

Gas-Powered Leaf Blower Ban Now Begins on September 1, 2022

By Robin Barr, Council Member, Essex Avenue

At its November meeting, the Town Council voted to advance the ban on use of gas-powered leaf blowers in Somerset to start on September 1, 2022, rather than January 1, 2023, as an earlier Council had established. This action follows a recommendation from the Environment Committee to accelerate the ban. The primary reason Council members voted to advance the start date was the now all-too-apparent effects of the noise of these blowers on our ability to work at home. The pandemic has turned many of us from office workers to home workers and many more of us now experience first-hand the racket from these machines. The ban is also consistent with the Council's earlier declaration of a climate emergency, with carbon dioxide emissions (as from gas-powered lawn equipment) being a primary contributor to climate change through the action of global warming.

In implementing the ban, Somerset may want to take a leaf from California's new law that bans all gas-powered lawn equipment in that State beginning in 2024. California's law recognizes the substantial contribution to total carbon emissions in the state from the landscaping industry. Rather than stop with the ban, the law goes on

to offer \$30 million in incentive payments to landscapers in the State to help them make the transition from gas to electrical equipment. Somerset could not offer \$30 million in incentive payments! But thinking in terms of incentives generally may well be the best way to facilitate the transition. These can be from the very simple (e.g., if you have an outdoor outlet on your property why not offer it to a landscaper to allow the company to charge batteries while working at your property?) to the more ambitious (e.g., would it be a good use of our ARPA funds to purchase battery-powered leaf blowers for landscapers to use while working in Somerset?).

Experience from other jurisdictions that have banned gas-powered leaf blowers is that incentives do matter. Without them landscapers often ignore the ban and continue using this noisy, smelly, noxious equipment.



Services for Alice Champlin

The September 2021 issue of the Town Journal published an "In Memoriam" article about **Alice Champlin**, a former Somerset resident and Council Member who died on July 22, 2021. Funeral arrangements have now been finalized. For those who would like to attend, details are as follows:

- The funeral service is scheduled for **11 a.m., Friday, December 10th** at All Saints Church, 3 Chevy Chase Circle, Chevy Chase, MD 20815. The service will be followed by a luncheon in the Church's Great Hall. All are invited.
- The interment is scheduled for **1:00 p.m., Saturday, December 11th** at Arlington National Cemetery. Time at the graveside will be brief. Information about security measures at Arlington National Ceremony can be found at <https://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/Visit/Security>.

For a full obituary, please see: <https://lewisfuneralhomeinc.com/alice-champlin/>.



Somerset Back in the Day...

By L. Paige Whitley, Chair,
History and Archives Committee,
Cumberland Avenue

House History: 4922 Cumberland Avenue

The small Dutch colonial home situated at the bottom of Cumberland Avenue was built by Washington, DC, builder Anton Koerber, an interesting man who was not only a builder and businessman but who was also a leader for Jehovah's Witnesses and a representative of its Watchtower organization throughout his life.

Robert Grossell, a bachelor who worked at the Government Accounting Office and who lived with his sisters up the road at what is now 4911 Cumberland Avenue, sold the land to Koerber in 1939. Koerber promptly built a home whose plans he copied at other locations in the area. One such "copycat" home can be found just a few blocks away at 4832 Chevy Chase Boulevard.

Selling for about \$10,950 the home was marketed as

A home that is really different, charming in every respect. Imagine a step down living rm ... with wood-burning fireplace, plus a beautiful picture window, large dining rm, with balcony effect, modern all-electric kitchen, a cosy den all on 1st fl. Upstairs master bedroom with private bath and 2 other bedrooms and bath. In the basement you'll find a knotty pine paneled recreation, laundry, lavatory, air-conditioned system. Attached garage... (Ad for Chevy Chase Blvd. "copycat" house, Washington Post, October 7, 1939)



During the 1940s, the house was bought and sold every two or three years. In the 1950s, residents included Philip Elman, a U.S. Department of Justice lawyer who wrote the government's brief in the landmark Brown vs. Board of Education case, and Congressman Frank Ikard, Democrat from Texas. Leslie Brady, a U.S. Foreign Service officer with postings both in Moscow and Paris, and his wife Mary bought the home in 1961 and owned it for more than three decades before selling it to current owners in 1998.

Ever wonder about your property? When and how your home was built, who lived there before you? The History and Archives Committee seeks interested volunteers to research house histories in Somerset. While much has been compiled for the historic district properties, we wish to add to Somerset's knowledge base, including information about other houses in the Town. Much of this work can be done from your own home! If you have internet and a library card, you can do this. We'll provide a short training this winter for those interested. Contact historyandarchives@townofsomerset.com.

Results of the Second Annual Town of Somerset Halloween House Decorating Competition

By **Maya Weil**, *Dorset Avenue*

Five judges, who ranged from age 4 ½ to adult (20 year+ residents of Somerset), came together to decide which three Somerset houses had the most “Spooktacular” Halloween decorations in the Second Annual Town of Somerset Halloween House Decorating Competition. This event started last year as a fun alternative activity to trick or treating, which was considered too risky during the pandemic. Because it was so successful, there was a request to make it a new Town tradition. Many Town residents put up wonderful house decorations, bringing a lot of joy to fellow residents. It was tough to decide but the judges gathered on the patio of my house and discussed the details of each of the homes.

The judges:

- **Mira Orhon**, age 8 (Falstone)
- **Joy Turner**, Surrey, age 10 (Surrey)
- **Abner Gottlieb**, age 4 ½ (Dorset)
- **Birdie Pieczenik**, Adult (Essex, Somerset resident for more than 20 years)
- **Lauren Rubenstein**, Adult (Surrey, Somerset resident for more than 20 years)

The winning houses:

- **4922 Dorset Avenue** was a clear winner for the second year in a row. The creativity of its decorations, including a custom sign and pumpkins painted in glorious “Dia de Los Muertos” colors, won over all the judges. Abner Gottlieb, the youngest judge, nicknamed it the “Coco House”.
- **4709 Cumberland Avenue** had a wonderful mix of skeletons climbing into the windows and ghouls climbing out of the ground.
- **4823 Cumberland Avenue** was appealing to the judges because of the scary joker on the steps and composition of the life-size elements that complemented the design of their house.

We placed yard signs to honor the winners and to celebrate the decisions. Thank you to the excellent panel of judges whose enthusiasm for the task was inspiring!

P.S. By the way, trick or treating was a great success and using 2 click counters, I counted 443 trick or treaters at my home!



4922 Dorset Avenue



4709 Cumberland Avenue



4823 Cumberland Avenue

Fall in Somerset

It has been a colorful fall, and the Town of Somerset has worn its fall colors beautifully!



Pool Update

By **Matthew Zaft, Chair, Pool Committee, Dorset Avenue**

It may be November or December (depending on when you get this), but things are still happening with the Pool! At our meeting on Wednesday, November 3, the Pool Committee voted on several motions that were unanimously approved. These will hopefully be added to future Town Council work sessions/meetings. Here are the recommendations:

- Request that the Town Council instruct the Pool Management Team (made up of the Mayor, Town Manager, Town Council President, and Pool Committee Chair) to annually provide a specific plan and timeline to smoothly open the pool on time that will be presented to the Council to be considered by the March Town Council meeting each year.
- Request that the Town Manager present to the Town Council the upgrades/repairs needed as identified by American Pools as well as new grills and water fountain repairs, and that the Town Council address these at their next work session.

- Request that the Town Council allocate at least an additional \$25,000 to the **current** fiscal year budget to open the pool on April 1, 2022.
- Additionally request that the Town Council allocate at least \$25,000 to **next** fiscal year's budget to keep the pool open until November 27, 2022.
- Request that the Town Council add a budget addition for the next fiscal year to hire a firm to analyze converting the pool into an all season, year round pool and community center.
- Request that the Town Council instruct the Town Manager to provide a proposal including budget and timeline to convert the pool to the nonresidential electric grid and bring in three-phase service to the pump room to be budgeted for next fiscal year.

Please contact me directly with any questions and please contact the Mayor, Town Manager, and/or Town Council to express your opinions on any of the above.

Thanks!



Dog Swim!

On October 31, Somerset's canine residents had the opportunity to enjoy the Somerset Pool on the last day of its 2021 season. The event was a splashing success!





Somerset Employee Holiday Fund

MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR

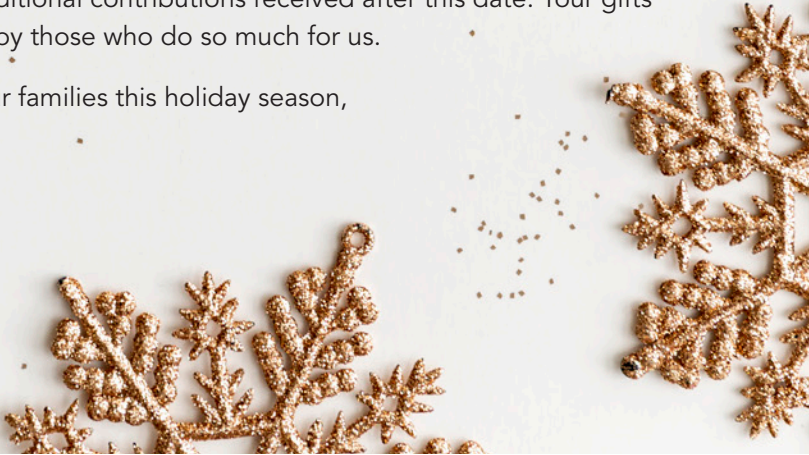
Dear Residents,

Our annual holiday fund for thanking Somerset employees has been extremely successful in recent years, and I am asking that the Town recognize our hard-working staff again this year. I began this project in 2012 in response to the many resident calls and emails I had received from residents asking how to properly thank our dedicated staff. I hope that everyone will show their gratitude this year by contributing generously. The pooled monies will be distributed to employees on the basis of length of service and responsibility. Other municipalities in the area make the distributions in this manner, which seems fair and equitable. The employees who will share in the funds are: the three maintenance employees, police personnel, Town Arborist, Code Enforcement Officer, and Administrative Assistant.

All contributions can be made by check or via Venmo. To contribute using Venmo, residents can send payments to @TownofSomerset-MD with the description "Holiday Fund 2021." To contribute by check, please make the check payable to the Town of Somerset (or cash), with "Holiday Fund" placed on the note line. Checks can be mailed or delivered to the Town Hall at 4510 Cumberland Avenue, Chevy Chase, MD 20815, or left at my residence at 5706 Warwick Place. An envelope for your use is enclosed in the print version of this issue of the Town Journal. Please send your contributions before 4:30 p.m. on Friday, December 17th so the funds can be distributed before the holidays. There will be a second distribution after the holidays to take into account any additional contributions received after this date. Your gifts will be greatly appreciated by those who do so much for us.

Best wishes for you and your families this holiday season,

Jeffrey Slavin
Mayor





Reflections on COP26 – Hope and Futility

The Conference of Parties (COP) is a 26-year effort, on the part of the United Nations, to solve the problems of global climate change (<https://ukcop26.org>). COP26, met in Glasgow, Scotland in November. I have just returned from my trip to COP26, having been invited to give a presentation on behalf of the Mother Earth Project (see article link in French, <https://bit.ly/30LcLbc>). My journey into the Climate Emergency world, surrounded by politicians, scientists and activists, has been beset with many highs and lows, hope and futility, sometimes squashed together, changing from minute to minute, depending on the news I was hearing and the conversations in which I participated.

I spent a week and a half mainly with Mother Earth Project volunteers from Zambia, Nigeria, Rwanda, and Burundi, all activists from the Global South (previously called the third world). (Information about the Mother Earth Project can be found at <https://motherearthproject.org>.) Presently, 92% of greenhouse gases are produced by the Global North and nearly the same disproportional percentage of climate catastrophes are happening in the Global South. Madagascar is literally starving as a country. My friends tell me that despite the Parachutes For The Planet and other climate-related events they organize in both urban and rural areas in Africa, only 10-30% of the population knows that the climate emergency is caused by humans. The rest think that the lack of rain and extreme heat is a “curse” or an “act of God.” In contrast, the Global North is aware that humans have caused the warming of the planet

and all of the catastrophic damage that has resulted, e.g. extreme flooding and droughts, frequent hundred-year sized hurricanes, and devastating fires in every corner of the earth.

My last evening, I walked in the dark streets of Glasgow with hundreds of people and Amal, a 12’ high puppet (see a video here: <https://youtu.be/YUfazZlcFhY>). Amal represents a nine-year-old Syrian girl’s plight and journey as a climate refugee – a plight shared by climate refugees who can no longer subsist on their drought- or flood-destroyed lands. Amal was followed by a local band playing a harrowing and mournful improvisation about her difficult migration journey. As it played, Amal stopped to rest and then reached down for a hug with the people surrounding her. Amal has literally walked from Syria to Glasgow ahead of COP26, choreographed by a puppet company wishing to bring more awareness to the plight of so many from the Global South (see <https://nyti.ms/30PE3Ns>). Walking with Amal wrenches the heart and you can literally feel her angst and determination to find a better life.

COP26 has produced new climate legislation that according to scientists will only limit global warming to 2.4 degree Celsius, which is still an unacceptable temperature that will put over a billion people at risk of death and displacement from rising sea levels. Many attendees at COP26 feel that signing on to the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty, as the Town of Somerset has recently done, is a binding and definitive way of keeping fossil fuels in the ground (a similar approach was taken for nuclear bombs). Recent global commitments to stop deforestation by 2030, phase-down burning coal (not phase-out, thanks to China and India’s pushback), end foreign coal investments, and reduce methane leaks by 30% by 2030, all appear to be a large step for our government representatives worldwide, but frankly only a small step for mankind (<https://bit.ly/3FCBsWd>).

