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

*Our Next General Meeting is January 10 at the Vista Room
Of the Maryland State Fairgrounds, starting at 7PM*

Opinion

Is Johnny Going to Run?

Recently, the Baltimore Sun published an article entitled “ From Washington to the Wynn, Las Vegas,” about County Executive John Olszewski, Jr. The purpose of the article was two-fold: first, to demonstrate that the county executive has a wide itinerary and met with many influential people over the first three quarters of 2023, and secondly, to inform the readers that Olszewski is thinking about higher office, specifically the 2nd Congressional District seat. The County Executive is term- limited, he cannot run for his current position when his term ends in 2026. But current Congressman, Dutch Ruppersberger, has not announced if he will seek a 12th term in 2024. So Olszewski must appear circumspect about his plans for the immediate future.

The article portrayed Olszewski as meeting with a wide array of influential people to help burnish his resume. He had lunch at the L’Hirondelle Club with Orioles General Manager Mike Elias. While in Las Vegas for the International Council of Shopping Centers conference, he attended a dinner hosted by John Angelos, CEO of the Orioles, at the Wynn Resort. Many local residents also took note that this article mentioned an Olszewski meeting with Lutherville Station developer Mark Renbaum while at the Las Vegas conference. Other persons that Olszewski spent time with to talk about county affairs and political strategy included State Treasurer Dereck Davis and political strategist Alexandra Hughes. Plus, there was time spent in Washington, on four occasions. Certainly, the highlight of those journeys was the chance to meet President Joe Biden during the National Association of Counties legislative conference. The article portrayed the county executive as more than just a local luminary.

As far as the executive’s future in elective office, politics can be a fickle mistress. Already, Olszewski knows that far too well. After two terms in the House of Delegates, Olszewski ran for State Senate in 2014, but he lost to Johnny Ray Salling, a Republican, in the

general election. Two years later, Olszewski barely squeezed thru the Democratic Primary for County Executive, nosing out Jim Brochin by a mere 17 votes.

If you look at the records of two former county executives, you see that Dutch Ruppensberger won his re-election to the post with 70.5 % of the vote, and Jim Smith won re-election with 66.3% of the vote. By contrast, Olszewski won his re-election with only 63.7% of the vote against a very polarizing opponent, Pat McDonough.

So, the future for our County Executive may depend upon what missteps he makes between now and his next bid for election. The recent furor over Councilman Julian Jones attempt to limit the Office of the Inspector General is an example of the type of misstep that can damage a career. Yet despite all the coverage of that misstep, few journalists recounted that Olszewski floated a similar idea of an oversight board two and one-half years before Jones. Certainly, his reluctance to meet with residents concerned about the future development of Lutherville Station could be viewed as another such misstep. Let's see what happens in the future. Stay tuned, it could be interesting.

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What to Expect from Annapolis ?

The Maryland General Assembly will convene on January 10 for the start of the 2024 session. What are we to expect from this session? I will be keeping a close eye on the fiscal front. Ever since late summer when Gov. Wes Moore told the Maryland Association of Counties (MACO) conference that the state is expecting deficit problems for the next fiscal year, and the years to come, I have been wondering just how the legislature would handle the problem. Will there be tax increases? Or service cuts? Or maybe use the O'Malley method of raising every fee under the sun to help reduce the deficit. Then again, it could well be a combination of all of the above.

There are several areas that demand a watchful eye. First is education. Most observers realized that when the Kirwin educational reform bill passed that sooner or later both the state and the counties would have to start allocating a serious amount of new money towards education. That time begins with the next fiscal year, and already some jurisdictions, like Baltimore City, are complaining that they do not have enough monies to pay for their share as outlined in the law. Secondly, we heard from the Maryland Department of Transportation that there is over \$3 billion in budget shortfalls for that agency. Those shortfalls could impact how much money the counties receive for their own projects, and it could have an impact on what type of Red Line mass transit project is proposed to connect the west side with the east side of the Baltimore metropolitan area. Finally, just before the new year, the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) released its findings of what must be done over the next decade for the state to reach carbon neutrality. The Secretary of MDE placed a price tag of \$1 billion per year on those efforts to replace fossil fuels.

As one republican senator recently observed, "Maryland does not have a revenue problem, it has a spending problem."

Eric Rockel
Vice President

County Unveils Plan to Extend Trail

Baltimore County's Department of Public Works and Transportation released a plan for the continuation of the Torrey C. Brown Rail Trail, formerly known as the NCR Trail, from Ashland Road down to Lake Roland Park in mid-November. The existing trail extends from the Pennsylvania line down to Ashland Road, nearly 20 miles in length, and the extension would travel another 7 miles. This proposal is intended to provide trail accessibility for all users, including the handicapped, hikers and bikers.

The alignment was developed by a local firm, JMT Engineering, and the project included an initial public workshop held in March 2023, the development of the conceptual design over the summer of 2023 and a second public workshop in November 2023. In the month of December, the firm will submit a final conceptual design report, and future phases will include more detailed conceptual design, securing funding for the project to move forward, environmental analysis, including state and federal environmental reviews, and final design capable of securing construction permits.

The alignment of the extension would begin at the Ashland Road parking lot and continue in the existing Northern Central right of way down to York Road at Railroad Avenue in Cockeysville. West of York Road the alignment would utilize Railroad Avenue until the trail crosses Cockeysville Road, and then the alignment would again use the railroad right of way south until it intersects Warren Road. The proposed trail would then use Warren and Beaver Dam Roads traveling south until Beaver Dam Road intersects with Padonia Road. The trail alignment would then cross Padonia Road and continue south on Deercro Road and Greenspring Drive until intersecting Timonium Road. On Timonium Road the alignment heads west until Thorton Road. The alignment follows Thorton Road in a southerly direction until reaching West Joppa Road.

For a further description of the alignment, including several alternatives proposed for discrete sections of the trail alignment, view the following link:
[NCRTrail-Public-Meeting-2-Presentation.pdf \(lakeroland.org\)](#)

One Nightmare is Over- MTA Makes Announcement

Maryland Transit Administrator Holly Arnold announced the next phase of the North-South Corridor study just a few days before Christmas. Ms. Arnold stated in her press release that "A segment along York Road north of Towson as well as segments along Loch Raven Boulevard/Joppa Road/Goucher Boulevard will not be included in the next phase of study for this project."

The grass roots effort of literally thousands of residents north of the Beltway must have made an impression on the planners at the MTA. Over 3500 residents signed an online petition

rejecting the proposal for a light rail line on York Road, north of the Beltway. Hundreds of other persons wrote emails and signed paper petitions in opposition as well.

Well done everyone. Your voices made a difference !!

Your Home's Water Service Line

In response to lead water line problems faced by Michigan municipalities and other jurisdictions around the nation, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is requiring that all water systems in the nation verify what material is used for the service lines that enter each home. Baltimore County, along with Baltimore City, has entered into a collaborative effort termed the "Baltimore Service Line Partnership" to identify and inventory the material used in the service line entering your home. Recently a postcard was sent to all addresses in the County asking residents to spend a few minutes performing the home survey. The postcard states that anyone can scan the QR code found on the card or use the URL, <https://bit.ly/SLMaterialSurvey> to reach the survey form. (Press ctrl+click)

Thefts from Cars Surged This Holiday Season

If you have heard the police say it once, you have heard it one hundred times : Lock Your Car !! The recent upswing in thefts from cars in Wellington Valley, off West Seminary Avenue, and in the vicinity of East Ridgely Road underscores this mantra. We also remind you that if you leave items of value visible in your car, you are asking for the car to be broken into.

If you want to learn more about local law enforcement in the Cockeysville area and stay up to date on the criminal activity in the area, please consider attending the monthly Police Community Relations meetings, 7PM on the fourth Wednesday of each month at 11101 McCormick Road.

Council Restructuring Workgroup

This Fall the County Council passed a resolution authorizing a workgroup to "develop a consensus recommendation on whether any changes to the structure of the Council are appropriate and serve the goal of improving representation for County residents." This workgroup grew out of complaints, and a lawsuit, that the Council was not representative of the changing demographics of the County, particularly the growth of communities of color.

Just what restructuring will be recommended by the workgroup remains to be seen because the group is just now starting those discussions. The recommendation(s) could include expanding the number of districts, changing the Council positions to full-time rather than part-time status, increasing each Council members' staff or other changes .

The composition of the workgroup includes one appointee of the County Executive, one appointee from each member of the County Council, one appointee from the Planning Board, one appointee from a local college or university who has expertise in political science or government, one appointee with expertise in demographics and two ex-officio members.

If you are interested in learning more about the workgroup, want to share an opinion on the appropriate County Council structure, or to take a short survey about restructuring (which should be available on or about January 16), go to the link : [Baltimore County Md. County Council - County Council Structure Workgroup Information](#)

Olszewski Appoints Two Members to Fair Election Fund Commission

The County Executive appointed Marietta English, a local teachers union official, and David Mister, a Timonium lawyer who specializes in liquor license law, to the Fair Election Fund Commission.

After other appointments become official, the Commission will support the County’s new public financing system for candidates to the County Council and County Executive, beginning in the 2026 election cycle.

Voters overwhelmingly approved a charter amendment in 2020 that has paved the way for this election fund system.

BGE Receives Approval for Utility Rate Increases

On December 14 Maryland’s Public Service Commission approved rate increases of just under \$408 million over the next three years. Beginning in January, the average customer’s electric bill will increase by \$4.08 per month and the average residential customer’s gas bill will increase by \$10.43 per month.

BGE had sought increases that would have totaled \$602 million, but the Public Service Commission paired that by nearly one-third. The utility company said the rate increases were necessary in order to enable the upgrading of the infrastructure required by the Maryland Legislature to meet the 2045 net-zero emissions goals set by the previously passed “Climate Solutions Now Act”.

Dulaney High Senior Earns Prestigious Scholarship

Naomi Franzblau, of Dulaney High School, is one of 2,242 students nationally to receive a full four-year scholarship from the QuestBridge National College Match. She will attend Dartmouth College in the fall, where she plans to major in government. Franzblau is an Advanced Placement scholar, with distinction, for both 2022 and 2023, as well as an Albrecht Fellow Youth Diplomat at the World Trade Center Institute. She also served as her school's vice president for the Model United Nations chapter.

State Releases Grades for Baltimore County Schools

The Maryland State Department of Education released ratings for all the schools in Baltimore County. In total, about 11% of Baltimore County schools improved their rating from the previous year, while 23% lost ground compared to the prior year. Using a rating of one-star (poor) to five-stars (superior), the County overall produced 19 five-star schools, 28 four-star schools, 70 three-star schools, 42 two-star schools and 2 one-star schools.

Locally, Timonium Elementary, Pinewood Elementary and Riderwood Elementary received five-star ratings. Lutherville Elementary, Hampton Elementary, Mays Chapel Elementary and Towson High garnered four-star rankings. The three-star rated schools included Padonia International and Pot Spring Elementaries, Cockeysville and Ridgely Middle Schools and Dulaney High School.

School Superintendent Myriam Rogers acknowledged that the report provides “valuable insights” into the schools, but she reminded that “it is still important to understand that it provides a limited view of the work” that is being done.

Speed Camera Bill Will Again be Considered by Legislature

Last year Delegate Michele Guyton sponsored a bill that would have transferred the authority to place speed cameras with Baltimore County. Current State law only allows the county to place cameras in school zones. Unfortunately, last year's bill did not receive enough support in the county's delegation for the item to proceed.

Delegate Guyton has pre-filed the bill again for this year's session, and support in the county's delegation is greater than last year. This year's bill includes amendments that were recommended last year, including a requirement that a study conducted by the Police Department and the Department of Public Works & Transportation to determine if a speed camera is the best tool to control speeding in each location. Additionally, the proposed bill would require a public input session and a County Council vote to authorize or move any speed camera.

Currently, both Montgomery and Prince Georges Counties already possess this authority, and a study commissioned by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety found that speed

camera usage in Montgomery County resulted in fewer accidents and personal injuries compared to the period before the introduction of speed cameras. Let your legislators know of your feelings on this bill.

Remembering Larry Townsend

Lawrence, “Larry”, Townsend, Jr., an active member of the GTCC in the late 1990s and early 2000s, passed away from complications from Alzheimer’s disease at the age of 82. He grew up in Yorkshire/Haverford, and as an adult, he lived in Dulaney Village, where he was active as an officer of that community association.

Larry worked for the old Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, latter CSX, from the early 1960s until he retired in 2012. Much of his time with the railroad was spent in the field of computer science, including system design and automation. He also volunteered with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra’s school program, with the Lutherville Volunteer Fire Company and other organizations. Rest in Peace, Larry.

Calendar of Events

- 1.) Baltimore Woodworking Show; January 5-7; in the Cow Palace, Maryland State Fair
- 2.) Wedding Expo; January 6, starting at 11AM; in Exhibition Hall, Maryland State Fair (MSF)
- 3.) Jurassic Quest; January 12-15; Cow Palace, MSF
- 4.) Reptile & Exotic Animal Show; January 13-14, Exhibition Hall, MSF
- 5.) Children’s Consignment Sale; January 19th, 9AM-7PM; January 20, 9AM-5PM; January 21, 9AM-4PM; Exhibition Hall, MSF
- 6.) Chesapeake Bay Boat Show; January 19-21; Cow Palace, MSF
- 7.) Gun Show; January 20,21; Exhibition Hall, MSF
- 8.) Pet Expo; January 26-28; MSF

9.) Maryland RV Show; February 16-19 & 23-25; in Multiple Buildings, MSF

Tentative Agenda for the next General Meeting, January 10

- 1.) Introductions
- 2.) Report on Public Safety from Precinct 7
- 3.) News from Baltimore County Government
- 4.) Lutherville Station Update
- 5.) Featured Guest: Yara Cheikh, education advocate and past Dulaney H.S. PTSA president
- 6.) Review of CZMP Issues
- 7.) Old & New Business
- 8.) Adjourn

