



Green Space Advisor

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Message From The President.....John Chirtea

“TAKE A WALK IN THE PARK”

On a beautiful warm Sunday in the end of November, Bailey (my dog) and I took a walk from Sandy Spring to Woodlawn Manor. I had forgotten the beauty of the trail between these two points, and the surrounding 160 acres of open space reminded me of the importance of Greater Sandy Spring Green Space (GSSGS). This nonprofit land trust was instrumental in placing Conservation Easements on the majority of that land, assuring us that this open space **will** remain open in perpetuity.

As you walk along the trail (and I hope you will), take a short side trip to see the Champion Ash tree along the North side of the farm field and the Southern boundary of Auburn Village. The next stop along the trail is the Sandy Spring, one of the most restful and idyllic spots in Montgomery County. The clear water bubbling up from the spring is cold and crystal clear. The only sounds I heard while sitting on the bench at the Spring were the birds chirping, leaves falling, and Bailey trying unsuccessfully to corner a squirrel. Walk along the farm fields which are planted with hay by the Stablers. Thank goodness we still have some local farmers who preserve and farm the remaining agricultural acreage in our community. Next you will enter the forest and cross over a large

stream on a 75' wooden bridge, wide enough to accommodate two passing horses. The trail winds through the woods, and you can take a short side trip to see the “Hollow Tree”. Although this huge Poplar tree does not challenge the California Redwoods, it is impressive. Finally, you reach Woodlawn Manor at the South end of the trail. The only interruptions I had along this well marked trail were a fallen tree, a small 3' running stream crossing, and a few horse droppings. It was a day well spent.

It is critical that the open spaces such as those along the trail be preserved for future generations. GSSGS is proud to have had a hand in the preservation of these areas, and we continue to work on other similar projects around the Sandy Spring Area. We are a volunteer organization, supported by your memberships and contributions, without which we could not exist.

GSSGS would like to acknowledge Willard Derrick for allowing us to use the office at the old Freestate gas station site in Ashton. We now have carpeted, heated quarters with a bathroom. Watch for our sign, which will be installed soon.

Please help us make *Green Space a Reality, and not a Memory*. Thank you for your support!

Save the Date:
Greater Sandy Spring Green Space Annual Meeting
Rachel Carson's Effectiveness
Tuesday, March 28, 2006 7:30 p.m.
Sandy Spring Museum



Executive Director's Report

Your membership in Greater Sandy Spring Green Space (GSSGS) is highly valued and incredibly important towards the mission of our organization. Qualifications to be a member are as follows: "All persons who support the purpose of the organization may become members upon approval of the Board of Directors and payment of dues." That's all! The work of the Board could not happen without the membership of groups and individuals like you. Enclosed in this edition of the *Advisor* is an envelope for membership dues. Please help to keep green space open in Sandy Spring by sending your membership dues today.

The GSSGS Board is a dedicated group of community members who are committed to preserving open space in the greater Sandy Spring area. This is a great group of individuals who work diligently to achieve the mission of GSSGS. Meetings are held on the last Tuesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at our new office at the corner of New Hampshire Avenue and Rt. 108 (next to the musical instrument repair shop). The term for each board member is three years, with an option of serving a second three-year term, if desired. Therefore we are always seeking new individuals to join the board. Many levels and types of services are needed. This is your personal invitation to come visit a board meeting and consider becoming a member. Please contact me if you can attend: 301-869-5358 or by e-mail at kmccathran@erols.com. You would be welcomed and enlightened.

This past summer, the Board was particularly concerned with a recommended proposal made

to the Joint Committee on Taxation of the U.S. Congress. This report recommended significant modifications to the tax benefits of landowners who generously donate land or easements. Greater Sandy Spring Green Space contacted members of the Committee and local elected officials expressing our concern with such drastic changes. Letters resulted in members of the Committee stating positively on the value of conservation easements in their respective states. The final outcome has yet to be determined. Thanks to the Land Trust Alliance and the Maryland Environmental Trust for keeping us updated on this issue. We'll be sure to stay on top of this issue.

On a more local note, this past fall, GSSGS was involved with the alignment of the Rachel Carson Greenway through Sandy Spring. Testimony was given to the Maryland National Park and Planning Commission on an alignment that had wide community support, and which will also serve to bring people into our village center.

Greater Sandy Spring Green Space cares profoundly about the Sandy Spring community. We recognize many of its recent changes and want to help to ensure additions to the community result in a balanced, successful community. Many needs and desires need to be met and we are interested in a cooperative balance between landowners, the environment, impact of land use and preservation of open space. Help us to create a shared vision for the future.

Joli McCathren

Community Supported Agriculture

Join the 2006 Sandy Spring CSA (community supported agriculture) and eat organic, locally grown, freshly harvested produce from May through October. Many members are from the Sandy Spring Friends community as well as members of Meeting. Besides receiving delicious food, fresh from the farm, we are helping

to support a sustainable form of agriculture that doesn't damage the earth.

You can learn all about how it works and what to expect from the enclosed flier. Learn more at WWW.SANDYSPRINGCSA.COM/HTML/HOW_TO_JOIN.HTML

For approximately 20-22 weeks, depending on Mother Nature, you will receive a weekly share of vegetables, fruits, and other items. The price is \$545 per share due by January 1 for returning members. For new members there is a one time fee of \$50 in addition to the \$545. A share is good for a household of four. Shares can be split. 2006 pick-ups will take place Mondays at

the old school house on Meeting House Road in Sandy Spring, between 2 and 7 p.m.

For more information, you can call either Robert True at 301/570-5468 or Vanessa Strunk at 301/424-9142. Our CSA is the base of income for several organic farmers in Maryland. This is about more than eating fresh veggies!

Good News From the Land Trust Alliance, Nov. 21, 2005

Late last night, the US Senate passed a tax bill that included a significant expansion of the deductions available to landowners who donate a conservation easement to a land trust. Thanks to the great work of land trusts throughout the country, not only did we block the Joint Committee on Taxation proposal to eliminate tax deductions for conservation, but we have won support for a dramatic expansion of that incentive!

We are also pleased to report that this Senate bill includes some much-needed appraisal reforms but does not contain unreasonable restrictions on conservation easements. The Senate bill does not include any new limitations on the size or composition of conservation easements on land, or any new requirements for donees accepting those easements.

The bill provides for extending the carry-forward period for tax deductions from 5 to 15 years and raising the cap on conservation deductions from 30 percent of a donor's income to 50 percent - and to 100 percent for farmers and ranchers. The bill also includes a variety of changes in law affecting charities and charitable contributions, including a significant tightening of the rules on donations of easements for the protection of historic structures, and tightening of the rules on appraisers and appraisals of all donated property (including conservation lands and easements). The details of what the Senate passed are posted on our website:

www.lta.org/publicpolicy/s2020_easements.pdf

This story is far from over. The House counterpart of this bill does not include the conservation incentive, and getting the House to accept the Senate provision will not be easy. A final decision could be made in the next month, and we will need your help to influence it.

I want to personally thank each and every one of you who helped get us to this point -- each person and organization that contacted their Senators about the importance of the work of land trusts and the implications of the changes suggested by the Joint Committee on Taxation for that work; everyone that helped us raise the financial resources for LTA's work here in Washington, DC; and every one who helped demonstrate our community's commitment to high standards and public benefit, by adopting Land Trust Standards and Practices and helping us to design a private-sector accreditation process for conservation organizations. The inclusion of an expanded tax incentive and the absence of draconian restrictions is a great victory for land conservation!

Sincerely,

Rand Wentworth
President
Land Trust Alliance
1331 H Street NW, Suite 400
Washington DC 20005

Mission Statement: Preserving the Open Space in the Greater Sandy Spring Area

Greater Sandy Spring Green Space, Inc. (GSSGS, Inc.) is a land trust, formed to help preserve open space in the greater Sandy Spring, Maryland area. As urban sprawl continues to encroach on valuable farmlands, efforts are being throughout the country to preserve the rural character of our communities. GSSGS, Inc.'s mission is to promote for the benefit of the general public, the preservation, protection and balanced use of open space and natural resources within eastern Montgomery County and the Patuxent River Watershed.

Landowners of qualifying property can protect their land in perpetuity with conservation easements, and in return they may receive income tax, property tax, federal estate tax, and Maryland estate tax benefits. A conservation easement is a perpetual legal agreement a property owner makes with a Land Trust (and/or government agency) to restrict the development and uses that may take place on the property. They are tailored to the particular property and to the interests of the individual owner.

The easement concept includes a separation of rights of ownership. Development rights may be separated away and voluntarily conveyed to other owners or sold. These rights have value, and if they are donated to a land trust in the form of a conservation easement, there are potential tax benefits including income tax deductions for the charitable gift property tax benefits and estate tax benefits. The new Taxpayer Relief Act, signed into law on August 4, 1997, includes new federal estate tax incentives for land conservation. This law allows beneficiaries to exclude from the taxable estate up to 40% of the value of eligible land subject to qualifying conservation easements in addition to the reduction in value already attributable to the easement itself.

Landowners are encouraged to consult their own financial advisors, and if interested, to contact GSSGS, Inc. Our group has formed a partnership with the Maryland Environmental Trust to receive conservation easements and they will perform the stewardship of the easements with regular property inspections and consultations with the owners.

Why Sandy Spring?

By Don McCandless

The parallel question is: "How did Sandy Spring get its name?" Place names of colonial settlements in the Eastern portion of the U.S., now known as the Mid-Atlantic states, had a number of origins which include the names of British rulers, royal family and towns, i.e. Maryland—Queen Mary, Frederick—Prince Frederick, Olney—England. Some places' names came from Indian designations, i.e., Patuxent and Potomac rivers. Others were named for prominent natural resources, i.e. Rockville, White Flint, Silver Spring, and of course—Sandy Spring. As the frontiers moved westward

places were frequently named for the first white settlers. Local examples are Brookville—for the Brooke family whose grant of 20,000 acres included Sandy Spring and adjacent areas. Laytonsville and Clarksville are other examples.

In the 21st century, it is difficult to envisage the importance of a small constant source of potable water to the early settlers. It is even more difficult to envision that the entire area was thickly covered with trees. One of the largest tracts in the Sandy Spring area was known as Charlie's Forest, which is referenced many times in the

19th and 20th centuries in legal descriptions as it was subdivided over the years.

Circumstances of the initial discovery of the Sandy Spring by the early settlers are not known from the sources the writer consulted. Was it found when the land East of Meeting House Road and South of Parr's Ridge (now the path of Route 108) was first being cleared for farming? Was it shown to the settlers by friendly Indians or when a hunter was tracking a wild animal? We have no direct information about

the application as the place name, despite the accumulation in the Sandy Spring Museum of much detailed documentation about the first settlers and their families who emigrated from the Western shore of the Chesapeake Bay.

Whatever the source of the naming might have been, it is a small miracle that the site of the Sandy Spring survives in a natural setting as a reminder of the discovery by those first settlers over 250 years ago.



The Spring, December 11, 2005

Who is the most important person in our land trust? Not surprisingly, each one of you - our generous membership - is, one at a time, the most important person. You believe in, and support, the mission of our non-profit. We strive to protect the agricultural and rural qualities that have been treasured in Greater Sandy Spring for many centuries. Are things changing? Sure they are. But we each have a chance to moderate and modify the changes to protect the essentials, such as our open space, forests, and the historic vistas. Please read through our Winter Newsletter, and then send back your dues with the membership form and we will update our records and look forward to a Happy and Healthy New Year for us all.

**Green Space Advisor
P. O. Box 92
Sandy Spring, MD 20860**



Greater Sandy Spring Green Space

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