



FALL/WINTER NEWSLETTER 2022-2023 MEMBERSHIP ISSUE

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FOR UPCOMING EVENTS

WINTER-ON-THE-FARMLAND returns with

**Fizz, Pop, Boom Science Show,
Secret Garden Birds & Bees,
Desserts to Share, Book Exchange,
and Manna Food Pantry Collection**



Sunday, January 8th
1:30 – 4:00 PM
Science Show 2-2:45 PM
Farmland Elementary School

Everyone is invited! The **Science show** for kids **begins at 2 PM!** The 45-minute program explores dozens of experiments, such as bubbling potions, chemical reactions, and explosions! After the show, the kids will see cotton candy being made and can take home a small sampling!

Secret Garden Birds and Bees, a raptor presentation, with raptor birds and educational discussion.

We'll have hot chocolate to go with our popular **Desserts-to-Share** ...bring some goodies to share with everyone, along with **all-ages Books to Exchange**, and non-perishable food items to donate to **Manna Food Center**.



The Environmentalism-at-Home next **NEIGHBOR TALKS** zoom, **Wed., Jan. 25**, will be on **electric cars**, with neighbors discussing their experiences. Details to follow.

There will be at least two **COMMUNITY-WIDE GENERAL MEETINGS** with interesting presentations TBA.

Bi-monthly **GFCA BOARD MEETINGS** are via Zoom and are open to community members.

Watch for 2023 **COMMUNITY DAY, YARD SALE, JULY 4TH AND HALLOWEEN CELEBRATIONS**, Programs from the **ENVIRONMENTALISM-AT-HOME** Group, and **GARDEN CLUB** activities

Keep an eye on the listserv and on GreaterFarmland.org for details and Zoom links for all of our events.



A Big Thank You to Those Who've Already Renewed for 2023!

- * Community Day * Neighborhood Yard Sale * Winter-on-the-Farmland Party * Halloween Party * Garden Club *
- * Landscaping Improvements and Maintenance * July 4th Parade * General Meeting Programs * Government Advocacy *
- * Environmentalism-at-Home Programs * Website and Facebook Page * Newsletters * Email Listserv *
- * Online & Print Directories * Candidate Forums * Block Party Support * Welcome Bags*

Over 500 of our households were paid members of GFCA in 2022!

Let's continue to build our warm and caring community.

Online option 1: Go to the GFCA directory at **GFCA.membershiptoolkit.com**. If you're registered on this site, log in. If not, register a new account. Follow the prompts to purchase the membership length of your choice. Your membership renewal will be automatically reflected in the directory.

Online option 2: On our website, **GreaterFarmland.org**, select the number of years you'd like to pay for, and click Head to Checkout. Please fill in your address, where indicated.

Mail: Use the enclosed addressed envelope to **mail a check, payable to GFCA** for \$35, \$70, or \$105. Please allow time for us to manually update your membership and deposit your check.

We are a volunteer organization composed of neighbors.

GFCA TRAFFIC AND PEDESTRIAN SAFETY COMMITTEE UPDATE by Jason Smith, Chair

In September 2021, the GFCA Board tasked the Traffic and Pedestrian Safety Committee to prioritize pedestrian safety along Hitching Post Lane in response to neighbor concerns about pedestrian safety on this street. Hitching Post Ln. is narrow and carries a high volume of vehicle traffic. Its proximity to Farmland Elem. School, the two MCPS bus stops on that street, and its through-access in the community means it also has a lot of pedestrian & bike traffic. Parked cars on both sides result in an extremely narrow path of travel, with line-of-sight obstructions. At least two pedestrians have been struck by vehicles.

Working with the Montg. Cty Dept. of Transportation, the Committee vetted over a dozen proposed solutions and considered numerous traffic mitigation measures (e.g., changing MCPS bus routes, shifting traffic, etc.). With most proposals deemed unworkable, the Committee identified three viable solutions, the subject of a recent community-wide online survey. Households from affected properties along Hitching Post Ln will be individually canvassed via paper survey and informational flyer.

The online survey responses show that the community overwhelmingly supports the installation of a sidewalk on one side of Hitching Post Lane on the block between Old Stage Road and Old Gate Road (more than 70% of the more than 100 households that responded chose sidewalks as the preferred solution). This is true, even when considering only respondents who reside on Hitching Post Lane; nearly 50% of the households on Hitching Post Lane favor installation of sidewalks over one-side restricted parking (25%), or taking no action (28%).

The Committee continues to analyze survey data and will evaluate data from the upcoming paper surveys. We continue to work with the community to address this and other safety issues.



UPDATE! I-270 PROJECT IS ON HOLD FOR NOW by Ed Rich

We have been opposed to Governor Hogan's plans to turn I-270 over to a private company in a 50-year contract to add four toll lanes to I-270 from the Beltway to I-370. His proposal is an environmental disaster for our neighborhood, and it would not solve traffic congestion issues. We have taken that message to the County Council, the Montg. Planning Board, the County Executive, the MD General Assembly, the Governor's office, the MD Board of

Public Works, the State Comptroller, the MD Dept. of Transportation, and the federal Dept. of Transportation. We advocate for solutions, such as expanded rail service along the 270 and 495 corridors that cross the American Legion Bridge, increasing telework and flexible work hours, improvements to rail (Metro, MARC, Monorail or rail service on the I-270 corridor), and expanded development of Smart-Growth communities around major transit hubs. We are partners with the Citizen's Against Beltway Expansion, Don't Widen 270, the Sierra Club, MD Advocates for Sustainable Transportation, the MD Climate Coalition, and the Coalition for Smart Growth. We have pushed the state and the federal government to reexamine Gov. Hogan's and MDOT's misinformation and to consider alternatives that can address transportation issues in an environmentally and economically sound way.

The MD Dept. of Transportation has delayed submission of the private company contract to the Board of Public Works until after Governor-elect Wes Moore is sworn in. Therefore, if it is presented at all, the board will consist of Gov. Moore, Comptroller Brooke Lierman, and Treasurer Dereck Davis. Governor-elect Moore has stated that he wants to see a "new type of proposal," emphasizing reversible lanes (a concept advocated by County Executive Elrich), increased transit and greater collaboration with local "stakeholders." Elrich said that the focus should be on the use of federal infrastructure funds to address the real bottleneck, the American Legion Bridge. Elrich stated: "We can do this right. It doesn't have to be this expensive. It doesn't have to be this destructive." We will continue to work with advocates and State and County officials to support alternatives that are economically viable and environmentally sound and welcome your continued input.

ON OCTOBER 25, THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL APPROVED THE 30-YEAR GENERAL MASTER PLAN, CALLED THRIVE 2050

by Alan Bergstein, Chair of the GFCA's Land Use and Zoning Committee

A general plan does not furnish a legal basis for a zoning text amendment. However, Thrive 2050 includes a desire for more housing types in single family residential zones to meet the County's long term housing needs, and includes draft text that may permit duplexes and triplexes in areas presently zoned for single family homes, if the local master plan allows it. The Planning Board wanted to see if the Council approved Thrive 2050 before sending specific draft text. There is nothing I heard in the Council debate that would cause the Planning Board not to go forward with drafting text language.

The next step is for Planning Department staff to draft the text needed to accomplish the Attainable Housing Strategies. That document will run to several hundred pages, because of necessary conforming amendments. Since the County Council recently replaced the Planning Board members with temporary members, it remains to be seen if the temporary Board wants to wade into these controversial waters. If it does, there would be a formal public hearing before any text can be sent on to the Council.

I want to state again that this proposal will have little effect on our neighborhood. Planning Dept. staff has indicated that a project to convert an existing home to two or three units would only be financially feasible if the property was valued at 70% or less of market value and, once converted, could be sold for at least 130% of market value. Indeed, one of the criticisms of the proposal was that it would be ineffective in solving the housing shortage.

Request from neighbors: Please bag and take home dog waste, and teach your kids to do the same. No one wants this in their trashcan, recycling bin, or left in the street gutters.

FUN, LEARNING, AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: WHAT WE DID IN 2022

GFCA INTRODUCED TWO NEW EVENTS FOR HALLOWEEN...

HALLOWEEN PARTY AT FARMLAND ELEMENTARY

Our Halloween festivities featured a DJ dance party. Kids and some parents came dressed up and The Giant Pumpkin made his appearance! We had several middle and high schoolers manning games for the kids, with lots of snacks and prizes. It was a beautiful and fun day!



HALLOWEEN PUMPKIN COMPOST COLLECTION

We collected approximately 125 pumpkins after the holiday, which were picked up by Compost Crew.



COMMUNITY DAY

Our biggest party of the year, we gathered behind Farmland ES for a Gringoes & Mariachis buffet, potluck desserts, face painting, DJ entertainment, moon bounces and pony rides. Free to all GFCA member households. This year, we added environmentally-friendly serving and disposal opportunities.



JULY 4TH PARADE followed by popsicles!



KAREN LIPSY MEMORIAL COMMUNITY YARD SALE

After a two-year covid hiatus, the Yard Sale was back in action! Over 52 households participated in this single-day, highly advertised event.



ENVIRONMENTALISM-AT-HOME GROUP

Neighbor Talks Zoom sessions included presentations by our neighbors on recycling in Montgomery County, solar systems, native plant gardening, home energy conservation & indoor air quality, and composting food waste. The next session will be on electric vehicles & charging stations on Wed., January 25. Watch the listserv and greaterfarmland.org calendar for zoom links, times, and future topics. The Group conducted a survey to study community interest in food waste composting. Over 50% of respondents either already compost food waste or want to learn more and start doing so.

GENERAL COMMUNITY MEETINGS

In our March 23 Spring Zoom meeting, we elected GFCA officers and had a presentation by the Environmentalism-at-Home group on recycling do's and don'ts in our county. GreaterFarmland.org/caring-for-our-environment for more info.

We held our Fall Zoom Meeting on September 14. The principals from Farmland Elementary and Tilden Middle Schools introduced themselves, reported on the start of the year, and highlighted traffic and safety issues relevant to their schools. Jason Smith, the chair of GFCA's Traffic & Safety Committee, gave an update on the studies and deliberations of the Committee with regard to possible solutions to address pedestrian safety concerns along Hitching Post Lane, along with some of the other traffic and safety issues in the Community.

GREATER FARMLAND GARDEN CLUB by Sue Schick, Chair

In the past year, GFGC has discussed composting, weeds, backyard chickens, native plants for pollinators, ferns, erosion control, and more. We usually meet once a month (from February to November) on the third Sunday from 2:00 to 3:30 pm, at a member's backyard. If you are interested in learning about next year's GFGC meetings, please contact me at sue.schick@gmail.com or call me at 240-498-2784.

Did you know GFCA has an ombudsman? Do you have a concern about something you have experienced or observed in the community, need guidance on who to contact about an issue, or are just looking for information, and you have not found it on the GFCA listserv or website? The GFCA Ombudswoman is here to assist. Contact Pamela at 240-606-6333. If no answer, please leave a brief message with your name, phone number, and the nature of your call.

ATTRACTING BUTTERFLIES WITH MILKWEED AND OTHER NATIVE PLANTS

By Marjorie Raley

1. **Butterfly weed** is beautiful, deer and rabbit resistant, and fairly drought tolerant. Plant it where it gets at least 4-5 hours of sun, adding some sand to your clay soil to prevent root rot. Pile leaves over it in winter, but clear them off in Spring so the shoots can sprout. Mine come up fairly late, late May to early June.
2. **Common milkweed**: This plant can produce lots of caterpillars! Caveat: this species spreads very aggressively. Plant it where you don't mind it taking over, not close to a neighbor's yard, unless they want it, too.
3. **Swamp or Rose milkweed**: Very well-behaved. It spreads slowly by seed. It needs at least 4-5 hours of sun and soil that stays a bit moist. In dry soil, it comes and goes too quickly to provide food for the Monarchs.
4. **Purple milkweed**: Slow to establish and not aggressive. Mine is about 4 years old and getting to be very pretty.

As for **flowering plants that attract butterflies**, here's the usual advice:

1. Native plants attract bees and butterflies better than most non-natives. Some natives have been "engineered" into varieties claiming longer bloom-time, better pest resistance, etc. These varieties may have less nectar and pollen, and may have changes to bloom time-frame or flower structure that may deter butterflies & specialist bees.
2. Try to have plants that flower at different times so that your butterflies have a continuous source of food.
3. Look into going beyond just providing nectar. Add plants that butterflies lay eggs on and feed caterpillars. You might be surprised to see that you already have some of these plants. Leave them untrimmed through winter.
4. Don't spray pesticides on plants you want the butterflies to visit!

GFCA LISTSERV

Our listserv is an email distribution group that allows us to communicate in real time. Over 650 of us use the GFCA listserv. GFCA announcements, buying & selling or free items, traffic concerns, security events, lost & found items/deliveries/pets, tips, gardening, appeals for charity events, all of these are the "stuff" of our discussions. To be part of "what's happening," join. Email GFCA+subscribe@groups.io or click the Community Email List icon on the bottom of GreaterFarmland.org.



NEW TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD ?

We invite you to join the Greater Farmland Civic Association and our community listserv, which is our major source of information. Please email directory@GreaterFarmland.org so we can get a Welcome Bag to you.

The Greater Farmland Civic Association has an official address: P.O. Box 2122, Rockville, MD 20847. GFCA committees and officers are working hard throughout the year to build our community. We welcomed three new officers this year, Jason Smith, Amir Khawaja, and Jeremy Martinich. Venu Ghanta has taken on Treasurer duties, and Michele Stein is stepping forward to lead the Social Committee.

JULIE MERBERG'S SCHOOLS CORNER

by Julie Merberg, GFCA Board and President of Tilden Middle School PTSA

By the Numbers

Current enrollment at Farmland Elementary is 801 students. With a capacity of 737 students, this puts the school 64 students over capacity, requiring the use of portable classroom buildings.

The newly constructed Tilden Middle School has a capacity 1,244 and an enrollment of around 1,100 students.

Walter Johnson High School has slightly under 3,000 students, with 834 students in the current freshman class. Despite 2009's renovations, the school is now 650 students over capacity, with 15 portable classrooms.

Woodward High School will serve as a holding school for two years, then will open to our neighborhood students for the 2026-2027 academic year, with a projected capacity of 2,159 students. 2026 represents a one year delay from the original planned opening. The contractor posts updates at hessconstructionwoodwardhs.com/.

With two of the three schools over capacity and plans for several new apartment complexes, school construction will continue to be a top issue for the Farmland community.

Tilden Lane Traffic

With the opening of Tilden Middle School and Rock Terrace School, there are now five schools - with over 2,500 students plus staff - which rely on Tilden Lane to get students safely to school. School traffic is compounded by neighborhood commuters and cut-through traffic.

The Farmland and Tilden community is working with MCPS to restore bus service to our middle school students who became ineligible for bus transport when the school moved from Old Georgetown Road. This may alleviate some traffic on Tilden Lane during school hours, but please watch out for the walkers, joggers, and bike riders. If you see unsafe conditions, please report by calling 311 or the MCPD non-emergency line at (301) 279-8000.