15% sales tax, VA tax credit of \$2,500, fed credit of \$7,500 (\$33,743)**	0% sales tax, no DC tax credit, fed credit of \$7,500 (\$34,500)	6% sales tax with MD tax credit of \$3,000, fed credit of \$7,500 (\$34,020)

* No sales tax if MPG reaches 40+

Approximate cost of cheapest Tesla sold in US

** Virginia charges a \$116 annual road tax on EVs, because EV owners are not paying gas taxes

Taxes and incentives for electric cars, plug-in hybrids, and gas-powered cars. To compare the costs of buying an electric car, plug-in hybrid or gas powered car in the three jurisdictions, let's assume the car costs \$42,000 and that the EV or plug-in hybrid car is manufactured in the US and the buyer meets income limits, thus qualifying for the federal \$7,500 tax credit incentive. As shown in Table 1b, the costs of an electric car are similar in the three jurisdictions, costing about \$10,000 less than the gas-powered cars. The plug-in hybrid cost is higher in Virginia than in Maryland or DC, because the state incentive of \$2,500 does not apply.

Income taxes. To compare income taxes in Fairfax, Virginia; DC; and Montgomery County, Maryland, I calculated taxes for households making \$75,000 and \$150,000 annually, not considering filing status, number of dependents, head of household status, or other deductions that would make the calculation too complicated (Table 2). To

calculate the dollar amount, I just multiplied the rate times \$75,000 and \$150,000, ignoring all factors affecting exact tax amounts. I am also ignoring federal income taxes, since these are identical for all three jurisdictions.

Table 2. A comparison of income taxes in Montgomery County, Maryland; Fairfax County, Virginia; and Washington, D.C. for two annual income levels (\$75,000 and \$150,000)

Income Tax	Virginia (Fairfax)	DC	Maryland (Montgomery)
Income tax annual income of \$75,000	5.75% (\$4,312) No county income tax	8.5% (\$6,375)	7.95% (\$5,962) State tax: 4.75% County tax: 3.2%
Income tax annual income of \$150,000	5.75% (\$8,625)	8.5% (\$12,750)	7.95% (\$11,925)

As shown in Table 2, both DC and Montgomery County, MD have higher income tax rates than Fairfax, VA, which makes more of a difference, the more income increases. DC charges about \$2,063 more a year than Fairfax County, Virginia for people earning \$75,000 a year, and this number rises to about \$4,000 for people earning \$150,000 a year. Corresponding differences between Fairfax, VA and Montgomery County, MD are \$1,650 and \$3,300, respectively.

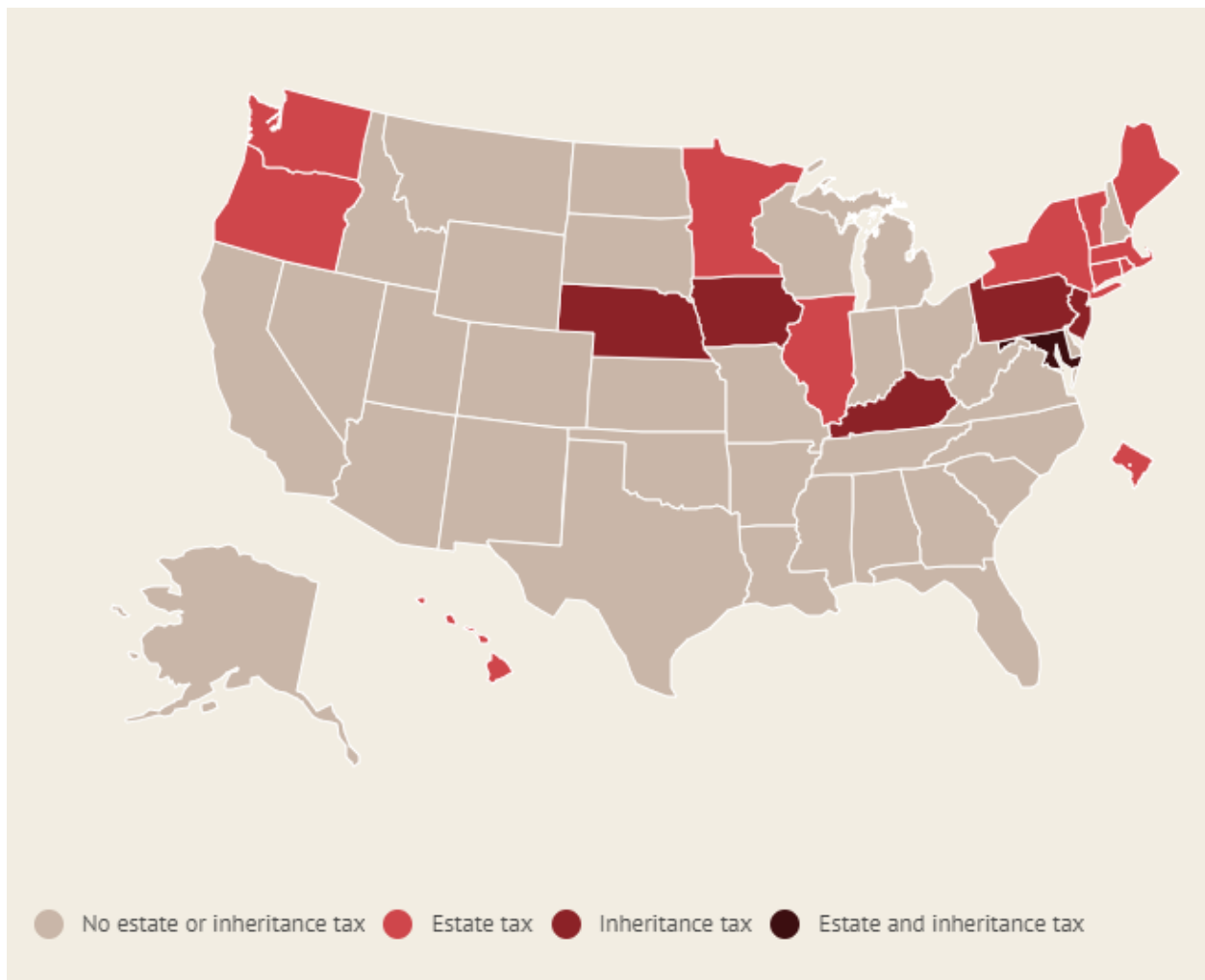
As shown in Table 3, in comparing real estate taxes, I figured house values for \$600,000, which is probably less than today's usual selling price for an un-renovated circa 1950 house in Parkwood. I also calculated real estate taxes for a \$1 million dollar house, which corresponds better to the price of renovated houses here in Parkwood, usually with an added floor and extra bedrooms and bathrooms. I ignored the factors that affect real estate taxes, such as age of resident and primary vs. secondary residence, just calculating the tax rate times \$600,000 or \$1 million. As shown in the table, real estate taxes are similar for all three jurisdictions but slightly higher in Virginia.

Table 3. Real estate tax rates and estimated annual taxes in dollars for the three jurisdictions.

Dwelling	Virginia (Fairfax)	DC	Maryland (Montgomery)
House value \$600,000	1.11% (\$6,660)	0.85% (\$5,100)	0.99% (\$5,940)
House value \$1,000,000	1.11% (\$11,100)	0.85% (\$8,500)	0.99% (\$9,900)

Estate and inheritance taxes. There are two kinds of taxes levied after death—estate taxes on the value of the estate itself and inheritance taxes, which tax the heirs according to their relationship with the person leaving them money. There is a federal estate tax that kicks in at \$12.92 million, with rates of 18% to 40%, but there is no federal inheritance tax. The federal estate tax threshold of \$12.92M is indexed for inflation, and it changes every year with the cost of living. Today's federal estate tax threshold is about twice as high as it's been in the past, even adjusting for inflation.

Although the various taxes discussed so far in this article are similar for the three jurisdictions, this is not true for estate and inheritance taxes. These taxes in Maryland are significantly higher than for the other two jurisdictions, especially compared to Virginia, which has neither an estate tax nor an inheritance tax. A dozen states levy estate taxes on a person's assets when they die, including DC and Maryland. Six states, including Maryland, tax inheritances. ([click here for more information on estate and inheritance taxes in the US](#)).



As shown in the map above, Maryland has the distinction of being the only state with both an estate and inheritance tax. Many other states have either never charged these taxes or have stopped charging them to discourage residents from leaving their states; it's a calculation the legislators have to make as to whether the state does better collecting income and real estate taxes if people stay versus losing these taxes because someone wants to avoid paying the estate and inheritance taxes by moving to a state that doesn't charge them. In other words, does the increased tax revenue from income and real estate taxes make up for what the state loses by not charging estate or inheritance taxes? With Virginia not charging either tax and being so close to our area of Maryland and with the other taxes in Virginia and Maryland being so similar, this is

probably something many people are thinking about, especially those with substantial estates who are likely paying high real estate and state income taxes (those taxes would total about \$30,000 a year for a married couple making \$200,000 a year living in a \$1.5 million house--if they stayed in Maryland, compared to about \$28,000 a year in Virginia and no estate/inheritance taxes). The threshold for Maryland estate taxes is \$5 million; DC's estate tax kicks in at \$4.2 million; estates under these amounts are not subject to estate tax. All estates are subject to inheritance taxes in Maryland.

To compare estate taxes, I calculated taxes on estates valued at both \$4 million and \$8 million. There is no dollar threshold for inheritance taxes, but instead the amount of inheritance tax depends on the heir's relationship to the deceased. Direct line relatives and charities are exempted from the Maryland inheritance tax, including spouses, children and their spouses, grandchildren and their spouses, parents, and brothers and sisters. However, people who are not exempted include the following: unmarried partners, nieces, nephews and friends. I calculated Maryland inheritance taxes both ways: assuming heirs were exempted and assuming they were not, again valuing estates at the \$4 and \$8 million dollar levels.

I also assumed that all property is in the state (or DC) of residence at the person's death. If property such as real estate is outside the state of residence at death, the calculation of estate tax gets even more difficult. For example, if a person also has a beach house at Rehoboth (Delaware has no estate or inheritance taxes), Maryland adds the value of the beach house to the total estate, calculates the estate tax, then reduces the tax by the percentage that the beach house contributes to the total value of the estate. Maryland also taxes non-residents who own property in Maryland when they die. If you're a non-resident of Maryland, a ratio (essentially the value of the property that is located in Maryland to the total value of the gross estate) is used to determine the tax the non-resident estate owes. If a person's heirs also owe an inheritance tax, the amount of inheritance tax paid is subtracted from the amount of estate tax owed. DC may handle their estate tax differently.

Table 4. Estate and inheritance taxes in the three jurisdictions.

Type of Tax	Virginia (Fairfax)	DC	Maryland (Montgomery)
\$4 million estate			
Estate tax	0	0 (no tax for estates under \$4.2 m)	0 (no tax for estates under \$5 m)
Inheritance tax (exempted heirs)	0	0	0
Inheritance tax (non-exempted heirs)	0	0	10% (\$400,000)

\$8 million estate			
Estate tax	0	<u>11.2% to 16%*</u> 11.2% on amount over \$4.2m (\$425,600)	<u>0.8% to 16%</u> 8.8% on amount over \$5m (\$264,000)
Inheritance tax (exempted heirs)	0	0	0
Inheritance tax (non-exempted heirs)	0	0	10% on full value of estate (\$773,600)**

* No tax on transfer of estate from one spouse to the other

** \$8 million, minus \$264,000 inheritance taxes, times 10%

Total taxes in Maryland on an estate of \$8,000,000 left to a non-married partner or nieces or nephews would come to \$1,037,000 (estate and inheritance taxes combined). Considering these taxes only, unmarried couples might want to think about either getting married or moving to one of the states like Virginia that don't charge estate or inheritance taxes; for example, the Maryland inheritance tax would be a problem for the surviving partner of an unmarried couple sharing a house, with the surviving partner having to pay a tax equal to 10% of the house's value or half the value if they were joint owners. Virginia might also be a preferential location for a retirement home for an aging relative in Maryland or DC if they want to leave their money to a niece or nephew or some other non-exempted person or if the estate exceeds \$5 m in Maryland, \$4.2 m in DC. To establish residency in another state, such as people retiring to Florida or to that Rehoboth beach house or even just moving across the Potomac River into Virginia, they need to live there more than 183 days (i.e., 6 months) each year to establish residency. People who prefer to stay in Maryland but still leave money to non-exempted persons might also consider making them life insurance beneficiaries instead of heirs receiving cash and property, since life insurance payments aren't considered part of the estate.