



Proposal to Bring Apiaries (Bee Boxes) to Somerset

Last year, our town opted into the Healthy Lawn Act of Montgomery County, which bans the use of pesticides on our lawns. This ensures that we significantly reduce the damage that pesticides do to our soil, small creatures, and our residents. I hope everyone realizes what is at stake here and will continue to respect and appreciate the importance of this law. Now that we have stopped the damage, it is time to repair our land.



Toward this goal, the Environment Committee (EC) has proposed the idea of bringing apiaries to the Town's public land. Pollinators, including butterflies and bees, have been decimated by pesticides; bringing in apiaries would provide an opportunity to reintroduce this critical part of our ecosystem. The EC has reached out to a beekeeper who is willing to bring 4-6 apiaries to our town at no cost. She would visit 2-3 times a week to care for them and give educational talks to residents and Somerset ES students about the bee's life patterns and how its community thrives. The apiaries will be surrounded by a fence, which will protect visitors from getting too close and allow the bees to take off (like airplanes) as they search for flowers to pollinate. This is a very exciting opportunity for the town. I hope to see you visiting these apiaries in the future, provided that the Town Council agrees to move forward with this Apiary Pilot Program.

enormous boost for farmers who can grow even healthier products for us to eat.

Here in Somerset, composting is completely subsidized by the Town, which pays for the buckets and the removal of food scraps from your buckets each week. So, with this in mind, the EC would like to encourage everyone to begin composting. All you need to do is go to the website www.compostcrew.com and click the Sign Up button in the upper right. After you fill out the form with your name and address, the website will recognize you as a resident of the Town of Somerset and inform you that the service will be free. That's it. Thanks for taking the next step and being part of a more sustainable future.

EC Proposes Somerset Join the Paris Climate Agreement

Last week, there was a public Zoom call on CSPAN with mayors from all over the U.S., as well as climate officials John Kerry (international liaison) and Gina McCarthy (domestic). Both spoke about how over a hundred municipalities around the country, led by their mayors, have independently joined the Paris Climate Agreement and have decided to tackle the goal of achieving a zero carbon footprint. As you may know, our neighbor Washington, DC has the most aggressive climate legislation in the country, committing to have a zero carbon footprint of its public facilities by 2032.

John Kerry said that having so many municipalities committed to the Paris Climate Agreement gave him "bragging rights and credibility" when urging other countries to make stronger climate legislation in their own countries. Hearing this made me realize that our municipality also needed to join this movement. With this in mind, the EC is proposing to the Town Council that Somerset Declare a Climate Emergency and officially join the Paris Climate Agreement.



Composting Food

According to the Compost Crew, 40% of our town is now composting their food. This means that people are separating their discarded food scraps from recycling and landfill items, and then placing them in special buckets that are put out on the street on

Tuesdays with the rest of our trash. The Compost Crew then takes the food scraps to farms to be used as fertilizer. This cycle of returning food scraps back to the land is an

Ban on Gas-Powered Blowers to Begin January 1, 2023

At its February meeting, the Town Council voted to ban all gas-powered blowers in Somerset starting January 1, 2023. Although this date is delayed by one year from what the EC originally proposed, many residents are now relieved that these noisy and polluting machines will finally be

Continued on page 7

All About BOOKS



Hidden Sins

By Selena Montgomery
(aka Stacey Abrams)

Reviewed by
Julie Greenberg,
Falstone Avenue

You probably know Stacey Abrams as the architect of the long-shot January victories of two Georgia Senators that have given Democrats control of the chamber. She's also the author of two recent books on politics. But there's an unexpected twist to Abrams' writing career: before anyone outside of Georgia knew Stacey Abrams' name, she'd published eight mass market romance novels under the pen name Selena Montgomery. Abrams wrote her first novel in 1999, during her third year at Yale Law School, and published the last in 2009. Over that decade, she worked as a tax attorney and as deputy city attorney for Atlanta; in 2006, she successfully ran for the Georgia General Assembly. Her 2010 election to the post of minority leader in the General Assembly seems to have put an end to her romance novel-writing side gig.

All eight novels have been well-received by fans, so when I decided to read one out of curiosity, I randomly chose *Hidden Sins*, Abrams' fifth novel. *Hidden Sins* weaves a story of a multi-generational treasure hunt in which the flawed (but fetching!) Black heroine's daring (and knowledge of ancient Greek!) earns her a multimillion-dollar gold coin treasure and her long-lost love. This is my first real romance novel, but I sensed it was checking off all the necessary boxes. Sure enough, I found that the book incorporates seven of the nine tried-and-true tropes

of romance novels: love triangle, friends-to-lovers, stuck together, enemies-to-lovers, forbidden love, second chance, and soul mates. Makes sense that an overachiever like Abrams would score high on tropes!

Is one of Abrams' novels a possibility for your book club's next selection? With all due respect to Abrams, I'd say you should "pass." How about for a beach read? That's a better option.

Hidden Sins is far removed from literature, which is why I don't recommend it. Nonetheless, the fact that Abrams unabashedly published a string of romance novels has only increased my respect for her. She wrote what she wanted to write – and I suspect enjoyed doing so. Even though Abrams used a pseudonym, she never concealed her identity: her photo and information on her role as General Assembly minority leader are both found on the Selena Montgomery website. Most lawyers attempting to rise professionally play it safer!

Stacey Abrams' novels are unique footnotes to her notable institutional creations — the New Democracy Project and Fair Fight — but in my eyes they have in common a willingness to ignore conventional wisdom and strike out on her own. I say, hurray for this feisty woman! I can't wait to see what path she takes next.

Continued from page 6

Sustainability Corner

leaving our neighborhood for good. The EC will continue its education campaign by reaching out to residents and landscapers. We will encourage them to begin making the transition to battery-powered and electric blowers. Separately, we will remind landscapers that they must immediately retire blowers that exceed 70 dB, which are illegal in Montgomery County.

Please contact the Environment Committee with your concerns and comments at **TOS.EnvironmentCommittee@gmail.com**