

# TALK OF THE TOWN



A NEWSLETTER OF THE TOWN OF ST. MICHAELS, MARYLAND

Spring

2023 EDITION



## A Message from the Commissioners of St. Michaels

"Resilience" is the word as we move forward into 2023. The Commissioners of St. Michaels continue to focus on sustainable practices for future growth and stability.

First and foremost is holding back the tide of the inevitable impact of climate change and rising sea levels. The Town's Climate Change and Sea Level Rise Commission has successfully secured grant money to start evaluating and implementing projects to protect our Town from flooding levels projected for the year 2050 and beyond. The commission is seeking public participation to help map our strategy. More on their work sessions can be found on the Town website, [www.stmichaelsmd.gov](http://www.stmichaelsmd.gov).

The Town has also received grant money for the initial engineering stage of extending the nature trail from Railroad Avenue to the ball fields at Perry Cabin Park, which would double the trail's length to two miles.



The new electronic water meters are here, with installation scheduled in phases over the coming year. These meters replace antiquated mechanical meters. The electronic meters will record more accurate water usage levels, and will instantly alert our staff to leaks and other issues. The overall impact will save money and time, creating a more resilient and efficient operation.

The Commissioners will soon be tackling the 2023-24 budget with the aim of further shoring up the Town's finances. The goal is to keep the Town running at peak efficiency while maintaining the resources to fund sea level rise projects and the planned Town office/police station complex.

The budget work sessions are open to the public and we encourage your participation. Times and dates will be announced on our website and through Constant Contact messaging.

We have also added new professionals to our staff who will help us achieve our long-range goals of resilience and sustainability. Eric Knapp is our new Code Compliance Officer and Steve Ball is our new Planning and Zoning Officer. They bring many years of experience and accreditation to their respective jobs. We look forward to working with them to maintain the special historic character that has made St. Michaels a popular destination for tourists, full-time residents, and vacation homeowners.

2023 will also mark the end of an era with two significant retirements. Chief Anthony Smith has announced he'll be hanging up his uniform in June after 11 years of exemplary service as our Town's police chief. He leaves the department in the very capable hands of Capt. Jeff Oswald and our outstanding officers. Our Town Clerk Suzanna Warnick is also moving on to an exciting new chapter in her life. She has been the glue that, in many ways, has held this town together for the past 14 years. Please offer your thanks and congratulations to Suzanna and the Chief when you see them around town.

And remember, if you have any questions at all about the Town's operations and policies, don't hesitate to reach out to the Commissioners or our Town Administrator Rob Straebel. Our email addresses are on the Town website.

A healthy and happy new year to all.

## Charming St. Michaels

As residents of St. Michaels, we don't need a reason to enjoy our Town... "That's why we live here!", but sometimes special occasions are a good excuse to escape the monotony of our daily routines. Make every season one to remember by taking time to create memories with family and friends! Join our local restaurants, boutiques and unique venues for delectable dinners, signature cocktails, and specialty gifts to treasure a lifetime! For more information go to [www.stmichaelsmd.org](http://www.stmichaelsmd.org).

## Community Events Calendar



March 4

ChocolateFest



March 17

St. Patrick's Day  
Shopping Cart Races



April 22-23

Eastern Shore Sea Glass &  
Coastal Arts Festival



## Town Welcomes Two New Employees

*Town Planner and Code Compliance Officer Hit the Ground Running*

The Town of St. Michaels has recently hired two key administrative staff members. Steve Ball started with the Town of St. Michaels on January 2, 2023. His experience includes over 25 years of professional work including eleven years in Maryland, most of which was as Planning Director for Charles County. He also worked in city and county governments in Florida and as a planning consultant. Mr. Ball is a nationally certified planner. He has a master's degree in urban and city planning and a bachelor's in natural resource conservation. Steve and his wife Jeanne have lived in Talbot County for three years.

"I am thrilled to be working in such a beautiful town, rich in history and natural resources with friendly and active citizens," stated Steve Ball. When not working Steve can be found kayak fishing around the Eastern Shore, at the library, or at the YMCA.

Additionally, the Town hired Eric Knapp as its new Special Project Manager/Code Compliance Officer. Eric has extensive experience as a carpenter, business owner, property maintenance and building inspector, which will assist him in navigating the Town Code and permits process.

Both Eric and Steve look forward to working with you!



## Town Clerk Retires After 14 Years

*Suzanna Warnick's Last Day will be February 28, 2023*

Please join us in congratulating and bidding Suzanna Warnick farewell on her upcoming retirement. Suzanna is originally from the windy city of Chicago.

She moved to Tunis Mills, MD from New Jersey when her husband (who worked for Black & Decker) was relocated to the Eastern Shore. Suzanna's employment with the Town began in September of 2008. She was originally hired to work in the Water Billing Department and later took on the position of Town Clerk as well. Her prior experience where she worked several years for a title company was a great asset in assisting her with her new role.

Suzanna has closely managed the intricate schedules, meetings and needs of numerous Town Commissioners throughout her tenure. In addition, she served as the Town liaison to the Parks and Recreation Board. Suzanna's dedication and outstanding service to the Town of St. Michaels will be greatly missed. Rest assured, however, in her final days Suzanna has been diligently training Vickie Sharp to move into the position of Town Clerk, effective March 1, 2023.

Although Suzanna will be missed by many, her transition to retirement is well-deserved. We are certain that her husband, Clenton, her five children and nine grandchildren, as well as her dog "Luke" will be thrilled to have her around more! Bon Voyage Suzanna... we wish you well!



*L-R: Eric Knapp, Special Project Manager/Code Compliance Officer and Steve Ball, Town Planner*

## St. Michaels Pursues Sustainable Communities Designation

*Town Seeks Community Input in the Coming Months*

The Town will be asking for your input on an important planning study in the coming months. St. Michaels was first established by the State of Maryland as a "Sustainable Community" in 2013. This program qualifies the Town for potential state funded grants for reinvestment and revitalization. The application materials must be updated every five years and the current deadline for such is the end of this year. The update will include an analysis of the past activities and an action plan to increase vitality and livability in the community and set priority initiatives and projects for the next five years. The action plan requires the Town to set desired outcomes for various categories like the environment, economy, transportation, housing, quality of life, and land use. A variety of public facility projects will be identified as we proceed in each of these categories.

Citizen input will be solicited on the documents as we proceed. We will likely reach out to the community, in various ways, such as community workshops or surveys to help us set priorities for this program. Once these are established, the Town will look for State funding opportunities to carry out projects.

Check our Town's website for more information in the coming months.





## Tales from the Town Code

### Permits Needed For a Variety of Projects

Eric Knapp, Special Project Manager/Code Compliance Officer, has been very busy his first few weeks on the job. Fortunately, Eric is well-versed in many aspects of code compliance and building construction review and will be a great resource for St. Michaels residents.

In Eric's short tenure with the Town, he has come across many issues including construction activities on neighbor's property, unknown lot lines, required setbacks not adhered to, dumpsters in not so convenient areas, and appropriate permits not obtained. To assist our residents, please contact Eric at 410-745-9535, before undertaking any large improvement project. Eric will be more than happy to assist you with the permitting process or answer any questions you may have.

Please feel free to view the entire Town Code online at the following link <https://ecode360.com/ST1595> or view a printed copy of the document at the Town Office. Please note the following short list of important but, not so known code requirements.

**§ 108-4 Permits required.** It shall be unlawful for any person to construct or cause to be constructed any structure within the Town of St. Michaels without first obtaining a permit therefor approved by the St. Michaels Building Inspector.

**2021 International Residential Code R105.1 Permits Required.** Any owner or owner's authorized agent who intends to construct, enlarge, alter, repair, move, demolish or change the occupancy of a building or structure, or to erect, install, enlarge, alter, repair, remove, convert or replace any electrical, gas, mechanical or plumbing system, the installation of which is regulated by this code, or to cause any such work to be performed, shall first make application to the building official and obtain the required permit.

## Town Awarded \$35,000 Nature Trail Grant

### Grant to Study Feasibility and Design for Trail Extension

The Town of St. Michaels was recently awarded a \$35,000 DNR Grant for a Feasibility and Design Study to construct a 1.25-mile extension of the St. Michaels Nature Trail/Multi-Use Bikeway. The vision for this project was initiated by the St. Michaels Rotary Club, who helped build the original Nature Trail, which was completed in 2010.

"Rotary of St. Michaels was instrumental in the first St. Michaels Nature Trail project," stated Amanda Davis, President of the St. Michaels Rotary Club. "Since 2010, our community and visitors alike have used the paved nature trail for biking, walking, and inline skating. It is wheelchair accessible and there is access to the water for fishing, kayaking and paddleboarding. We are looking forward to exploring all the ways our Rotary Club can partner with the Town of St. Michaels to achieve the trail extension for this great community."

Project partners include the Commissioners of St. Michaels, the St. Michaels Planning Commission, Rauch Inc., Environmental Concern, and the Rotary Club of St. Michaels. The proposed multipurpose ADA compliant bikeway/pedestrian trail will connect the southeast side of Town (near the high school) to the northwest side of Town, terminating at Perry Cabin Park. The trail will provide a safer route for pedestrians and cyclists to bypass the downtown area, thereby avoiding the busy traffic on the main thoroughfare. It will also provide a safe alternative means to get to/from school events and the ballpark.

The Town has committed in-kind and matching-fund support with Environmental Concern donating in-kind services for the initial conceptual planning.

As illustrated in yellow on the attached map, the trail extension will connect with Bradley Park on Railroad Avenue and continue northward to Perry Cabin Park. Disruptions to private property are anticipated to be minimal as the trail will be located on State Highway Administration easements. Preliminary investigations including soil studies, wetland studies, and engineering studies will guide the design and engineering.

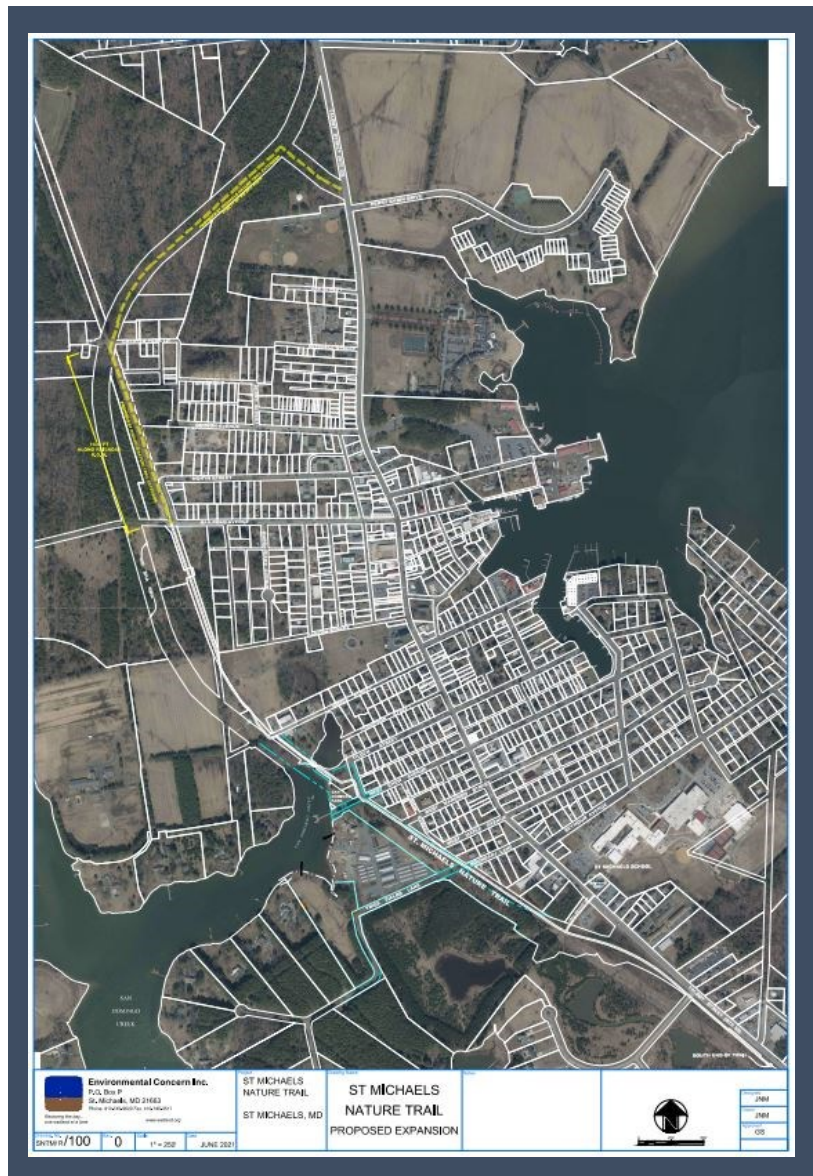
Once the Feasibility and Design Study are completed the Town and partnering agencies will seek funding from the FHA Transportation Alternative Plan to construct the trail extension.

The Town is grateful to have so many committed organizations working collectively to see this project from the visionary stages to its ultimate realization! We extend our gratitude to both Liz Connelly of Rauch Inc. and Tom Roessel and Amanda Davis of St. Michaels Rotary Club for their tireless efforts to advance this worthy project.

As this project moves forward, please log into the Town's website for project updates.

We look forward to highlighting the Town's natural beauty and serenity through this Nature Trail extension.

Please click on the attached link for additional information regarding this Program. [Kim Lamphier Bikeways Network Program](#)





## St. Michaels Architectural History

### HDC Preserves Town's Historical Charm

History is one of the many attractions that St. Michaels has for visitors and residents alike. We are, after all, "the Town that fooled the British." We not only have that story and other stories to tell, but we also have a remarkable concentration of residential and commercial buildings that witnessed these stories. These structures, and the history that they reflect, are protected in St. Michaels Historic District which is on the National Register of Historic Places. Several structures are also listed individually in the National Register; many more are listed in the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties.

The Town established the St. Michaels Historic District Commission (HDC) to safeguard these sites that reflect the Town's cultural, social, political, and architectural history. The HDC meets each month to review plans for construction, additions, or any other alterations to the exteriors of structures or sites within the Historic District. The Zoning Code requires an approved Certificate of Appropriateness before any permits are issued or construction begins.

"Our mandate is historic preservation. However, we recognize that St. Michaels is a vibrant, living town and we work hard to balance our mandate for preservation with the expectations and requirements of 21<sup>st</sup> Century life," stated HDC Chairperson, James Fulton. "We also try to consider the effect that any proposed change will have on neighboring properties and the streetscape."

All the standards that the HDC uses in reviewing applications are contained in [The St. Michaels Historic District Design Review Guidelines](#). The Guidelines were updated in April 2021 and are based on best practices for historic preservation as described in [The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties](#) and numerous other historic districts around the country. This document is available from the Town website and is available for review by anyone who has an interest in the Historic District.

## Town Addresses Emergency Operations Protocol

### Talbot County and Local Police Partner Together

Both the Climate Change/Sea Level Rise and Town Commission are working diligently to mitigate flooding on low lying areas within our community. As these weather-related challenges are being addressed, the Town is also making public safety a critical priority during these extreme weather events. As mentioned in previous articles, flooding in St. Michaels is a major concern. Although hurricane season has officially ended, St. Michaels is still susceptible to severe snowstorms, tornadoes, high tides, heavy rain and flooding. It is well known that these storms and high waters continue to cause havoc on our small town. They have caused street closures, downed trees/electrical wires, damaged properties and resulted in several water rescues for those trying to travel on our flooded roadways. Fortunately, we can alleviate some of these risks.

Preparing for any hazard or disaster starts at home. Hurricane and winter seasons are the perfect time to ensure you have your emergency supply kits stocked, family evacuation plans set, and your home or business prepared. Knowing the hazards affecting your area from a severe weather event and receiving emergency alerts is a priority in preparation. You can find emergency preparedness information at [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov) and [www.talbotdes.org](http://www.talbotdes.org).

Collaborating with our partners will be the key to success. Not only is the support offered by Talbot County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) during natural disasters invaluable, their coordination effort during the height of the COVID pandemic was a model for all to emulate.

"The Talbot County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) stands ready to support Talbot County and the Town of St. Michaels for any incidents that may occur," stated Talbot County Emergency Management Coordinator, Geneva Schaffle. "The EOC is where all our local, state, and federal partners coordinate planning and resources to make sure residents and visitors of Talbot County are prepared and notified in the event of a disaster. Our daily coordination efforts ensure that all our stakeholders are communicating and planning together as one to better serve our communities in times of need."

For anyone needing information on emergency preparedness, please visit the websites mentioned above and as always you may call the St. Michaels Police Department at 410.745.9500 for more details.



**L-R: 911 Communications Chief Holley Guschke, SMPD Chief Anthony Smith, and 911 Training Lieutenant Jessica Wolfe**

## Join the Town of St. Michaels email list!

If you are a St. Michaels resident and are NOT receiving regular emails from the Town Office regarding news, meetings and events BUT YOU WANT TO, sign up at [info@stmichaelsmd.gov](mailto:info@stmichaelsmd.gov).

For more information visit [www.stmichaelsmd.gov](http://www.stmichaelsmd.gov)

## Water Department Preparing for Upgrades

To assist the Town in maintaining accurate and up to date customer databases, please contact Vickie, in the Water Department, at 410-745-9535. Or you may email her at [Waterdept@stmichaelsmd.gov](mailto:Waterdept@stmichaelsmd.gov) with the following information: current email address, phone number, billing address and physical street address information. If you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to her. Thank you for your assistance!