

The MONTEBELLO Voice

an independent gazette

peace on Earth

December 14, 2018



Mitchell Levy recommends



A Star is Born

The third version of this classic movie goes from Judy Garland and James Mason to Barbra Streisand and Kris Kristofferson to this version with Bradley Cooper in his directorial debut. A standout Lady Gaga is a withdrawn working girl who meets up with a major country singer (Bradley Cooper) who helps her emerge from her sheltered, sheltered life as a waitress and a songwriter to a major recording star as he plunges deeper and deeper into self-abuse through drug use.

While superbly acted, this version is really loud and blaring. Be warned.



Can You Ever Forgive Me?

An Academy Award caliber performance by Melissa McCarthy and a treat for cat lovers.

She portrays a writer turned professional forger who writes and sells items as originals by famous authors. Based on a true story.



Green Book

Starring Viggo Mortensen as an Italian American bouncer from the Bronx who gets a job as the driver for a black concert pianist on tour in the segregated South in the '70s. The two form an unlikely bond and friendship. Co-starring Mahershala Ali as the pianist Dr. Don Shirley.

A different take on the classic Driving Miss Daisy. Based on a true story. Be sure to watch the footage after the credits roll.

Stretchnastics class breaks apparent record

By Sarah Newcomb

Montebello's long-running Stretchnastics class broke apparent records December 14 when men outnumbered women in the challenging floor exercise portion of the class. Seven men joined five women doing crunches, leg lifts, rowing and the inevitable plank. The number of men participating in the class has been increasing steadily over the past year.

Stretchnastics classes are free and led by volunteers on Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 9 to 10 a.m. That day's leader was Jean Smith, who is 88 years of age, tough as a Marine, supportive as your best friend, and as flexible as a girl. Jean is an inspiration for every participant.

The class consists of two parts designed to work every muscle in the body. The first portion consists of gentle stretches, walking, and some aerobic activity such as air boxing. About 20 participants are standing, stretching, balancing and bending. The second part of the class is more difficult, targeted exercises executed on mats on the floor. Many class members participate in just the first half of the class. No special attire is required, although sneakers are a good idea.

So, men, if you need some exercise – and some new friends – join us in the exercise area in the basement of the Community Center. Stay for the challenges of mat exercise. Stretchnastics is not just for women! 🍷



The Montebello Voice wants to hear from you: musings, travels, announcements, photos, book reviews, commentary, memoirs, essays, analysis, poems, suggestions, club news, recipes, and free ads

A twice-monthly publication for the residents, by the residents

Chess Club Game Nights holiday schedule

December's Chess Club event is canceled in honor of the holidays.

The club will resume its regular schedule in January 2019, ringing in a new year of chess starting on Thursday, January 24.

The Chess Club wishes everyone Happy Holidays!!!!!!!

– by Lisa Stedje

Cover photo of the Montebello woodlands by Catherine Cooke

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This publication accepts no funding or oversight from advertisers, residents, or the Montebello Condominium Unit Owners Association. All opinions are encouraged and reflect the diversity of views in the community. All articles and photographs come from Montebello residents. To receive or contribute to this free email-only gazette, contact montebellovoice@cox.net or visit on the web at www.montebellovoice.com.

Editor & Designer.....Mikhailina Karina
Contributors..... Chuck Amorosino, Catherine Cooke, Donald Barnes, Mitchell Levy, Azita Mashayekhi, Dian McDonald, Sarah Newcomb, Richard Titus, Paul Zeisset

Trees rings tell tales

By Catherine Cooke

As a self-proclaimed tree hugger, and a nature lover in general, it has always amazed me how much our woodlands at Montebello have to offer. Around every corner there is much to observe and discover and it changes on a daily basis.

On a recent trudge through the woods, I noticed one of our trees recently fell, perhaps due to all the recent rains. It had been carefully removed and its beautiful remains were used to line our trail.

A tree's bark tells an intricate story of its life and this tree obviously lived a long, eventful life at Montebello. Saddened that its life had been cut short in a seemingly healthy tree, I started to count the rings and hopelessly stopped at 30. Intrigued, I turned to the internet to find out more about its history.



Count the dark rings in a tree's stump and that will tell you the age of

the tree. The thickness of the rings indicate when growing seasons were longer and toward the end of the growing season, the bark becomes darker and more dense. Factors such as precipitation, amount of sunlight, disease, soil conditions, drought, fire and temperature will affect the color and thickness of the rings.

In Virginia, where we have distinct seasons, the light rings represent spring growth whereas the dark rings represent summer growth. Broad rings generally mean a favorable growing year. Narrow rings might indicate a dry summer, fungi or insect infestation. Rings that are off-centered might indicate the tree was exposed to high winds.

So start in the middle and count only the dark rings, moving outward...maybe with a little patience you might be able to tell this tree's story. 📖

All politics is local

By Richard Titus

There have been a number of comments in *The Voice* about our ever-increasing condo fees, and on how wisely this money is being spent. For those who are dissatisfied, please consider that while most of us see Montebello as a place to live, some see it as a place to invest. And these investors may have quite different ideas about how our money should be spent, such as favoring "curb appeal" spending over spending to deal with essentials.

There is no limit on how many Montebello units an individual may own, and some individuals own quite a few. The more units one owns, the more votes one has in our elections. If investors coordinate, they can be an important voting bloc, especially given that fewer than half of Montebello owners vote in our elections. Compared to other owners, the views of investors will carry greater weight with management and with the BOD.

An owner does not have to live here to vote in our elections, serve on our

Board of Directors, or chair one of our committees. It's happening right now. Are their goals likely to be the same as ours?

Montebello is simply another form of government, writ small. It has the same basic problem as other larger forms: people don't stay informed, don't run for office, and don't vote. What they do best is complain about the mismanagement and waste that results. 📖

traditions



Christmas decorating has always been a major endeavor and an exciting time at our home. Along with the Christmas tree, a collection of Santas from around the world, "The Night Before Christmas House" and assorted lights, wreaths, and other Christmas fun collected over the years, the main feature is our Christmas Village. We have been putting up variations of the Village – BIG and Small – every year since 2006. For 2018, it's an Alpine Village. We hope you enjoy scenes of this year's Village.

Raymond Houck and Holden Coy

Board approves landscaping projects and contract

By Mikhailina Karina

The usual two dozen regulars attended the 40-minute December 11 Board of Directors meeting. Directors Lynn Tjeerdsma, Doug Kennett, and Raymond Goodrich were absent.

Board director Greg Bender announced that residents contributed \$20,000 to the annual employee holiday fund. Three employees – Stephanie Sheffield, Earl Roberts, and Sgt. Ibrahim Kandeh – received special recognition.

In addition to approving the 2019 fee schedule (page 6), which has no increases, the board unanimously approved

several landscaping design initiatives.

The first is the perennial butterfly garden in the flower beds flanking the road between buildings 1 and 2. According to General Manager George Gardner’s memo, “Butterfly gardening is designed to create an environment that attracts butterflies as well as certain moths. Butterfly gardening is often aimed at inviting those butterflies and moths to lay eggs as well.”

Natural Resources Design (NRD), the firm that has been consulting on Montebello’s landscaping needs, has prepared a plan that will keep flowers in bloom throughout the growing season.

The gardens will cost almost \$30,000.

NRD will also develop a landscaping design plan for the north side of the front entrance, affectionately referred to as “dirt hill” outside the gate. Design services will cost nearly \$8,000 and the landscaping budget is projected to be between \$50,000 and \$60,000. It will focus on deer-resistant plants.

Additionally, the NRD will maintain its consulting position for landscape design services – technical assistance and resident education – next year at a cost of \$51,000. It does not include work on specific projects and hourly work. 📄

Residents get the first glimpse of the reimagined Community Center

By Mikhailina Karina

A capacity crowd filled every available chair in the Community Center lounge to see the unveiling of the proposed Community Center renovation plan on December 12.

Board treasurer Jon Kandel shared an informative, clear, 45-minute presentation describing the plan by Kerns Group Architects. While the plan incorporates resident wish list and results of surveys and focus groups, “nothing has been decided,” he said. Eighty percent of ideas for the redesign were generated by the residents.

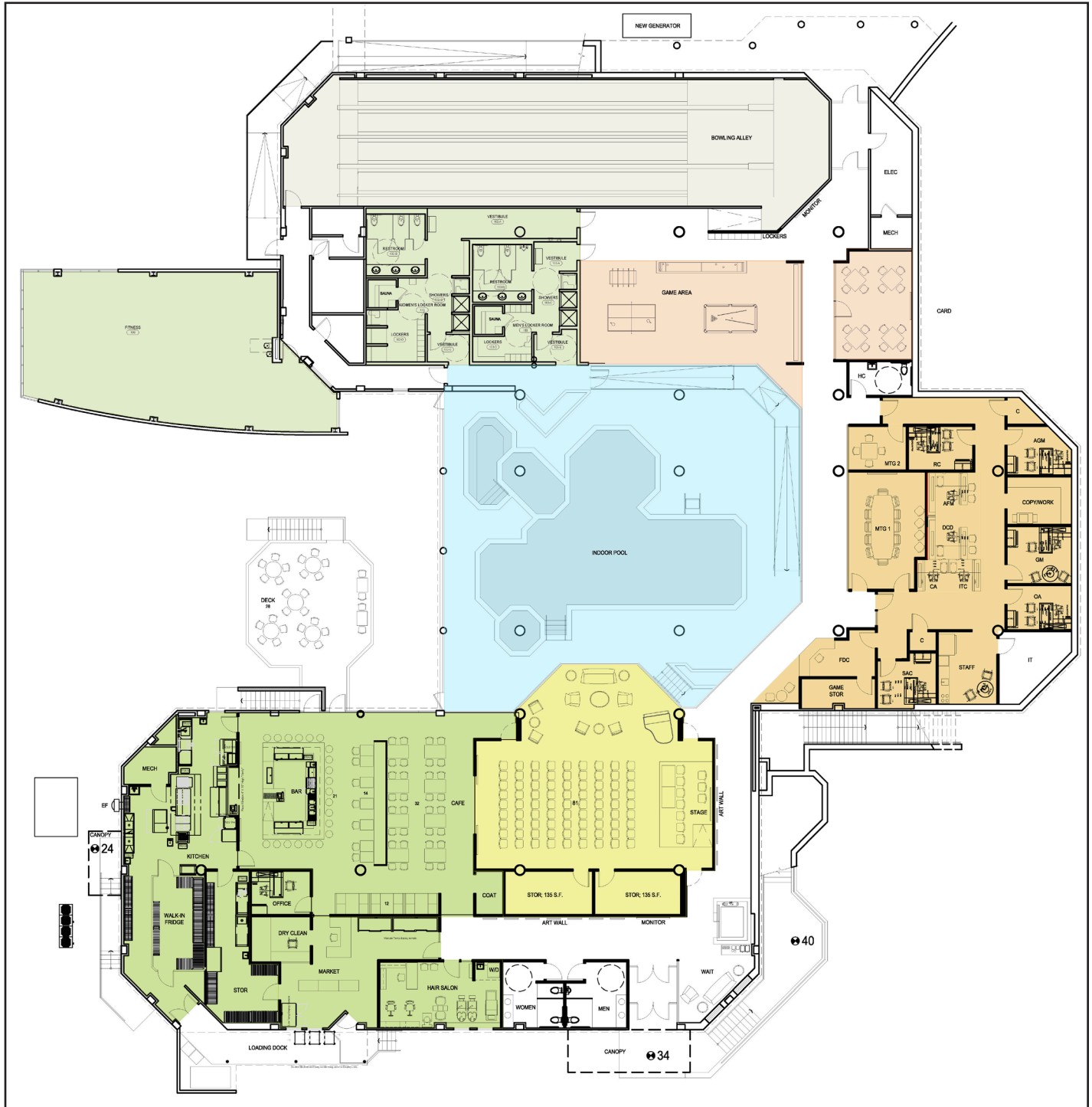
The plan’s price tag was revealed after a detailed description of radically reconfigured spaces, high-tech amenities, and improved accessibility. If the plan is approved in short order, the final cost would be nearly \$7 million – perhaps half a million less if everything runs according to plan. After an audible gulp and stunned silence subsided, Kandel assured the residents that the necessary funds were put aside years ago – \$5 million has been earmarked in the Reserve Budget – and additional \$2.5 million can be easily allocated to cover the balance. “It’s a well-planned

Community Center Renovation Budget	
Description	Cost
Construction	\$2,789,680
General Requirements	\$223,174
Design Contingency (@5%)	\$150,643
Construction Contingency (@5%)	\$158,175
Overhead & Profit (@5%)	\$166,084
Payment & Performance Bond (@1%)	\$34,878
Total Construction Cost Estimate in 2018 Dollars	\$3,522,634
Cost Escalation (@6% for two years)	\$422,716
Construction Contingency Increased from 5% to 15%	\$352,000
Additional Costs	
Kitchen Equipment	\$164,000
Furniture	\$420,000
Audio-Visual / IT / Security	\$130,000
Subtotal	\$5,011,350
Design Contingency Increased from 5% to 15%	\$501,000
Total Escalated Construction and Furnishings Cost Estimate for Build in 2020	\$5,512,350
Soft Costs @ 25%	\$1,378,088
TOTAL COST ESTIMATE	\$6,890,438

Budget courtesy of Jon Kandel

governance

Proposed Community Center renovation plan by Kerns Group Architects



and well-funded” project, he said, “we started paying for it 10 or 15 years ago.”

One of the residents’ biggest concerns about the hefty price tag was increased condo fees. Kandel assured the audience that Community Center renovation “will not impact condo fees.” With the current assessment, the association collects \$2.8 million a year, he

said. The association’s healthy finances will not suffer from a one-time payout of \$2.5 million, he assured.

The reason for the center’s radical transformation is its age – 35 years without major upgrades (except for the fitness center). With construction costs going up by 6 percent each year, Kandel said the longer we wait, the more

Courtesy of Jon Kandel

expensive it’s going to be. The current plan is to complete construction in about six months in 2020.

With the footprint remaining the same, the plan’s highlights include:

- ❖ replacement of the HVAC system
- ❖ new kitchen for the café

governance

- ❖ more efficient reconfiguration of association offices
- ❖ improved ramp access on both sides of the building
- ❖ reduced market and enlarged café
- ❖ elevator to replace spiral staircase
- ❖ game room converted to office space and conference rooms; it will be re-

located to an enlarged space in front of locker room entrance

- ❖ main lounge to include a raised stage, acoustic isolation, new audio-visual and sound system, storage rooms, and doors

- ❖ lower level room will be outfitted with new flooring, wall mirrors, sound system, and a bathroom

- ❖ infrastructure for electric car charging stations will be put in place

- ❖ in addition to a staircase and a long ramp, the Picnic Hill will have gas grills, a pavilion, and a fire pit in the center

To expedite the construction, the Community Center would need to be vacated. Kandel did not have answers about access to the popular amenities, such as the café and exercise facilities, during the construction.

The complete proposal with architectural drawings will be distributed to the residents next week, Kandel said.

Residents will be able to comment on the proposal via surveys, focus groups, or by getting in touch with Community Center renovation ad hoc committee chairman Guido Zanni at gzanni@aol.com.



Montebello Administrative Resolution #51 Fee Schedule 2019

1 Administrative Fees

1-1	Move In (administrative fee)	\$100
1-2	Move Out (administrative fee)	\$100
1-3	Internal Move (administrative fee)	\$100
1-4	Lease Fee (only for new renters moving in)	\$50
1-5	Lease Amendment (only for additions to or changes of the occupants of a unit)	\$50
1-6	Additional Resident (administrative fee)	\$50
1-7 a	Relocate Unit Boundaries Fee (to document combining units)	\$50
1-7 b	Attorney Review of Documents	\$150
1-7 c	Additional revisions to documents if necessary (Each time)	\$75
1-8 a	Garage Space Transfer Fee	\$50
1-8 b	Attorney Review of Documents	\$150
1-8 c	Additional revisions to documents if necessary (Each time)	\$75
1-9	Resale Documents (normal 14 day delivery - Includes Inspection)	\$200
1-10	Resale Documents (expedited 5 business days added to above)	\$50
1-11	Mortgage/Refinance Questionnaire	\$50
1-12	Bylaws or Rules and Regulations, (available free on line)	\$25

2 Refundable/Nonrefundable

2-1	Service Elevator, Primary Use, Non Refundable (per hour/day)	\$25/\$100
2-2	Service Elevator, Refundable Cash Deposit (if no damage or rules violations)	\$200
2-3	Community Center, Reservation Fee, Non-Refundable	\$100
2-4	Community Center, Deposit, Refundable (if no damage or rules violations)	\$250
2-5	Party Room Fee, Non-Refundable	\$50
2-6	Party Room Deposit, Refundable (if no damage or rules violations)	\$150
2-7	Estate Sale Open to Public, Non-Refundable, Administrative Fee	\$100
2-8	Estate Sale Open to Public, Refundable Deposit (if no damage or rules violations)	\$200
2-9	CC Lower Level Multi-Purpose Room Fee, Non-Refundable	\$50
2-10	CC Lower Level Multi-Purpose Deposit, Refundable (if no damage or rules violations)	\$150

3 Replacement Fees

3-1	Mailbox Lock (replacement)	\$35
3-2	Montebello I.D. Card/Guest Pass Replacement	\$25
3-3	Common Area & Storage Room Key Fobs (replacement or addition)	\$20
3-4	Vehicle Decal (replacement or addition)	\$20

4 Service

4-1	After Hours Lockout (when front desk is closed or no convenience key is available)	\$50
4-2	Emergency Service (M-F 8:00 p.m. to 8:30 a.m.; weekends, holidays, per staff hour)	\$50
4-3	In-Unit Service (duty hours M-F 8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. for ea 1/2 hour per staffer)	\$25
4-4	Staff Fee for Unusual Incidents (charge depending upon level of Staff required [GM, AGM, FPM, etc.]; up to a per hour rate of)	\$25/\$75

5 Other

5-1	Pet Registration Fee	\$25
5-2	Pet Tag Replacement	\$15
5-3	Personal Use Lockers (per year)	\$30
5-4	Copy Items at the Office (per page - non-association business)	\$0.25
5-5	Color copies (per page - non-association business)	\$0.50

This version recommended by Finance and Budget Committee on 11/15/18.

Source: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1DUTKTeydg6CGAO36PSCFjqw61heYlr2J/view>

club news

Changing of the guard at the Montebello Environmental Club

By Donald Barnes

It has been my pleasure to serve as Chair of the Environmental Club for the past two years. During that time, the club has been active in a number of areas, including the following:

- 🌿 Holding more than 20 meetings
- 🌿 Publishing more than a dozen articles in *The Times of Montebello*
- 🌿 Making possible the use of re-usable flatware at more than two dozen functions at Montebello
- 🌿 Helping to conduct the Arbor Day celebration that resulted in the planting of more than 80 native trees in the Montebello woodlands.
- 🌿 Participating in two Montebello Expos to inform the community and to encourage others to join us.
- 🌿 Encouraging the management (to the point of action) to invest in compostable tableware.
- 🌿 Exploring possibilities for a pilot composting program focusing on kitchen scraps.
- 🌿 Promoting and participating in three County-led ivy-cutting, tree-rescue activities in nearby Mt. Eagle Park.
- 🌿 Pushing for policy changes to allow Montebello residents to carry out modest environmental endeavors on the grounds.
- 🌿 Sponsoring two Saturday Cups of Joe.
- 🌿 Co-sponsoring (with the Kids Club) an outdoors Earth Day event.
- 🌿 Co-sponsoring (with the Activities Committee), the appearance of the President of Friends of Dyke Marsh to introduce Montebelloans to the unique ecological features of this nearby wetlands.

After two years of service, it is appropriate that I stand aside and let others take up the leadership banner of the organization. Although I plan to remain active in the club, other opportunities beckon that will require additional time commitments that must be drawn from current activities. 📱



Donald Barnes, lame duck chair of the Environmental Club, takes a cake of appreciation from Amy B. Garcia, who was elected to serve as chair for 2019

Photo by Karen Barnes



Let there be light

Why we wanted a historical marker for Montebello

By Paul Zeisset and Chuck Amoroso

Each of us has lived at Montebello for more than 15 years, and each of us was curious about the history of this unique property. Chuck was the first to encounter Nan Netherton's *Montebello at Mount Eagle*, a book that many early Montebello owners received when they bought their units. He got his copy when he bought a unit in Building 5 in 2002, and he began to wonder why there wasn't some sort of historical marker about Montebello's auspicious history.

Paul found Netherton's book at an online used book store. He was fascinat-

ed by the stories about the early owners of this property, but particularly about Byron Fairfax, the man who built the manor house he named Mount Eagle in 1790. The fact that George Washington was a frequent visitor to the house during the last years of his life made it all the more interesting.

Paul was particularly eager to figure out where the house was originally located, because there is no apparent trace left now. He acquired aerial photographs taken in 1937 and 1962, when the mansion was still standing, and overlaid them on contemporary maps to determine that the house was centered on what is now our Village Green, near the playground, though also over-

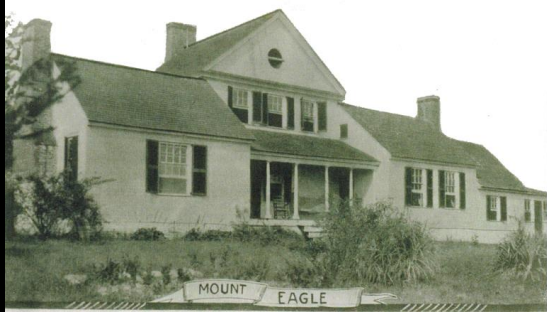
lapping onto areas of the parking lots on either side. The driveway extended west to North Kings Highway, since that was the main road into Alexandria until after the Civil War.

A few years ago, Paul met local historian Jay Roberts at an event, and found he was writing a book about historic houses that no longer existed in this area. Paul invited him to visit the site he had figured out for the former Mount Eagle mansion.

Since Roberts knew about the house from Nan Netherton's book and other sources, to him it seemed like the site was hallowed ground. Jay Roberts writes about local and regional history and other topics at his blog, Jaybird's

Mount Eagle Mansion

Mt Eagle mansion before 1918



Mt Eagle mansion after expansion



Mount Eagle. Illustration by Chris Youngbluth, 2016. Copyright.

George Washington Visited Here Often

This is the site of the Mount Eagle Mansion, built in 1790 by Bryan Fairfax.

George Washington was a long-time friend of Fairfax. Washington visited here frequently and dined here for the last time only a week before he died in 1799.

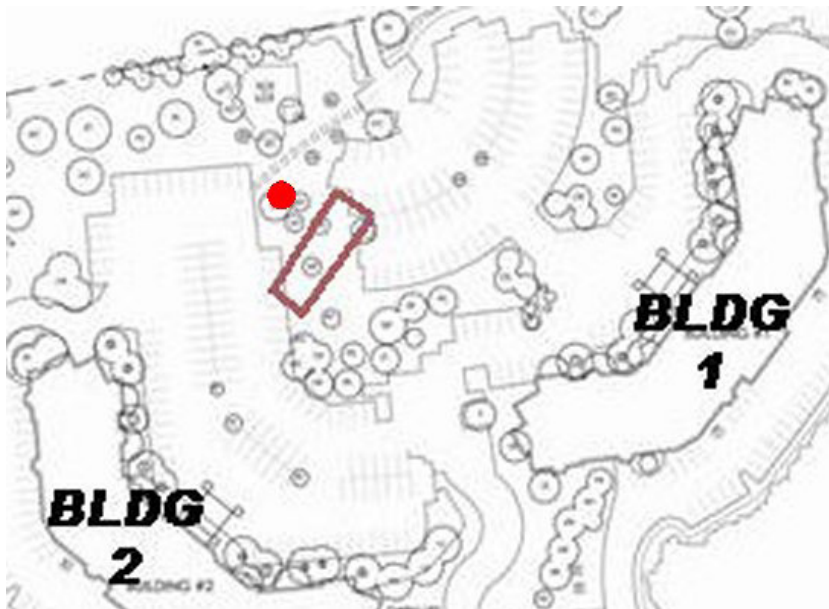
The Mount Eagle property changed hands many times in the years that followed. In 1918, a new owner greatly expanded the mansion, adding a full second story and two more wings. In 1936, a group of local businessmen and preservationists purchased Mount Eagle and formed the Lord Fairfax Country Club, but that venture failed within a few years. The last resident owners purchased Mount Eagle in 1941, raised their family here, and continued some farming activities for the next two decades.

The property was sold to developers in 1966, and the mansion, by then deteriorating, was destroyed in 1968. Metro obtained 20 acres of the Mount Eagle property for the Huntington station, and, in 1979, International Developers, Inc. purchased the remaining 35 acres of Mount Eagle for the construction of Montebello.

Montebello

Proposed historical marker plaque

historic preservation



From a 1962 aerial photograph, we have determined that the Mount Eagle Mansion was located in the center section of what is now Village Green, although also overlapping into parts of the adjacent parking lots.

Jottings at http://jay.typepad.com/william_jay/.

In 2017, Roberts' book *Lost Alexandria* was published, featuring Mount Eagle and 15 other historic homes around Alexandria that had been destroyed over the years. Paul arranged with Montebello's Speaker Series to allow Roberts to make a presentation about the book. Roberts brought along Lee Fifer, a member of the last family to own the mansion before its demise in 1968. Fifer described what he remembered of the house and growing up here.

In an October 5, 2017, article in *The Montebello Voice* to promote Roberts' presentation, Paul revealed the idea that had been building in his mind, that there should be a historical marker to draw Montebello residents' attention to the historic nature of the property. In that article, he suggested a headline *George Washington Dined Here*.

By that time, both Chuck and Paul had joined the new Grounds Committee, and were already working together on the Woodlands Subcommittee. They talked about a Mount Eagle Mansion sign and visited historical signs at other locations in the area for more ideas. Before long, Chuck volunteered to fund the creation of the sign to help make sure it got done. The rest of the Grounds Committee reviewed the idea and endorsed it.



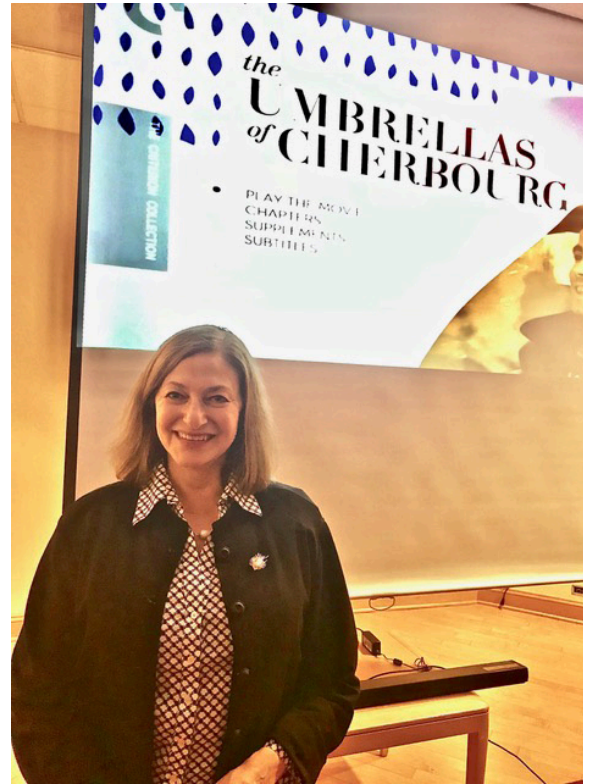
The sign would be an angled display, approximately 24x36 inches, in a design similar to that of the sturdy Civil War fortification sign in Mount Eagle Park. The location is just outside the original footprint of the house near the playground.

A proposal for the sign was presented to the Board of Directors at its working session November 27. On December 11, the board voted unanimously to accept the gift of the sign.

Now the draft content and graphics for the sign go to a creative company that will develop the detailed design. It

is expected that the sign can be manufactured and installed some time in mid 2019. The Grounds Committee plans to host an unveiling ceremony to which the Montebello community will be invited. Watch for an announcement. 📌

out & about



Top: The Montebello Music Club went caroling in each building.

Right: Pamela Copley presented The Umbrellas of Cherbourg for the monthly Classic Movie Night; Leslee Levy shared Marty at the AiM Film Society screening.

Photos by Dian McDonald

final glance



Reflection of tree branches and the sky on the Potomac

Photo by Azita Mashayekhi