

GTCC

The Greater Timonium Community Council

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9b West Ridgely Road, Box 276, Timonium Maryland 21093
[http:// www. gtccinc.org](http://www.gtccinc.org)

President: Eric Rockel, 410 252-8439; Vice President: Kathleen Beadell, 410 977-7581; Secretary: Laura Renshaw, 410 583-1908; Directors: Ashley Richardson, Cathy Norton, Joan Mahan, Larry Lidard and Ed Hale, Jr.

We will not be holding a General Meeting for GTCC in November due to the restrictions in place brought on by the corona virus. Please follow the three simple steps to

help keep everyone safe- wash your hands, frequently; wear a mask when appropriate and

keep six feet of distance from others in social situations.

President's Message

At the Mid Way Point

We are essentially half-way through the first term of County Executive John Olszewski, Jr. So, I thought it would be appropriate to reflect on his progress to this point. Mr. Olszewski ran as a progressive Democrat during the primaries and he tacked back a little bit toward the middle during the general election. He promoted himself as a reformer, and during his first two years in office he has accomplished a range of reform measures. For example, he urged for campaign finance reform, and this November the voters will get the chance to vote on Question A, a County Charter Amendment that would create a Citizens' Election Fund System. He also supported police reform, even before the tumultuous events of the last nine months brought headlines, and in conjunction with the County Council, the County has adopted Bill 96-20, the so-called "SMART Policing Act." The County Executive also supported the implementation of development impact fees to mitigate the impact of new development on such things as infrastructure and schools. The County Council and the County Executive offered differing bills on how to implement impact fees. For example, the Executive's bill would have applied to residential and non-residential development, with non-residential rates based on a per square foot basis and residential rates based on a per unit basis. He would have also exempt certain construction from paying the fees, including construction by governmental entities, such

as BCPS, affordable housing so long as those units would submit to a binding agreement to limit rents for 15 years, construction in enterprise zones and construction for religious purposes. The final legislation as passed by the County Council enlarged the list of exemptions that Olszewski wanted to include private schools, colleges and non-profit hospitals, state designated transit-oriented developments, country club redevelopment (with a concept plan before 2021) and commercial revitalization districts. Although the County Executive got some of what he wanted in the impact fee legislation, it remains to be seen whether this legislation will generate enough funding to mitigate the impact of development.

Another area where the County Executive has made an impression is in many of his personnel decisions. For many community activists the departure of County Administrative Officer Fred Homan was long overdue. Mr. Homan had butted heads with many community leaders throughout his career, and his departure signaled an important reform by Olszewski. The County Executive also created a Chief Sustainability Officer, appointing former delegate Stephen Lafferty as the first to hold the position, as a way of managing natural resources and working on ways to reduce environmental pollution. He also appointed the County's first female Police Chief, Melissa Hyatt, to demonstrate that this administration is committed to equality.

One area where the County Executive has not implemented any reform attempts is in the development process. Baltimore County government has never received high marks in terms of citizen involvement, and the development process often brings out citizen frustration. For example, citizens frequently become frustrated by the lack of answers offered by developers at community input meetings held to explain proposed projects to the public. They also wonder why their comments at community input meetings typically hold no affect on the plans being proposed for their neighborhoods. Development plans can be changed up to and including during the development hearing, which leaves citizens feeling as if they are aiming at a moving target that they cannot prepare for fully because specifics are subject to change. School impact analysis from proposed residential developments is seen as a joke when the County accepts that less than ten percent of the housing units being proposed will generate a student in public schools. Additionally, citizens fail to understand why so many variances and special exceptions are handed out in a county that supposedly supports "high quality" development. Will the County Executive seek to reform the development process in the future? That prospect remains to be seen, but so far Mr. Olszewski has not touched the development process.

Eric Rockel

Changes Coming on Water Billing

Recently, the County Executive announced that the County will hire an outside contractor to assist with water meter readings, and it will deploy County staff to assist the City's Department of Public Works with sending water bills to County customers. Residents have not received a water bill since the advent of the pandemic, and County Executive Olszewski acknowledged that his office has heard from many who are concerned about further delays.

Baltimore County will hire the firm Itron, Inc. to collect water meter data for County accounts beginning in late October. Additionally, the County will deploy four staff members from its own Department of Public Works to assist the City's workforce in preparing and sending out water bills. The first round of new bills should start hitting the mail by mid-November.

Why this process has become so bogged down remains a mystery. Keep in mind that the City and County installed automated meters that were meant to streamline the water billing process only a few years ago. In 2012, a city audit of the water billing system found millions of dollars of overcharges, and many are concerned that the problems persist to this day.

Several days after Olszewski's announcement, Baltimore City announced that it would also hire Itron, Inc. to handle the city's meter reading, small meter installations and maintenance. The city also indicated that it would lay off approximately 60 employees as part of this move.

Community Input Meeting for 1400 Seminary Avenue

Approximately one dozen citizens participated in the September 17, community input meeting for the property at 1400 Seminary Avenue, owned by Alvin Krongard. The property, located on the northeast corner of Seminary Avenue and Mays Chapel Road, contains approximately forty-two-and one-half acres, and it is zoned DR-1, which allows for one home per acre. The concept plan shows that 32 dwellings are proposed for the site, along with nearly one and one-half acres of open space and nine tenths of an acre of HOA common area. All homes will be served by public water and public sewer.

Among the comments from County agencies about the proposed plan, the Bureau of Development Plans Review, on behalf of Public Works, noted that this development is within a traffic deficient level of services "F" area, and as part of the County's Growth Management legislation, development would be limited or prohibited until the level of service improves. The Department of Planning urged that the plan should respect all setbacks from environmental features and specimen trees, as well as conduct a study to document all specimen trees on site. Since West Seminary Avenue is deemed a scenic road, the developer should upgrade any landscaping along the road frontage that is currently in poor condition.

Many of the citizen comments from the meeting related to traffic concerns on Seminary Avenue. The developer now has one year from the input meeting to present a development plan to the County. After the development plan has been submitted and reviewed, the County can rule on whether the plan is approved at a development hearing.

Student Well Being During Remote Learning

The following article summarizes parts of an article written by Alec MacGillis, who reports on government and politics for ProPublica, an online, nonprofit newsroom. Mr. MacGillis' story, "The Students Left Behind by Remote Learning", was co-published by The New Yorker and ProPublica.

When Alec MacGillis is not reporting the news for ProPublica, he tries to give back to the city of Baltimore, where he lives. One of his efforts is to tutor a 12-year-old from a disadvantaged section of the city. That young man's home life was quite challenging- his mother was recovering from drug addiction and he did not have a father he could depend on. Because of the mother's situation, they frequently moved to different homes, and at times the student found himself living with his grandmother or with older siblings who had moved out to start life on their own. He often stayed up late watching television with his mother, which caused him to fall asleep in class when he did make it to school, but in some subjects he displayed an aptitude for learning and he bonded with certain teachers who were able to reach him in a meaningful way.

But MacGillis saw this young student's life become even more untethered when the coronavirus hit Maryland in the March of 2020. Remote learning started on April 6, and for this child it resulted in only four hours per week of live online instructions, one hour for each of his four main subjects once a week. Since this student's family had no computer, MacGillis purchased one for the student's use. Yet that computer only solved part of the equation. He had a good connection at his grandmother's house, but the young man was shuffling between several different homes, not all of which were near wireless hot spots. In addition, he often missed the daily reminders about class times or the links to access the remote connections. His teachers worried about his lack of attendance, but with the child and his mother moving frequently, it was hard to catch up to the family.

One social studies teacher at a school for high-needs students told MacGillis that his typical class of between five and ten students, kept purposefully small due to the needs of the students, would see only one or two students log on for their remote learning lessons. Frequently, no one showed up. Another teacher in a middle school reading class for special education students reported that three of his ten students had *never* logged online for remote learning.

It is hard to imagine a more challenging time for school systems than the Spring months of 2020. No one saw a pandemic coming and teachers and administrators had no advance time to plan for instructional strategies. But by Summer there were voices questioning the lock down. Jennifer Nuzzo is a Johns Hopkins University epidemiologist; whose specialty is outbreak detection and response. By summer she joined with Joshua Sharfstein, former Maryland health secretary, to write an op-ed in the New York Times that coronavirus had mostly spared young people, and they cited studies from France and Australia suggesting that children were not major transmitters of the virus. They also noted that the American Academy of Pediatrics supported the reopening of schools.

Mac Gillis reported that Dr. Sonja Santelise, head of Baltimore City schools, instructed city educators to work on a plan that would encourage students to return to the classroom for two days a week, while allowing parents the option to keep their children home

with full remote learning if they desired, instead. In addition, schools would be retrofitted with better ventilation systems, including better air filters, to address air borne transmission of the virus.

But then politics got in the way. President Trump held a series of events promoting that schools should be re-opened. Teachers who has been receptive to the idea of returning to the classroom suddenly became more suspicious, according to MacGillis. “Our teachers were ready to go back as long as it was safe,” spoke Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers, to Alec MacGillis. “Then Trump and DeVos played their political b****s****,” exclaimed Weingarten. In the following days, the Baltimore Teachers Union and the Maryland State Education Association sent a four-page letter to Governor Larry Hogan calling on him to prevent any in-person instruction for the first semester.

MacGillis points out that some of the unions’ concerns seemed justified. The federal government offered little funding for PPE or ventilation system upgrades, and the state government did not step in to fill the need. Additionally, there were differences of opinion as to whether the local districts, the state government or the federal government should establish the policy directives and funding streams that enabled the re-opening of schools. In the weeks that followed, both sides pointed to studies in other countries that buttressed their position. The public was left undecided on what to believe. Is it safe or deadly to reopen schools?

In July, the Baltimore School District released results of an informal survey of over 5,000 parents. Of the sample, 47% preferred all-virtual learning, 41% preferred a mix of virtual and in-class learning and 12% preferred all in-person learning. For faculty and staff, 72% preferred all remote instruction, 25% favored a mixture and only 3% preferred all in-person. By comparison, a Baltimore County Public School poll showed 33.9% favored a mixed, or hybrid, approach, 26.7 favored an all virtual approach and 30.4% favored all in-person. For faculty and staff, 42.9% favored all virtual, 34.5 supported a mix and 22.6% favored all in person.

For the young man whom MacGillis was tutoring, the return to learning in September was disconcerting. The student was surprised that he had been promoted into seventh grade. He had assumed that because he learned so little in the last quarter of sixth grade that he would be held back. When asked how he felt about starting the school year on-line, he responded by saying that “school was getting annoying.” Mac Gillis was struck by the fact that the student used the past tense, as if school no longer affected him. It seemed obvious to MacGillis that this young student could not navigate the demands brought on by on-line learning, largely because he does not have a support system to help in the navigation. One educator observed that “there are no good choices now.”

But many places are making different choices. School districts in Pennsylvania have reopened without the dire consequences that critics predicted. Schools have opened across Europe, including in cities whose covid-positivity rates are well above the rates in Maryland. As France’s minister of education proclaimed, “Not everything should be destroyed by the health situation. We must be vigilant, but not forget the educational and social imperatives, nor deviate from our two objectives: improving the educational level of each child and reducing inequalities.”

Code Enforcement Recommendations

Approximately six months after a work group composed of county personnel and citizens examined the code enforcement process, Baltimore County has released the group's final recommendations. Co-chaired by Michael Mallinoff, Director of Permits, Approvals and Inspections, and Councilman Izzy Patoka, the workgroup consisted of community representatives from each council district and county personnel from the Office of Code Enforcement.

Among the recommendations are the need to establish a special "revolving fund," wherein monies collected from code violation citations could be used to repair derelict structures and other remediation measures. The group also urged that code enforcement expand its inspections to include "proactive" inspections. In other words, do not wait until you have a complaint before you conduct an inspection. Regular anticipatory inspection patrols would attack the problems proactively. Currently, Baltimore County does not have a specific multi-family unit inspection program, unlike many nearby jurisdictions. The recommendations support a dedicated multi-family inspection program. The workgroup also supported the creation of a vacant property registry, in which owners of vacant properties would be required to register annually, and they favored the hiring of more code enforcement inspectors. One feature that was discussed by the workgroup but not included in the final recommendations was the need to improve the County's online, automated complaint filing system. Critics of the system claim that it offers few details about specific complaints and the inspector's responses.

Citizen Complaint Bears Fruit

One resident of the Dulaney Valley Improvement Association, Tim Rupult, became concerned over the ethical behavior of Planning Board member Howard Perlow after watching the Planning Board hearings for the Comprehensive Zoning Map Process. Mr. Perlow recused himself from voting on several zoning issues at the hearing, but he did not recuse himself from the discussions leading up to those votes on specific issues, nor did he refrain from advocacy during those discussions. The Baltimore County Ethics Commission examined the situation and concluded that Mr. Perlow had, in fact, violated County Code Sec. 7-1-301(a)(1), (2) of the ethics laws.

Efforts of citizens like Mr. Rupult, in this situation, can only strengthen our local governance process when public officials realize their actions will have consequences and citizens expect high ethical behavior.

Hearing on 230-Unit Apartment Complex

A virtual hearing on the 230-unit apartment complex at the southeast corner of Padonia and Deereco Roads took place on October 22. The property, owned by Atapco Deereco LLC, will also be re-developed to include a hotel, retail space and an additional office building, but those features do not require a hearing officer's hearing, unlike the apartment complex. The apartment complex is expected to be seven stories tall and include an outdoor pool and dog park for residents. There is a smattering of ground level parking for the residential occupants, as well as a multi-deck parking facility that will be constructed.

Some of the local residents who viewed the hearing on-line expressed concerns about the traffic that will be generated at the Padonia and Deereco intersection. The traffic expert hired by the developer expressed confidence that with the widening of the east side of Deereco that the developer will be undertaking, as well as a widening of Padonia Road along this property's frontage, that the intersection will function at an adequate level of service. Other residents voiced concerns about the absence of open space and the school impact analysis conducted for the project.

Carol Martin, of Springlake, expressed concerns that have been echoed by others, not in attendance at the virtual hearing. She stated that this project and others of similar density would threaten the suburban nature of the Timonium area. The Administrative Law Judge did not issue a decision at the time of the hearing.

County Council Passes Police Bill

By a vote of 6-1 the Baltimore County Council passed the so-called "SMART Policing Act" at its October 5 legislative session. The bill, which was introduced by County Executive Olszewski and Councilman Julian Jones, will limit the use of chokeholds, unless in defense against death or serious injury, will provide whistleblower protection to officers who report excessive use of force and require the creation of an early intervention system to identify officers at risk of misconduct. The legislation will also require the Police Department to issue a report on the use of force within its ranks each year to the County Council. It is expected that the Maryland General Assembly will examine state-wide rules concerning police conduct when it convenes for its session in January 2021. Olszewski remarked on the legislation that "This is not the end, but it is another important step towards a more just and equitable future."

School Board Study Upends High School Construction Plans

The School Board recently received a report from the consulting firm Cannon Design that cast a new set of recommendations for local high schools. The design team that issued this report included David Lever, the former head of Maryland's Interagency Committee on School Construction, who had drawn heat from Governor Hogan and Comptroller Franchot over some of his more controversial actions, and he ultimately resigned from his position in state service.

Previously, County Executive John Olszewski seemed committed to rebuilding Lansdowne, Dulaney and Towson High Schools when monies could be secured for those projects. But this report from Cannon Design omits plans to build new schools at Towson and Dulaney, calling instead for renovations and comparatively small additions to address those schools and others needs. All total, the consultant estimated that it will cost \$1.2 billion to address the needs of all twenty-four high schools in the County.

The report examined each high school according to three criteria: educational equity, facility condition and capacity demands. The consultant recommended that BCPS continue along with replacing Lansdowne High since the process had already started, but none of the County's other 23 high schools were recommended for a complete replacement. Of the schools in need, Sparrows Point ranked first, followed by Towson, Lansdowne, Dundalk, Catonsville and Dulaney in descending order. Dulaney was not deemed to need added capacity, only renovation. Under current funding levels, it would take over twenty-five to achieve all the renovations recommended under this report.

State of Maryland funding, through the "Built to Learn Act" would provide an infusion of monies, but not all that is needed for school construction. Yet the legislature in its wisdom inserted a provision in the Built to Learn Act that prevents it from taking effect until the Kirwan Commission legislation becomes law. Governor Hogan vetoed the Kirwan Commission legislation, which effectively placed the school construction funding in limbo.

Whether the School Board accepts the recommendation of this report, or not, remains to be seen. The report's findings are meant to be non-binding, meaning that BCPS may choose not to follow the recommendations, and two additional reports from the same firm are expected in the next year in an attempt to provide greater details. Certainly, the coming State legislative session will also bring school construction funding into greater focus, and the session may add funding for part of these high school construction projects.

Caregivers Conference Announced

Baltimore County's Department of Aging announced plans to hold a virtual Caregivers Conference on Saturday, November 7, from 9 A.M. until 3 P.M. The keynote speaker will be Dr. Nicole Rochester, whose talk is entitled "Caregivers Belong at the Center of Every

Healthcare Team.” In addition, Alan D. Eason, attorney, will speak about advance directives. Other topics in the seminar will include caregiver resources, Maryland medical orders for life-sustaining treatment and real estate questions for older adults. You must register to participate in the conference, either by logging on at caregivers@baltimorecountymd.gov or by calling 410-887-4724.

Resource Guide Made Available

Baltimore County government has created a resource guide of useful information during these challenging times of navigating during a pandemic. The link below, accessed by clicking when the control button is engaged, will take you to this fifteen- page guide.

[..\Downloads\BaltCoPartners Resource Guide 10-29-2020.pdf](#)

Martin Marietta Announces Grant Finalists

In an effort at community engagement, Martin Marietta Materials, the operator of the Texas quarry, holds a grant application each year to encourage local non-profit groups to make improvements in the community. The grant is in the amount of \$5,000, and this year the finalists both aim to educate children. The first finalist, the Land Preservation Trust, hopes to set up a nature camera, and use the footage generated by the camera to educate children about wildlife activities from the video. The second finalist, the Maryland Agricultural Resource Council, hopes to create an educational trail at the County’s Agricultural Center on Shawan Road to make children aware of the disciplines of science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics that are related to agricultural operations.

We would like to thank Martin Marietta Materials, and specifically Mr. Dave Thomey, for their work in this grant process and for their outreach to the residents of this area.