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President: Eric Rockel, 410-252-8439; Vice President: Kathleen Beadell, 410-977-7581; Secretary: Laura Renshaw, 410 583-1908; Treasurer: Tina Kline; Directors: Cathy Norton, Lisa Baldanza, Pam Burke, Greg DeHoff, Ashley Richardson and Doug Dunlap

*Please join us for our next General Meeting, March 12, 7PM at the Vista Room
Councilman Wade Kach is our guest*

President's Message

Pass/ Fail

For six years we listened to John Olszewski, Jr. proclaim that he is a common sense, middle-of-the- road elected official as he served as Baltimore County Executive. I never believed that he was a middle-of -the-road kind of leader, and I wanted to track some of his early votes in Congress as a better barometer of his true sentiments. Would his voting record be more bipartisan, or would he be strongly partisan as he started this new career?

One of his early votes in Congress was on the Laken Riley Act. Laken Riley was a 22-year-old nursing student in Georgia who was assaulted and murdered by an unlawful immigrant. Her name was symbolically affixed to this legislation, which requires federal officials to detain any unlawful immigrant who is arrested or charged with certain crimes, including shoplifting, assault, or other crimes that injure or kill someone. This act also empowers state attorneys general to sue the federal government for any harm caused by failures or decisions in immigration enforcement. The bill truly received bi-partisan support. Forty-six Democrats in the House of Representatives and twelve Democrats in the Senate, including Senators Fetterman, Warner (Va.), and Arizona's first Latino senator, Senator Ruben Gallego, voted for the act.

Congressman Olszewski did not vote in favor of the legislation. When asked, he said he did not vote for it because it denied due process rights for immigrants.

The second piece of legislation that I tracked was the Fix Our Forest Act, co-sponsored by a Republican, Rep. Westerman (Ark.), and a Democrat, Rep. Peters (Cal.). In light of the devastation caused by wildfires in the Los Angeles area, I thought this bill would certainly receive bi-partisan support. Succinctly, the bill established better forest management standards, which hopefully will result in fewer forest fires. The bill did pass with bi-partisan support, 279 to 141. Both Representatives Hoyer and McClain Delaney, Democrats from Maryland, voted in favor of the bill. On the other hand, Congressmen Mfume, Raskin and Olszewski voted against

the bill. I have not seen any explanation by Congressman Olszewski for the reasons behind that vote.

So, I ask you the reader, as far as being bi-partisan and middle-of-the road, would you give the new congressman from the second district a passing grade or a failing grade? Or is it too early to tell? You be the judge.

Rising electric bills, the controversies over electric transmission lines in northern Baltimore, Harford and Carroll Counties, the disputes over a wind farm off the coast of Ocean City and now the talk of the state reassessing its position on nuclear energy are all signs that our state leadership has failed the citizens and consumers when it comes to proper energy policy.

In addition, the budget deficit in the state shows that our legislature has failed in managing the state's finances over the last few years, as well.

So, the question is: Are we going to make a major course correction to address these problems, or are we going to tinker around the edges and keep the underlying policy positions that got us into these messes in the first place?

I wish I could be more optimistic about where things are headed, but I cannot. If you have any ideas, write your delegate or senator. Suggest that the status quo is unacceptable and offer your recommendations on how to change things, big time.

Eric Rockel

Your State Legislators in Action

The following is a sampling, not an exhaustive list, of the legislation that our delegates and senators are sponsoring in Annapolis during this current legislative session. For a full list or to read the proposed legislation visit the Maryland General Assembly website to see each representative's homepage.

Senator Shelly Hettleman:

- 1.) SB 83: Allows community-based organizations, with approval from the Md. Dept. of Health, to set up overdose and infectious disease prevention programs. This would include locations for drug use under supervision, providing sterile needles and other services. It also allows the Program to bill insurance carriers of the individuals who use these services.
- 2.) SB 154: This bill would require the Comptroller to distribute \$14 million annually from the State's Unclaimed Property Fund to the Access to Counsel in Evictions

Fund. It also requires the Governor to, annually in his budget, transfer that sum from the Access to Counsel in Evictions Fund to the Maryland Legal Services Corp.

- 3.) SB 327: This bill allows county governments to exempt real property used for rental housing from county property taxes if the owner maintains at least 50% of the rental units as affordable units and enters into a payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT) agreement with the county. These affordable units must be maintained as affordable for at least 15 years.

Senator Chris West:

- 1.) SB 19: Clarifying the commissions that a guardian may charge in Estates and Trusts; authorizing a trustee of a trust to charge compensation that is reasonable and requiring trustees who are associated with financial institutions or members of the Maryland Bar to charge compensation consistent with rates filed with appropriate agencies.
- 2.) SB 61: Establishing that it is lawful to use a cell phone, or another device, to intercept an oral communication in public, if the speaker should reasonably anticipate that the communication could be overheard. Also establishing it is lawful for a person to use a security camera to intercept an oral communication.
- 3.) SB 180: This bill alters the expiration and renewal periods for a handgun permit issued to a retired law enforcement officer, who retires in good standing. Currently, these handgun permits expire after two years. This bill would extend the permit period to five years.
- 4.) SB 338, Sponsored by both Senators West and Hettleman: Authorizing the SHA to place and use not more than 4 speed monitoring systems on both I-695 and I-83. Also, fines collected must be used to maintain and improve these interstates.

Delegate Dana Stein:

- 1.) HB 131: Authorizes the Md. Dept. of the Environment to establish performance-based funding levels for the best available nitrogen removal technology for septic systems that qualify for funding from the Bay Restoration Fund.
- 2.) HB 234: For motorists who cause the serious physical injury, or death, of an individual who is working on a highway, or a utility facility along a highway; who is walking on a sidewalk; and/or who is lawfully operating a bicycle, motor scooter, motorcycle, play vehicle or several other pieces of equipment on a highway, shoulder of a road or sidewalk, that the penalty for those injuries or death would be imprisonment, not to exceed two months, or a fine not to exceed \$2,000, or both.
- 3.) HB 528: Authorizing police officers to enforce Maryland Vehicle Laws on private roadways in residential communities in Baltimore County. (Also sponsored by Del. Cardin)
- 4.) HB 530: Requiring the governor to include a \$250,000 appropriation to the Maryland Forestry Education Fund through 2031.

Delegate Jon Cardin:

- 1.) HB 27: Estates and Trusts, Compensation for Guardians- This bill is identical to SB 19, which is sponsored by Senator West.
- 2.) HB 160: Repealing the prohibition on applicants for our holders of video lottery licenses, and persons who hold an interest in a video lottery facility, from making contributions to political campaigns.
- 3.) HB 238: Requiring a law enforcement agency to file administrative charges arising out of misconduct allegations within 1 year and 1 day of when the law enforcement agency became aware of the charge of misconduct.
- 4.) HB 245: Requiring a register of wills to allow installment payments for inheritance tax if the beneficiary is of limited means.

Delegate Michele Guyton:

- 1.) HB 178: Prohibiting a person from stopping, standing or parking a vehicle in a bike lane or bike path; the maximum fine would be \$500.
- 2.) HB 450: Requiring the MTA to automatically renew the Disability Reduced Fare Program for an enrollee who is permanently disabled.
- 3.) HB 452: Requiring the Maryland Green Building Council to update or develop guidance for the purchase of outdoor light fixtures, as well as altering the requirements for the use of State funds for the installation or replacement of lighting. This bill only requires the Dept. of Transportation to conduct a review of its policies.
- 4.) HB 631: Prohibiting the State or a political subdivision from taking by eminent domain privately owned property that is subject to an agricultural or conservation easement. (Delegate Nino Mangione is a co-sponsor)
- 5.) HB 644: Expands the ability of counties to install speed monitoring systems on roads in residential areas where the maximum posted speed limit is 35 mph and under.

Delegate Nino Mangione:

- 1.) HB 081: requiring the fair market value of certain agricultural property taken in a condemnation proceeding to be valued at 350% of the highest appraisal value. (Delegate Guyton is a co-sponsor)
- 2.) HB 085: Repealing provisions in law prohibiting law enforcement agents from taking actions related to their immigration status and prohibiting a county or municipality from adopting or enforcing sanctuary policies.
- 3.) HB 192: Requiring boards of education to adopt a policy that prohibits students from using a cellular phone during school hours.
- 4.) HB 200: Establishing a workgroup to identify issues related to school bus safety.

What's the State of the County?

The Hunt Valley Business Forum recently asked that question, and County Councilman Julian Jones offered his answer. "Overall, the state of Baltimore County is Good- with an asterisk," the councilman proclaimed. Councilman Jones is a member of the County's Spending

Affordability Committee, which is required to recommend spending guidelines for county government that do not exceed the rate of growth in the local economy. This requires the committee to review revenue projections, economic forecasts and existing obligations, such as bond interest payments, salaries, health and retirement costs, to estimate a realistic growth rate for the County. That growth rate is predicted to be 4-4.5% this year.

Baltimore County has some very positive demographics, according to Jones, including the second largest jurisdiction in terms of jobs and homes, and the county is the third largest in the state with respect to overall population. Yet the “asterisk” that Jones mentioned “represents some substantial clouds on the horizon.”

Among the clouds concerning Jones is the fact that the school system is asking for a 7% growth in its budget when the county’s overall growth rate is 4-4.5%. According to him, much of that increase would go to raises for teachers. Another concern for the councilman is the fact that County population has declined by 20,000 over the last three years. “I believe that a warning light is on, opined Jones, and many of my colleagues don’t share my concern.”

Councilman Jones’ remedy for his concerns is to get the County growing at a faster rate, and he specifically mentioned speeding up the County’s permitting process and limiting the recently passed Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance, which he believes is impeding growth.

County Council Passes Resolution Concerning Reserve Fund Mandates

Back in 2022 the Maryland General Assembly passed legislation that required all condominium associations and homeowner associations with common-owned property costing at least \$10,000 to install to be responsible for completing a reserve study at least once every five years. In addition to the reserve study estimating the total costs to repair or replace such common property, the law also required condominiums and homeowner associations to set an annual reserve fund for future repairs or replacement of these common elements.

The County Council became concerned about the “looming deadlines to collect unaffordable fees and assessments from unit owners, including low-income owners and seniors on fixed incomes,” brought on by this State-mandated reserve requirement.

As a result, the Council passed a non-binding resolution encouraging the State Legislature to amend the reserve fund mandates so as to alleviate the unaffordable fees and costs faced by many of these common-owned property associations. As initially written, this resolution only referenced the troubles that condominium associations were facing, but through the efforts of GTCC representatives, the Council expanded the resolution to include the burdens faced by homeowner associations brought on by the State law. Councilman David Marks was instrumental, along with other councilmen, in seeing this resolution adopted.

Our “New” County Executive

Although Katherine Klausmeier may be “new” to the daily workings of local government in Towson, she brings to her new position a wealth of experience in state government from 1995 until her appointment as County Executive in 2025. From 1995 until 2003 she represented the 8th District of Baltimore County in the House of Delegates, and she served in the State Senate from 2003 until January 2025.

Ms. Klausmeier’s roots are all Baltimore centric, having been born and educated in the area, and she worked at St. Joseph Medical Center as an administrator in the Human Resources Department. Prior to entering politics, she served as president of the Gunpowder Elementary School PTA from 1987-89 and from 1991-94. She lives in Perry Hall with her husband, and she raised two daughters.

As a State Senator, she served as vice chair of the Finance Committee, chair of the Joint Committee on Worker’s Compensation Benefit and Insurance Oversight, and as chair of the Joint Committee on Unemployment Insurance Oversight. In addition, she had multiple leadership positions within the General Assembly, including assistant deputy majority whip, president pro tem of the Senate and chair of the Baltimore County delegation. She also served as a member of the Women Legislators of Maryland from 2003-25, and as Maryland State Coordinator, National Conference of State Legislatures, 2019-25.

Councilman Wade Kach, who served with Ms. Klausmeier in the General Assembly, was effusive in his praise for her prior to the Council’s vote to elect her. By all accounts she is a friendly and accommodating person, and it will be interesting to see how she steers the county. Congratulations on being the first female county executive in our history!

Development Expansion in District 3

The Hunt Valley Business Forum will be holding a panel discussion concerning development expansion on March 13, from 8:30 AM until 10:30 AM. The event will be held at Executive Plaza in Hunt Valley. Mark Renbaum of Lutherville Station will be one of the panelists for this event. There is a charge for non-members to attend. [www. hvbf.org](http://www.hvbf.org).

Budget Town Hall for District Three

County Executive Katherine Klausmeier and Councilman Wade Kach gave their perspectives on important budget concerns for the Third District Town Hall. The County Executive and Director of Finance reported that this coming year will be challenging given the budget deficit in Annapolis and the suspected cuts at the federal level. The director reported that the County spends nearly 60% of the budget on education, but none of these officials directly addresses that BCPS is asking for higher levels of spending for the coming year, levels higher than the anticipated growth in revenue for the county. Councilman Kach, however, indicated that there are no plans to push back the schedule for a Dulaney H.S. rebuild at this time.

A smaller crowd than in past years, probably the result of inclement weather, made their feelings known to the executive and councilman. A representative from TABCO spoke in favor of greater educational funding, and large contingents from the volunteer fire companies, particular Monkton, represented their need for county dollars to flow into the volunteer fire companies. There was also a representative from the land conservation community who spoke about the need for funding the program that purchases agricultural easements for land preservation. Councilman Kach indicated that early indicators show the State of Maryland still plans to fund this land preservation program for the coming year.

Finally, a representative of GTCC asked the County Executive to address two problems in the area. The first problem is the excessive motorist speeding on Cranbrook Road. The other problem is the prolonged time it has taken to complete the sewer replacement project south of East Timonium Road, along Edgemoor and other streets. The director of Public Works spoke to the problems tying the sewer line into another line owned by Baltimore City, which has been deemed as riddled with problems, and while that may be true as a reason for part of the delay, it does not excuse the failings to restore the construction along Edgemoor in a timely manner.

Sargent Fisher, from Precinct 7, followed up about Cranbrook Road following the meeting. He indicated that the precinct's traffic patrol had recorded 62 stops along Cranbrook in the month of January. Currently there is only one officer assigned to the traffic patrol, due to personnel shortages, and St. Fisher said the hope is to add a second officer in the future. The Sargent also indicated that in conjunction with the Department of Motor Vehicles, the police had confiscated 50 license plates that were affixed to vehicles illegally in the Cranbrook Road corridor in a sweep they undertook this winter.

Local Educator Named County's School Psychologist of the Year

Cathryn Beichley, who is stationed at Pot Spring and Martin Boulevard Elementary Schools, has been named school psychologist of the year. She has been employed by BCPS since 2006, after earning a master's degree from Towson University. Her colleagues observe that Ms. Benchley is truly gifted at explaining a student's strengths and weaknesses to parents, and she is a patient listener for staff who need her support, as well. Congratulations to Ms. Benchley!

Calendar of Events

- 1.) March 1, Fire Museum of Maryland- Family Safety Day
10AM-4PM, free admission
- 2.) March 1-2, 7-9, Maryland Home, Garden & Craft Show
Cow Palace & Exhibition Hall starts at 10AM each day
- 3.) March 8-9, Cat Show, 4H/Home Arts Bldg., 9AM-4PM
- 4.) March 15-16, Unicorn World, 9AM-4PM at MSF
- 5.) March 22-23, Maryland Antique Arms Show, Cow Palace
9AM-3PM
- 6.) March 28-29, Beer, Bourbon & BBQ Festival, Cow Palace
March 28- 6PM-10PM; March 29- 12PM-6PM

- 7.) March 29, All About Maryland Festival, local crafts & products, 4H/Home Arts Bldg.
- 8.) April 26, SHRED Day, sponsored by Better Business Bureau, North Gate Area
- 9.) April 26,27 Quilt Expo, 4H/Home Arts Bldg. 10Am-5PM

Tentative Agenda for the Next GTCC General Meeting
7PM at the Vista Room, Maryland State Fair

1. Introductions
2. Report on Public Safety from Precinct 7
3. Featured Speaker: Councilman Wade Kach
4. State Legislation Impacting Our Area
5. Old Business
6. New Business
7. Adjourn