

Citizen's Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
June 9, 2010

Meeting called to order at 7:34pm.

In attendance: John Schwenkler, Rick Olesek, Ann Kulceski, Denise Etris, Larry Little, Don Briggs

1. Denise announced that she will type up the committee members' contact information and distribute the list among the committee.
2. Charles Schneider is a new member of the committee; he had to work overtime tonight but Denise will fill him in, and he will be at our next meeting.
3. Denise brought up the grease trap ordinance: The water and sewer facility has had a problem with grease backing up the system and failing to break down in the holding ponds. This is an expense for the town to deal with, and also a nasty job. The town proposed to create an ordinance requiring business and organizations to have a grease trap of an appropriate size; you must apply for a permit, with a \$100 fee, and then be approved by a plumber at a significant cost, and must pay to have the grease traps emptied, certify this work, etc. The businesses and churches in town are bearing the financial brunt of this ordinance, since they are the easiest source of grease to control; however, it seems that this burden should be shared by households in town as well. So Denise proposes that we recommend to the town to include in the next water bills information about how properly to dispose of grease (e.g. biodiesel collection points, a grease collection point in town, freezing grease and putting in the trash, using it to feed birds, etc.). People need to know that over time failing to do these sorts of things will cost them money by damaging their household sewer systems as well as that of the town.

Questions about this proposal: Where is the sewer system backing up? *In several locations.* Are there other places where sewage can be filtered between the source and the holding ponds? *Even if this is possible, it would be prohibitively expensive.* Is it possible to monitor subdivisions or neighborhoods to see where the grease is coming from? *Denise will look into this; but it is not clear whether it is possible or what good the data would do us.* Larry Little suggested that the presence of garbage disposals in newer homes may make them contribute more to this problem.

Rick Olesek pointed out that one difficulty with including an insert in the water bill is that many people may fail to read it; he suggested that it would be easier to share a lot of this sort of information with the town if there were a monthly or quarterly newsletter that went out. One difficulty with this might be the cost; this is part of what makes it attractive just to put an insert in the water bill. But Rick emphasized that there are many ways the community could be served with the distribution of such a newsletter. Discussion of these matters continued for a while; one suggestion was that a community calendar might be created online and posted at various places around the town. It was emphasized that creating a calendar or newsletter for community events does not exclude providing information separately, e.g. in the water bills or in the newspaper, about the grease problem.

Denise's summary of the grease issue: We will get something in both newspapers, as well as the next water bill. We will have to determine what to include in it, perhaps identifying a town collection spot for grease. (It was observed that the town has no collection spot for other things, e.g. motor oil and Christmas trees.) Our recommendations: Recycle it; throw it away; or use it for activities. Larry Little stressed that the information should be presented in a low-key manner. There was unanimous agreement on the committee that Denise will send something around for the other committee members to review, and will bring up the topic at the next town meeting.

4. Don Briggs mentioned that Catocin Orchards will take the town's organic waste if we are willing to have it picked up separately; this would cost a bit up front but would significantly reduce tonnage fees. Apparently they do this in Middletown, and maybe also Thurmont – Don will check into these towns' experience, and Denise will add it as an agenda item once we've gotten more information.

5. Revisiting the possibility of a calendar or newsletter: The ideal would be to set up a basic framework and then have non-profit organizations submit their own information about their events. Denise suggested that we start with a community calendar, which would be online as well as displayed in the center of town and distributed in Jubilee, the post office, the library, the deputy's office, and possibly elsewhere, and then move to creating a newsletter depending on how this goes. Organizations that want to have their events listed will e-mail an administrator to have their events added. Rick and John suggested that Google Calendar would be an effective means of doing this, and Larry emphasized the importance of getting the information out in a printed form as well. The town would be asked to have somebody administer the calendar, to pay for printing, and to handle distribution. There was unanimous agreement that Denise will add this as an agenda item for the July 6 town meeting.

6. Don emphasized the importance of thinking of downtown Emmitsburg as the "lobby" to our homes, in the same way as the lobby of a building is to its owners. Is there anything the town can do to improve the appearance of the historic district? Denise also observed the poor condition of the sidewalks; and the issue of tree replacement and sidewalk repair was brought up. Rick asked whether this sort of work could be assigned to people required to do community service. Denise will bring this up under administrative business at the next town meeting.

7. Rick mentioned his dissatisfaction with the town's Christmas decorations, and Denise suggested that we might work on this issue with Parks and Recreation in the future.

8. Larry emphasized the importance of publicizing this committee's work to citizens and making it clear how citizens can have us address their concerns. Denise will work on this.

9. Larry suggested that a community garden could be created in front of the municipal building. Two concerns: this is the county's land, so we would have to get permission; and there are problems with vandalism. There is plenty of time to look into this before next spring.

10. Our next official meeting will be August 4.

The meeting adjourned at 9:09pm.

Respectfully submitted,
John Schwenkler, Committee Secretary