

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.

Our Next General Meeting will take place on September 15th, starting at 7:00 PM at the Vista Room in the Administration Building of the Fairgrounds. We will be holding all our general meetings at the Vista Room in the future, and our thanks go out to the leadership of the State Fair for making the room available.

We recommend that all our members wear masks during the meeting, but masking will not be required.

President's Message

Snapshots from the Summer

In preparation for producing the Master Plan 2030, the Department of Planning has been holding virtual town halls around the county, including a virtual town hall for greater Timonium. There were several takeaways from the local meeting. First, the Master Plan 2020, prepared eleven years ago, encouraged the development of mixed-use properties, featuring high density residential development combined with office space and retail uses. Some of the citizens at this virtual meeting rejected that approach, saying that they wanted to maintain a suburban feel for Timonium. Another concern expressed at the meeting was the need for greater traffic management in many neighborhoods. Traffic safety can take multiple forms, including more traffic control devices, such as speed bumps, as well as more pedestrian sidewalks and reduced speed limits to encourage greater safety. It was also suggested that the County should take steps to encourage that the fairgrounds remain a viable part of the community, and a fallback plan should be in place for use of the property if the directors would ever elect to move the

fairgrounds from Timonium. These were the most overarching comments made at the town hall, along with many more localized comments that would not impact the area at large.

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The Olszewski administration and Baltimore County Public Schools seem to be backtracking on the pledge to build new high schools at Towson and Dulaney. A consultant claims that spending the large sums to replace these two schools will impact the ability to renovate and construct additions for other schools. See the article in this newsletter from a group of elected officials that rebuts the notion that Dulaney and Towson should be renovated.

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The image that John Olszewski, Jr. had cultivated as a reformer took a hit recently when his administration introduced legislation to limit the authority of the County's Office of Inspector General. That office has a mission to uncover waste, fraud, and misconduct in the day-to-day operations of County government. The uproar over this proposed legislation was so strong that the administration swiftly withdrew the bill, but the optics had been set. Two Democratic members of the County Council had also been critical of the Inspector General during recent budget hearings, and it remains to be seen whether the Council will try to limit that office in the future.

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Local community association leaders from diverse areas in Baltimore County, such as Pikesville, Essex-Middle River, Perry Hall, and Timonium, among others, have criticized some of the zoning and development regulations that govern new development. Recent legislation that allowed changes for single properties in the Pikesville and Cockeysville areas prompted these community leaders to speak out. In addition, some community leaders have also called for the County to convene a panel to re-examine the current PUD regulations with an eye towards ensuring that PUDs are truly used for mixed use developments and not merely a way to circumvent existing zoning on any given property. The leader of the Perry Hall Improvement Association also proposes that future comprehensive zoning map changes should occur after the production of future master plans, not before the plans as currently takes place.

* * *

It was good to see the Maryland State Fair back to its normal routine at the end of August. With residents enjoying all the entertainment provided by the fair, it was easy to forget that just one year earlier the corona virus put a major damper on the fair experience and much of our "normal" lives.

Eric Rockel

Leaders from the 42nd District & County Council Speak Out

The State Senator and delegates from the 42nd district, along with Councilmen Kach and Marks wrote to the Board of Education concerning a recent consultant's report that recommended not to rebuild Dulaney and Towson High Schools. Below is the letter penned by these elected officials.

The Baltimore County School Board's Fiscal Year 2021 state capital budget request contained the duly adopted priorities of the School Board for eighteen capital school projects. A replacement Dulaney High School was listed as priority number 17, and a replacement Towson High School was listed as priority number 18. In December 2020, the School Board was presented with a proposed priority list for Fiscal Year 2022 omitting Dulaney and Towson from the list. On January 5, 2021, the School Board voted 7-2-2 to restore the replacement for Dulaney to the priority list as priority number 17 and to restore the replacement for Towson to the priority list as priority number 18. On January 19, 2021, the School Board finalized the priority list, adding an addition to Dundalk High School to the list as priority number 17, moving replacement schools for Towson and Dulaney to priority numbers 18 and 19.

Cannon Design ("Cannon") has now presented its Final Recommendations for capital spending on County schools in a document entitled "Multi-Year Improvement Plan for All Schools" ("MYIPAS"). Contrary to the repeated demonstrated intent of the School Board that both Towson and Dulaney should be replaced, the MYIPAS plan recommends that both the Towson and Dulaney projects be downgraded to renovations rather than replacements.

As the elected representatives of the citizens of central Baltimore County whose children attend Towson and Dulaney High Schools, we urge the School Board to decline to approve the recommendations proposed by Cannon and instead to maintain its existing priority list of capital projects. In support of this position, we offer the following reasons:

1. The 15-year timeline used by Cannon is far too short.

Even though it is not uncommon to adopt a 20–25-year timeline for "major building renovations" for schools, Cannon decided to propose that every school in Baltimore County receive such "major building renovations" within the next 15 years. This shortened timeline has very significant policy implications. It reduces the amount of money available to pay for school capital projects to just \$2.5 Billion, including the \$400 million that the County expects to receive from the Built to Learn Act. If Cannon had chosen to use a 20-year time horizon instead of a 15-year time horizon, it would have set the amount of money available to pay for school capital projects at \$3.2 Billion, \$700 Million more. Even using a 16-year time horizon instead of the proposed 15-year time horizon would have increased the amount of money available for school capital projects by \$140 Million. Thus, either using a 20-year time horizon or even a 16-year time horizon would have enabled the County to schedule more significant capital projects, including the replacements of both Towson and Dulaney.

The School Board should ask Cannon to prepare a new set of recommendations, using a 20-year timeline or a 16-year time horizon instead of a 15-year timeline and to take the priorities adopted by the School Board into account in preparing a new priority list over the course of the new timeline.

2. The Cannon recommendation that every single school in Baltimore County be the subject of "major building renovations" in the next 15 years means spending money on recently built or renovated schools and giving short shrift to older schools. That doesn't make sense.

The Cannon recommendations advocate subjecting every single one of Baltimore County's 170 schools to what are described as "major building renovations" within the next 15 years. This means that schools recently built or renovated during the Olszewski and Kamenetz Administrations such as Berkshire ES, Chadwick ES, Colgate ES, Dundalk ES, Honeygo ES, Lansdowne ES, Victory Villa ES, Relay ES, Westowne ES, G. W. Carver Center for Arts and Technology, Dumbarton MS, Dundalk HS, Catonsville HS, Patapsco HS and Pikesville HS will be the subject of "major building renovations" even though they are nearly new. Of course, the money spent renovating new schools will greatly reduce the money available to attend to the serious infrastructure needs of the County's older schools.

Why should the County ignore the fact that the older schools are in much greater need of capital improvements than the newest schools? Why would the School Board want to devote resources to "major building renovations" of nearly brand-new schools with money that should instead be used to replace Towson and Dulaney and other older schools?

The entire purpose of a school capital budget prioritization list is to "prioritize" the schools most in need of renovation or replacement. The Cannon recommendations abrogate the entire purpose of the School Board's current priority list.

According to Cannon's plan, fully \$1.6 Billion of the \$2.5 Billion proposed to be spent in the next 15 years will be dedicated to schools not on the School Board's current priority list. In order to funnel that much money to non-prioritized schools, schools such as Towson and Dulaney which the School Board has repeatedly included on its priority list are to be downgraded and merely renovated instead of being replaced. This represents a major change in direction for Baltimore County Public Schools. Those schools that most need to be replaced will be given short shrift while the newer and indeed newest schools in the County will be showered with capital funds.

The Cannon proposal to spend \$237 Million on 28 school projects is hopelessly inadequate.

Under the category of "Managed Growth", the Canon proposal envisions spending \$237 million over the course of 15 years on 28 addition/renovation projects. Using simple arithmetic, this means that each project will receive an average of just over \$8 Million. Two of the 28 projects are additions/renovations of Towson and Dulaney High Schools. \$8 Million is egregiously inadequate funding, even to execute the cheapest options for those two schools. Whoever computed the \$237 million number for 28 capital projects grossly miscalculated the costs.

3. The Design Collective Feasibility Study options for Towson High School clearly show that the Option 3 is far and away the best option.

Towson High School is hugely overcrowded. Built in 1949, over 70 years ago, with additions in 1953 and 1965 it now has a state-rated capacity of 1260 students, this school is hundreds of students over capacity, and is projected to become even more overcrowded in upcoming years. The school facilities are overwhelmed. There are twelve modular classroom units in the rear of the school. The cafeteria is too small. The gymnasium is the second smallest of any high school in Baltimore County. The other common areas cannot accommodate the current student population.

Three options have been presented. Option 1 ("Renovation/Addition") would involve the demolition of both previous additions and the renovation of the original school structure. The duration of construction, with students on site is estimated to be 4.5 years. An entire class of students would spend its high school career in the midst of a construction zone. The total cost of Option 1 would exceed \$131 Million. Option 2 ("Renovation/Addition") would involve the complete destruction of much of the existing structure and a complete interior renovation of the remaining building. Option 2 includes a demolition of the undersized gymnasium, auditorium, and food service

areas. Once again, the construction work would take over four years, causing serious disruptions to Towson students over four school years. The total cost of Option 2 would be \$143 Million.

Option 3 (“Replacement School Building”) would cause no disruptions at all to students in the current building. Normal operations would continue during construction of a new, independent structure, and then the existing building would be demolished once the new building has been completed. The total cost of Option 3 would be \$141 Million, only \$10 Million more than Option 1 and less than Option 2.

Beyond this, the calculation of the Total 40-Year Life Cycle Cost of Option 3 is simply wrong. The methodology of calculating this number is to add the Total Construction Cost to the Total 40-Year O&M Cost. In the case of Option 3, this calculation produces a Total 40-Year Life Cycle Cost of \$283 Million (not \$408 Million). \$283 Million is considerably lower than the Total 40-Year Life Cycle Cost assigned to either Option 1 (\$387 Million) or Option 2 (\$419 Million). This is because a brand-new building costs far less to operate and maintain than an older renovated building.

Incredibly, the Design Collective proposal opts for Option 1 because it’s cost of construction would be 7% less than the cost of construction of Option 3. The fact that Towson students would have to endure four years of construction was clearly deemed not dispositive. Further, in light of the total proposed spending of \$2.5 Billion over 15 years, the \$10 million difference between Options 1 and 3 seems insignificant, amounting to just 0.004% of the total. And at the end of the project, under Option 1, Towson would be left with a 70+ year old renovated building, which will surely have to be the subject of additional renovations during coming decades. The families of Towson deserve far better than this from the Baltimore County School Board.

4. The GWWC options for Dulaney High School also clearly show that the Option 3 is far and away the best option.

Dulaney High School is increasingly decrepit. The central school structure was built in 1964, nearly 60 years ago, and has had no meaningful capital investment in those many years. There are growing cracks in the ceilings and walls. The school’s water is famously brown and tested positive for elevated levels of lead. In the words of the GWWC Feasibility Study: “The existing building does not support the educational needs of Dulaney High School. Many of the existing spaces do not meet the program requirements of BCPS Educational Specifications, the building lacks many modern mechanical and information technology systems, and many of the critical function areas are located in such a way as to limit expansion and modernization.”

As in the case of Towson, the GWWC team presents three options for Dulaney. Option 1 does not replace the undersized gymnasium or the auditorium which cannot house the current student body, much less the anticipated larger student body within the next decade. It envisions a 42-month (3 ½ year) renovation process and the need for modular classrooms, which it acknowledges would be a “potentially disruptive” process over the course of at least three school years. The cost of Option 1 would be \$130 million.

Option 2 would cost \$4 Million more. This option would include a new, properly sized gym but would involve construction work in the existing school facility for four years and thus would disrupt the school’s educational mission for four full school years. It also would necessitate the use of modular classroom units as one of the school’s wings would need to be demolished.

Option 3 would involve a replacement school building constructed on a separate location on the existing school site. As such it would not disrupt the normal functioning of the school at all. The new building would be larger than the current building. In the words of the GWWC report, Option 3 would result in a “completely new, efficient and modern school to provide the 21st Century learning opportunities for the students and staff of Dulaney”. GWWC

estimates the cost of Option 3 as being 16% higher than Option 2. In light of the total proposed spending of \$2.5 Billion over 15 years, the \$22 million difference between Options 1 and 3 seems insignificant, amounting to just 0.008% of the total.

GWWC also estimates the cost of operating and maintaining Dulaney for the 40 years after the work is completed. If Option 3 should be undertaken, involving a brand new, state-of-the-art school, this cost is estimated to be \$297 Million. But, according to GWWC, if Option 2 should be undertaken, leaving Dulaney with a nearly 60-year-old building, the operating and maintenance cost over the following 40 years would be \$255 Million. GWWC fails to offer an explanation as to why a brand-new building would cost considerably more to maintain and operate than a 60-year-old structure which at the end of the 40-year timespan would be 100 years old.

We have spoken at length to a prominent local architect with substantial experience in designing and estimating the construction cost of schools. He confirms that the GWWC numbers in the area of 40-Year O&M Cost are way off kilter. As he put it, “It doesn’t make sense that you would spend more to operate and maintain a new building vs an old building”. He points out that Option 3 involves only 11% more square feet than Option 2 but is estimated to involve 19% higher O&M costs over the course of the next 40 years. He suggests that because new school construction produces higher energy efficiency standards than renovated older buildings and because the new buildings contain brand new mechanical equipment, not older mechanical equipment, a brand-new school with 11% more square feet should only cost about 5% more in O&M over the first 40 years of the school’s life, not 19% more.

Our Recommendation

We urge the Baltimore County School Board to maintain its existing priority list. That list has been the subject of much discussion and thoughtful deliberation over the course of the last several years. The nineteen projects on the list are clearly the most urgently needed capital projects in the County.

We urge the Baltimore County School Board to direct Cannon to use a 20-year timeline or at least a 16-year timeline instead of the current 15-year timeline. Cannon should reconsider the possible capital projects in light of the new timeline and the fact that using a longer timeline would free up much more money for school construction. In particular, Cannon should be directed to work into the extended timeline full funding for the capital projects on the School Board’s priority list.

State Senator Chris West
State Delegate Cathi Forbes
State Delegate Michelle Guyton

State Delegate Nino Mangione
County Councilman Wade Kach
County Councilman David Marks

August 10, 2021

Redevelopment Discussions Under Way in Lutherville

The Lutherville Station property, on the north side of West Ridgely Road, at the road’s terminus, is the subject of redevelopment discussions between developers who purchased the property at the end of 2020 and the Lutherville Community Association. These developers envision a mixed-use property that would contain 450 units of apartments, 100,000 square feet of

office space and 25,000 square feet of retail space. In order to build this type of mixed-use, the developers would need to submit to the Planned Unit Development (PUD) process, and Councilman Kach has stated that he will not support a PUD unless the developers and the community can reach an agreement about the uses for the property. So far, discussions have indicated that the community cannot support 450 apartment units, and community leaders continue to solicit responses from its residents.

Greenspring Manor Housing Development

Plans to build sixty-one single family homes on a property located on West Joppa Road, near Falls Road, inched closer to receiving Baltimore County approval when the owner submitted a development plan in early August. The next step for this project is the Hearing Officer's Hearing to make approval of the development official.

Even if approved by the Hearing Officer, this project has several hurdles that must be overcome before any construction can start. The property is in a failing traffic shed, and road improvements would be needed in several locations before the start of any building. The developer has argued that their road improvement plan should cure that impediment, but the Hearing Officer will need to rule on the issue. Further, there are sewer deficiencies that could also delay any construction, and some of those improvements will be completed by third parties who own property in the area, while other improvements will be the responsibility of this developer. The improvements made by the third party do not need to be completed until August 2023.

As of early September, a date for the Hearing Officer's Hearing had not been set on the County's website, but the hearing is expected to be scheduled within the next month.

Tax Credits for Energy Efficiency

With the Biden Administration placing greater emphasis on green energy solutions, some homeowners are reconsidering home energy efficiency measures. In essence there are two federal income tax credits that are available for homeowners in this situation. Neither of these tax credits will result in a refund to the homeowner. They are used to reduce the amount of federal income tax owed. If the credit exceeds your tax liability, you will forfeit that part of the credit. IRS Form 5695 is the appropriate form to claim the tax credit should you elect to proceed in "greening" your home.

The first alternative is called the energy efficiency credit and it applies when an alternative energy system, such as solar panels and related electric equipment, solar-powered

water heaters, wind turbines and/or geothermal equipment, is installed in your primary residence or a vacation home. The tax credit will vary, but equal 26% of the cost of equipment and installation costs for those systems that are installed between 2020 and 2022. The credit is reduced to 23% in 2023, before expiring in 2024. The credit can only be claimed once the system is installed. Also be aware that if you receive any rebate from the utility company for installing the system, that rebate will reduce the amount of the federal tax credit you will receive.

Far smaller credits are available on your federal return for such items as energy efficient windows, doors, and certain types of insulation. This credit is reduced to 10% of the cost, as well as credits for the full cost of electric heat pumps. The total amount that can be claimed for this category is a \$500 credit, and if you received a credit in past years for part of that credit, it would reduce the ceiling in the current year. For example, if you received a \$100 credit for a water heater three years ago, your total claim going forward would be \$400. In addition, there are limits for the various items, no more than \$150 in credits for a furnace, for example. Consult the instructions for IRS Form 5695 to get the full run down.

There are also certain tax benefits at the state and local level. The Residential Clean Energy Rebate, on the state level, provides a rebate of \$1,000 for solar panels on a first come, first served basis. It is important to check that funds remain in this pot before assuming you can receive the rebate. Also, on both the state and local level you will not be charged any property tax for solar energy devices, nor for residential wind energy equipment.

Report Conclusions on the Metropolitan District

In the 1920s Baltimore City and Baltimore County entered into a Metropolitan District agreement that bound Baltimore City to provide water and wastewater services for both jurisdictions, and eventually the agreement was amended so that the city now also provides certain services to parts of Anne Arundel, Howard, Carroll, and Harford Counties. Recently, the services and administration of the Metropolitan District have come under heavy criticism due to questionable billing practices, unresolved disputes over billing and other administrative problems. In order to improve these services, the City and County jointly hired a management consulting firm, New Gen Strategies & Solutions, to review the operation of the system. The consultant examined six key areas in its evaluation: existing joint service agreements, the organizational structure and governance models of each jurisdiction, staffing needs, water and sewer system planning and management, meter to cash operations and field maintenance operations. The aim of this study is to identify areas to enhance intergovernmental coordination, improve business procedures and develop policies to better supply water and sewer services.

The leaders from City and County ultimately want to create a “utility of the future,” which portends that these services may undergo a significant transformation in the future. As the Executive Summary of this report concluded “it appears that stakeholder groups are not satisfied with the current status and performance of the water and sewer systems...”. “There is a range of regional coordination and integration options that could be pursued, ranging from simply revising existing laws and agreements to creating a regional management agency that contracts with the County and City to perform certain functions to an independent regional agency, without taxing power, that would be dependent solely on rates and fees for income...”. This report did not advocate for any one new option, but rather encouraged the local governments to convene a wide range of stakeholder groups to reach a conclusion.

Fuel Station Coming to Texas Station Court

The ruling from an Administrative Law Judge cleared the way for Sam’s Club to operate a fuel service station on its site at Texas Station Court. The station will only be available to those patrons who have membership in Sam’s Club. Needing a parking variance in order to receive approval, Sam’s Club produced a report from a traffic consultant stating that on two days of review, both of which were pre-covid, the parking lot for the club was less than 60% full and that the introduction of a fuel station would not inconvenience customer parking.

No date for the start of construction was provided at the hearing.

Timonium Terrace

Timonium Terrace is that assisted living project proposed for the west side of York Road, south of the Broad Street Market Shopping Center on west Padonia Road. The project called for 97 beds in the facility, and it received approval from a hearing officer in February 2020. Since that time the local developer lost an out-of-state partner due to financial and other constraints related to the covid pandemic. That local developer is still in discussions with other possible partners for the project. It has also been reported that the local developer has an approved subdivision plat for the property in question, as well as nearing approval from governmental agencies for the construction and grading plans for the project.

Since the project needed a special exception from zoning regulations to locate an assisted living facility on land zoned OR-2, Office Building, Residential, the developer has a limited time frame to proceed with the project before the special exception expires. It appears that the developer will request an administrative extension of the special exception, which is permitted by law.

Is This a Breaking Point?

Baltimore County's Chapter of the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) recently declared that the county has reached a breaking point. The department, which is the twenty-first largest police department in the country, is struggling to overcome increases in early retirements and resignations that have left it with more than one hundred vacancies. Add to that the effects of the pandemic and under-investment in the department as-a-whole results in the gloom expressed by the FOP.

Among the issues that alarm the FOP are non-competitive benefits compared to several other jurisdictions. They point out that officers receive smaller pensions and fewer retirement options than their peers in some other jurisdictions. They also point out that the department uses limited and inadequate space at CCBC Dundalk Campus as their training facility, and the firearms training range has ventilation problems and high lead levels. Additionally, the department's K9 training facility has never been rebuilt after being shut down fifteen years ago, resulting in working out of dilapidated government buildings.

The FOP also asserts that several of the precinct buildings are not equipped to meet the needs of twenty-first century policing requirements. Precincts 1 and 7 have buildings constructed in the 1960s, and Precinct 11 was built in the mid-70s. Dave Rose, president of the FOP Lodge #4, points out, for example, that Precinct 1 is no longer suitable for holding prisoners because the building is considered an escape risk.

Will this call for action result in greater funding in future budgets? Only time will tell but given the many needs on a variety of fronts, it seems doubtful that all these needs can be addressed in a few budget cycles.

Calendar of Events

- 1.) September 11: Antique Fire Engine Show, 10AM-3PM, Fire Museum of Maryland, 1301 York Road, Free Admission
- 2.) September 23: Blood Drive, sponsored by Grace Lutheran Church & the Red Cross, 1:30 PM-7 PM, 8601 Valleyfield Road, Lutherville, sign up online at www.redcrossblood.org.

Calendar of Events, continued

- 3.) September 25: Trifecta Food Truck Festival, at the Maryland State Fair, 12 PM- 11 PM
- 4.) October 1-3: Gem & Jewelry Show, at the Maryland State Fair, 10 AM- 5 PM
- 5.) October 9: Shred Day, sponsored by Better Business Bureau, 8 AM- 11 AM, at the Maryland State Fair
- 6.) October 9: Faith & Blue Weekend, 10 AM- 12 PM see flyer attached with this newsletter.

Meeting Agenda for September 15th

1. Introductions
2. Report from the Cockeysville Precinct
3. Featured Speaker: Senator Chris West on local & state-wide issues
4. Featured Speaker: School Board member, Kathleen Causey, on Dulaney & Towson High Schools and getting back to normal in our schools
5. Efforts to Improve Safety on Pot Spring Road
6. New Business

Thanks to all our first responders, active military and veterans who protected us

after September 11, 2001. We will be forever grateful!