

The MONTEBELLO Voice

an independent gazette

la vie bohème

January 31, 2019



Jc Maxim, Montmartre, December 2018

By Mikhailina Karina

Ed Hill says thank you to Montebello

By Joe de Angelis

In the last issue of *The Montebello Voice*, my wife and I initiated a collection for Officer Ed Hill and his family. During the past week, approximately \$1,500 was collected, which we forwarded to Ed. Hedi and I want to thank all of you who have participated in this effort.

We spoke to Ed this past Sunday evening. At the time he was resting in bed at home so we did not talk long. But Ed wanted us to relay his thanks to all of his friends at Montebello who contributed and wished him well. He said that never in his entire life has he received so many cards and well wishes. He was very touched by everyone's thoughtfulness and generosity.

For those of you who would still like to contact Ed, his address is:

Ed Hill
16135 Inheritance Drive
Brandywine, MD 20613 📧

Calling Montebello artists: Art in Many Forms



Communications?

By Elizabeth Card

I read in *The Times of Montebello* the self-congratulatory pieces on the community association and communication awards. Question: if Montebello is so GREAT at communicating, then why do we receive so many duplicate emails? Revisions? Corrections? And why is NO ONE able to spell correctly or use proper grammar in their communications? 📧

Art in Montebello is looking for jewelers, potters, quilters, needlepointers, knitters, fabric artists, clay creators, shoe designers, clothing designers and makers, ceramicists, sculptors, floral arrangers, wood carvers, metal crafters, paper artists, printers, and upcyclers to showcase their work in the art show on April 28 in the Community Center. AiM plans to feature the work of resident artists whose work cannot be displayed on the walls of the café.

Applications to participate will be posted online as well as available in the lobby mail slots and at the office.

For more information, please contact Harriet Duval at haziduvall@gmail.com or at 703-329-1342 or Pratibha Srinivasan at Psrinivasan@icloud.com. 📧



Parking lots are not for auto repairs

By Paul Walden

On December 20, I observed a car with the front end jacked up, parked near the playground by the Metro access road gate. I immediately reported this to Security and Access Control. I also notified the Board of Directors about this and was told that they were aware of the situation. The vehicle was not removed until the week of January 7, nearly three weeks after it was reported.

This is in violation of Rules and Regulations Sec 4 (d)(7), which prohibits the repairing of vehicles in common areas (except for emergency repairs). Sec 7(d)(3) also gives management the right to tow any vehicle in violation after 10 days of notifying the unit owner of the vio-

lation. Furthermore, having a car up on jacks is a safety hazard to children playing in the adjacent playground. What if one of them chased a ball under that car while it was up on jacks?

Management needs to take swift action regarding any vehicle that poses a safety concern. 📧



The MONTEBELLO Voice
an independent gazette
Alexandria, Virginia

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 email-only gazette, contact montebellovoice@cox.net or visit on the web at www.montebellovoice.com.

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A different look at Huntley Meadows

Text and photos by Rebecca Long Hayden



Who takes time to admire dead vegetation from the previous year? Henry David Thoreau, of course. This from *Walden*.

“... the stately beauty of the withered vegetation which had withstood the winter – life-everlasting, goldenrods, pinweeds, and graceful wild grasses, more obvious and interesting frequently than in summer even, as if their beauty was not ripe till then...”

“Many of the phenomena of Winter are suggestive of an inexpressible tenderness and fragile delicacy.”

Many of us visit Huntley Meadows Park in the fullness of summer or the spectacle of fall, but in winter perhaps it's more elegant, more subtle. On an early morning in January, only a handful of hearty folks venture there – a wildlife photographer who lets me see a merganser through his long-distance lens, an old man with a steaming cup of coffee and a smile, a mother with a toddler still enchanted with all that's new in her world.

The trails are flat, well-maintained and dry, the park is safe (never quite deserted), and my winter day is made by spending an hour there. Three miles away, or 15 minutes, it's our own local version of Walden Pond. <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/huntley-meadows> 📍



community center reno

Community Center Master Plan

Current \$6,800,000 cost is an incredible escalation from \$1.3 million in 2013 Kerns study and \$1.6 million in the 2015 Reserve Study

By Alex Beiro

On January 27 at the Community Forum on Capital Improvements, Board Treasurer Jon Kandel stated “none of these numbers are not accurate, they are ballpark.” This is not the faith we need to move forward on a \$6,800,000 project. I recall the Fitness Center was budgeted at \$852,000 with the actual costs coming in at \$1,500,000!

In 2013 and 2015 studies were commissioned by the Board of Directors to provide guidance for costs to make improvements to the Community Center. The 2013 study projected costs at \$1,300,000 and the 2015 study was \$1,600,000. Does the Community Center need some improvements? Absolutely! Do we need the Community Center and all its facilities closed for 6+ months? No access to pool, fitness

center, game rooms, restaurant and exercise rooms? More time is needed to study the necessity of improvements and to prioritize each amenity.

As a Realtor for over 25 years in Northern Virginia and leasing/selling property at Montebello, along with 15+ years of living here, my family, friends, and clients have never uttered one word of “the Community Center needs a face-lift.” It has always been just the opposite!

Montebello has wonderful amenities, beautiful grounds, walk to Metro, indoor/outdoor pools, etc. And as you know Montebello was just awarded the 2019 Condo of the Year Award. So if you just won the best in class in any category, would you spend more money for something that is already #1? 🏡

Concerns about CC renovation

By Rivers Hanson

The proposed community remodeling is greater in extent and cost than necessary or prudent. After the fitness center was added, I received a tax bill from the county indicating the value of my unit had decreased! Why would we remodel the building if there was not a reasonable prospect of a return of capital?

I favor replacing HVAC equipment and furniture and floor coverings as necessary. The remainder of the proposed remodeling should be reevaluated – especially the addition of an elevator to take participants to an exercise class. 🏡



Lights out by Mikhailina Karina

The Montebello Voice

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

Picnic Hill renovations

By John Powers

Adapted from an email to the Community Center Master Plan Committee

The cost of the proposed stairs to the picnic hill is \$21K and the ramp is \$54K for a total of \$75K.

The scale of the picnic hill drawing on page 3 of the Master Plan is about 27' per inch. Using this, the width of the ramp is roughly 5', which will require a 5' cut into the hill. This will in turn require either a retention wall that is $\geq 2.9'$ high or a regrading. Regrading seems feasible but tricky, especially near the turn around.

The current appearance of the picnic hill is very attractive. [Photos and captions on next page, ed.] Some trees likely will be

lost and I am not sure how much we will like the overall appearance if the stairs and ramp are put in.

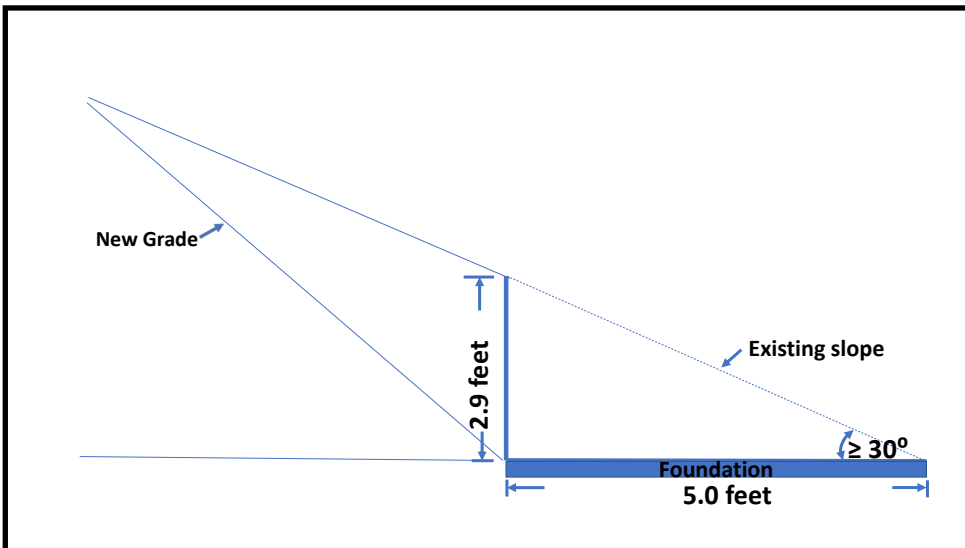
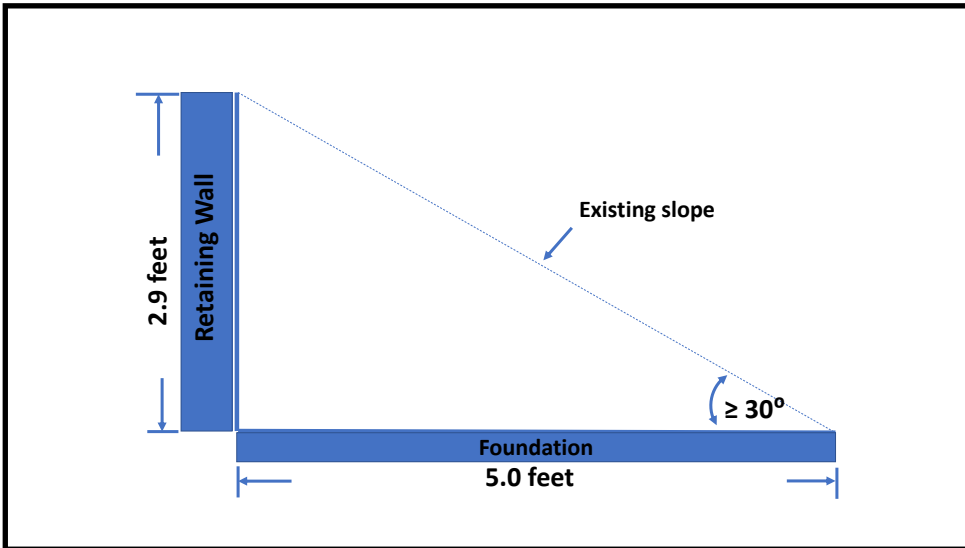
The current stairs are fully functional and roughly 6'1" in height, including the two steps above the main set vs. the 10' of the proposed stairs. The railing on the path up to the picnic area is in need of replacement. In any case, why two sets of stairs to the same place?

The current path through the outdoor pool is fully functional. During the open pool season, life guards are available and when it is closed, it can be fenced along the pool. Once exiting the rear gate there is a small dip and then a rise along the stairway path that will require pavers or paving from the rear gate.

The pathway through the outdoor pool is close to level and much easier for non-motorized wheelchairs. Wheelchair residents from buildings 3 and 4 would, however, have to either drive to the west CC parking lot or go through the CC.

If there was no other way for wheelchairs to access picnic hill, I would be a strong proponent of the ramp. But there is. It is true that the money is in the reserves but every dime we spend out of reserves will need to be replaced eventually by the owners.

If we have a burning desire to spend money, at least consider, as an alternative, some exquisite art work for the CC. 🏠



Are you having a party?

By Karen Barnes

The Montebello Environment Club is encouraging residents to borrow and use the community's flatware rather than relying on throw-away plastic ware. Both our Potluck and monthly Cup of Joe sponsors are already using it regularly.

More than 10 individuals have donated flatware to the cause. If you would like to borrow some for a special event, please contact Don or Karen Barnes at chinakaren@yahoo.com. If it is available, simply come by to pick up the amount you need, use it, wash it, and bring it back for the next event. 🏠

The Montebello Voice wants to hear from you

community center reno



This is near the beginning of the proposed ramp. I love the appearance. These three trees would likely be lost by the 5' cut and regrading. The proposal is to re-landscape this area attractively, but can they replace its natural beauty?



This is near the turnabout of the proposed ramp (about 10' to the right). The bushes to the left would certainly go, but that is not a big deal. The tree on the right, however, would almost certainly be a casualty. The trees to be lost are, I believe, Bradford Pears, which have a vibrant display in the spring.



These stairs are about 6'1" vertical height (including the two steps in the background) vs. the 10' of the proposed stairs. These are followed by a gradual ramp up to the picnic area but the fundamental question is why spend money to duplicate functional stairs? If it was essential to reduce the grade, then tear these out and put in new stairs where they will not tear up the hill.



This shows the wheelchair access path from the rear pool gate. Once through the front pool gate, the path is level to the rear gate and then a small dip and small rise from there. This, of course, would require pavers or concrete at a cost that would likely not approach the \$54K of the proposed ramp. Persons in wheelchairs from buildings 3 and 4 would, however, need to get to the front pool gate and the pool itself would require fencing when not open.

community center reno

Residents support elevator, question finances at community forum

By *Mikhailina Karina*

“Make the community accessible to *all* people,” stated Jane Anne Gleason at the Community Forum on Capital Improvements on January 27.

Half a dozen speakers agreed that adding an elevator with a straight staircase to the lower level of the Community Center would be a most welcome upgrade.

Close to 70 residents attended the forum to discuss the proposed Community Center renovation. Because it was not a town hall, participants did not have to fill out index cards with their comments, but could make short statements.

Board members Jon Kandel, Doug Kennett, and Guido Zanni conducted the meeting.

Ever since the proposed plan to renovate the Community Center was unveiled last December, self-selected focus groups have been discussing the various components of designs proposed by Kerns Group Architects. A series of online surveys (read results and comments at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ekcnXbpWq4DmVhBy-iOGZaL6L5KLR7tJn/view>) have provided feedback from the wider community.

The proposed plan is not the final design, Zanni said. There is time to tweak individual components based on community needs and desires.

Ford Chinworth, resident consultant for architecture, said “we have a good master plan to be used as a basis for design. We have a whole year ahead of design period

to make significant changes – some of them by request and others by engineering necessity.” He emphasized that it was important “not to truncate the process by refusing the plan.” He implored the residents to vote “yes” for capital improvements on February 13 and to keep pushing for the changes they desired.

The upcoming capital improvements vote (article on page 7) will fund the projects. Construction is slated to begin in March 2020.

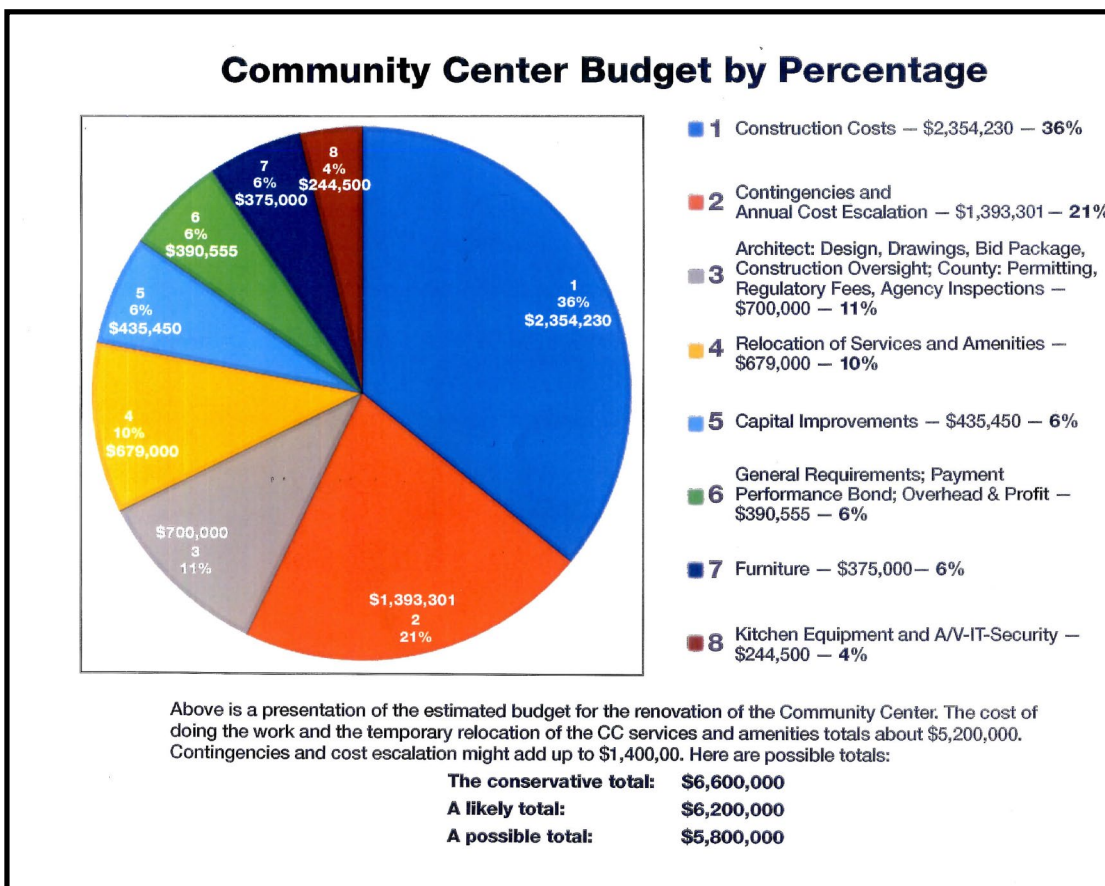
In addition to the widespread support for the elevator and improved accessibility, several speakers worried about the hefty price tag for the project and its potential impact on Montebello’s finances.

Board treasurer Jon Kandel responded that Montebello has approximately \$10 million in reserves.

“Everything that needs to be done is funded,” he said. And there is enough of a cushion to cover unexpected expenses, such as earthquake damage or other calamities.

“I trust the board and the treasurer when they say the money is there,” said Virginia Nickich. “We have money in the reserves.” She urged the residents not to “personalize” potential changes and think about the future generations who will be living at Montebello. 🏠

This pie chart was distributed at the community forum



community center reno

Board approves “all or nothing” ballot on capital improvements

By *Mikhailina Karina*

In a unanimous vote, the Board of Directors chose the “lump sum” option for a ballot on proposed capital improvements for the Community Center. The ballot (below), with just “in favor of the above resolution” or “against the above resolution” will be presented to the owners at a special meeting on February 13.

Besides the two options, favored by board members, other ballots were single vote and vote splitting. Nearly 30 people attended the special session on January 28.

Director Guido Zanni, who has been one of the board members spearheading the Community Center renovation effort, said the up-and-down vote would prevent voting bias of residents who favored certain amenities over others.

Other board members agreed. The problem with individual votes is people cherry picking what they like, said Board Treasurer Jon Kandel. As a result, the vote could fall short of the necessary number of ballots cast and nix the entire project.

Description	Cost
By Area	
Elevator	\$145,000
South Walkway	\$7,300
West Walkway	\$36,250
Sitting Area	\$38,000
Windows in East Wall	\$30,000
Picnic Hill	\$153,000
Bathroom by Card Room	\$13,300
Bathroom on Lower Level	\$12,600
Subtotal (no contingencies, and in 2018 dollars)	\$435,450
	\$367,450
15% Design Contingency	\$65,318
15% Construction Contingency	\$65,318
Cost Escalation (6% per year for two years)	\$52,254
Total Capital Improvement Cost including Maximum Contingency and Cost Escalation in 2020 Dollars	\$616,339 \$521,779

The final project will not include two proposals soundly rejected by the residents in surveys and focus groups: sitting area by the east entrance (\$38,000) and windows in the east wall (\$30,000). The subtotal with no contingencies in 2018 dollars will be \$367,450. The total cost with maximum contingency and cost escalation in 2020 dollars will be \$521,779.

“The issue there is that we are using contingency and escalation numbers that are on the high side, producing a conservative total,” Kandel wrote in an email. “I – and several outside architects who have spoken up recently – believe that the \$367,450 figure probably grows to \$440,000 or so. These items are less subject to contingency expense than other things in the overall construction.” 🏠

**MONTEBELLO CONDOMINIUM UNIT OWNERS ASSOCIATION
SPECIAL MEETING: February 13, 2019
**** OFFICIAL COMMUNITY CENTER BALLOT ******

RESOLVED, that the Unit Owners hereby authorize the Board of Directors to expend up to \$525,000, for the purpose of undertaking additions, alterations or improvements to the Community Center and adjacent facilities substantially in accordance with the Community Center Schematic Plan included in the Notice of Special Meeting Notice mailed to Unit Owners. The amount authorized is in addition to: (a) the amount (1% of the annual budget) which the Board is authorized to spend for additions, alterations or improvements without Owner approval; and (b) the amount the Board is authorized to spend for replacements or refurbishments that are not considered to be additions, alterations or improvements.¹

I hereby cast the votes of the Unit specified above **IN FAVOR OF the above Resolution**

I hereby cast the votes of the Unit specified above **AGAINST the above Resolution**

Ice melt used at B3 and pet areas isn't pet-safe...yet

By Lisa J. Stedje

Thank you to management and our wonderful staff for doing a great job at clearing our walkways and parking lots in snowy and icy conditions!

Unfortunately, currently (as of January 28), a non-pet safe ice melt product is used not only on the walkways from the B3 glass doors and over any steps to the pet areas, but it's spread directly onto the start of the pet area trails (onto the snow/ice, actually right on top of the wood chips and dirt), thus mixing non-pet safe additives into the soil of the pet areas, creating more unhealthy pet areas than usual and ultimately more mud.

Years ago, when Manju Gulati was our general manager and Doug Kennett was our board president, Montebello used to make a point of only applying non-pet safe ice melt (ice melt that's safe for dogs' paw pads, even if they lick them) in the walkways from the B3 doors to the pet areas. That was an excellent and healthy practice that



we somehow forgot to continue, and one which the Montebello Pet Club and I are hopeful will be resumed.

Resurrecting the use of pet safe ice melt will, furthermore, aid in the walking safety of the dogs' owners (human residents). After all, presently, dog-owning residents who are physically able, walk on ice and snow in order to avoid the unsafe-for-pets ice melt product on cleared walkways. Thus, further safety hazards (slippery walking conditions) are being unintentionally thrust upon residents. Those who dare not even try to walk around the unsafe-for-pets ice melt product are con-

tinually putting their dogs' health at risk – and those are often the lesser able-bodied residents who cannot clean their dogs' paws once they return to their units.

For now, for expediency's sake, the pet store, PetSmart (down Route 1 in the Mount Vernon-Hybla Valley Shopping Center), has stock of pet-safe ice melt at the front of their store, near their registers. Montebello staff could drive down there and get a couple of bags of it for each building's rear exits, rear walkways, and pet areas.

Later, when there is more time, management can decide how we ought to purchase pet-safe ice melt in the most economical way, as well as consider using it exclusively on all paved pedestrian walkways, around Picnic Hill, and at all garage entrances. 🐾



Suzette Manduley, data platform project manager at the U.S. Department of Energy, spoke about good personal cyber security practices at the January 17 Speaker Series presentation.

Photo by Dian McDonald

Theresa Kritcher
An Artist Over the Years

Montebello Café
January 5 - February 15

Invite you to our film & discussion

BREAD AND CHOCOLATE
THURSDAY FEBRUARY 28 7:30 P.M. PARTY ROOM 2

"A WONDERFUL FILM"
inspired, profoundly original, deeply touching and filled with humor. —*Roll*

"Delicious, absolutely delicious."
—*WGBH-TV*

Francis Bruniotti's
BREAD and CHOCOLATE
You'll Laugh Till Your Heart Breaks.
Starring Nino Manfredi and Anna Karina. © 1978 ROLL-NORTAL FILM

Italian comedy-drama about clashing cultures when a hardworking Sicilian goes to Switzerland to find a job. The contrast between the cool elegance of the Swiss and the unpolished style of the Italian immigrant conflict to create laughs and tears. This touching film is a "hidden gem" with some unforgettable images that reveal the gap between the wealthy and the working poor. The film won the New York Film Critics Circle Award for best foreign film in 1978.

Caryl Curry will introduce the film and lead the post-movie discussion.

Montebello Classic Movie Night
Wednesday, February 13, 2019, at 7pm
on the Big Screen in the Community Center

The 1934 Pre-Code Romantic Drama starring Frances Dee, Ginger Rogers, Bruce Cabot and Billie Burke. This film was condemned by the Legion of Decency (my, how times have changed!).

FREE popcorn, candies, and soft drinks for a great classic movie night!

Your host, Pamela Copley, will give you the pre-screening information on the movie and its stars, and then give you a post-screening back story.

Shooting Into the Sun
Sunsets, Sand and Water
Siesta Key, Florida

Photographs and Poems by Bonnie Jacob
Production and Printing by Jeanne Tiff

Montebello Café
February 16 - March 29

final glance

