

# Council Schedules Open Space Hearing

The City Council has tentatively scheduled an open hearing on the proposed open space master plan for July 25.

The plan, originally put before the Council in June 14, 1993 by the Takoma Park Open Space Committee is intended to "provide active and passive recreational space close to where citizens live and work as well as provide for greenway linkages to parks, schools and other significant points of interest within the City." It also addresses land and water preservation.

"The primary impetus for the open space plan was to have a way to assess vacant properties that are threatened with development to see whether or not the City should seek to develop them," said Lisa Schwartz, a planner with the Department of Housing and Community Development.

"The plan would allow us to take a pro-active approach on this [issue], rather than having development plans on the table all the time and having to react," said Schwartz. She pointed out that the proposed plan is not a full-blown policy, it simply recommends that the city try to preserve nine undeveloped areas of Takoma Park.

Originally, the plan had recommended ten, but, responding to opposition from homeowners at last year's public hearing, the council voted to delete the so-called "super lots" from the list. Those lots are located in a block behind Ethan Allen, Woodland, Elm, Prince George's and Forest Park Avenues. Homeowners expressed fears that if the city acquired them and built a trail, more pedestrian traffic would pass by their back yards.

At the hearing the council also instructed staff of the Department of Housing and Community Development to visit neighborhood associations and get a better sense of citizen concerns about open space and report back.

Schwartz said that while some residents had concerns about specific neighborhood situations, the DHCD found little opposition to the open space idea.

When asked why it's taken so long for the plan to return to the council, Schwartz said, "There's been a lot going on in the last year with unification and Blair High School . . . people have been distracted

with other issues." She verified that now that the issue has re-emerged, the "expressed intent of the council is to adopting the plan."

The open space policy was originally proposed in 1984, but the City Council did not appoint an open space committee until March of 1992. The six-member volunteer committee, chaired by Farroll Hamer, visited over 118 undeveloped areas in the City before earmarking 10 for preservation or low impact recreational use (hiking trails).

The committee also pro-

posed that the city create an asphalt trail along the Baltimore Avenue paper street, connecting Philadelphia Avenue with the paved section of Baltimore Avenue leading to the Metro. Many commuters now walk along a dirt path in that wooded area.

According to the plan the City would take two approaches toward protecting an area marked for open space. One approach is outright acquisition. Three areas have been so designated: Lake Street (a paper thoroughfare), 6847 Eastern Avenue (behind Pizza Mov-

ers) and 7813 Carroll Avenue (in the Long Branch Stream Valley). According to Schwartz, the DHCD is already pursuing acquisition of the lots surrounding Lake Street.

The plan suggests that the city gain control of the other six areas through easements, which would grant the City rights of use over an owner's property without conveying ownership. This would save the city the cost of purchase, but would give them the right to decide its level of development. The owner would also retain some rights to the property as well as tax benefits. The sites recommended for easements are 46 Columbia Avenue, 204 Dogwood, 7316 Glenside Drive, 7310 Holly Avenue and 7333 Piney Branch Road, 117 Ritchie Avenue, 801 Sligo Creek

Parkway, and 8403 Sligo Creek Parkway.

The City Council has also asked that an amendment be prepared which would include acquisition of the wooded lots at Glengarry Place. The lots have recently gone on the development market, and many residents have lobbied the council to preserve the forest area around Sligo Creek, where the lots are located.

A copy of the open space plan is on reserve at the Takoma Park library next. Copies are also available from the Department of Housing and Community Development, at the Takoma Park Municipal Building, 7500 Maple Avenue. Or call Lisa Schwartz at (301) 270 5900, extension 228.

## Poetry in Motion

Takoma Park Mentor Produces Learning and Fun

TAMMY MAGEE

*Poetry in Motion* is Takoma Park Television's answer to Sesame Street. It was initially geared towards children 10 to 12, but has proven to appeal to all age groups. Dwayne Redmond has been producing the show for over a year. A volunteer for Takoma Park's Cable station, Redmond has worked energetically to bring quality and creative programming to his audiences. When asked to describe *Poetry in Motion*, Redmond responds, "It's a fun, different, educational show for kids as well as for parents... It's like nothing else you see on television."

The name alone provokes curiosity. Redmond says he thought of it after seeing his poems on television for the first

time. "When I saw my poetry moving across that screen, I was instantly struck with the idea." Redmond displays his verses throughout the program. With its references to God and nature, the poetry adds an atmosphere of spirituality, without promoting any particular religion. The show advocates general moral philosophies—love and respect for one's self and one's neighbor.

Redmond aims to keep *Poetry in Motion* "the most community oriented show in Takoma Park." Real issues and real people are what give this show its personable effect. Viewers may see themselves or their next-door neighbors and friends speaking and interacting on this program. Neighborhood children from Takoma Park and Carol Highlands El-



Dwayne Redmond puts poetry in motion for Takoma kids.

ementary schools make up the majority of the show's performers. The babies in one of his public announcement broadcasts were recruited from nearby shopping malls—their parents were included in the video, too.

Redmond, who is the chairman of the Black Male Achievement Program at Carol Highlands Elementary, believes in authentic news and reactions. For his show's teen rap segment, "The Corner," Redmond conducts on-the-spot interviews with local teenagers. The show's "Black History Moment" segment involves children acting out a particular African-American hero while a brief reading of the person's history is played in the foreground. "When these children see themselves on television, portraying the roles of black achievers, they are encouraged to learn more about their characters and other positive black role models," says Redmond.

Encouraged by the supportive words of children, parents and community leaders, Redmond can see only good things for the program's future.

*Poetry in Motion* can be seen on Takoma Park Television (54/19) on Fridays at 12:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. and on Saturdays at 10:00, 10:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m.

## City to Study Employee Attitudes

On May 11, the City Council voted unanimously to spend \$8,050 of Unappropriated Reserves on a cultural diversity audit. Bonnie J. Berger & Associates, a Takoma-based human-relations consulting firm, will conduct the audit over 14 days sometime in June. The City took bids from three companies and decided that Berger & Associates was the "best and most cost effective." City Administrator Beverly Habada said in an interview that the idea for the audit was first raised several years ago by former Ward 6 Councilmember Lloyd Johnson.

"We're not doing this because we think we have a prob-

lem," said Habada. "We're doing this because we're trying to be responsive. I think that every organization should have people who are responsive to multi-cultural situations, because that is what the world is."

During the first phase of the audit, City employees will fill out surveys about their attitudes towards people of different gender, race, country of origin, or sexual orientation. Forty-eight of the City's 150 employees will participate in focus groups, and up to 16 will be interviewed.

During the second phase, Berger & Associates will review the data with the City—look-

ing for trends, and common issues of concern—and will hold an open session with all of the employees who took part in the first phase. They will then recommend City action based on the survey. During an April 4 work session, the council had decided not to commit the city to a full-scale workshop until after the audit.

"We might find out that we don't have a problem," said Mayor Ed Sharp during the work session.

According to the proposal submitted by Berger & Associates, the workshops, which would have lasted a day and a half for every employee, would have cost an additional \$8,775.