AI Summary of Town Council Meeting March 9, 2026

AI can make mistakes. Review for accuracy.

[One-on-One format]

Key takeaways

- Town Council approved formation of a safety workgroup to address recent vehicle break-ins and vandalism, with 6 volunteers including council members and residents
- Summer in the Parks program will proceed with required state licensing and permitting to ensure compliance with Maryland Department of Health regulations
- Council approved continuing to lock both clay and hard tennis court gates to protect facilities from damage
- Stream crossing safety assessment report approved, recommending culvert installations at 3-4 locations in East and West Woods instead of bridges
- Council deferred vote on immigrant rights resolution to allow workgroup (John, Barbara, Larry French, Mary) to reconcile different versions
- Playground equipment purchase will bypass RFP process, with committee to provide comparable vendor proposals for March 23rd budget meeting

Discussed topics

Safety and Vandalism - Vehicle Break-ins

Recent vehicle break-ins on Sunday night resulted in at least 6 broken windows and vandalism to cars parked on streets. Council discussed town response options and formed a safety workgroup.

- **Details**
  - John: Summarized incidents of broken windows and vehicle damage, noting this is escalation from previous unlocked car entries
  - Kriss: Contacted Officer Romano from Montgomery County Police, shared non-emergency number (301-279-8000), emphasized need for residents to report all incidents to police
  - Peter: Expressed frustration and concern about feeling unsafe, emphasized need for proactive technology-based solutions and organized response

        - Mary: Suggested reviving neighborhood watch program with block captains that existed previously
        - Howard Harary: Volunteered for safety workgroup
        - Sylvie, Adam Ogg, Eva: Also volunteered for workgroup
- **Conclusion**
    - Motion passed 5-0 to create workgroup to address safety issues
    - Workgroup formed with 6 members: Kriss, Peter, Patty, Howard Harary, Sylvie, Adam Ogg, Eva
    - Kriss will follow up with Montgomery County Police for recommendations and potential patrols
    - Residents urged to report all incidents to town clerk, council, or mayor in addition to police

Safety and Vandalism - Vehicles on Walkways

Brief discussion of contractor and utility vehicles using town walkways without permission.

- **Details**
    - John: Clarified that all vehicles need permission from mayor to use walkways, including contractors accessing properties
    - Kathy: Noted contractors shouldn't park on walkways all day
- **Conclusion**
    - Reminder to be published in town bulletin about walkway access requirements

Tennis Court Gate Locking

Council voted on continuing to lock tennis court gates to prevent damage from non-tennis use, with separate votes for clay and hard courts.

- **Details**
    - John: Clarified motion is about protecting courts from damage, not about resident vs non-resident access which is separate issue
    - Barbara: Opposed locking, citing town's welcoming resolution and concern about exclusionary message
    - Peter: Supported locking clay court due to high maintenance costs and vulnerability to damage, noted no public clay courts exist in Maryland
    - Mary: Supported locking as protection measure, suggested separate discussion about opening to non-residents

    - Linda and Meredith: Reported some new damage since locking began, but less overall damage
    - Peter: Proposed amendment to vote separately on clay court vs hard court
- **Conclusion**
    - Amendment to separate votes passed 3-2 (Peter, John Porter, Mary in favor; John, Barbara opposed)
    - Clay court locking approved unanimously 5-0
    - Hard court locking approved 3-2 (opposed by Barbara)
    - Signage will be clarified with multiple contact options for residents to obtain gate combinations

Summer in the Parks Permit and Licensing

Discussion of newly discovered requirement for state licensing and county certification for summer camp program.

- **Details**
    - John: Explained that upon investigation, program is not exempt from state requirements despite past assumptions
    - Eva: Committed to obtaining Maryland Department of Health license and county recreational camp certification, implementing required safety plans, staff training, and background checks for all staff and volunteers
    - Barbara: Thanked Eva for diligent response to compliance requirements
    - Paul: Raised questions about volunteer liability in written public appearance
- **Conclusion**
    - Eva will work to complete licensing and certification by end of May, with July 6th camp start as deadline
    - Program will proceed with 30 registered campers
    - Background checks will be implemented for all staff and volunteers going forward

Town Manager/Clerk Position Discussion

Eva and Paul raised concerns about need for professional town management in public appearances, followed by council discussion of hiring process.

- **Details**
    - Eva: Advocated for hiring paid town manager with government experience to ensure regulatory compliance, suggested combining with town clerk role

    - Paul: Requested clarification on volunteer liability when acting on behalf of town
    - Barbara: Reported hiring committee (John, Gene, Peter, Barbara, Mary) is revising job description to include more management responsibilities including facility management and regulatory compliance
    - Peter: Praised Gene's work educating committees on proactive budget management
    - John: Expressed concern about scope of typical town manager positions, suggested some compliance responsibilities might fit better with treasurer role
- **Conclusion**
    - Job description will be finalized for March 23rd budget meeting
    - Position will include elevated responsibilities beyond traditional town clerk
    - Title (clerk vs manager) still under consideration
    - John will research volunteer liability questions with town attorney and insurance company

Town Archiving Project

Bob Booher presented comprehensive report on status of archiving project and need for new archivist.

- **Details**
    - Bob Booher: Reported longtime archivist Pat Petula has not responded since December and appears unable to continue, summarized work completed on Camp Meeting materials and remaining municipal records work
    - Bob Booher: Recommended hiring Joanna Church (Margaret Church's daughter) who has archiving and Past Perfect software experience
    - Patty: Provided context that archiving responsibilities have been with committees since 1983, emphasized information consolidation purpose of report
    - Marilyn: Explained 2-year process to develop and get state approval for records management plan
    - Peter: Raised broader concern about knowledge management across town operations
- **Conclusion**
    - New archivist needed to assess remaining Camp Meeting work and begin municipal records archiving
    - Joanna Church identified as qualified candidate
    - Migration to Past Perfect Online (cloud-based) recommended for better accessibility

- Budget implications to be addressed in FY27 budget discussions

Stream Crossing Safety Assessment

Patty and Kriss presented safety panel report recommending culvert installations instead of bridges for stream crossings.

- **Details**
  - Patty: Explained culverts blend better with woods, require less maintenance than bridges, protect stream banks better, presented photos of existing crossings
  - Kriss: Outlined cost estimates of $2,500-3,000 per culvert installation
  - Peter: Expressed frustration that Whetstone Trail crossing near Kelly Park not included in recommendations despite being heavily used and dangerous
  - Patty: Explained Whetstone crossing deferred pending Westwoods environmental assessment to address flooding and erosion issues
  - John Porter: Created renderings showing what culvert installations would look like
- **Conclusion**
  - Report and recommendations approved unanimously 5-0
  - Priority installations: 3 footbridge replacements in Eastwoods (Maple Trail, Chestnut, Ridge Trail) and 1 culvert in Westwoods (Poplar Trail replacing Boy Scout bridge)
  - Estimated total cost approximately $10,000, can be covered by current Woods Committee budget
  - Whetstone Trail crossing to be addressed separately as major construction project

Playground Equipment Purchase Process

Discussion of whether to use RFP process for train set purchase under $30,000 budgeted for FY26.

- **Details**
  - Oscar: Explained Playground Committee focusing on train set purchase (6-8 cars, wood or poly lumber options) while awaiting state grant decision for larger equipment
  - Peter: Made motion to bypass RFP process based on uniqueness of desired equipment
  - Kriss: Emphasized need for comparable specifications even without formal RFP to enable apples-to-apples comparison

    - Barbara: Questioned authority to bypass RFP and expressed discomfort voting without full understanding
    - John: Explained town charter requires bids over $5,000 but not specifically RFPs, noted vendor proposals meet bidding requirement
    - Kriss: Read charter language confirming sealed bids required but RFP not specified, council can authorize bypassing bid procedures if needed
- **Conclusion**
    - Motion to bypass RFP process passed 4-0-1 (Barbara abstained)
    - Playground Committee will obtain comparable proposals from multiple vendors with detailed specifications
    - Full presentation and budget discussion scheduled for March 23rd meeting

Immigrant Rights Resolution

Council discussed three versions of resolution supporting immigrant rights, ultimately deferring to workgroup.

- **Details**
    - Barbara: Moved to approve her amended version of Larry French's original resolution
    - John: Advocated for his version which includes stronger language about civil rights violations and specifies delivery to senators and president
    - Peter: Urged timely action given ongoing situation
    - John Porter: Requested deferral to review three different versions
    - Barbara: Argued for keeping resolution to one page for effectiveness with congressional staff
- **Conclusion**
    - Motion to defer passed 4-1 (Barbara opposed)
    - Workgroup formed: John Porter, Barbara, Larry French, Mary
    - Target completion for March 23rd meeting or April if needed
    - John noted situation unlikely to change quickly so timing remains relevant

Treasurer's Report and Budget Timeline

Gene Moyer presented February financial report and FY27 budget timeline.

- **Details**

        - Gene: Noted municipal building utility costs will exceed budget due to cold weather, Conservation Meadow Grant Phase 2 nearly complete with $1,100 remaining
        - Gene: Outlined budget timeline with March 23rd work session, requesting John's draft edits to communicate changes to committee liaisons before meeting
        - Peter: Commended Gene's work educating committees on proactive budget management
- **Conclusion**
    - Treasurer's Report approved 5-0
    - Budget work session scheduled March 23rd
    - Grove alert about budget meeting to be sent with mayor's draft attached

Mayor's Report

John covered multiple administrative and project updates.

- **Details**
    - John: Thanked residents, RJ Landscapers, and Pepco for snow cleanup and power restoration
    - John: Reported testimony submitted on Maryland Starter Homes Act (with Bob Booher's letter), County/Municipal Lighting Investment Act, and Municipal Revenue Modernization Task Force
    - John: Updated on Washington Grove Connector pathway (95% plans with MCDOT, awaiting easement)
    - John: Reported hard tennis court cracks worsening, testing short-term repair approach before considering full $100,000 replacement
    - John: Updated stormwater infrastructure project moving to 100% engineering plans, work to start this spring
    - John: Announced Playground Spring Cleaning event March 21st
    - John: Noted passing of Betty Knight, longtime resident since 1966
- **Conclusion**
    - Multiple legislative advocacy efforts underway
    - Infrastructure projects progressing on schedule
    - Community volunteer opportunities available

Hall Sprinkler System Replacement

Kriss provided status update on ongoing sprinkler system replacement project.

- **Details**
    - Kriss: Reported permit initially denied, required second flow test showing 10 pounds less pressure than expected, design drawings revised and resubmitted
    - Kriss: Old system removed, hall access restricted to Steve Wertz, Dane Clark, and Kriss only during construction
    - Kriss: Projected completion may slip one week to approximately March 20th
    - John: Announced additional upgrades including LED light fixtures in old conference room (after discovering charred wood near old fixtures), new ceiling fans, and insulation batting above lower ceiling
- **Conclusion**
    - Awaiting permit approval for revised design
    - Steve purchased wood for ceiling restoration and began staining
    - Additional safety and efficiency upgrades being incorporated while ceiling is accessible

Website and Bulletin Management

John outlined plan for replacing Christine's webmaster and bulletin producer roles.

- **Details**
    - John: Reported Arlene McCreon committed to producing bulletin in MailChimp HTML format
    - John: Explained Arlene will serve as project manager for website improvements, with actual development work done by contractor
    - John: Proposed new town clerk be responsible for website content updates, either doing directly or managing contractor
- **Conclusion**
    - Bulletin production transition to Arlene McCreon
    - Website functionality improvements to be managed by Arlene with developer contractor
    - Content management responsibility to be included in new clerk job description

Council Committee Reports

Brief updates from various council liaisons on committee activities.

- **Details**
    - John: Announced road work RFP needed for June/July work, will assess road conditions and prioritize segments

        - Barbara and Peter: Reported Planning Commission and HPC working on historic preservation waiver ordinance to allow construction meeting design guidelines but conflicting with setback restrictions
        - Mary: Reported Light Committee met with new chair Steven Hansen, developing policy and procedure document
        - Peter: Reported Lake Committee unanimously voted to add porta potties at lake for parties and swimming season, estimated cost under $3,500
- **Conclusion**
    - Road assessment and RFP development to proceed for summer 2026 work
    - Historic preservation waiver ordinance coming to council
    - Lake porta potties to be included in budget discussion March 23rd

Challenges

- Vehicle break-ins and vandalism continuing with apparent targeting of specific vehicle types (Hondas, Kias)
- Summer in the Parks operating without required state license for multiple years, now requiring rapid compliance work
- Town archiving project stalled with archivist unavailable, significant municipal records work remaining
- Hard tennis court developing extensive cracks requiring repair or eventual replacement
- Hall sprinkler permit process delayed due to water pressure issues requiring design revisions
- Whetstone Trail stream crossing remains dangerous but deferred pending broader Westwoods environmental assessment
- Three competing versions of immigrant rights resolution requiring reconciliation
- Volunteer liability questions raised without clear answers currently available

Action items

- **Kriss**
    - Follow up with Officer Romano at Montgomery County Police for recommendations and patrol assistance
    - Coordinate with safety workgroup on technology solutions and camera surveillance options
    - Continue managing hall sprinkler system project through permit approval and installation
- **Safety Workgroup (Kriss, Peter, Patty, Howard Harary, Sylvie, Adam Ogg, Eva)**

    - Research and recommend security measures including organized doorbell cameras, potential security service, and other technology solutions
    - Coordinate with Montgomery County Police on community safety presentation
    - Explore reactivating neighborhood watch program with block captains
- **John (Mayor)**
    - Publish bulletin reminder about walkway access permission requirements
    - Research volunteer liability questions with town attorney and insurance company (Legit)
    - Conduct road condition assessment for summer 2026 road work RFP
    - Finalize town clerk/manager job description with hiring committee for March 23rd
    - Send Grove alert about March 23rd budget work session with draft budget attached
    - Provide budget draft edits to Gene before March 23rd meeting
- **Eva**
    - Complete Maryland Department of Health licensing application for Summer in the Parks
    - Obtain Montgomery County recreational summer camp certification
    - Develop written emergency, safety and health plan
    - Implement background check process for all staff and volunteers
    - Complete all compliance requirements by end of May (July 6th camp start deadline)
- **Gene Moyer**
    - Communicate budget changes to committee liaisons before March 23rd work session
    - Continue HR and personnel procedure improvements
- **Immigrant Rights Resolution Workgroup (John Porter, Barbara, Larry French, Mary)**
    - Reconcile three versions of immigrant rights resolution
    - Bring final version to council for vote (target March 23rd or April meeting)
- **Playground Committee (Oscar)**
    - Obtain comparable vendor proposals for train set with detailed specifications covering materials, maintenance requirements, costs
    - Prepare full presentation for March 23rd budget meeting
    - Organize Playground Spring Cleaning event on March 21st
- **Woods Committee (Patty, Kriss, Steve)**

    - Proceed with culvert installations at 4 priority locations (Maple Trail, Chestnut, Ridge Trail, Poplar Trail)
    - Use remaining Conservation Meadow Grant funds ($1,100) with Parks and Planning staff assistance
    - Schedule separate discussion of Whetstone Trail crossing as major construction project
- **Arlene McCreon**
    - Take over town bulletin production in MailChimp HTML format
    - Serve as project manager for website functionality improvements with developer contractor
- **Light Committee (Steven Hansen, chair)**
    - Develop policy and procedure document for committee operations
- **Hiring Committee (John, Gene, Peter, Barbara, Mary)**
    - Finalize town clerk/manager job description incorporating management responsibilities
    - Prepare job posting for multiple venues including ICMA, National Association of Counties, Patch
    - Present final job description and budget at March 23rd meeting
- **All Residents**
    - Report all suspicious activity immediately to 911 or non-emergency number (301-279-8000)
    - Report all incidents of crime or vandalism to town clerk, council members, or mayor in addition to police
    - Consider registering cloud-based cameras with Montgomery County Police
- **Council**
    - Review and approve FY27 budget at March 23rd work session
    - Consider porta potties budget request for lake facilities
    - Review playground equipment proposals and budget allocation
    - Vote on final immigrant rights resolution when workgroup completes reconciliation