

NORTHWOOD NEWS

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Councilmember Elrich Proposes Bus Rapid Transit

By Jim Zepp

At-large County Councilmember Marc Elrich is currently floating a proposal among various agencies, public officials, and citizen groups to establish a bus rapid transit (BRT) network. This would be a less-costly option for addressing the County's growing transportation needs since it is likely that the state and local governments will not be able to afford more expensive alternatives such as new highways and rail-based transit

systems for the foreseeable future.

A BRT system consists of specially configured buses that either can be used on dedicated guideways or travel like normal buses on regular roadways. It is possible for these vehicles to collect or discharge passengers within neighborhood areas and then shift onto the BRT guideways built along major highways so they can operate at higher speeds. Elrich's plans would have BRTs operating on most of the major roadways in the County, including I-270, Georgia Avenue, and Route 29.

The concept of BRTs as an urban transportation alternative has been around for at least 30 years and there are examples in several cities around the world. Locally, busway proposals have been considered for Route 29 for over 20 years. Most recently, former County Executive Doug Duncan's "Go Montgomery" transportation plan had included several busways. The Route 29 busway would have extended from downtown Silver Spring to the Howard County line and was estimated to cost about \$100 million.

About 10 years ago, a

shorter version of the Route 29 busway from Burtonsville to the Sligo Creek Parkway
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Next Meeting on 10 December

The next meeting of the Northwood-Four Corners Civic Association will be held on 10 December 2008 at 7:30 p.m. at the North Four Corners Rec Center. The Rec Center is located at the end of Southwood Road, just off Edgewood Drive. Items on the agenda include election of three Board members.

All residents of the Northwood-Four Corners-Forest Knolls area are invited to attend and express their views. Please note that only paid members of the NFCCA are eligible to vote. (Annual dues are \$10 per household and may be paid at the meeting.)■

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Imagine trying to capture and photograph a single fragile snowflake. You'll have to work fast, because snow crystals are ephemeral, even in very cold weather. Now imagine doing this without a modern high-powered microscope and camera. Amazingly, that's just what Wilson "Snowflake" Bentley did in 1885.

He was a farmer and also one of the first cloud physicists (self educated). But he is best known for his "ice flowers." Over the years, he photographed more than 5,000 crystals. (To see some more of his images go to www.snowflakebentley.com.)

"Under the microscope," he said, "I found that snowflakes were miracles of beauty; and it seemed a shame that this beauty should not be seen and appreciated by others. Every crystal was a masterpiece of design and no one design was ever repeated. When a snowflake melted, that design was forever lost. Just that much beauty was gone, without leaving any record behind."

I get the feeling Bentley was the type of character who would feel right at home in our community. On the one hand, he was a precise scientific observer. On the other, he was an artist driven to capture and communicate nature's prolific yet fleeting beauty. No doubt each of his pursuits enriched the other.

Similarly, I think we build community through both work and play. As we work together, friendships grow. We come together for a fun event like the "Pitting of the Pooches" (see article, page 5) and we are inspired anew to protect and enhance our neighborhood.

—Carole Barth, Immediate Past President



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NORTHWOOD NEWS

Northwood News is published by the Northwood-Four Corners Civic Association. The NFCCA represents the 1,490 households in the area bounded by Colesville Rd. (Rte. 29), University Blvd. (Rte. 193), Caddington Ave., and the Northwest Branch.

Any resident of this area is eligible to join the NFCCA. Annual dues are \$10 per household and may be paid at any Association meeting or mailed to the treasurer.

Northwood News is published five times a year—in October, December, February, April, and June. To place an ad or discuss a story, please contact the editor.

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Bus Rapid Transit Proposed

(continued from page 1)
was studied by the County. This was estimated to cost about \$40 million, require purchasing portions of land from about 50 residences fronting along the road, and would reduce the travel time for Upcounty commuters by 12 minutes.

In order for the busway to function at optimum speeds, these buses would

also have the ability to override the sequencing of traffic lights at intersections so that they don't have to stop. Consequently, the busway feasibility study found that the level of congestion would actually increase at Four Corners. The County planners response to this finding was that the intersection's conditions were already so bad

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BRT Considered by Co. Council

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that worsening it wouldn't make any difference (while costing taxpayers only \$40 million).

The other concern raised by residents along the Route 29 corridor was that construction of a busway would eliminate the median strip, which provides some safety for pedestrians crossing the highway. This is especially important because the traffic lights are programmed for a minimal length of time. The transportation planners have stated that this is done to maximize vehicle speeds and volume along Route 29. For this reason, the State Highway planners have resisted past requests by community residents for other measures that would provide better facilities for pedestrians.

When asked how his plans would differ from previous busway proposals, Councilmember Elrich has said that the BRT buses would be narrower than current buses and would not require use of the entire median, which would leave some room for pedestrians attempting to cross Route 29. This may not be a sufficient width to provide for pedestrian and transit rider safety and comfortable separation from traffic. As a frequent mass transit user, I can attest to the conditions that one can be subjected to while standing along Route 29. Vehicles can be whipping by at high speeds which throw dust in your face during dry weather and splashes water or slush at you when it is raining or snowing.

Councilmember Elrich also believes that, despite the objections of the transportation planners, the timing of the Route 29 traffic lights would be changed to better accommodate pedestrian safety so this would not be a problem in the future.

In the past, the communities along Route 29 have united to oppose previous busway proposals because of their adverse impacts on area residents, while primarily benefitting Upcounty and Howard County commuters. This proposal may continue to evolve and would affect most of the County, so it has a long way to go before anything is definite. We will let residents know if this proposal progresses further. ■

NFCCA BOARD

The Board of Directors for the Northwood-Four Corners Civic Association meets five times a year, in October, December, February, April, and June. Current officers for 2008-2009 are:

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2008-2009 NFCCA Mtg. Calendar

Please mark these dates on your calendar for the upcoming meetings of the Northwood-Four Corners Civic Association:

10 December 2008

11 February 2009

8 April 2009

10 June 2009

These dates are all on the second Wednesday of the month.



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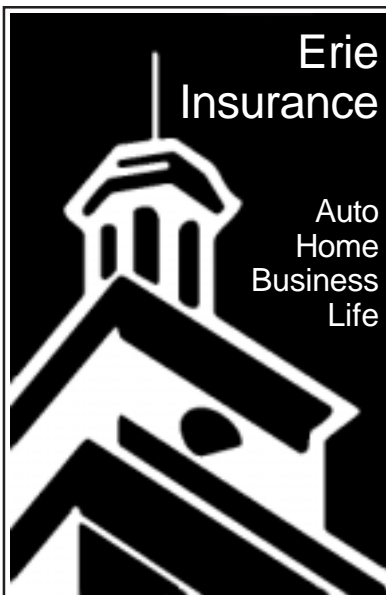
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'Pitting of Pooches' for the Dogs

By David Rotenstein

The neighborhood's inaugural Pitting of the Pooches was a bust, but not for lack of interest. Rain forced a postponement from the original date and the event was rescheduled for the following Saturday, the day after Halloween. Unfortunately, because no official rain date had been set, and the schedule change was only communicated through the NFCCA email listserv, only a few pooches and their people trekked to the meadow where organizer and board member Laura "Hound" Hussey had set up a show ring.

Fellow board member Ted Daniel arrived to emcee the event, accompanied by his personable Plott hound mix, Captain. Fiona Morrissey was escorted by her pair of poodles, Cozy and Apple. A few dog walkers—unaware of the event—wandered through and some other would-be participants, including one family with a young dinosaur (okay, a kid in a dinosaur costume), did arrive but not enough to make it a true sporting event.



Laura Hussey sets up the show ring for the dog show.

Laura threw a few bones to the dogs that did show and packed it in with plans to try again in the spring, this time with a built-in rain date. The newsletter will carry information on the new date in a later issue. ■



A few determined dogowners showed up to 'pit their pooches' at the dog show.

Proposed Bill Would Give County Employees Special Tax Breaks

The Montgomery County delegation has introduced Bill No. MC 919-09 into the Md. general assembly. This bill would enable the County Council to grant property tax credits and exemptions to County employees. Specifically, the credit would apply for the first five years after purchase. In addition, employees would be exempt from the recordation tax.

In jurisdictions where housing prices are high and government salaries are low, it is often difficult for teachers, police officers, and fire fighters to live where they work. Employer-assisted housing for government workers is one way to address such a problem.

This bill, however, goes way beyond the concept of affordable housing. To begin with, the program is not limited to primary residences. In fact, employees could receive tax credits and exemptions for buying a second home or even for buying rental property as an investment. Secondly (and even more incredibly), there is no income limit so employees making six-figure incomes

would be included.

Finally, the bill includes employees at Montgomery College, MCPS, the Housing Opportunities Commission, WSSC, and M-NCPPC. Park and Planning, you remember, maintains it is not subject to oversight by the County Executive, the County Council, or the Inspector General by virtue of being a bicounty or state agency. How can M-NCPPC workers be County employees if they don't answer to County Government?

Montgomery County is in a worsening budget crisis, yet many County employees are getting monumental raises (roughly 8% in the current budget and a cumulative increase of about 30% for the next three years.) For this reason (as well as the problems listed above), the Montgomery County Civic Federation passed the following resolution on 10 November 2008: "Be it resolved, that the MCCF strongly opposes State Bill MC 919-09 and urges our state delegation to withdraw it from further consideration." ■

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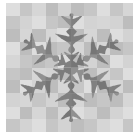
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1407 Caddington Ave	\$350,000	Split Foyer	4	3	1
10306 Colesville Rd	\$439,000	Cape Cod	4	2	0
1108 Chiswell Ln	\$464,000	Split Level	4	2	1
1004 Chiswell Ln	\$444,900	Split Level	4	2	1
208 Hannes St	\$374,900	Rambler	3	2	0
423 Kerwin Rd	\$295,000	Rambler	4	2	0
405 Kerwin Rd	\$350,000	Rambler	3	2	0
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10915 Lombardy Rd	\$330,000	Rambler	5	2	0
304 Ladson Rd	\$259,900	Rambler	4	3	0
314 Ladson Rd	\$340,000	Rambler	2	1	0
904 Loxford Ter	\$400,000	Split Level	4	2	1
1008 Loxford Ter	\$376,450	Split Level	3	1	1
817 Malta Ln	\$389,900	Split Level	4	2	1
812 Malta Ln	\$359,900	Split Level	6	1	1
10212 Sutherland Rd	\$619,000	Colonial	4	3	0
517 University Blvd W	\$329,000	Cape Cod	6	3	0
415 University Blvd W	\$329,000	Colonial	6	2	0

** Information deemed reliable but not guaranteed **



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Living the Good Life (Part 2): Cleaning ‘Green’

By Patricia Stephenson

I remember how my mother ran her household when I was a kid in the 1950s and 60s. By today's standards, she would be considered “green.” In my efforts to figure out how to reduce my family's “carbon footprint,” i.e., the greenhouse gases produced by the energy we use to drive our cars, fly to our destinations, power our households and produce all the goods and services we consume, I have found it instructive to reflect on lessons of the past.

For example, my mother did not have a separate household cleaner for every task nor did she dispose of a cleaning or dusting cloth after one use. Somehow we have been sold on the idea that we need a cleaner for windows, one for stainless steel, another for dishwashing, and a separate one for the dishwasher, plus a scouring powder or foam (or both), tile and toilet bowl cleaner, laundry soap, fabric softener, dryer sheets (what are they for anyway?), disposable dusters, mops, air “purifier” sprays, floor cleaners for various surfaces, rug cleaners, wipes of every sort, paper towels, and, last but not least, an “all purpose cleaner.” (Ha!) When I consider not just the monetary expense involved in purchasing all these products but the amount of greenhouse gases (GHG) and waste produced in the manufacture, transport to market, and disposal of the product containers,

plus the personal energy expenditure involved in keeping track of household supply, it makes my head spin.

For the environmentally conscious, companies have figured out that they can make a fortune off you by marketing “green” nontoxic substitutes for common household cleaners and charging double the price. This makes no sense either since it only addresses the toxicity issue while doing nothing to reduce GHG and waste disposal issues.

Now I work full-time and have a very active schedule outside of work as well, so I really need simplicity. I don't want to spend a lot of time cleaning or foregoing my labor saving devices. Still, I decided to take another look at how I was running my household. Before dismissing the idea of making my own cleaners, I decided to do a cost-benefit analysis to determine whether there were some practical alternatives. Did I really need all this stuff cluttering up my closet or could I do the job just as well with the stuff my mother and grandmother used? That turned out to be a no-brainer. I did some research on the Internet and a little experimentation. Not only have I reduced clutter, GHGs, household waste, and improved indoor air quality, the cost-savings and results have been astonishing. You really only need a few readily available ingredients to make your own household cleaners:

- White vinegar;
- Leftover lemons (or juice);
- Baking soda;
- Washing soda;
- Borax;
- Castile soap liquid;
- Ivory, Zote, or Fels Naptha soap bars;
- Isopropyl alcohol;
- Lemon oil;
- Nontoxic butcher block oil;
- Natural concentrated essential oil for fragrance (for example, lemon or lavender);
- A few spray bottles and a felt pen to label them;
- Reusable microfiber clothes and wool duster;
- Arm & Hammer oven cleaner; and
- Lots of cotton hand towels (to substitute for paper towels).

You will still need to buy special commercial products for your dishwasher and washing machine or else risk voiding the warranty. If you have a frontloading washer, you must use the concentrated liquid detergent formulated for these machines.

How to Clean Everything Recipes Kitchen Sinks

Save your used lemons. They are great disinfectants and cut grease. They are especially good on stainless steel sinks. Use a reusable quart size zip lock bag and store them in the freezer or refrigerator until ready to use. To clean sinks, simply rub surfaces with the lemon. Alternatively, baking powder makes an excellent scouring powder that will not scratch surfaces.

(continued on page 10)

The Good Life: Cleaning 'Green'

(continued from page 9)

Dishwashing Liquid

Fill a pump dispenser with 1 part castile soap to 1 part water.

All-Purpose Cleaner

Mix in a 1 quart spray bottle ¼ c. white distilled vinegar, 1 tablespoon Borax or Castile soap, a few drops of essential oil for fragrance, fill with water and shake to blend. Label appropriately. If someone in the house has a cold or flu and you want to seriously disinfect bathroom surfaces, a little isopropyl alcohol on a damp cotton rag will do the trick. This isn't recommended for everyday use; it isn't necessary.

Chopping Blocks/Bowls

To disinfect, use straight lemon juice (a very strong acid). Let stand 10 minutes. Wipe off. Wipe down with a little nontoxic butcher block oil periodically to preserve the wood.

Ovens

Use Arm & Hammer oven cleaner.

Drain Cleaner

Pour ½ c. baking soda down the errant drain followed by ½ c. vinegar. 15 minutes later, pour in a quart of boiling water (or hot tap water if you have plastic pipes).

Lime Deposits in Kettle

Mix ½ cup vinegar with 2 cups water and let stand overnight.

Copper Pans

Sprinkle cut lemon with ordinary table salt and scrub.

Rinse and dry.

Silver

Line a shallow pan with aluminum foil and fill with 1 quart warm tap water. Add 1 tablespoon of Calgon water softener (or other brand) and 1 tablespoon of salt. Mix well until powders dissolve in solution. Dip silver and polish with a silver cloth.

Floors

For vinyl or ceramic tile, use the all-purpose cleaner recipe. For hardwood, use a solution of Murphy's oil soap or castile soap (1 part) to 3 parts water. For Pergo floors that will be ruined if they are cleaned with a water-based product, you must continue to use the commercial cleaners formulated for this purpose.

Windows

Use a solution of ¼ cup of white vinegar to ½ quart of water. Use newspapers to polish glass.

Toilets

Use ¼ cup of baking soda and 1 cup vinegar. Scour with a brush. This is effective in cleaning and removing lime deposit and metallic stains.

Showers and Tubs

If scouring is necessary, use baking soda. Otherwise, mold and mildew can be kept in check by using 1 part hydrogen peroxide to 2 parts water in a spray bottle. If mildew is present, use full strength lemon juice or vinegar.

Clothes Closets/Drawers

Get rid of all mothballs; they are toxic to humans and animals. Use cedar chips in

cloth bags or use a cedar liner to prevent moth damage to clothes.

Air Fresheners

Houseplants are great for this purpose. If you would like a nice scent, make your own potpourri from dried lavender or rose petals from the farmers' market. Whole spices (cinnamon sticks, cloves, bay leaves and nutmegs) in bowls or sewn into sachets also make a nice air freshener. Scented soaps may be stored in clothes drawers or linen closets to add a nice fresh scent.

Laundry Soap

For this effective, biodegradable and very inexpensive homemade laundry soap, you will need a 5-gallon bucket with a lid (like a painter's bucket, available at the Takoma Park Silver Spring Co-op or Strosniders), 1 bar of biodegradable soap (Ivory, Zote or Fels-Naptha), Arm & Hammer Super Washing Soda, and Borax, a box grater, and measuring cups. Grate 1 bar of soap. Put into a large cooking pot and add 6 cups of hot water. Cook on medium-low heat, stirring often, until the soap dissolves completely into solution. This step takes the most time, up to 30-40 minutes. Then add ¾ cup each borax and Arm & Hammer Super Washing Soda. Stir until dissolved (this only takes a few minutes). Pour 1 quart of hot tap water into the bottom of the 5-gallon bucket. Then pour in the soap mixture and fill to the top with hot tap water. Stir to blend evenly. The mixture will form a gel-like solution that can be stored
(continued on page 11)



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Cleanin' Green

(continued from page 10)
for months. If you like, you may add essential oils such as lavender, tea tree, or citrus. Use about a ½ to ¾ cup per load.

Shampoo

Fill a pump container or used shampoo bottle with 1 part liquid castile soap with almond oil to 3 parts tap water. You may wish to add essential oils such as lavender or tea tree oil. Tea tree is especially effective to get rid of dandruff. This shampoo may also be used as a body wash.

For more information on how to clean using earth-friendly, cheap, and nontoxic products, go to www.eartheasy.com. ■

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Dennis Av./Ct.: 404, 411, 500 (3/43)
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Edgewood Av.: 10220, 10228, 10309, 10404 (4/72)
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Irwin St.: 300 (1/31)
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Marvin Rd.: 306, 309, 314 (3/18)
Mountain Quail Rd.: 10420 (1/28)
Northwood Av. — (0/13)
Ordway Dr.: 10702, 10707 (2/26)
Playford La.: 1002 (1/31)
Pinewood Av.: 319 (1/13)
Royalton Rd./Terr.: 409 (1/31)
Snowy Owl Dr.: 113 (1/23)
Southwood Av. — (0/21)
Sutherland Rd. — (0/31)
Thistle Dr./Ct.: 203, 208, 212 (3/22)
Timberwood Av.: 208, 305, 309, 317 (4/25)
University Blvd.: 205, 611 (2/48)
Whittington Terr. — (0/15)
Woodridge Av.: 115 (1/13)

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\$18 Million in 2008 Sales

I am selling lots of homes even in this most difficult real estate market. More than ever, you need a top professional to deal with the unexpected obstacles to closing your transaction. Not only do you need someone to negotiate with other agents but, even more importantly, you need an experienced agent to work closely with inspectors, lenders, mortgage brokers, appraisers and settlement attorneys to make sure your deal settles.

Northwood Closed Sales (Since 9/1/08) and Under Contract - As of Nov 14, 2008

Status	Close Date	Address	List Price	Close Price	Seller Subsidy	BR	FBA	HBA	Lot SqFt	DOM
CONTRACT	12/31/08	825 LOXFORD TER	\$424,900			4	3	0	7,504	113
CONTRACT	12/31/08	311 LADSON RD	\$280,000			4	2	0	6,244	90
CONTRACT	12/20/08	306 PINWOOD AVE	\$505,000			3	2	1	8,250	4
CONTRACT	12/4/08	110 SOUTHWOOD AVE	\$339,000			3	1	1	5,192	185
CONTRACT	11/28/08	38 KINSMAN VIEW CIR	\$350,000			4	3	1	1,600	0
SOLD	11/5/08	1000 PLAYFORD LN	\$329,900	\$300,000	\$5,000	4	1	2	7,865	18
SOLD	10/15/08	133 KINSMAN VIEW CIR	\$284,905	\$270,000	\$0	3	3	1	1,971	129
SOLD	9/26/08	821 CADDINGTON AVE	\$350,000	\$350,000	\$0	5	3	0	11,261	111
SOLD	9/19/08	36 KINSMAN VIEW CIR	\$355,000	\$330,000	\$0	3	2	1	1,600	104
SOLD	9/15/08	11201 LOMBARDY RD	\$335,000	\$330,000	\$15,000	3	2	0	6,965	364
SOLD	9/15/08	512 ROYALTON RD	\$329,900	\$320,000	\$5,000	3	1	1	8,067	26
SOLD	9/10/08	10204 LORAIN AVE	\$409,000	\$400,000	\$9,572	3	1	1	7,952	63

Now is a Great Time to Buy a Home!!
This Distressed Market Period
May be the Best Buying Opportunity of Your Life
Let Me Help You Find the Home of Your Dreams!