

ECA Newsletter

September 2020

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1. Latest News on Voting in the November Presidential Election

With the November Presidential Election less than 60 days away and the COVID-19 pandemic still firmly entrenched, arrangements for voting are continuing to evolve. Here is the latest. If you want to receive regular updates on voting in the election, please see the Edgemoor Tip of the Month, below. You can visit the Montgomery County Board of Elections website [HERE](#). The Maryland State Board of Elections website is [HERE](#).

Mail-in Voting

Remember – The easiest and safest way to vote this year is to use a mail-in ballot. See the August 2020 ECA Newsletter for more information about mail-in ballots. A few additional reminders:

- There are two different places on the Board of Elections website where you can submit an online request for a mail-in ballot. Many recent articles and messages have included a link to a web page that is used to both register to vote and request a mail-in ballot. That can be confusing (and unnecessarily time-consuming) for most people. If you are already registered to vote and don't need to update your registration, go [HERE](#) to simply request a mail-in ballot. If you need to register to vote or to update your registration and you also want to request a mail-in ballot, go [HERE](#).
- The Board of Elections plans to send out requested mail-in ballots to voters in late September and they strongly encourage voters who are mailing in the ballots to get them in the mail as soon as possible, and no later than October 28, to ensure the U.S. Postal Service can deliver them in time.
- If you use a mail-in ballot, make sure that you sign your name to the oath and date your signature on the back of the return envelope. If you do not, your ballot will be rejected.
- You do not have to submit your mail-in ballot in the mail. You can also put it in a Drop Box at one of the following locations:
 - The Board of Elections office at 18753 N. Frederick Ave, Suite 210, Gaithersburg, MD 20879. That box is available now; or

- Any one of the early voting centers (see Early Voting, below) beginning about October 1; or
- Any of the Election Day voting centers beginning in mid-October (see In Person Voting on Election Day, below).

The Board of Elections plans on having additional Drop Boxes available soon.

- If you request a mail-in ballot, do not go to the polls and try to vote. You can drop off your completed mail-in ballot at a polling place, but you cannot cast a regular ballot. If you try to vote, they will make you vote a provisional ballot—a process that is complicated and takes more time.

Early Voting

There are eleven (11) early voting sites this year. Each one is also an Election Day voting center. Early voting will run from October 26 to November 2, 7 am-8 pm. Here are the early voting sites:

Activity Center at Bohrer Park (Gaithersburg)
 Damascus Recreation Center (Damascus)
 Executive Office Building (Rockville)
 Germantown Recreation Center (Germantown)
 Jane E. Lawton Recreation (Chevy Chase)
 Marilyn J. Praisner Recreation (Burtonsville)
 Mid-County Recreation Center (Silver Spring)
 Potomac Recreation (Potomac)
 Sandy Spring Volunteer Fire Department (Olney)
 Silver Spring Civic Building (Silver Spring)
 Wheaton Recreation (Silver Spring)

The early voting site closest to our community is the Jane E Lawton Recreation Center (4301 Willow Ln, Chevy Chase, MD 20815).

In Person Voting on Election Day

In past elections, there have been 240 polling places where residents voted on Election Day, and each voter went to a specific own polling place near their home (ours was Bethesda Elementary School). In this November's general election, there will be 39 voting centers across the County, and residents will be able to vote at any one of those centers. There will be no voting at Bethesda Elementary this year. Twenty five (25) of the voting centers will be at public high schools (every public high school in Montgomery County except Thomas Edison High School of Technology). The rest will be in county recreation centers and other public facilities. These are the locations of the voting centers:

- All public high schools except Thomas Edison High School of Technology
- Activity Center at Bohrer Park (Gaithersburg)
- Damascus Recreation Center (Damascus)

- Executive Office Building (Rockville)
- Germantown Recreation Center (Germantown)
- Jane E. Lawton Recreation (Chevy Chase)
- Marilyn J. Praisner Recreation (Burtonsville)
- Mid-County Recreation Center (Silver Spring)
- Nancy H. Dacek North Potomac Community Recreation Center (Rockville)
- Potomac Recreation (Potomac)
- Sandy Spring Volunteer Fire Department (Olney)
- Silver Spring Civic Building (Silver Spring)
- Wheaton Recreation (Silver Spring)
- White Oak Recreation (Silver Spring)
- Montgomery County Conference Center (Bethesda)

Note that the location of the Montgomery County Conference Center listed as Bethesda, but it is in Rockville—now frequently called “North Bethesda.” It is not nearby. The Election Day voting centers closest to our community are the Jane E. Lawton Recreation Center (4301 Willow Ln, Chevy Chase, MD 20815), Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School (4301 E W Hwy, Bethesda, MD 20814), and Walt Whitman High School (7100 Whittier Blvd, Bethesda, MD 20817).

2. Theft from Vehicles and Vandalism

There were several messages posted to EC-Net last month about area crime—in particular vehicle theft and theft from vehicles. I contacted Montgomery County Police and asked them about these events. They reported that the overall crime rate remains low in our neighborhood, but there has been an increase in these kinds of property crimes this year. They are using undercover officers in unmarked vehicles to catch perpetrators, and there have been some arrests. However, the problem continues. I asked what residents can do to help prevent vehicle theft and theft from vehicles. This is what they said (edited for length and clarity):

Montgomery County Police believe that these crimes are being committed by career criminals who walk through neighborhoods after midnight and test car door handles in search of vehicles that are unlocked. When they find an unlocked vehicle, they enter it and ransack the glove box, the center console, and other storage compartments. If the vehicle has push-button ignition, then they press the start button hoping that a careless owner has left the key fob somewhere inside the vehicle. If the car has a traditional key ignition mechanism, they look in the glove box for a “wallet key” or “emergency key” or “valet key” which is sometimes made of plastic, is sometimes a different color, and is often included with an owner’s manual and vehicle-related paperwork (which many owners do not realize is there). If a vehicle does not have a key in it, the thieves will still take any items of value such as briefcases, clothes, phones, sunglasses, credit cards, or loose change.

The most effective way to stop these crimes is to lock your car at all times, remove all keys from the car (including wallet, valet, and emergency key). In many cases, victims think they've locked their cars when they haven't. There have also been rumors about devices that can clone key fob signals in order to enter locked vehicles--however there is no evidence that such devices are being used in this area. In most instances, vehicles have been left unlocked. If you park your vehicle in your garage, it is still not safe to leave the key in it.

It is also important to remove all valuables from the passenger compartment of your car when you park, even at home. This includes items that you may feel are not worth much, as thieves will sometimes steal seemingly insignificant items such as a polo shirt or even a few dollars of loose change stored in a cup holder.

Never leave a garage door opener clipped to your visor, in a center console, in a door pocket, or elsewhere in the passenger compartment of your vehicle, especially if the vehicle is outside.

Lock the door between your garage and your home. Thieves recently entered the living area of a residence at night via the garage, located car keys inside the house, and stole multiple cars.

Keep your garage door lowered at all times, except when going in or out. This prevents thieves from stealing from your garage or a vehicle in the garage.

Theft of car parts (air bags, catalytic converters) is common. In general, parking garages and residential lots are key targets but they do steal them from residential homes. If you hear loud noises coming from outside at a time when you know there isn't construction going on (e.g., power tools), it is a major clue to the theft. Call 911.

Do not confront, attempt to scare off, follow, or otherwise interact with criminals. Stay in a secure area and dial 911.

Always report all crimes of any sort, no matter how seemingly insignificant (e.g., someone has rummaged through your glove box contents), and do not make the mistake of thinking you are "bothering" the police. In addition, reporting criminal activity gives police an opportunity to look for fingerprints and determine if neighbors have security camera video that might provide clues.

Motion-sensing lights are inexpensive and can deter crime. Security cameras are also now very reasonably priced and can offer peace-of-mind as well as provide valuable evidence for police.

3. Residential Parking Permit Renewals

It's that time of year again—time to renew residential parking permits. You may already have received an e-mail telling you that your permit is expiring, and to renew online.

Despite our complaints and suggestions to Department of Transportation to improve the online renewal process, it appears to be no better than it was last time. Here are a few suggestions that might help you to navigate the online renewal process. If you have other information, tips, and suggestions, please [email me](#) and I'll compile those and send them around to everyone.

- When you “renew” an existing permit online, you are essentially applying for a new permit. Therefore, you will probably have to re-submit the necessary documentation to support your right to the permit – proof of residence (e.g., a recent utility bill), and/or copies of vehicle registration(s). Submitting these online is fairly easy if you have (or can get or make) electronic copies of the required documents.
- When you renew multiple permits of the same type (e.g., two residential permits for two different cars, or two visitor permits), they group them under a single permit number on the “My Permits” page. That can be confusing.
- When renewing a standard residential permit, you'll come to a place where it asks you to choose the address for the permit. There will be a drop-down box titled "Address Type," but it will give you only one choice -- "Home Address." Then it will give you an "Address" box to fill in. But, what they don't tell you is that you are supposed to type only your house number in that space. Then it will present you with some options of addresses that start with that number and you have to then choose your address.
- When you renew online, they will email you when your permit has been approved. But, unless they have a credit card on file for you, the email will also tell you that you have to go back to the online permit system and pay for the permit. In that case, your permit won't be effective until you submit the online payment.

Of course, you can always call the help number, (877) 748-8802, and renew your permit by phone. That may be easier for many people. They can tell you how to submit any documentation required. However, if you call when they are not open (they don't tell you the hours) the system will put you on hold for a minute, and then disconnect you. Try during regular business hours.

The Division of Parking Management's website says that the local parking office (4720 Cheltenham Drive, Bethesda MD 20814) is open 7:30 am to 4:00 pm Tuesdays and Fridays, and that it handles residential parking permits (information [HERE](#)).

4. Restaurant and Retail Customer Input on Business Reopening

The Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation is helping local businesses adapt to new public health requirements and changing consumer spending habits associated with COVID-19. Their goal is to support independently owned restaurants and retail establishments that serve a significant role in communities—especially those hard-hit by the pandemic.

If you would like to participate and answer a few questions about business reopenings, you can go [HERE](#).

5. Edgemoor Tip of the Month – BCC Regional Services Center Newsletter

This is a repeat of a tip from last year, when I recommended subscribing to the email Newsletter by the Ken Hartmann, Directory of the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Service Center--our communities' local Montgomery County office. The Newsletter is especially helpful right now because it has regular updates about COVID-19 issues, voting in the upcoming election, events, State and local government activities, schools, recreation, roads, construction, and a long list of other issues. To sign up for the Newsletter, go [HERE](#). Click on “Newsletter signup” in the menu on the right side of the page.

Do you have a tip you'd like to share with your neighbors? Please email me your suggestions [HERE](#).

The ECA Newsletter is a compilation of information relevant to Edgemoor area residents. It is distributed on an occasional basis on the EC-Net email list.