

May 2021

**COMMUNITY CONCERNS****COVID RELATED**

**Covid Vaccination:** Having the Silver Spring Civic Building serve as a vaccination site has helped the down-county community access vaccination. FEMA recently provided extra vaccines and we extended the hours of operations into the evenings and weekends. We have also shifted to individuals being able to make their own direct appointments without having to go through pre-registration. Hopefully soon we'll be able to go to 'walk-up', which will greatly facilitate the messaging. There are other 'pop up vaccination sites' that non-profits and providers are arranging. However, we are now entering the 'hesitancy' phase. Some in the community remain hesitant to get vaccinated for a variety of reasons. The Silver Spring Covid Community Committee is focusing their activities on this issue.

**Access to Covid testing:** Three clinics in the Silver Spring Region that do Covid testing: Mary Center, Takoma Park Recreation Center, and CCI in Takoma Park. These locations are augmented by testing at various private clinics including a new 'same day testing' in downtown Silver Spring. It is imperative that we continue spreading the word that testing is critical. Also: It is becoming increasingly clear that specific messages (i.e.: get tested even if you've had Covid) is becoming increasingly critical as well.

**Food insecurity:** Following the lead of the Montgomery County Food Council, we continue helping get food to the communities in need. While the Clifton Park Food Hub remains the prominent site for distribution, there are many others throughout Silver Spring that provide food to the general public and/or their own constituency, including: St. Camillus, Jesus House, and Shepherds of Zion (at the Takoma Park Elementary school). The work of these providers is augmented by an increasingly robust home delivery system, including Meals on Wheels.

**Housing protection:** We continue following the lead of the Department of Housing and Community Affairs, Health and Human Services, and various non-profits on aggressive efforts to inform renters of available temporary protection from foreclosure, advice and help for renters behind on rent payments, and specific Covid-19 rent relief programs – as exemplified by the available flyers in multiple languages ( <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/SNHS/rent-relief.html> )

**NON-COVID**

**Ambiance downtown:** New signs will soon be installed on Veterans Plaza and other key locations throughout downtown welcoming everyone – and highlighting certain activities that are not allowed, including skateboarding, smoking, unlicensed vending, panhandling, and noise beyond certain decibels. We are working with the various agencies that have responsibilities in these areas – including the Urban District, Community Use of Public Facilities, Permitting Services, Health and Human Services, Environmental Protection, Police - and the users of the public spaces to ensure safety while promoting a welcoming environment. We are pursuing a

similar strategy working with the area business to address the issues along Georgia Avenue as well.

**Eateries:** As the restrictions on restaurants ease and the provisions for curb-side pickup evolve, Ellsworth Drive will soon be closed to vehicular traffic to expand the existing sidewalk eatery. Food trucks are now welcome at the Newell Street Community Place. The tent on Veterans Plaza will remain as an eatery for at least one more month. And, the tables and chairs are now available throughout Long Branch, increasing places where eating outside is possible there.

**Living under construction:** Pepco has finally finished its work on Fenton and is in the process of resurfacing. However, other utility work for the various major developments under construction is evident throughout downtown. The Purple Line work is picking up, including in the eight stations in the Silver Spring Region. These necessary infrastructure projects create a constant sense of ‘living under construction’ which requires vigilant attention to disruption of vehicle and pedestrian flow. We are working closely with the utility companies, the Purple Line contractors, and local and State agencies to minimize these disruptions and through our community eNewsletter alert businesses and residents of the work underway.

**BID:** The proposed Business Improvement District (BID) for the downtown Silver Spring will host a series of public input sessions in the weeks and months to come. The proposal will then go back to County Council for further consideration.

**Jazz Festival and Thanksgiving Parade:** We are exploring holding the Thanksgiving Parade this year at its regularly scheduled date, the Saturday before Thanksgiving. We are not doing the Jazz Festival in August. Rather, we are including the festival as part of a Jazz Week in the Spring of 2022, to most help the local economy while providing for safe entertainment.

**Long Branch Efforts:** The Long Branch Business League is leading efforts to improve business conditions among the small businesses in the area. Most recently they sponsored a “Cinco de Mayo” event where customers could contribute to local charities when they placed an order in local restaurants.

**Taste the World in Fenton Village:** Led by the Fenton Village, Inc., with the collaboration of volunteers and partners, the TTWFFV event will happen this year for a full week in May, from the 16<sup>th</sup> through the 22<sup>nd</sup>. For a second year in a row, the event will adjust to the pandemic. It will invite people that visit Fenton Village restaurants to participate in a raffle and share their stories.

## ADVISORY GROUPS

### Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board:

The SSCAB regular full board meeting in April focused on conversations Wade Holland, Vision Zero Coordinator. In May the SSCAB will host a conversation with the Planning Department on the Thrive Montgomery Plan.

The SSCAB Committees remain very active, meeting every 4th Monday of the month. In April the Transportation, Environment, and Energy Committee (TREE) and Commercial Economic Development Committee (CED) met simultaneously, with their separate

agendas. TREE followed up on the Vision Zero full-board conversation; CED spoke with Eric Rasch, Civic Building and Veterans Plaza Facility Manager, and Elizabeth Gallueresi, Arts District Consultant; and, Neighborhood had a panel conversation with area school principals.

(The SSCAB is also functioning as part of the Silver Spring Covid Community Committee.)

#### **Silver Spring Urban District Advisory Committee:**

At the April meeting the Committee met to discuss their advice letter regarding the issue of re-imagining the Police; an update on operations and vacancies; and an update by Pepco on their work on Fenton St.

Operationally, the Silver Spring Urban District Operations continues to support the eateries throughout downtown and support the new Civic Building operations for Covid vaccination. They have also been busy with contractors doing the Spring planting and site-specific clean-ups. The hiring process for the new Silver Spring Urban District Manager and Program Manager is now complete, with the new staff projected to start in early June.

#### **Silver Spring Arts & Entertainment District Working Group:**

- The following Silver Spring arts education organizations are offering **in-person summer camps or classes** for the public to help Montgomery County parents with childcare and to help students cultivate their creativity and emotional expression: Create Arts Center, Round House Theatre and Education Center, Akhmedova Ballet, Maryland Youth Ballet, and potentially Levine
- **Virtual summer programs** from arts education organizations include: Ghandi Brigade, Docs in Progress, Arts on the Block, Create Arts Center, Round House Theatre and Education Center, Akhmedova Ballet, Maryland Youth Ballet, Levine
- Virtual programs are not filling quickly, and the Silver Spring Arts & Entertainment District is assisting in **promoting these beneficial programs** to the public through promotion on our website, a press release, and a cooperative marketing campaign
- **The Fillmore Silver Spring's** first concert is currently scheduled for June 18, 2021 (subject to change), The AFI Silver anticipates reopening to some in-person shows in the summer (potentially with some trial dates in the spring), The Montgomery College Cultural Arts Center is anticipating reopening programming in the fall, as are many entertainment venues/organizations in the district.
- While many of the organizations are planning a combination of virtual and in-person programming, the current capacity doesn't cover the operating costs of staffing and opening many venues. The district is in discussion about the roll out timeline of their **Safe in Silver Spring marketing campaign**, as we would like to coincide this campaign with a timeline that is most beneficial to the arts organizations.
- Silver Spring Arts & Entertainment District has embarked on the process of seeking **redesignation as an Arts & Entertainment District** by the State of Maryland. This designation was granted to Silver Spring in 2002, was redesignated in 2012, and the current redesignation is due in the fall.

#### **Other Advisory Groups and Efforts:**

There are many other internal and external efforts in which the SSRSC and the SSUD are involved, providing input and establishing collaboration. Some of these include:

- Silver Spring Transportation Management District (focusing on commuter options)
- Long Branch Partners (focusing on emergency management)
- Chamber of Commerce Security Calls (focusing on homelessness)
- Food Council Coordinating Calls (focusing on coordinating and delivering meals)
- Purple Line Coordination
- Retail & Restaurant Recovery Work Group