

Mount Vernon Belvedere Clarion

June 2008

Volume 23, Number 06

The general meeting will take place at the Belvedere Hotel, Tuesday, June 17, 2008, beginning promptly at 7:30pm. Both members and non-members are welcome to attend.

This month's focus at the general meeting will be a discussion of the pros and cons of the proposed trolley car system.

New Circulator

Last week, MVBA leadership joined the Mayor in announcing the free circulator bus that will begin operating next summer. These will be new quiet hybrid buses which will be "branded" to distinguish them from MTA buses, and will operate every 10 minutes using existing bus stops from the Inner Harbor, up Charles to Penn Station then back downtown (likely down Saint Paul - but exact route is yet to be finalized).

Trolley Update

Two years ago, MVBA provided its support for a Trolley feasibility/engineering study, and joined the Transit Riders C?? (TRAC) with a number of questions. We hope to have the study and answers to our questions in hand within the next two weeks. In the meantime, we'll be talking about the pros and cons of the proposal at the Tue, June 17 MVBA General meeting. You are also strongly encouraged to drop in to a Trolley Open House to be held June 23rd 5:30-8:30pm at the Belvedere. Finally, CSDC will present the Trolley Study at our July 15th meeting when we will put the matter of support for moving forward to a vote.

State Center

The State Center project seems to be moving ahead, and due to a lack of interested/consistent volunteers, MVBA has been largely missing from the table. Fortunately, our good neighbors at Bolton Hill have been helping keep an eye on this. Volunteers, please contact Paul Warren at development@mvba.org

Mount Vernon Place

Thanks to a joint working group of MVBA and the Friends of Mount Vernon Place volunteers, the City has agreed to support the formation of a Conservancy for the restoration and ongoing operations of our National Landmark District, Mount Vernon Place. Further, they have agreed to contribute \$40,000 to the development of a Master Plan to be conducted working group's proposed contractor, The Olin Group of Philadelphia. Thanks to generous seed money from MVBA and the Friend (\$5k each) the working group has also hired Clair Segal as a consultant to begin building what will be a "museum quality" board for the conservancy with participation and leadership from across the city and state. Standby for more news on this exciting development, and many thanks to Lance Humphries, Jane McConnell, Karen Footner, Brian Coleman, Paul Warren and Jack Danna who has been staying on top of this, researching similar conservancies in NYC, and taking the train down for working meetings with the city.



SUBSCRIBE!

If you are getting this newsletter in the mail, you are probably missing out on important email newscasts, neighborhood alerts and early electronic delivery of this newsletter itself. Help save a tree and convert to email delivery by sending an email to membership@mvba.org with "SUBSCRIBE" in the subject line and your full name in the body. Non-members can join the association and sign up for email communications at www.mvba.org.

Improvements Made To Children's Park

Thanks in large part to fundraising efforts at Flower Mart this year, the Mount Vernon Children's Park has begun to undergo some major improvements and repairs. Most notably, the hedge maze at the park is sporting a brand new sprinkler system that will help it reach its full potential – even in the face of another drought this summer!

Although the system itself was installed by a private irrigation company, all of the plumbing for the project was performed pro bono by Brent Goldsmith Plumbing. Mr. Goldsmith has worked on a number of projects in Mount Vernon over the years, including the renovation of 16 East Eager Street, home of Eric Lowe and Laura Giantris. When Mr. Goldsmith learned about the Children's Park project, he enthusiastically offered to perform the plumbing work free-of-charge. The advisory board for the park would like to express its deepest gratitude to Mr. Goldsmith for his extremely generous gift.

Work is also underway to repair the park's water play area, which unfortunately has been experiencing some technical difficulties. A special thanks to Paul Warren for undertaking this effort. Users of the park may also have noticed some unusual rocking at the seesaw, which has now been scheduled for repair as well. With the completion of these projects, this summer at the park will be better than ever.

Of course, the success of the park is entirely dependent upon the hard work of community volunteers and the generosity of our financial supporters. If you would like to volunteer your time to help with upkeep at the park (green thumbs especially welcome), please contact Laura Giantris at 443-322-6853 or lgiantris@gmail.com. Also, if you would like to make a contribution to the park's operational fund, please visit our website at <http://www.mountvernonchildrenspark.org>. There you can purchase a personalized brick or make a donation in any amount. All gifts are made through the Midtown Community Fund, a 501(c)-3 organization, and are tax-deductible.

Homeless Shelter Update

In response to an MVBA request, the City has agreed to a Community Impact Study prior to any final decisions on the proposed 200-250 bed homeless shelter at Centre St and the Fallsway. An MVBA ad hoc Shelter Study committee (shelterstudy@mvba.org) has been formed under the capable leadership of Shawn Terrell, and has already met with the City and the City's study contractor, Morgan State University. Some of the ques-

tions we have asked to be answered by the study are as follows: There will be more discussion at the general meeting.

1. Please describe how the study will determine the extent that the proposed shelter will increase, decrease or have no effect on the problems listed below.

Panhandling

Illicit drug sales and use

Other crimes such as larceny, burglary, and robbery

Potential for increased trash

Potential for other sanitation problems such as increased public defecation and urination.

Homeless people sleeping and congregating in Mt. Vernon parks and doorways

2. How will the study evaluate whether the proposed services and supports offered to shelter guests will be effective?
3. How will any gaps in services be considered as part of the impact study findings?
4. How will the study determine effective mitigation strategies based on the findings?
5. What was the experience of the Greenmount neighborhood with their temporary shelter (has there be a "lessons learned" exercise?).
6. Absent an Area Master Plan, how do we put this proposal in context of the future development of Mount Vernon? For instance, how will the shelter block future efforts to link east side development to Mt. Vernon. What could be done to allow for optimal development opportunities.
7. What services for people who are homeless are currently available in the Mt. Vernon area (e.g. non governmental non-profits)? What will the likely impact of the shelter be on the use of these services?
8. What should be done to gain the cooperation of area and suburban churches, charities, and other non-profits?
9. What is the current baseline of social service facilities, how does this compare to national averages, and how will the city control the "snow ball" effect of yet more services wanting to come to the neighborhood in order to interface/support the new homeless shelter?
10. What should be the city's exit plan for the project if the city chooses to reduce the budget or cut it out altogether? What indicators would trigger a reevaluation of the impact and the need for additional mitigating strategies, including closure of the shelter? For instance if, despite all best efforts there is significant increase in people sleeping in public parks what should occur to deal with this?

Mount Vernon in the News

Mount Vernon’s own transportation expert Edward Cohen, President of the Transit Riders League, was again featured in the local media for his expertise in public transit issues. This time Ed was the sole guest for a long segment on the Ed Norris radio show examining the proposed Red Line and the various bus and rail options being considered.

New Business Alert

MVBA is very pleased to welcome the Pink Hibiscus Boutique and Café at 224-226 W. Read Street as a new retailer in the neighborhood. Owner Sylvia Pool immediately joined the MVBA and kicked off her store opening by hosting a shop full of Mount Vernon women at her Thursday Strawberry Martini night (Thursdays 6-8 p.m.). The shop carries carefully selected designer items and retro vintage wear (everything from jean jackets to cocktail dresses) as well as jewelry and accessories.

Also up and running and gaining a Mount Vernon following is Soup’s On at 11. W. Preston Street. Offering gourmet soups freshly-prepared daily. This family-owned company prides itself on soups that are made all natural using no additives, preservatives or anything artificial. Even their stocks are made fresh. Stop in for lunch or dinner to try one of their over 200 varieties of soup. Open Monday-Saturday 11 – 8 and Sunday 12-6.

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byob

wake up to breakfast off the garden



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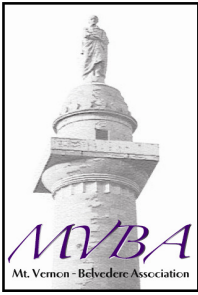
celebrating our 5th year!

Changes at Center Stage

The MVBA bids a sad farewell to Michael Ross who has served for many years as the Director of Center Stage. Michael resigned his position effective this month. Michael has been an enthusiastic and consistent supporter of the community and he will be missed by Mount Vernon. Center Stage has announced that Debbie Chin, Managing Director of California Shakespeare Theater for the past seven years, will be replacing Michael Ross.

Mount Vernon “Ambassadors” Needed

This is an easy, but important job for our community during the coming summer tourist season when we will see more and more visitors in Mount Vernon. So what can you do? Sign up to keep a small supply of the Mount Vernon Visitors’ Maps in your car, backpack, purse, or briefcase and offer them to anyone who seems to be visiting the neighborhood. (people with cameras gazing around Mount Vernon Place in awe or looking lost on a street corner are likely candidates). Ambassadors simply need to offer a map and wish them a good visit in Mount Vernon. If you want to help out with this, please contact Susan Warren at sbwarren@hotmail.com.



Mt. Vernon ~ Belvedere Clarion

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



To contact members by phone, call MVBA's main number 410-528-1919 and select the desired extension from the menu.

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Sanitation.....Sandy Lawler
Property Stewardship.....*Vacant*
Liquor.....Steve Johnson
Zoning.....Paul Warren
Marketing.....Regina Minniss (rminniss@cbmove.com)
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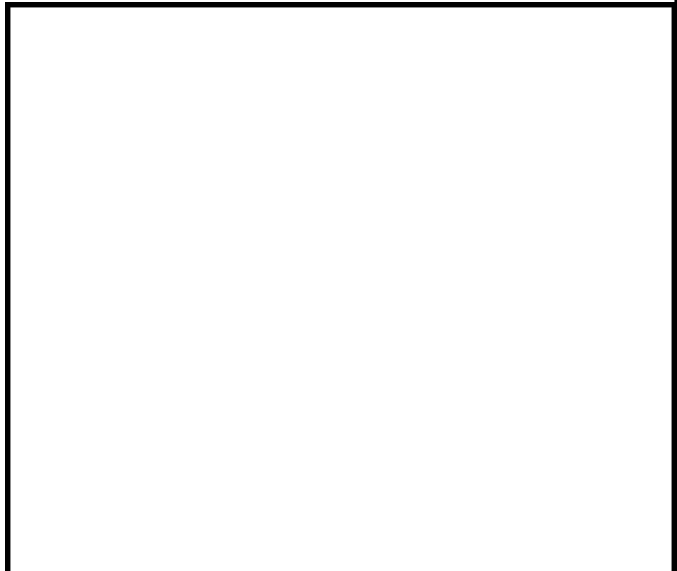
Appointed Member:

Bill Oelke, Walters Art Museum
Stan Keyser
Kenn Hobbs

Ex-officio Members

Steve Johnson
J.J. Pecora
Mary Ann Henderson

Historic Mt. Vernon/Belvedere



Starting January 8, 2008, "Single Stream" starts.

Set out all mixed paper and bottles and cans every Tuesday and Friday 5pm-7pm, the same time as your regular trash each week. Recycling materials should be set out in front of house. Your regular trash goes in the same location as it did previously.

