

GTCC The Greater Timonium Community Council

Volume XIV, Issue 2 9b West Ridgely Road, Box 276, Timonium MD 21093
March 2022 <http://www.gtccinc.org>

President: Eric Rockel, 410 252-8439; Vice President: Kathleen Beadell, 410 977-7581; Secretary: Laura Renshaw, 410 583-1908; Treasurer: Ashley Richardson; Directors: Jason Rommel, Cathy Norton, Lisa Baldanza and Ed Hale, Jr.

Our next general meeting will be held on March 9 at 7:00 PM at the Vista Room in the Administration Building of the Maryland State Fair. All residents are welcome to attend, and face masks are optional.

President's Message

Unusual Priorities

When sitting down to create a “to do” list, I usually place my top priority as number one on that list. Not everybody follows this pattern, but it is more common than not. Last fall I remember Speaker Pelosi claiming that the most important legislation that the House of Representatives would consider in the legislative session receives House Bill 1. But in the Maryland General Assembly it is unclear if they follow that rule of thumb. For the 2022 legislative session, the Maryland House of Delegates has established that a bill to legalize cannabis for adults should be given the title of House Bill 1. This legislation, if passed, would send the constitutional question of legalizing cannabis to a voter referendum in November of 2022, and if it is approved would legalize cannabis for adults as of July 1, 2023. The bill further places all regulations related to the use, distribution, and taxation of cannabis in the hands of the General Assembly.

This message is not supporting or opposing the legislation. I will leave that up to each of you to decide. I do, however, find it very myopic that the cannabis bill should be considered a top priority when we have so many needs in this state. We are hearing every day that there are crime problems in Maryland, particularly in Baltimore City, and one might think that crime prevention would be especially important. A delegate from Prince Georges County is proposing to create a family and medical leave insurance program. Why is not that insurance program considered more important than cannabis? Maryland has a \$6 billion surplus. You would think that the House of Delegates would have all sorts of ideas about how to spend that surplus.

Governor Hogan wants to gradually phase out taxation on retirement income for seniors, but that does not interest the majority of delegates. The pandemic has put a strain on the State's health care system, and we face an acute shortage of nurses in the state, but that is not the top priority either. House Bill No. 1 is all about legalizing cannabis, the least compelling issue I can think of at this time. The other issues mentioned above are all more important, yet none received the coveted top spot. I wonder why?

* * * * *

It was heartening to see County Executive Olszewski reverse course and again support the rebuilding of Towson and Dulaney High Schools. Elected officials and the public alike took many shots at the County Executive for backing away from his earlier pledges of support for rebuilding the two schools. Did that prove to be the tipping point? Only Johnny O. knows for sure. But he should have seen the criticism coming. Electioneering 101 dictates that it is problematic when you reverse campaign pledges.

When he did reverse his campaign pledges, he brought up the MYPAS Study on school construction as a compelling document that changed his mind. Frankly, the MYPAS study was not a very persuasive document. For example, the consultant who created it argued that schools like Mays Chapel Elementary School and Carver School for the Arts and Technology would not be funded for renovations if significant sums were spent rebuilding Towson and Dulaney. Now with Mays Chapel's building being less than ten years old and Carver's building being less than thirty years old, I did not see an outstanding need to renovate either facility. I feel the MYPAS Study was grasping at excuses to side against Towson and Dulaney.

It is good to see that future students and parents have new buildings to look forward to. Bravo to all who spoke out in favor of this long overdue funding need.

Delegate Guyton Speaks Up for Safety Inspectors

In a recent opinion piece published in the Baltimore Sun, Delegate Michele Guyton stated that the Maryland Department of Labor's safety inspectors are understaffed and under paid. These Occupational Safety and Health inspectors make sure that businesses and construction sites around the state are following health and safety regulations for their workplaces.

There are only fifty such inspectors to monitor the entire state, and their responsibilities are not only proactive, meaning they inspect sites where accidents have not taken place, but reactive, whereby they inspect sites where accidents have occurred, and they make recommendations about changes to prevent future accidents. According to the delegate, with this limited workforce of fifty inspectors, it would take over 150 years to inspect all workplaces in the state.

So, what are Delegate Guyton's recommendations? First, set up a regulated injury prevention program where employer and employees are required to periodically sit down together to single out safety concerns and plans to address those concerns. Secondly, with

Maryland's budget surplus, she advocates for a doubling of the number of inspectors, as well as further training and tools to carry-out their job. Finally, she wants to provide higher wages for these inspectors.

Legislative Initiatives

The following proposed legislation is a sample of those bills sponsored by the delegates and senators representing our GTCC area. The descriptions are brief, and for a full understanding of the entire bill, consult the Maryland General Assembly website.

11th District

- A. Delegate Lisa Belcastro: HB 048- Establishes a Suicide Fatality Review Committee; provides that a person has immunity from liability for certain actions related to the committee; exempts the committee meetings from the open meetings laws.
HB 369- establishes certain procedures for the issuance of a new marriage record.
HB 370- alters the circumstances under which the Secretary of Health is required to issue a new birth certificate due to changes of a sex designation of an individual.
HB 573- establishes a grant program to encourage students to participate fully in recess and physical activity; requires the Governor to set aside \$500,000 annually for this program.
HB 636- requires the Maryland Health Care Commission to conduct a study regarding quality of care for elder and assisted living facilities with nine or fewer beds.
- B. Delegate Jon Cardin: HB 045- establishes that the perception of, or belief about, another person's religion, disability or homelessness does not constitute legally adequate provocation to mitigate a killing from the crime of murder to manslaughter.
HB 079- expands the prohibitions against certain clauses in construction and construction-related contracts regarding indemnifications or hold harmless clauses.
HB 121- repeals statutory provision that grant the juvenile court authority over peace orders in which the respondent is a minor.
HB 176- increases the fees charged by sheriffs for the service of court papers.
HB 183- regulates certain activities of bail bondsmen in apprehending individuals
- C. Delegate Dana Stein: HB 302- authorizes Baltimore County government to grant a property tax credit imposed on a dwelling where the homeowner(s) have a combined gross income above \$60,000, if the homeowner(s) can demonstrate certain hardships related to illness, accident, or property casualty
HB 303- adopts the regulations of the International Swimming Pool and Spa Code as the State's standard.

HB 318- establishes a Board of On-Site Wastewater Professionals to regulate and license individuals who provide on-site wastewater services. This board will be tasked with establishing minimum standards for wastewater systems that will be implemented state-wide.

HB 451- establishes invoicing and prompt payment requirements for certain State grants
HB 570- regulates the use of PFAS chemicals in mosquito-control products and applications.

D. Senator Shelly Hettleman: SB 124- Creates a grant program to encourage county boards of education and public schools to develop programs to reduce food waste and establish composting for food waste and post-consumer waste

SB 129- establishes the Access to Counsel in Immigration Proceedings Programs to provide covered individuals with access to legal representation in proceedings related to deportation.

SB 279- alters the funding sources of the Access to Council in Evictions Special Fund to include funds received by the Consumer Protection Division.

SB 280- allows a petitioner receiving medical care at a hospital or urgent care center to electronically file a petition for a temporary protective order and allows for video conferencing for the hearing on the order.

SB 315- re-defines the legal parameters involving strategic lawsuits against public participation (so called SLAPP suits). These lawsuits often seek to silence persons who want to exercise their constitutional right of free speech at public hearings before the legislature or on issues of public interest.

42nd District

A. Delegate Michele Guyton: HB 226- requires each county board of education to install video cameras in each special education classroom. The law would provide confidentiality of recordings. The bill also requires school administrators to notify law enforcement on receipt of a complaint of neglect or abuse.

HB 264- includes nursery schools within the limits of a “school zone” that is eligible for speed cameras. The Pot Spring community and GTCC have supported this legislation.

HB 376- establishes the “outdoor preschool license pilot program” to license and encourage outdoor, nature-based early learning programs

HB 460- authorizes the Baltimore County Board of Liquor License Commissioners to approve transfer of certain liquor licenses in the 15th Election District.

HB 512- alters the composition of the Professional Standards and Teacher education Board by adding a member of the Maryland Association of Non-Public Special Education Facilities.

B. Delegate Nino Mangione: HB 595- requires the Dept. of Environment to create a database of supplemental environmental projects that the Dept. may consider for implementation as part of a settlement of an enforcement action.

HB 597- lowers from age 55 to age 50 the point at which residents who were military veterans, correctional officers, law enforcement or fire & rescue retirees can be eligible for subtraction of certain retirement income.

HB 619- requiring local board of election to establish separate polling precincts at continuing care retirement communities, if requested.

HB 773- establishes the Dept. of General Services “Broker Rebate Fee Fund”.

C. Senator Chris West: SB 009- requires the Board of Public Works to certify a business as a “minority business enterprise” if it already enjoys certification under the federal “Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Program”.

SB 017- requires the judiciary to develop a training program for judges presiding over child custody cases involving child abuse or domestic violence.

SB 036- authorizes a person to execute an electronic will or remotely witnessed will without a notary public under certain specific occurrences.

SB 044- prohibits leaving a dog outside and unattended for longer than 30 minutes without access to shelter and shade during extreme weather, either heat or cold.

SB 049- this bill expands the definition of “a person in a position of authority” in sexual offense crimes.

Recognizing Excellence

Mays Chapel Elementary School counselor, Lori Counsell, has been named the Maryland Elementary School Counselor of the Year. She points out jokingly that “sometimes I point out to students that having a school counselor named Mrs. Counsell is like having a teacher named Mrs. Teach.”

She started out as a temporary employee in BCPS, and she then became a permanent employee as a school counselor at New Town Elementary in Owings Mills. When Mays Chapel opened in 2014, she joined its staff.

Counsell sums up her philosophy, in part, by observing that “Ultimately my goal is to make children internally reliant and to ensure they have the skills they need to move to middle school. The big three things I focus on are making sure our students understand what a healthy relationship is, how to handle big emotions, and how to resolve conflicts peacefully.”

* * * * *

Congratulations also go out to Dulaney High School senior Miriam Talalay, who is one of five individuals in the country to be awarded the Infinite Potential Commendation from the Duke of Edinburgh’s International Award. Ms. Talalay has completed her Bronze and Silver levels in this program, and she is working toward the Gold level Award. This program challenges young people, ages 14 to 24, to develop new skills, become physically active, cultivate a sense of adventure in the outdoors, and volunteer in their communities. Talalay spent more than 3,000 hours fostering more than 200 animals through the Maryland SPCA. Previously,

she received recognition from the nonprofit organization Points of Light and from Governor Hogan for her efforts in animal welfare.

The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award started in 1956 under the founding of Kurt Hahn, a German educator, and His Royal Highness, The Duke of Edinburgh. The Award is now available in more than 130 countries worldwide, involving over one million youngsters annually. Each country involved in the program has its own country specific board of directors, and the USA Board hopes to involve 470,000 young people in the program by the year 2026.

County's Inspector General Uncovers Another Embarrassment

As reported in the Baltimore Sun, the Baltimore County Inspector General's office disclosed that the developer of the multi-million-dollar, mixed use Metro Centre at Owings Mills was allowed to forego millions of dollars in fees and security deposits by a former County official. The report details that Arnold Jablon, who served as head of the Permits, Approvals and Inspections Department that oversees new development, allowed the waiver of fees for security deposits and inspection fees for utilities and right-of-way agreements for the Metro Center project, according to the Sun .

Under County regulations, only the County's Administrative Officer can alter fees, and to do so the Administrative Officer must also notify the County Council. That did not happen in these instances. There was no indication in the Inspector General's report that Jablon received a direct quid pro quo for not assessing the fees and security deposits, but the Inspector General did indicate that there was an appearance of a conflict of interest.

After Jablon retired in 2019, with John Olszewski, Jr. serving as County Executive, the County continued to waive certain fees and security deposits for the Metro Centre project. The report indicated that Jablon's successor, Michael Mallinoff, attempted to alter this arrangement, but a person in the Olszewski administration told him that the arrangement had predated the current administration and therefore needed to be honored. Further, in September of last year, Administrative Officer, Stacy Rodgers, wrote the developer that the County would continue to waive project fees, but only for new construction. Modifications to existing buildings will be subject to permit fees. Rodgers indicated that she came to this decision because the prior Kamenetz administration started the practice.

The entire report can be accessed on the Inspector General's webpage on the County's website.

Council Approves Backyard Chicken Law

By a vote of six to one, the Baltimore County Council voted to allow backyard chickens on properties less than one acre in size. The approval came after years of lobbying by advocates supporting this home agricultural practice.

The raising of chickens is limited to owner-occupied properties only, and the owner must secure a license from the County, which must be renewed annually. This law only allows the raising of hens; roosters are not permitted.

The number of hens on a property varies according to the size of the lot: 10,000 square foot lots are permitted four hens, 20,000 square foot lots can hold six chickens, 30,000 square foot lots are allowed eight chickens, and 40,000 square foot lots are permitted ten chickens. Variances are not allowed to raise chickens on lots smaller than 10,000 square feet.

The law also has specific setbacks for the distance a coop must be set back from a property line, ten feet, and from any adjacent dwelling, 30 feet. In addition, there are specific requirements on constructing a chicken coop and an adjoining chicken run.

Supporters of this law reported that a petition signed by over one thousand persons was submitted to the County Council, and many supporters spoke in favor of the law at the Council's work session.

Dulaney Valley Improvement Association Upset with Development Regulation

Members of the Dulaney Valley Improvement Association are claiming foul at the fact that the Royal Farms Stores can start the development process for a new store to be built at the corner of York Road and Greenridge Road in Lutherville.

Under the County Code for limited exemptions from the County's development regulations, the Royal Farm Stores applied for and received a limited exemption under Code Section 32-4-106 (b.) (8) that allows minor development that does not exceed a total of three lots to be exempt from community input meetings and hearing officer hearings. This procedure is common for commercial and manufacturing uses throughout the County.

Under this process, the developer can submit their plans directly to the County's reviewing agencies for approval of engineering standards, traffic engineering standards, environmental requirements, stormwater management and the like.

The community, however, believes this process is too secretive and precludes its concerns about traffic, compatibility, and other matters. The association has appealed the limited exemption ruling.

Redistricting Maps Face Court Challenges

At least four distinct court challenges were launched to question the suitability of the Maryland General Assembly's redistricting maps for state legislative districts. Fair Maps Maryland, a non-partisan group that includes participation from former State Senator Jim Brochin, filed its lawsuit on February 10, in which it contends that the maps unfairly advantage the Democratic party. The group also claims that the maps feature gerrymandered districts. They contend that thirteen districts are unconstitutional, one of which is the 42nd District in the Greater Timonium area.

A second lawsuit is filed by Delegates Brenda Thiam and Wayne Hartman, as well as a voter from Carroll County. In that lawsuit, the petitioners contend that by creating single representative districts and multi-representative districts the map disenfranchises many voters.

The Court of Appeals must decide these lawsuits quickly. Maryland's primary elections take place in June of this year, and decisions on the maps must be made prior to the primaries. This issue is sufficiently convoluted that already the court has pushed back the filing date for primary candidates from February until March. The final disposition of the lawsuits should create further controversy.

Separate and distinct from the lawsuits mentioned above, the Baltimore County NAACP, other civil rights groups and private citizens are contesting the County Council district map approved by the Baltimore County Council. These plaintiffs contend that the County map violates the Voting Rights Act. It is being heard in U.S. District Court. The plaintiffs want at least one more Council district that is majority-Black in nature. Presently, only the Fourth Council district can be characterized as a majority-Black district.

Federal Judge Lydia Griggsby ruled on February 22 that the County Council map violated the Voting Rights Act because it did not contain a second majority-Black district. The judge, appointed by President Biden this past summer, instructed the County Council to create a new map by March 8, which seems like an unreasonably short time to create an alternative. As of this writing, it has not been determined whether the County will appeal the ruling.

Gunpowder Valley Conservancy Receives Grant Funding

The Gunpowder Valley Conservancy (GVC) announced that both the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources have authorized grant funding for the Conservancy's Clear Creeks Project. The combined grants total in excess of \$929,000. The grants allow the Conservancy to offer discounts on rain barrels, Bayscapes, rain gardens, and microbioretention practices to residents, businesses, and non-profit organizations with land in specific sub-watersheds within the larger Gunpowder watershed. If this is of interest to you or an organization that you are affiliated with, contact program manager, Darcy Herman of GVC.

House Bill 264

Jeff Myers, from the Pot Spring community, and Eric Rockel, on behalf of GTCC, both spoke in favor of House Bill 264 before the House of Delegates Committee on Environment and Transportation recently. The bill, sponsored by Delegate Michele Guyton, if passed into law would enable local jurisdictions to place speed cameras in area occupied by nursery schools. Presently, the use of speed cameras is restricted to school zones for children in K-12 grades.

Residents are encouraged to support this bill by emailing your state representatives in support of the bill.

County Relaxes Covid Restrictions

Recently, County Executive John Olszewski, Jr., announced that effective February 28, the County would no longer require employees or visitors to wear masks in County-owned facilities. At the end of January, the county executive let a general mask mandate lapse, as well.

The compelling evidence behind the decisions rest with statistics on the spread of covid. From early January to mid-February the average positivity rate in the County has decreased by 89 percent. The average case rate has decreased by 95 percent, and hospitalized patients dropped by 77 percent. Approximately 78 percent of residents, ages five and up, have been fully or partially vaccinated since the vaccine became available. Dr. John Chessare, CEO of GBMC, adds that Maryland has the fifth lowest infection rate in the nation at present, and the positivity rate for tested persons is now below 4%, a figure that had not been seen since October of last year.

Calendar of Events

Adult Night Out for Ridgely Middle School, March 4, 6:30-8:30 PM at BC Brewery
10950 Gilroy Road, get tickets thru Ridgely PTA

Family Safety Day at Maryland Fire Museum, March 5, 10AM-4PM (free)

Spring Home, Garden & Craft Show, Md. State Fair, Exhibition Hall & Cow Palace
March 5-6, 11-13, 10AM -6PM

American Red Cross Blood Drive, Md. State Fair, Mosner-Miller Bldg., March 11,
10AM- 3PM

Crab & Mallet Cat Club, Cat Show, Md. State Fair, 4H/Home Arts Bldg, March 12-13
9AM-4PM

Antique Arms Show, Md. State Fair, Cow Palace, March 18-20, 9AM-3PM

Children's Toy Consignment Sale, Md. State Fair, 4H/Home Arts Bldg. April 8-10
10AM-4PM

Beer, Bourbon & BBQ Fest, Md. State Fair, Cow Palace, April 8-9, 2PM-6PM

Stamp & Coin Show, Md. State Fair, Mosner-Miller Bldg, April 9, 9AM-4PM

American Red Cross Blood Donation, Md. State Fair, Mosner-Miller Bldg, April 20
10AM-3PM

St. Vincent DePaul, Empty Bowls Fundraiser (to assist the homeless), Md State Fair,
Exhibition Hall, April 23, 12PM-3PM

Dog Show, Md. State Fair, Track Infield, April 22-24, 8AM-6PM

The Cost of Last Year's Kirwan Legislation

When the legislature passed the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, the so-called Kirwan education reform bill, it did not provide funding for it. The reform will require funding on both the State and Local levels. Recently the Department of Legislative Services issued a report on the anticipated impacts at the Local level. Entitled "Local Fiscal Impact of implementing the Blueprint for Maryland's Future," the report identifies that five jurisdictions, including Baltimore City and Prince Georges County, will face significant increases in local funding to meet the requirements of Kirwan.

By fiscal year 2034, when all programs under Kirwan are fully phased in, the State revenue to education is expected to increase by \$3.9 billion. As for local appropriations, counties across the entire state are expected to add an additional \$700 million by fiscal 2034. Overall, local appropriations are expected to increase by 2% in fiscal 2023, by 3% in fiscal 2028 and by 8% by fiscal 2034.

According to the report, Baltimore County will not be required to increase local aid up to fiscal year 2028, but by fiscal year 2034, the County will need an additional \$111 million annually in local aid. Since the County is already at the top limit on the local income tax rate, sources of the additional funding will come from either the property tax, from a reduction in other programs or a new taxing stream.

Agenda for General Meeting of March 9, 2022

1. Introductions
2. Report on Public Safety from Precinct 7
3. Featured Guest- Curio Wellness, medical cannabis provider
4. Featured Guest- Solid Waste Management, changes to collection procedures
5. Questioning the County's development process
6. New Business
7. Adjourn