

# GTCC

# The Greater Timonium Community Council

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+++++++ NEWSLETTER ++++++

## *President's Message*

### **Color Me a Cynic**

By now I am sure that many readers are tired of my complaints about the Kirwan Commission recommendations, but the recent events in the Maryland General Assembly leave me no choice but to complain at least one more time. I am writing this message in the last week of February. So, it is very possible that things will change in Annapolis before the end of the legislative session. However, for now I am very disturbed at the actions of the leadership of the Democratic party as they propose how to fund the Kirwan Commission recommendations.

It's not unreasonable to want to improve the educational structure of public schools in the state, but the price tag for this is enormous- \$ 4billion per year when fully implemented. Additionally, wasn't the public promised that the state's educational product would improve greatly with the implementation of the Thornton Commission recommendations in 2003? According to former Delegate Herb Mc Millan, the state has spent a total of \$3.2 billion to implement the Thornton recommendations, and it has resulted in a one-point rise in National Education Assessment Program scores in fifteen years! That's hardly a good return on the investment.

Turning now to the most recent development in this on-going drama, on February 20<sup>th</sup> Delegate Eric Luedtke, a Montgomery County Democrat who is the House majority leader, introduced a bill to reduce the state sales tax by one cent, but expand the sales tax to include taxing services, such as legal services, accounting, engineering, haircuts, lawn work and many others. According to Delegate Luedtke, the tax exemption on medical services, educational services and health services would continue, although a comprehensive list of what will be taxed and won't be taxed has not yet been produced. Earlier in the session, Senate President Bill Ferguson and House Speaker Adrienne Jones had pledged that across the board increases in sales

tax, income tax or property tax would not be used to fund Kirwan. So, my blood pressure rose when Luedtke's bill broke that pledge. Further, Delegate Luedtke said that this tax increase would result in each household paying about \$3.00 a week in increased taxes to produce \$2.6 billion in funding for Kirwan. Yet many are challenging Luedtke's math skills in stating it would only cost each household \$156 per year. Delegate Kathy Szeliga, Republican Baltimore & Harford Counties, said a back of the envelope calculation indicated that each household would pay between \$1,400 and \$1,700 a year.

One delegate suggested to me that the tax on services was just a trial balloon that Del. Luedtke threw up without consulting all his House members. That may be true, but there were other sponsors on the bill. I don't know what to think, but the cynic in me says that this is part of a shell game wherein a tax that is less controversial will be substituted for the tax on services, and the Democrats will expect everyone to accept that less controversial tax. Don't count on it! Further, isn't it appalling that the supporters of Kirwan have had two years to create a funding bill for those recommendations, and here we are at the half-way point in this legislative session and no consensus funding plan has emerged. Additionally, for something that will be so expensive, most citizens are not even familiar with the specifics of the Kirwan recommendations. What a sad state of events.

One final thought- Hartford County Executive, Barry Glassman has suggested that the state choose one jurisdiction, such as Baltimore City, and implement the Kirwan recommendations in that jurisdiction to see if they produce the desired results. If they do after a five-year trial period, the plan could be introduced statewide. That seems like a prudent approach for something as sweeping and costly as the Kirwan recommendations. It seems much more sensible than Del. Luedtke's wild proclamation that once Kirwan is in place Maryland will have the best education system in the *world*. Call me a cynic, but I much prefer the slow and steady approach of a trial period than I do the hyperbole of a "world's best" proclamation.

### **County Executive Announces Public Safety Plan**

County Executive John Olszewski, Jr. and Police Chief Melissa Hyatt released a public safety plan that focuses on combating violent crime thru a multipronged approach. "Any increase in violent crime is unacceptable. We refuse to normalize violence in our communities." said Olszewski as he unveiled the various components. This new approach is coming out amidst reports that the County's homicide numbers doubled over the prior year.

"There is no single factor that causes violent crime, and no single solution," stated Chief Hyatt. "This plan includes innovative and proven strategies that will better equip our officers..." she asserted.

The plan focuses on five key priorities to reduce violent crime:

- a.) Improve Data and Analytics- establish a "real time crime center". A physical place where real time data, human intelligence and technology are used to deploy resources.

The crime center will primarily focus on precincts that experience the greatest amounts of gun violence.

- b.) Focused Crime Prevention- enable law enforcement to increase targeted crime prevention in “hot spots” and at key times of activity. Coordination between the real time crime center and the existing Comstat process will improve law enforcement’s ability to identify and apprehend violent offenders.
- c.) Attract and Retain Talent- an emphasis to attract and retain high quality police officers. Among the innovations in this category is a pilot program to allow officers to “take home their police vehicles,” a plan to invest more in local recruitment efforts and implement a foreign language proficiency stipend and referral bonuses.
- d.) Innovative Strategies- including seeking public and private resources to establish an Office of Public Safety to coordinate innovative programs and new violence reduction strategies. For example, last year the department expanded the number of area sectors from two to three, each led by a Major, which allowed a greater ability to focus resources.
- e.) Strong Partnerships- build upon the regional solutions approach to crime fighting, such as the existing Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces, which partners with other localities, State officials and Federal authorities to look at the regional characteristics of certain crime trends.

The County Executive concluded that “Baltimore County remains a safe place to live, work and raise a family, but the increase in homicides in 2019 requires a decisive response.”

### **Crime Trends in the Overall County, and in Precinct 7**

In comparing overall crime statistics and the local numbers, the reports are not yet available for the entire 2019 year. What is reported herein will compare the first six months of 2018 with the first half year of 2019. Homicides were up significantly in 2019 by approximately 58 % over a six-month period. The crimes of rape and burglary were also higher, although both categories increased by less than 4%. Aggravated assaults increased by nearly 6.5%. By contrast, motor vehicle theft was down county-wide by approximately 12%, thefts were down by more than 3% and total robberies were down 12.5 %.

As far as Cockeysville’s Precinct 7 goes, there were no homicides in the first six months of either 2018 or 2019. Rapes, robberies and thefts were all down by percentages in the middle teens. The only category that showed an alarming rise was aggravated assault, which increased by 82%, from 50 incidents to 91 assaults over the two six-month periods.

## **Budget Town Hall at Dulaney High School**

County Executive John Olszewski, Jr. and Councilman Wade Kach held a town hall in order to get a sense of what is important to the residents of the third district. The meeting started with the County Executive reviewing what he believes are his accomplishments over the past year. He pointed out that his administration oversaw one of the largest increases in education, with over 160 new teacher and counselor positions added and \$242 million in funding for new schools. His administration has also created an office of Ethics & Accountability to root out waste, fraud and abuse. Road resurfacing was also highlighted, but the County Executive acknowledged that there are more needs than funds to resurface all the poor-quality roads. He also pointed out that the County has developed its first comprehensive tourism strategy in order to attract more visitors.

Comments from the audience were varied and mostly supportive. Ron Boone of the Springlake community complemented County agencies in helping with traffic calming and suggesting approaches to improve the Springlake pond, which had deteriorated under the last administration. Several speakers urged that the County spend more money on agricultural preservation. Advocates also complained that the Dulaney Springs athletic fields were not being maintained properly, with too little turf and too many rock outcroppings posing a potential harm to young athletes. At least two citizens also called for the County to install an artificial turf field at Dulaney High, and they pointed out that many of the high schools already have artificial turf. One Lutherville-Timonium Recreation Council member also asked for an indoor facility, including an ice rink, to be installed at the Timonium Fairgrounds. One early speaker, however, talked about how he is spending too much on local taxes, and he complained about the County spending funds on illegal aliens.

All in all, over two hundred residents attended this forum and approximately fifty residents spoke in favor of funding a specific initiative. In addition to the elected officials, many county agencies set up information tables in the lobby of the auditorium and doled out advice on a variety of subjects.

## **Assisted Living Facility Receives Approval**

Administrative Law Judge, Paul Mayhew, approved the project known as Timonium Terraces after a January 30, 2020, hearing, known as a development plan hearing. Timonium Terraces, when constructed, will be a two and four story, single building property located off Broad Avenue, south of Padonia Road. The property is located behind the “Sudsville” laundromat situated on York Road. When finished, the site will include 88 units of general assisted living and memory care facilities for seniors with memory impairment. The developer for the project estimated that the average age of facility residents will be 83.

Approximately ten neighbors from West Timonium Heights attended the hearing. There was interest in whether the current fencing across Broad Avenue would remain intact after the project is built. That fencing was constructed when the Broad Street Market Shopping Center

was built to prohibit commercial traffic from the shopping center traveling through the adjacent residential neighborhood. The developer of Timonium Terraces reported that the fence across Broad Avenue will remain. Residents also wanted to learn about the lighting proposed for the facility. Nearby lighting from the shopping center is deemed to be intrusive for some of the residential neighbors. In the case of Timonium Terraces, the developer reported that the exterior parking lights will only be twelve feet tall to minimize light intrusion, as well as use a lighting cap, or shield, that would also concentrate the lighting away from residences. Jim Hermann, from the County's Development Plan Review, told residents that they could contact him about the lighting plan for the project in the future before the final details are approved.

A final point of some contention was the need to construct a sidewalk along the Roosevelt Street frontage of the property. The developer reported that the Office of Planning wanted him to construct a public sidewalk on the north side of Roosevelt, but many of the residents attending the hearing were not in favor of the sidewalk. Administrative Law Judge Mayhew ruled that the sidewalk should not be constructed as part of the development, resulting in support from many West Timonium Heights residents.

### **7<sup>th</sup> Congressional District Primary Completed**

Caused by the passing of Congressman Elijah Cummings, the special election primary to fill the remainder of his term was marked by low voter turnout. This district, which is comprised by parts of Baltimore City, Baltimore County and Howard County, had a total voter turnout of only 19.7 %. Baltimore County voters did slightly better in their portion of the turnout, with 21.7 % participating.

Kweisi Mfume, a former congressman and NCAAP president, won the Democratic nomination for the remainder of Cummings current term. On the other side, Kimberly Klacik, a Middle River resident and State Central Committee member, won over seven other candidates in the Republican primary. The runoff between the two will take place as part of the April 28<sup>th</sup> regular primary in Maryland.

### **Dear Lamar ...**

What happens when you mix elementary school students with a professional sports franchise? Well in this instance the answer is a video feature involving Pot Spring Elementary School students and Lamar Jackson. The Ravens public relations and video team had been at Pot Spring Elementary earlier in the football season to film a video, and after Lamar Jackson was reported to be the frontrunner for the MVP award, the Ravens video team returned to the school to film a piece about student's knowledge of Jackson and how he had inspired them. Altogether, the school asked 19 students, ranging from kindergarteners to fifth graders, to draw portraits of Jackson and write letters to him.

The student letters addressed many different aspects about Lamar. Some letters recited his statistics, which propelled his selection as the MVP, while other letters dealt with his relationship with his mom, or his competitiveness and enjoyment of the sport. One student even wrote, “you are tricky, just like me.” The kindergarteners had to dictate their letters to a teacher, but they participated just the same. Finally, on January 28 the film crew returned to school to film the students reading their letters to Lamar.

The finished film product was released on the Ravens’ Twitter account, where it was seen two million times, according to the club, as well as shown on news programs. USA today described the feature as “super touching.” Congrats to the students of Pot Spring Elementary!

### **Work Group will Examine Code Enforcement Efforts**

The County Executive, John Olszewski, announced that a workgroup has been formed to examine the efforts of the code enforcement office. Co-chaired by Permits, Approvals & Inspections Director Michael Mallinoff and Councilman Izzy Patoka, 2<sup>nd</sup> District, the work group will be tasked with examining four areas in the delivery of code enforcement services, and make recommendations on reform:

- 1.) Analyze staffing and other resources in light of demands on code enforcement
- 2.) Response timelines, based on the types of services requested
- 3.) Administrative Hearing Transparency
- 4.) Eliminating Blight and dealing with vacant properties

A panel of ten citizens, as well as members of the Code Enforcement staff held the first of three sessions in mid-February. Many of the citizens’ reactions to enforcement practices concerned response times, vacant properties and the need to have bilingual inspectors. The final conclusions of this workgroup will be reported on in the future.

### **Council Amends Work Session Start Time**

The County Council passed a resolution, sponsored by Councilmen Kach, Patoka and Marks, to start future work sessions at 4:00 PM, or later, rather than the current start time of 2:00 PM. Originally, this resolution had called for start times of 6:00 PM, and the passage of a 4:00 PM start time is seen as a compromise. The resolution takes effect starting in July of this year.

### **Legislation on Donation Bins**

Expanding on previous legislation, the County Council has passed additional legislation concerning donation bins, also known as collection bins. The original law, passed in 2017, placed certain location and upkeep requirements on donation bin operators. However, the new

law addresses more of the public safety and nuisance concerns that are associated with the containers for charitable giving. Many critics point out that donation bins are often overflowing, resulting in a trashy appearance and collections from these bins is not always regularly scheduled.

When the County enacted the original legislation in 2017, one charitable operator filed suit against the County, claiming that the law violated the operator's freedom of speech in asking for donations. While that lawsuit was settled without adverse findings against Baltimore County, other jurisdictions nationwide have not been so lucky. Some jurisdictions in places like Michigan and California banned donation bins completely within their city limits, and lower courts had ruled in favor of the bin operators that such a ban did violate freedom of speech. However, in a more recent federal court case in the Ninth Circuit, related to a law imposed by the City of Oakland, California, the court ruled that the city had the right to impose restrictions in order to limit graffiti, blight and illegal dumping.

The newly passed legislation requires that all donation bins have an annually renewable permit issued by the County. In order to receive the permit, an operator of the bin and the landlord on whose property the bin will be located must: provide contact information for the public to register complaints, provide the County with a site plan and rendering of the bin, provide a maintenance plan and pick-up schedule for each bin, and list the types of items to be collected. Only one donation bin is allowed on a property, and bins may not be located within 1,000 feet of another bin. All bins will be required to have a special permit sticker attached to the front of the bin, as well as a warning to not leave donations outside of the bin. Any materials dumped outside the bin could result in fines to the operator and landlord, if not removed within 72 hours.

It remains to be seen as to whether any bin operators will seek to challenge the County's authority to regulate these donation bins a second time. Hopefully, the Council gained valuable insights as a result of court challenges in other jurisdictions.

### **Tentative Agenda for GTCC Meeting of March 11, 2020**

1. Introductions
2. Report on Public Safety from Precinct 7
3. Review of all Comprehensive Zoning Map Issues for the Greater Timonium Area:  
Share your questions, comments and opinions on all the properties up for re-zoning
4. Does your neighborhood need more streetlights or no parking signs? Thomas Stehr of the County's Dept. of Public Works will offer some advice
5. Old Business: including what is happening in Annapolis
6. New Business
7. Adjourn

## Calendar of Events

1. Home, Garden & Craft Show, March 6 to 8<sup>th</sup>, 10 AM to 6 PM  
Timonium Fairgrounds, Exhibition Hall & Cow Palace
2. Night Out for Ridgely Middle School. March 6, 6:30 to 8:30 PM  
At BC Brewery, 10950 Gilroy Road
3. Family Safety Day at the Fire Museum of Maryland, March 7, 10 AM to 4 PM. Admission is free!
4. Model Railroad Show, March 13 & 14, 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM  
Timonium Fairgrounds, Cow Palace
5. Cat Show, March 14, 15, 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM  
Timonium Fairgrounds, 4H/ Home Arts Bldg.
6. Dulaney High School Spring Musical, March 19 to 21, 7:00 PM  
At the School
7. Antique Arms Show, March 21, 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM, March 22, 9:00 to 3:00  
Timonium Fairgrounds, Cow Palace
8. St. Vincent DePaul Society, Empty Bowls (in support of donations against hunger)  
Timonium Fairgrounds, Exhibition Hall, March 21, 1:00 PM until 5:00 PM
9. Builder's Mart, March 25, 8:30 AM until 7:30 PM  
Timonium Fairgrounds, Cow Palace
10. Gun Show, March 28 & 29, 9:00 AM until 5:00 PM  
Timonium Fairgrounds, Exhibition Hall
11. Save the Date: Yorkridge Shopping Center, at York & Ridgely Roads, will hold its Spring Fest on May 9, 10 AM to 1 PM. If your community would like to advertise an upcoming community event at Spring Fest, Yorkridge would like to help. Contact Holly Geelhaar, [holly@schwaberholdings](mailto:holly@schwaberholdings), to learn more.



## **Kach to hold Public Meeting on Re-Zoning Requests**

Councilman Wade Kach will be holding two public meetings to listen to comments about the upcoming Comprehensive Zoning Map Process requests. The first of those meetings is not required by law, but as he did during the CZMP period in 2016, Councilman Kach wants as much dialogue as possible. The first meeting will be held on Thursday, April 23 at the Fastig-Tipton Building on the Timonium State Fairgrounds. The meeting starts at 6:00 PM but sign up to provide testimony begins at 5:00 PM.

That first meeting is followed on Thursday, June 18, by a hearing that is required by law, and includes not only Councilman Kach, but the other six Council members. It will begin at 6:00 PM and sign up to speak begins at 5:15 PM. This meeting will also be held at the Fastig-Tipton Building on the Fairgrounds, and the location is a departure from prior meetings that were held at Loch Raven H.S.

## **Traffic Calming Services Available to Communities**

Thanks to our friend and 3<sup>rd</sup> district planner, Wally Lippincott, for calling attention to the fact that the County has a traffic calming program to assist residents who are concerned by traffic speed and safety on their neighborhood roads. The Office of Traffic Engineering has a variety of options at its disposal, including traffic circles, speed humps, pedestrian refuge islands and narrowing driving lanes in order to promote safety and slow down speeders.

Anyone who is interested needs to read the department's "Neighborhood Traffic Management Policy," which can be viewed on the County's website. For more information and to start the process to have your neighborhood analyzed go to:

[https://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/Agencies/publicworks/traffic/traffic\\_calming.html](https://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/Agencies/publicworks/traffic/traffic_calming.html)

*Please join us for the next GTCC Meeting on March 11<sup>th</sup>, 7 PM at the Cockeysville*

*Library. We will be discussing the properties requesting zoning changes in CZMP.*