

# GTCC

# The Greater Timonium Community Council

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## **A New Beginning and other Matters**

### *President's Message*

When the voters of the Third Council District gathered at the Fairgrounds on the evening of February 13<sup>th</sup>, they were offered a glimpse of the new County Executive's administration. John Olszewski and Councilman Wade Kach came to present some thoughts about the upcoming budget and to hear about the needs of their constituents. Mr. Olszewski listened intently for nearly two hours as constituents shared their concerns, their grief and their hopes for the way Baltimore County will be governed in the future, and Councilman Kach presented the County Executive with a list that probably measured twenty feet long detailing the many requests received from citizens throughout the district.

Although the hopes and desires of the many constituents was certainly an important part of the evening, the real news was made when the upcoming budget was discussed. Mr. Olszewski reported that there will be an \$81 million deficit in the FY 2020 budget, which starts on July 1, 2019, if nothing is done. Because of this deficit, the County may have to delay all plans for new high school construction unless the County Executive is successful in getting the State to increase its share of school construction monies. Other school construction projects for elementary and middle schools would also face similar delays. He hopes that finding efficiencies and other methods will reduce some of the deficit, but at this point in time it seems that a possible property tax hike and/or income tax increase is certainly on the table. There was also some discussion about possibly instituting impact fees on all new development, both residential and non-residential, but before that can happen the General Assembly would have to pass enabling legislation to authorize the County to proceed with impact fees. Apparently the county delegation in Annapolis appears willing to do so. Interestingly, Councilman Kach reported that the homebuilding industry is already offering to not oppose impact fees if the County will extend

the Urban/Rural Demarcation Line, which in effect would extend denser-scale development into areas in northern Baltimore County, but the Councilman indicated he could not support impact fees if that condition was attached to any deal.

Again, it cannot be stressed enough that no decision on how to address this deficit has been reached as of the middle of February. To the casual observer, it would appear likely that a property tax and/or an income tax increase is coming, but that announcement is for another day. The County Executive appointed a commission on fiscal sustainability to examine the problem and find solutions for it. One thing that was clear to this writer is that this problem did not just appear in the last several months. The problem was easily discernible over a year ago, but it was never brought to the public's attention.

As to the constituents' concerns, they were varied and ran a gamut of problems. Ron Boone of Springlake thanked Traffic Engineering and the County Executive for starting a program to initiate more traffic calming efforts in Springlake in the wake of the tragic deaths of two pedestrians last year. Other persons from northern Baltimore County spoke of their concerns over traffic, even though they live "in the country" where the congestion stems from commuters from Pennsylvania. There was a whole contingent of citizens who were alarmed by the conditions and treatment of pets at the County's Animal Shelter, and the County Executive indicated that he had already ordered a thirty day review of the operation. Members of the County's Volunteer Fireman's Association also came out and pointed out that these volunteer companies save the County millions of dollars every year. The evening was also punctuated by many advocates for Dulaney High School, and education in general, who offered that they would gladly pay higher taxes to support their schools and its teachers.

Over his first four years in office, Councilman Kach has championed the need for greater government transparency and more accountability. This evening indicated that Councilman Kach may have found a partner for those efforts in John Olszewski. We will keep an eye on the coming months to see if that promise is fulfilled.

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Thanks go out to all of the community associations who took part in the poll on allowing sports betting at the Fairgrounds. In case you missed this discussion, the General Assembly is considering whether to allow sports betting in the State, and if so, where. Because GTCC has a covenant with the Fairgrounds that restricts gambling other than betting on races during the fair and for the OTB facility in the grandstand, the Fairgrounds had asked if we would amend that covenant.

We took a non-binding straw poll at our January meeting and the majority favored allowing sports betting. We followed that up with a vote by our officers and board members, the majority of which also favored sports betting, and we concluded by asking our member associations if it favored sports betting. That vote of member associations also resulted in the majority in favor of sports betting.

But the chapter on sports betting is not closed yet. As of this writing, there is no guarantee that the Fairgrounds will be an allowed location for sports betting. At least a faction of the lawmakers want to restrict sports betting to the existing casinos in the State. Other proponents want to restrict betting to the casinos and Laurel and Pimlico. At this point there is no visibility as to which way the legislature will swing. Additionally, even if the Fairgrounds was a permitted location, we have made it clear to our local legislators that a referendum by Maryland voters, similar to what was done with the OTB, is a necessary step in the process. We will keep you updated on developments in the future.

### **What's an "URDL" ?**

Is it animal, vegetable or mineral ? Well it is none of the three. "URDL" is actually an acronym for "urban rural demarcation line," the imaginary division between the urban and rural parts of Baltimore County. If you live within the urban area, chances are that your home is supplied by public water and public sewer. These public utilities are not allowed to extend beyond the URDL.

Back in the early 1960s an influential study entitled "Plan for the Valleys," by authors Wallace and McHarg, argued that the rural parts of Baltimore County needed to be conserved so as not to harm, or even destroy, their unique character and beauty. The establishment of the URDL was a means of limiting development in those areas.

### **New Development Activity Planned for Area**

There has been a definite uptick in development activity since the start of the new year. Some of the activity is relatively small in size, such as Smyth Jewelry's plans to replace the existing electronic message board part of their York Road sign with a slightly larger and more up to date version of a message board, or the Poulet restaurant's plan to add a small addition to the existing building.

In other news, the Yorketowne Plaza has petitioned Baltimore County to re-develop their shopping center but finalized plans have not been reviewed as of this writing. Grace Fellowship Church has purchased the building they have been renting since 1995 from a subsidiary of Hill Management for \$14 million. The possibility of this sale had been reported over a year ago. Kaiser Permanente's plans to build a medical center and parking garage on Deerco Road met a roadblock when several property owners south of the planned facility appealed the County Development Review Committee's approval.

Two larger projects also came to the public's attention over the last month. The owners of the property at the southeast corner of Padonia and Deerco Roads, 9690 Deerco Road, announced that it wants to build 230 apartment units on the site. This residential component is in

addition to a proposed hotel, office building and parking garage that are also planned for the property. Because the apartments fall under the County's classification of a major residential development, the owner will be required to hold a community input meeting and hold a development plan hearing before an Administrative Law Judge for the residential part of the project to proceed. The other parts of the project, the hotel, etc., are not subject to the same input regulations that require a public hearing. The community input meeting for the apartments is scheduled for May 6 at the Cockeysville Library.

The other large project, variously known as Lorien Padonia or Towns at Padonia, is located immediately to the east of the car dealership on East Padonia Road. More than fifteen years ago a six story nursing care facility had been proposed for the site, but a combination of community opposition and economics led to a revised approach. The current plan proposes 26 townhomes on the five acre site.

### **Teacher's Salaries**

Part of the County Executive's Town Hall meeting was a powerpoint presentation highlighting some of the economic challenges facing Baltimore County, as well as his objectives for coming budgets. Among the slides in the presentation was a detail of the average teacher salaries for seven jurisdictions in central Maryland. Baltimore County ranked fifth among these seven localities, with an average teacher salary of \$65,918, and the implication being that we need to raise salaries to be more in line with the four higher jurisdictions.

It can certainly be argued that teacher salaries could be increased based upon the value they provide to our society, but viewing teacher salaries in isolation, without considering the context of those salaries compared to the median household income does not illuminate the discussion. Baltimore County had a median household income of \$72,305 for 2016, the most recent year of available statistics. Baltimore County's average teacher salary is approximately \$6,390 below the household income, which surprisingly is the lowest disparity among the central Maryland suburban counties. By comparison, Montgomery County has a median household income of \$99,604 and an average teacher salary of \$81,823, resulting in a difference of \$17,780. Harford County has a median household income of \$83,595 and an average teacher salary of \$60,929, for a difference of \$22,666. Only in Baltimore City is the household income smaller than Baltimore County. So considering household income provides a more textured understanding of teacher salaries.

### **Tentative Agenda for the March 13 Meeting**

1. Report on Public Safety from Precinct 7
2. Featured Guest: Baltimore County State's Attorney Scott Shellenberger  
On "Red Flag Protective Orders" & other matters
3. Review of the development project at Padonia & Deerco Roads
4. Proposed local legislation and Administration priorities
5. Old Business
6. New Business

## **New Administration's Transition Team Issues Report**

Early on County Executive Olszewski appointed a transition team composed of private citizens who are experts in a variety of fields to examine various government practices and establish many goals for this new administration. Specifically, the team examined the topics of Education, Public Safety, Jobs and Economic Development, Government Reform and Innovation; Sustainability, Infrastructure and Transportation; and Health & Human Services. The report, over fifty pages in length, can be viewed on the Baltimore County website. Listed below are some brief descriptions of some of the recommendations made by the transition team:

### Public Safety:

Evaluate fire, police & corrections Operations, technology & HR practices;

Build community trust through better community engagement;

### Diversity, Inclusion & Quality of Life:

Create a commission on volunteerism;

Boost the capacity of non-profits and community associations

### Sustainability, Infrastructure & Transportation:

Establish a climate change adaption strategy;

Re-invigorate the Dept. of Recreation & Parks

### Education:

Expand early childhood education;

Competitive pay for educators;

create & publish a long-term capital project plan;

### Government Reform & Innovation:

Create a performance management system;

Center the budget process on goals, outcomes and tracking metrics

### Health and Human Services:

Potential restructuring of health-related County departments

Appoint an Opioid Strategy Coordinator

### Job Creation and Economic Development:

Establish an Economic Development Commission;  
Restructure County Departments

## **General Assembly Bills on Sports Betting**

Three bills have been submitted in the House of Delegates related to sports betting in the current General Assembly session. House Bill 0739, sponsored by Delegates Mangione, Anderson and Corderman would allow sports betting licenses to be issued only to video lottery (slots) operators or a licensee for thoroughbred racing or harness racing. This would effectively allow sports betting at the Fairgrounds, if adopted. This bill would also require that the state voters pass by referendum in November 2020 the approval for sports betting. Senate Bill 0470, sponsored by Senator West, is the companion bill in the Senate to this House proposal.

In contrast, House Bill 0936, sponsored by Delegates Ebersole, Barnes and others, would only allow sports betting at mile-long racing facilities and at video lottery establishments. The Fairgrounds could not conduct sports betting if this proposal is passed. It too would require referendum approval by the voters of the state. There is no companion legislation in the Senate for this proposal.

Finally, House Bill 1132, sponsored by Delegates Buckel and Hornberger, would not require a referendum by state voters, but require that the Lottery and Gaming Control Agency conduct the sports betting operation. Under this proposal, video lottery operators and horse racing facilities could apply for licenses to operate sports wagering. This bill, unlike the other two, more broadly describes the licensing requirements, such as one-time license fees and annual fees for the operators. It also restricts betting to those citizens over age 21. As is consistent with the other two proposals, this bill stipulates that most of the monies the State will collect from sports betting will go to education funding.

## **Calendar of Events**

March 8-10, 10 AM to 6 PM, Maryland Home & Garden Show, the Cow Palace at the Fairgrounds;

March 8-10, 10 AM to 6 PM, Cat Show, the 4-H Building at the Fairgrounds;

March 13, 7-9PM, GTCC General Meeting, Cockeyville Library;

March 16-17, 10AM to 5 PM, Antique Arms Show, Cow Palace at the Fairgrounds;

March 20, 12-1 PM, Adult Book Club at Cockeyville Library;

March 23, 10:30 AM to 12:30 PM, Chess for Adults at Cockeyville Library;

March 25, 7 PM to 8:30 PM, Adult Book Club at Cockeyville Library;

Every Tuesday and Wednesday, 10 AM to 11:30 AM, Preschool Story Time at Cockeyville Library, children must be accompanied by an adult

March 29-30, 2 PM to 6 PM, Beer, Bourbon & BBQ Fest, Cow Palace at the Fairgrounds;

May 4, 10AM to 2PM, The Steam Show at the Maryland Fire Museum, 1301 York Road  
View antique fire equipment, hose wagon rides and food vendors;

May 4 & 5, Towsontown Spring Festival. From 10AM to 8 PM on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 1-6 PM on the 5<sup>th</sup>

**HOPE TO SEE YOU AT OUR NEXT GTCC MEETING ON MARCH 13TH @ 7:00 PM !**