

GTCC

The Greater Timonium Community Council

**Volume XII , Issue 1
January 2020**

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President's Message

Kirwan Commission Will Dominate the Legislature

When the 2020 legislative session starts in a couple of weeks, you can bet that more time will be spent on funding the Kirwan Commission recommendations than any other single item. After all, the recommendations will cost Maryland taxpayers an additional \$4 billion per year when fully implemented some ten years down the road. Two-thirds of that total will come from State coffers and the remaining third will come from local governments. Already Baltimore City Mayor, Jack Young, has advised all government departments to figure on a five percent decrease in their funding to pay for the expected cost of Kirwan at the city level. Fortunately, the additional funding that Baltimore County needs to supply is far less than the city. We have not heard from the Olszewski administration about how it plans to pay for the additional costs of Kirwan.

A recent poll indicates that most respondents know very little about the sum and substance of the recommendations made by the Kirwan Commission. The five broad policy objectives of the commission include investing in high quality early childhood education, including expansion of full day pre-school for 3 and 4-year-olds, free for all low- income families. Elevating teachers thru such measures as raising the standards to enter the profession, higher pay, more extensive continuing development programs and less classroom teaching time. Improving the instructional system by having students' career- and college-ready by the end of tenth grade. More support for students from the lowest socio-economic rung by additional instruction, health and behavioral services and support for English as second language learners. Finally, the commission urges for better accountability. The commission's focus on accountability seems to rest with seeing that its policy recommendations are implemented properly. While other educational commentators have recommended better accountability for the entire education system far beyond the narrow work of the commission.

Despite most commentators saying that it's a slam dunk certainty that the Kirwan findings will be fully funded in this legislative session, it is not too late to push back if you think that the price tag is just too costly. We were told that the Thornton Commission's work would revolutionize education in the early 2000s, but at least in terms of standardized test scores, we saw students lose ground rather than make up ground. Spending more dollars does not guarantee a better education. We have no further to look than the dollars spent on education in Baltimore City. On a per capita basis, the city is the third highest spending locality in the entire nation on public education. Yet in terms of test score and achievement results, it is far from the top of the heap.

Included in our upcoming general meeting on January 8 will be a discussion about the Kirwan Commission report, as well as a presentation from a member of Kimco Realty about their re-zoning request for the shopping center across from the Fairgrounds. We will also have elections for GTCC officers for the 2020 year. I hope to see you on January 8th and have a wonderful New Year as we move into a new decade.

The Stars Are Out

No, we are not talking about Bradley Cooper, Jennifer Lawrence or Al Pacino, rather we mean the "star rating system" by which the Maryland Department of Education rates the public schools in Maryland. This is the second year that the star system has been used to evaluate public schools. Prior to 2018, the schools were rated largely on standardized tests, and many educators felt that certain qualitative factors were ignored when test scores were the primary measure. Currently, factors figuring into the star rating system include test scores, student growth, curriculum, attendance/absenteeism, graduation rates, English language proficiency, Math proficiency and Science proficiency. Students in two grades are also asked to rate their school and its learning environment in helping to determine the school's rating.

The headline in most newspapers was that school achievement was down slightly in 2019. This year schools with four or five stars constituted 55% of the total public schools in the state. Last year, the first for the star rating system, 59% of the schools garnered four or five stars. In the star rating system, schools receiving one or two stars are judged to be below average, a school with three stars is judged to be average and four or five stars are deemed to be superior.

As far as the schools in the Greater Timonium area, most did very well in this year's ratings. For elementary schools, Timonium, Pinewood and Riderwood all attained five stars. The list of four-star elementary schools includes Lutherville, Pot Spring, Padonia International, Hampton, Riderwood and Mays Chapel. Only Warren Elementary drew a three-star rating. For middle schools, Ridgely was rated with four stars and Cockeysville was rated with three stars. Both Towson and Dulaney High Schools scored four stars.

It should be pointed out that the State's website that detailed these school by school ratings would receive only one star, if ratings were given out for it. The website was down on the first day the ratings were released and on the second day it operated only sporadically. In trying to compile information for this article, the website was down or produced many error messages. Maybe the Maryland Department of Education needs to hire a couple of computer savvy high school students to re-code the site to run efficiently.

News from the Texas Quarry

As some of you may know, the Texas Quarry was sold to Martin Marietta Materials in the last year, but management of the site has remained very consistent with the changeover, save for the fact that some new faces are in supervisory positions. Benny Bowman is the new plant supervisor. Mr. Bowman assumed that role in October, and he has an extensive resume in the mining industry. He reported that there will be three more blasts at the quarry before the operation shuts down for a two-month break in mining operations. During that down time workers will attend to many housekeeping issues.

Mr. Bowman also reported that sales of stone products have remained very constant over the last few years. The quarry has not seen any fluctuations brought on by the economy, with sales averaging 2.8 to 3 million tons of stone per year.

In addition to the surface mining done by Martin Marietta, a company known as Imerys conducts subsurface mining on a much smaller scale. Imerys mines approximately 150,000 tons of high-quality calcium carbonate (limestone) each year which is ground into a fine powder and used in building materials such as carpet backing, drywall, roof shingles and pvc pipe. In addition, this calcium carbonate finds its way into many food products.

With the reserves of stone on hand, this quarry will remain in operation for decades upon decades, and we hope that its efforts at community relations will continue in a strong manner during that time.

Dulaney and Towson Highs Receive Honor

Recently, Dulaney and Towson High Schools were two of four local schools locally to be honored by the One Love Foundation as "champion schools" for their commitment to education on healthy relationships.

The One Love Foundation is a national nonprofit organization whose aim is to promote relationship health education through workshops, curriculum and peer-to-peer interactions. Founded in honor of and in the wake of the death of Yardley Love, this organization wants to teach young people to recognize the difference between healthy and unhealthy relationships.

In the case of Dulaney, an extracurricular club was set up to hold monthly meetings, and members of the club conducted several types of fundraising efforts in support of the One Love Foundation and hosted a workshop on healthy relationships. As to Towson High, its students held a winter coat drive for the House of Ruth, boasts a One Love Club with 85 members and sponsored a forensic nurse from GBMC, who spoke about domestic violence and its early warning signs.

Nationally, thirty-one high schools in seven states have been recognized as a “champion school” by the One Love Foundation.

Gunpowder Valley Conservancy Announces Accomplishments

The Gunpowder Valley Conservancy, that local non-profit who made a presentation at our September general meeting, recently announce their intentions to expand their Clear Creeks project into the Loch Raven watershed. The Clear Creeks project is a multi-pronged approach that attempts to improve the purity of stormwater runoff using rain barrels, rain gardens and planting of trees, among other measures, all of which improve water quality in tributaries.

Recently, the Conservancy announced that it had received grants from both state and federal sources that will help fund their efforts in the Loch Raven watershed. Already the Cromwell Station Homeowners Association, beyond our GTCC boundaries, has indicated a desire to partner on this Clear Creeks effort, and it is hoped that community associations in the Timonium area will also participate after learning more about the program. At a meeting on Clear Creek accomplishments, the goals and outcomes of the program were reviewed for years 2018 and 2019. In terms of rain barrels distributed, they had hoped to reach one hundred properties during the two-year period. They distributed rain barrels to 107 properties. They also reached their goal of installing twenty-four rain gardens during the two-year term, as well as installing eight bayscape gardens. Volunteers associated with the program had hoped to collect 15,000 pounds of trash along waterways during 2018 and 2019, but in reality, they collected over 26,000 pounds of trash. All in all, over two thousand persons volunteered over the two-year period, including landowners, students and others.

Got a Beef?

Large companies are making it harder and harder for consumers to get their complaints addressed. Whether it's customer service reps who never get back to you or long waits on the telephone in order to speak to someone, it makes getting your problem solved a real challenge.

A recent article in *Kiplinger Personal Finance*, by Patricia Mertz Esswein, points out that to successfully deal with a complaint, you need patience, persistence and politeness. You should not expect an instant fix and give the company's complaint process time to work the matter out. If you remain polite, chances are your issue will be resolved sooner than if you become

frustrated and nasty. Expect to have to explain your issue several times, not just initially to the first person in the chain of command. Keep copies of everything related to your purchase- order confirmations, receipts, warranties, billing statements and the like. Also, if you complain on-line, take a screen shot of your on-line complaint form or other chat so when the company claims they have no record of the complaint, you can back up your earlier effort.

If you are not getting any results and you have given the company a reasonable time to respond, try taking your complaint to the next level in the company. One strategy is to visit the company's website to search for contact names. Don't start with the CEO but look for a mid-level manager to contact. If the website is no help, try the website of the Better Business Bureau (www.bbb.org) and search by the company's name. Under "business details" you may find contact information for company executives. Another resource is Elliott Advocacy (www.elliott.org), which lists names and phone numbers of executives responsible for customer service at major companies.

Keep any correspondence with the company brief and unemotional. Too much detail may prove to be problematic. Keep your letter at 250 words, or less, in describing the problem and your suggested solution. Ask for a response in ten days if you have already gotten the run around from lower levels in the company and remember not to include the originals of your supporting documents. Only send copies of those documents.

If you want further information on this topic, go to the website www.consumer-action.org for a free guide entitled "How to Complain." Good luck on your next go round!

Tentative Agenda for the Next GTCC Meeting, January 8, 2020

1. Introductions
2. Report on Public Safety from Precinct 7
3. Featured Guest: Kimco Realty Shares Their CZMP Request for the Fairgrounds Shopping Center, by Michael Ogden
4. Featured Guest: Upcoming State Highway Projects for 2020, by Fran Ward
5. Featured Guest: In Support of the Kirwan Commission, by Emily Brown
6. Election of GTCC Officers for 2020
7. Old Business
8. New Business

Our meetings are held in the meeting room of the Cockeysville Library and we regularly start at 7 PM. Hope you can join us.

Area Trivia

1. What prominent Baltimorean owned a share in the former restaurant known as the “Tail of the Fox”?
2. There is a small residential subdivision on Timonium Road known as “Legends Hill.” Why is it so named?
3. What Cockeysville family played a role in supplying gravestones in the Baltimore area?

Answers on the following page

Maryland State Fairgrounds Getting Greener

Recently, Gerry Brewster, chairman of the board of the fairgrounds, announced that they will be planting an additional 45 trees on the State Fairgrounds. Supplied through a program provided by Baltimore County government, the trees include eastern redbuds, three species of oaks, black gum and others. Twelve of the trees will be planted along the fairgrounds York Road frontage, with the rest placed at other locations. This will certainly add to the attractiveness of the property, and it should also help moderate stormwater runoff and help clean the air. Not too long ago, the fairgrounds announced that it would be installing solar panels on the roof tops of two of its larger buildings, another sign of its commitment to environmental stewardship.

Senator Zirkin to Retire

State Senator Bobby Zirkin recently announced that he will step down from his position in the General Assembly in early January. Zirkin had served in the legislature for twenty years, and most recently he held the position of Chairman of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee. Zirkin cited the desire to spend more time with his wife and daughters as the principal reason for his departure, and he indicated that he will spend more time practicing law and helping athletes with charitable pursuits.

In recent years Zirkin had come under fire by certain progressive groups as being too centrist, and not liberal enough. He had also expressed displeasure with the social media environment where anyone can chastise public officials. A replacement for Senator Zirkin has not been named as of the writing of this article, but Delegates Hettleman, Stein and Cardin are certainly in consideration to assume the position for the 11th District.

Primary For 7th Congressional District

The passing of Elijah Cummings necessitates a primary for the open congressional seat in the 7th District. Now that the filing deadline has passed, there are 24 Democratic candidates and 8 Republican candidates running for the seat to the district that includes parts of Timonium, Cockeysville and northern Baltimore County, as well as parts of Baltimore City and Howard County.

The primary will take place on February 4, 2020, followed by a special general election on April 28, 2020. If you reside in the 7th District, please make sure to exercise your vote.

Answers to Trivia Questions

1. Peter Angelos was a partner in the Tail of the Fox restaurant.
2. Legends Hill is so named because Johnny Unitas lived in the subdivision.
3. The Tyrie family operated a burial monument business in Cockeysville, starting in 1898. Recently, George, “Jack”, Tyrie, Jr. passed away on November 27, 2019 at the age of 92. In addition to the family business, Jack Tyrie served on the Baltimore County Council for twelve years. Currently, the Dulaney Valley Memorial Gardens owns the Tyrie Monument Company.

Dulaney Students Headed for London

Forty members of Dulaney High School’s Lion’s Roar Marching Band will parade in London’s New Year’s Day celebration. The band previously marched in this parade in 2011 and 2015. Directed by Barry Chesky, the group will perform the song “Light Em Up” by Fall Out Boy.

The Lion’s Roar Marching Band has previously performed in many large venues, including the halftime shows at the Allstate Sugar Bowls in 2013 and 2017, at Disney World in Orlando and locally at the Baltimore Holiday Parade.

Bills Submitted for the Upcoming Legislative Session

Listed below are bills submitted by local legislators, as of December 24, for the Maryland General Assembly Session, which starts in January. For further information check the legislation page on the Maryland General Assembly website.

HB 009- Dels. Guyton, Hettleman & Cardin- Defines breeding stables and horse establishments for the purposes of licensure and regulation.

HB 011- Del. Cardin- Amends the retirement age for certain judges and retention elections for judges.

HB 013- Del. Hettleman & others- Prohibits the release of balloons into the atmosphere.

HB 021- Del. Cardin- Pertains to abandoned property in possession of a museum.

HB 022- Del. Cardin- Alters the definition of campaign material under election laws.

HB 030- Del. Hettleman & others- Clarifies what must be disclosed to condominium association members by Boards of Directors after closed door meetings

HB 033- Del. Guyton & others- Matters relating to abuse and neglect of vulnerable adults.

HB 041- Del. Cardin- Expands what constitutes a campaign finance violation.

SB 011- Sen, West- Requires all Liquor Board commissioners for Baltimore County to be residents & voters of the county.

SB 022- Sen. West- Requires local boards of election to set up polling places in retirement communities of at least 200 residents.

SB 038- Sen, West- Allows candidates to seek an injunction against certain violations of campaign finance law.

SB 058- Sen. West- Allows for sports betting at video lottery (slots) operations and racetracks, provided sports betting is approved by a referendum of State voters.

SB 067- Sen, West- Alters, by expediting, the time required of government to produce public records as a result of a public information request.

Calendar of Events

Bridal Expo: January 3, 5 PM until 9 PM; January 4, 11 AM until 3 PM, Home Arts Building, The Maryland State Fair

A Season to Forget: The Story of the 1988 Orioles: Meet Ron Snyder, author of the book, January 7, 7 PM, Cockeyesville Library

Learn Chess for Children: January 13, 4:30 PM, Cockeyesville Library

Books, Coffee and Conversation: January 15, 12 PM, Cockeyesville Library

Maryland RV Show: February 14 to 16 & February 21 to 23, Cow Palace, The Maryland State Fair

We encourage PTAs, schools and local groups to notify us so we can post other events that will take place in the greater Timonium area.