



**September Meeting Date:**  
**SOECA will hold a meeting**  
**on Monday, September 29 at**  
**7pm at the Zinnia Restaurant**  
**and via Zoom.**

***SOECA's September Meeting: Monday,  
September 29, 2025, at 7pm***

Our speaker will be journalist, environmentalist, and author Mike Tidwell who recently published his book *The Lost Trees of Willow Avenue: A Story of Climate and Hope on One American Street*. The book uses the author's own Takoma Park block to tell the story of climate change—and what can be done about it. This book is generating a lot of buzz. Mike will have copies for purchase for \$29; he accepts cash/ check/ Venmo, and he is happy to sign books for folks after the meeting.

Here is the Zoom meeting info:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84704125049?pwd=RFZNDKhOc45YZom0Qfl5b0uSj7Vb3t>

Use Meeting ID 847 0412 504 and Passcode:  
SOECA

One tap mobile:

+13052241968,,84704125049#,,, \*166841# US

***SOECA Membership***

We would like as many neighbors as possible to become members to help support our activities. We are also seeking donations to enhance our use of technology. To join, check the status of your membership, or donate, go to [www.soeca.org](http://www.soeca.org) and scroll to the Join Now

button, which will take you to the secure SimpliDues website.

***SOECA Boundaries***

Colesville Road on the West;  
Cedar and Fenton Streets on  
the South; Bonifant Street  
and Wayne Avenue on the  
East; Franklin and Caroline  
Avenues on the North.



***SOECA Officers***

Chris Reynolds, President  
Elicia John, Vice President  
Matthew Murawski, Vice President  
Cody Uhing, Treasurer  
Diana Rowny, Secretary

***SOECA Committees***

If you are interested in either of the open positions listed below, please contact Chris Reynolds.

*Environment Committee* – Anne Vorce

*Land Use Committee* – Chris Reynolds

*Membership Committee* – **Open**

*Neighbors Help Neighbors Committee* –  
Michael Gurwitz

*Public Safety Committee* – **Open**

*Purple Line Community Advisory Team* –  
Robert Samors

*Social Committee* – Angela and Matt Hood

*Technology Committee* – Jonathan Bernstein

## **SOECA Email List**

While it is not a SOECA project, we advertise the email list as a helpful resource. To join: <https://groups.io/g/SOECA/join> and fill in your email address; or email [SOECA+subscribe@groups.io](mailto:SOECA+subscribe@groups.io) and include your name and address in the email.

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## **Highlights of Membership Meeting on May 19, 2025**

SOECA held its annual Board elections at the May 19 meeting. Chris Reynolds, Elicia John, Matt Murawski, and Cody Uhing were elected to their current offices, President, Vice Presidents and Treasurer, respectively. Diana Rowny was elected as Secretary.

SOECA currently has approximately \$10,000 on hand, with \$800 earmarked for improving meeting technology. A \$1,500 budget was approved for the block party. Chris Reynolds noted that SOECA had secured a \$900 grant to cover the band and bounce house.

By a vote of 20 in favor, 2 opposed, and 2 abstentions, the membership approved a \$500 contribution for the restoration of the historic Spanish colonial gates located at the intersection of Franklin and Hamilton Avenues. The membership also discussed establishing a budget specifically for beautification/

preservation projects, but no vote was taken on this idea.

## **Silver Spring Hotel to Become Affordable Housing**

Arctaris Impact Investors LLC will convert the now-closed Silver Spring Hotel at 8727 Colesville Road into apartments. By utilizing Montgomery County's PILOT program, half of the property's units will remain affordable to households earning up to 60% of the Area Median Income— \$163,900 for a family of four. Arctaris is partnering with Good Homes, a specialist in hotel-to-apartment conversions; Housing on Merit, a nonprofit committed to preserving and developing affordable housing; and Erie Insurance, which is investing in the project as part of its social impact commitment to fund developments in underserved communities.

While county officials lamented the loss of the hotel in downtown Silver Spring, they also acknowledged that housing projects in the county typically don't provide that amount of affordability.

## **SOECA Scam Alert**

In July a neighbor received an email that was made to look like it was from Chris Reynolds, SOECA's President. The message included a request that the person pay some expenses on behalf of SOECA. If you receive such an email, remember that SOECA will never ask members to send money on its behalf. To protect yourself, check the details of suspicious emails carefully and be sure to pay your dues through the SimpliDues website.

There was a second scam email later in the summer. While the first one was received by an individual, the second one showed up on the email list. The scammer was able to post to the list because a BOT returned a legitimate-looking message in response to the moderator's standard request to confirm a potential user's

identity. As soon as the moderator realized the user was illegitimate, he terminated access to the email list and warned list members to delete the scam message. To combat this in the future, more information is now required before someone is permitted to join the list, and member postings will be monitored for some time to ensure compliance with the list's rules and standards.

### ***Zoning Changes/Workforce Housing***

**Housing N.O.W.** The County Council passed Zoning Text Amendment 25-02 in July, by a vote of 8-3. This ZTA will allow duplexes, triplexes, townhomes and modest-sized apartment buildings as an option to replace single family homes along certain designated corridors. Around SOECA, this would apply to homes fronting on Colesville Road from Fenton St. to Four Corners; ZTA 25-02 would not apply to the wider neighborhood. When a triplex is built, the County would require that one of the three units satisfy the definition of "Workforce Housing," or attainable to households with an income of 120% of the area-wide median income. If a duplex is built, no workforce housing requirement would be come into play.

**Office-to-Housing Conversions.** Bill 02-25, the "Payment in Lieu of Taxes-Affordable Housing" bill, was passed by council members who voted 9-2 to override the County Executive's veto. The bill would make 100% of the real property tax that developers would pay for a period of 20 years exempt if they convert office buildings with a 50% or greater vacancy rate into housing. They would also have to make 17.5% of the housing units affordable. This bill was associated with zoning amendment ZTA 25-03 which was passed by the Council this spring.

**University Boulevard Plan.** The County Planning Board has transmitted a new draft master plan to County Council. This plan addresses housing and other issues along University Blvd from the Beltway to Amherst Avenue. It encourages mixed-

use development to "bring housing, retail and public amenities together." Public hearings were held on September 10 and September 16.

### ***No Extension to Leaf Blower Ban***

On July 28 the County Council rejected a proposal to delay implementing a ban on gas-powered leaf blowers used by commercial landscaping companies (individuals were banned from using them on 7/1/2025). The extension would have given companies 3 more years to transition to battery-powered equipment, but the Council rejected the proposed extension. As of July 1, 2025, gas-powered leaf blowers are prohibited in the county (with exceptions for large sites, like school grounds, golf courses). The sale of such equipment in Montgomery County was banned in July of 2024.

### ***Springvale Terrace Construction Update***

Enterprise Community Development hopes to begin demolition in November with construction starting in February of next year. Barring unforeseen circumstances, the new building should be open by February of 2028. There have been no changes to the plans that were approved by the County. Enterprise will have another community meeting at least 30 days before demolition begins to give us more information and to answer our questions.

### ***Fall Yard Care Tips from the Environment Committee***

**Fireflies!** - for Fireflies next summer, rake some of your fallen leaves under bushes and trees and into perennial borders. Leaves suppress weeds and fertilize your soil, and Fireflies may lay their eggs on your fallen leaves.

**Lanternflies!** - to reduce voracious Lanternflies, plant some milkweed this fall. One munch of milkweed and the Lanternflies keel over. Bonus: milkweed hosts Monarch Butterflies, whose caterpillars are immune to its sap.

**Mosquitos!** – there are no-spray services to kill mosquitos. Their trap technique enables pollinators to thrive by targeting only mosquitoes. Right now we can see the sulphurs, monarchs, swallowtails, and many other “flutterbys” that benefit from not spraying.

**Ticks!** - Ticks carry diseases for people and pets and they love Japanese Barberry; you can swap in local shrubs this fall. Some shrubs offer color all year, like the bright red stems of Red Osier Dogwood (*Cornus sericea*) or the glossy evergreen leaves of Inkberry (*Ilex glabra*).

**Trees!** - Fall is a good planting season and you can use state and county coupons for \$75 off the tree price. The coupons, which can be found by searching “Montgomery tree planning coupons,” count toward both canopy trees like Oak and rooftop trees like Dogwood and Fringetree.

**Vines!** - Fall is a great time to kill the vines that creep on your trees and shrubs. We’ll come to your yard to do the work and to teach you how, including bundling for county removal. We’ll even sharpen your pruning tools.

Email Betsy Mendelsohn with any questions: [b\\_mendel-sohn@hotmail.com](mailto:b_mendel-sohn@hotmail.com)).

### **Good News on Crime in DTSS**

In a Safe Silver Spring meeting in May, Commander Jason Cokinos reported that all types of violent crime are down in DTSS compared to last year. Many things have contributed to this, including the Late-Night Safety Bill, increased patrols in garages; increased bike patrols during business hours; the Drone as First Responder, among other things. Also, he reported that the Maryland Transportation Authority’s police will have primary responsibility for policing crime along the Purple Line.

### **Honoring Rachel Carson**

SpringSong Museum, the brainchild of Silver Spring resident Rebecca Henson, hopes to transform the existing water filtration building at Burnt Mills East Park into a museum honoring Silver Spring native Rachel Carson, a pioneering writer and biologist.

### **Many Thanks**

**SOECA’S Race Team.** A huge thank you to Michael Gurwitz who organized TEAM SOECA for the Poplar Spring Animal Sanctuary’s Run for the Animals on May 18. The team raised over \$1,170 and placed 3rd out of 14 teams. Courtney Blenkinsop, Wesley Blenkinsop, Kailen Blenkinsop, Anna Vanderwaart, Nathan Vanderwatt, and Chiara Jacoby won individual honors in their age groups.

**SOECA’s Street Fest.** Heartfelt thanks go to Matt and Angie Hood for organizing another fabulous summer party for the neighborhood. They were helped by an army of volunteers, including Floyd Gomez-Starnes who sponsored the Shave Ice Stand; Jon Bernstein and others who gathered door prizes from local merchants, and many other people who staffed the food and activities tables, watched over children in the bounce house, and helped set up and clean up.

**SOECA’S Esteemed Leaders:** Deep appreciation to Chris Reynolds, Elicia Johns, Matthew Murawski, and Cody Uhing for continuing in their roles as President, Vice Presidents, and Treasurer, respectively, and to Diana Rowny for assuming the role as Secretary for the current year.

Our thanks also go to our Committee Chairs who continue to work on our behalf: Anne Vorce, Chris Reynolds, Michael Gurwitz, Robert Samors, Jonathan Bernstein, and Matt and Angie Hood.