

Just Blowing Off Steam

The blowhards on the editorial board of the Baltimore Sun continue to advocate for the Lutherville Station project promoted by Mark Renbaum. (“How Promoting Transit Around Baltimore Easier said Than Done,” October 22, 2023) The editorial board suggests that the opposition is guided by racism, classism and bias. This is an all-too-common argument used by progressives when they don’t like the logic or arguments of their opponents.

I don’t remember the Sun condemning the people of Perry Hall when they objected to the building of apartments at the old Sears’ Store site at the Whitemarsh Mall. Did the editorial board accuse certain residents in Bel Air when they opposed additional apartments in that town? It would have been almost comical if the Sun condemned the residents of East Towson of racism when they opposed the Red Maple condominium project on East Pennsylvania Avenue. Yet they feel entitled to throw out these “charged” words against the residents of Lutherville/Timonium without even attempting to hear any side of the story other than Renbaum’s.

The concerns of the opponents are heard in many parts of the County when larger development projects are proposed. School impacts are one of the primary concerns, and critics of the County’s development process complain that adequate public facilities legislation is a paper tiger with no teeth After the first wave of new residential development took place in Towson, the elementary school boundaries were “adjusted” and a few years later Hampton Elementary School received a group of “learning cottages,” indicating that the school was overcrowded. The irony there being that the school had just received a renovation a few years earlier that should have addressed future population needs. A companion problem exists for athletic fields in the Lutherville/Timonium area. We do not have enough fields to accommodate all the boys’ and girls’ sports events and practice activities.

Despite the Sun's hope that all of these apartment dwellers will use transit, there is a better chance that the automobile will be their predominant means of transportation, which means that the roads will become even more congested. Light rail usage, for the system as a whole, is down over the past ten years, not up. Other parts of the infrastructure, such as storm drains, water lines, etc., could also face capacity challenges, and the residents question whether the County will exercise proper oversight in addressing these concerns.

While I'm at it blowing off steam, let me circle back to past criticism of the Master Plan. Sometime before the end of the year, probably in December, the County Council will need to approve the Master Plan document. As I have written in past newsletters, this Master Plan proposes three "core retrofit areas, or nodes" in an area between West Ridgely Road and Padonia Road, along the corridor occupied by the Light Rail line. The Master Plan recommends high density residential development, along with commercial, institutional and office development in these three nodes. In my opinion, these nodes could radically alter the character of the area if this plan is approved as currently written. So, I advocate for all residents to write Councilman Kach (council3@baltimorecountymd.gov) and urge him to eliminate the three "nodes" proposed for the Lutherville/Timonium area.

Eric Rockel
Vice President

Comprehensive Zoning Map Process

Every four years the County undertakes a comprehensive look at changing zoning designations throughout the locality. From August 15 until the middle of October, any citizen can request that any property's zoning be changed. If you want to see high density zoning in the middle of My Lady's Manor, you can make a request. Or, if you want downtown Towson to be exorcized from commercial uses, that, too, can be requested. You won't stand a snowball's chance of seeing either of those fantasies come true, but this process allows you to make the request, just the same.

The month of October is the time for members of the Planning Board to request zoning changes, and during the month of November, the County Council members can put in requests as well.

Hearings are held by the Planning Board and the County Council in each Council district to elicit citizen comments about any requested changes in each individual district. The Planning Board hearing for the Third Council District is scheduled to take place on February 13th, from 6-9 PM at Loch Raven High School. Comments from individual citizens need to be limited to three minutes, or less. The County Council meetings will take place in June, but I have not seen a specific date set, as of this writing, for the Third District.

The Department of Planning will make comments on each request, and those comments are non-binding, during the month of March, and the Planning Board will hold discussions on the zoning issues and set forth its' recommendations in April, which are also non-binding on the County Council. In August the County Council votes on each of the rezoning requests and the new zoning maps are signed into law by September 2024.

Listed below are the issues impacting the Greater Timonium area as of the 28th of October. GTCC members will have a chance to discuss these requests at our November meeting, as well as the January meeting.

Issue Number	Location	Existing Zoning	Requested Zoning
1.) #3-010	1829 York Road	R.O (.56 ac) DR 3.5 (.03 ac)	BL .59 ac
2.) #3-014	2300 Dulaney Valley Road	RC 4 (38.44 ac)	DR 16 38.44 ac
3.) #3-016	245 Shawan Road	ML-IM (17.59 ac)	BM CCC 17.59 ac
4.) #3-017	130 Ridgely Road	BL (12.76 ac) ML-IM (.84 ac) DR 1 (.01 ac)	BL CCC 13.61 ac
5.) #3-018	15 Aylesbury Road	ML-IM (9.58 ac)	BR- IM 9.58 ac
6.) #3-022	11 Aylesbury Road	ML-IM (3.56 ac)	BR-IM 3.56 ac
7.) # 3-023	1301 York Road	BL (4.92 ac) DR 1 (.74 ac) DR 5.5 (.80 ac)	BL CCC 6.46 ac
8.) #3-024	1202 York Road	DR 5.5 (0.45 ac) RO (0.60 ac)	BL 1.05 ac
9.) #3-029	2004 Greenspring Dr.	ML-IM (7.07 ac)	ML-IM 7.07 ac
10.)#3-030	1447 York Road	BL (2.54 ac)	BM CCC 2.54 ac
11.)#3-031	5-7 Adams Ave. & 10 Parks Ave.	OR 1 (2.68 ac) BL CCC (.05 ac) BL (.01 ac)	BM CCC 2.74 ac
12.)#3-032	9603 & 9525 Deerco Road	ML-IM (8.49ac)	BM CCC 8.49 ac
13.) #3-033	2311 York Road	MR (7.16 ac) BL (2.23 ac) DR 2 (.03 ac)	BR 9.42 ac

Issue Number	Location	Existing Zoning	Requested Zoning
14.)#3-035	1420 York Road <i>Really W. Seminary Ave.</i>	DR 5.5 (1.07 ac)	BL 1.07 ac
15.)#3-038	1615 York Road	RO (.97ac)	BL .97ac
16.)#3-040	101 W. Ridgely Road	RO (.95 ac)	BL .95
17.)#3-041	12 Galloway Ave.	ML-IM (1.24 ac) BR (.04ac) BM (.02 ac)	BM 1.3 ac
18.)#33-042	NS West Seminary Ave., East of Falls Rd.	RC 5 (21.6 ac)	RC 8 21.61 ac
19.)#3-044	2007-2023 York Rd	BL (1.52 ac) DR 5.5 (.02 ac)	BL AS 1.53 ac

Debate Continues Over Plastic Bag Ban

In February the County Council passed the “Bring Your Own Bag Act,” which banned stores from offering plastic bags, and instead required retailers to charge at least five cents for reusable and paper bags. The law was set to go into effect on November 1.

The Council heard many complaints that the original law was overly burdensome and an example of government overreach. Councilman Todd Crandell attempted to amend the original act, but those amendments were tabled in September. The amendments were re-introduced in October, and on October 16 the County Council approved three changes to the original law that exempt liquor stores from the plastic bag ban in an amendment sponsored by Councilman Julian Jones, allowing plastic bags if the bag’s thickness is at least 2.25 mils thick in an amendment sponsored by Councilman Pat Young, and exempt paper bags used for prescriptions from the five-cent tax in an amendment sponsored by Councilman Marks.

County Executive John Olszewski, Jr. threatened to veto these proposed amendments, and on October 25 he followed thru by vetoing the liquor store amendment and the one concerning thick plastic bags. He did not veto the measure sponsored by Councilman Marks. Olszewski stated that: “These two bills (which he vetoed) will unnecessarily allow more plastic bags to end up in our landfill and our environment, counter to the goal we set together ... (in the original bill).”

The County Council would need five votes to overturn the executive’s vetoes, and that vote may happen in November.

Recreation and Parks Releases Oregon Ridge Master Plan Document

In mid-October the Department of Recreation and Parks released a voluminous Oregon Ridge Master Plan, which is the product of many community meetings, both in-person and virtual, and the input from a wide variety of park users and hired consultants.

Oregon Ridge served as a hub for iron ore and marble mining in the mid-1800s, as well as a village for workers associated with the industry. By the twentieth century, mining had been abandoned but the quarry became a commercial swimming facility before Baltimore County took ownership in the 1960s.

The plan categorizes the park into three distinct areas: the Terrace Core, which is the north end of the park where most of the major buildings and athletic fields are located; the Transition Core in the middle of the park where the south side of Quarry Lake and some trails exist; and the Conservation Core that includes the largest number of trails and the Baisman Run watershed. The ultimate goal of the plan is to better protect the natural areas, improve the trails, create new event structures to replace the existing ones and better accommodate access and parking for park users.

If you want to hear and see more of the specifics about the Master Plan for Oregon Ridge, we will have Bob Smith, the Director of the Department of Recreation and Parks, at our next meeting to share information about the plan.

A Learning Seminar for New Drivers

The Dulaney High and Towson High PTAs will be hosting an event with attorney John Angelos, Esq., on November 15 at 7 PM in the Dulaney satellite cafeteria. Mr. Angelos will be discussing legal issues often faced by “new drivers,” matters that aren’t part of the driving test, such as how to react to your first traffic stop, search and seizure protocols, obligations if you are involved in an accident and how to avoid becoming a distracted driver.

Proposed Boundary Changes Evaluated for Area Elementary Schools

With many Baltimore County schools either nearing or at capacity, the school system is conducting its most comprehensive boundary study to date. The examination impacts 19 central area elementary schools, including those in the Cockeysville, Timonium, Lutherville, Hampton and Towson communities. The school system has chosen consultant Cropper GIS to lead the boundary study.

Parents and students often become emotional about the changes to a school's geographic boundaries, but nothing has been officially decided at this point in time, with just two of the scheduled five meetings completed. The remaining meetings are all scheduled to take place at Carver Center for Arts and Technology: November 2, January 4 and January 25. All will run from 6 PM until 8:30 PM. In addition to these committee meetings that are not seeking public comment directly, there will be two meetings specifically aimed at hearing public feedback- one on November 15, from 7 to 8 PM at Cockeyville Middle School and a second on November 16, from 7 to 8 PM at Loch Raven High School.

The committee studying these boundaries will make a final recommendation to the school board in February, and the school board is expected to reach its decision in March.

Public Meeting on Extending the NCR Trail South

The Baltimore County Department of Public Works and Transportation will be holding a meeting on the proposed southerly extension of the NCR Trail to the existing trail system around Lake Roland on Wednesday, November 15 from 6 to 8 PM in the gym of the Cockeyville Recreation Center at 9836 Greenside Drive. Several different options were examined by the consultant employed by the department, and it will be interesting to hear and see what is being recommended.

Can Artificial Intelligence Detect Guns Brought onto School Grounds?

The answer to that question is a resounding yes, if you ask Chad Green, the Director of Artificial Intelligence, for Omnilert, a school security company. In August the school board entered into a contract with Omnilert, in the amount of \$2.66 million, to provide artificial intelligence software to the system's cameras, which total 7,000 in number.

If a gun is detected by the software, an automated response is sent by Omnilert to the school system, to the police department and other emergency personnel. No other company offered a bid proposal for this service, and the installation schedule for the software has not been finalized as of mid- October. The school system's spokesperson also said the system is adding about 1,000 new cameras to bring the total number up to 7,000.

Omnilert is already providing detection service to "several hundred" schools, hospitals, businesses and government offices, including Charles County Public Schools.

Cockeyville Precinct Welcomes New Captain

A seventeen-year veteran of the County's police force has been appointed the new captain of the Cockeyville precinct. Captain Scott Walston has served in a variety of positions

over his career, including patrol officer, detective on the robbery unit, internal affairs division, and most recently as Assistant Precinct Commander at the Parkville Precinct. Captain Walston joins the longstanding second in command, Lt. Robert McGraw, in managing the precinct.

Calendar of Events

1. Maryland Toy Expo
November 4, 8:00 AM
Exhibition Hall & 4H Bldg., Maryland State Fair (MSF)
2. LAX Tournament
November 4 & 5
Infield MSF
3. Irish Festival
November 10, 6-11 PM; November 11, 12-11 PM; November 12, 12-6 PM
Cow Palace MSF
4. PTA Craft Fair, Ridgely Middle School
November 11, 10AM-3PM
At the school
5. Native American Festival
November 18 ; go to baltimoreamericanindiancenter.org. for more info.
4H/Home Arts Bldg. MSF
6. Kennedy Krieger Institute's Festival of Trees
November 24-26, 10AM-7PM
Cow Palace MSF
7. Stamp & Coin Show
December 2 9AM-4PM
Mosner-Miller Bldg. MSF
8. Train Show
December 2 & 3, 9AM-4PM
9. Motorcycle Races
December 9-16, 6-9 PM
MSF

10. Maryland Fire Museum, 1301-R York Road, Holiday Train Garden
November 25- 10AM-4 PM ; November 26- 12-4 PM
December 2- 10AM-4PM ; December 3- 12-4 PM
December 9 &16 -10AM-4 PM ; December 10 &17- 12-4 PM
December 23- 10AM-4 PM

Please join us for the next General Meeting on November 8, 7:00 PM, at the Vista Room in the Administration Bldg. of the Maryland State Fair.

Tentative Agenda

- 1.) Report on Public Safety from Precinct 7
- 2.) Featured Guest: Maggie Litz Domanowski, School Board, 3rd District
- 3.) Feature Guest: Bob Smith, Department of Recreation & Parks and board members of LTRC
- 4.) Overview of the Comprehensive Zoning Map Process (CZMP)
- 5.) Discussion of Recent Developments on Lutherville Station
- 6.) Old & New Business

Wishing Everyone a Joyous Thanksgiving, Merry Christmas & Happy New Year !!