

Vol. XVIII, No. 1
January 2026

President: Kathleen Beadell; Vice President: Eric Rockel; Secretary: Scott Taylor;
Treasurer: Tina Kline; Directors: Lisa Baldanza, Ashley Richardson, Pam Burke
Gregg DeHoff, Doug Dunlap

*Join us on January 14th at 7 PM
For our next General Meeting!!*

Vice President's Executive Summary

A Disappointing Ending

The first chapter in the history of Baltimore County's Inspector General ended on a sour note in early December. Kelly Madigan had survived County Executive Klausmeier's attempt to replace her, and at least until a new county executive is elected in 2026, Madigan could have continued in her position. While Madigan may have been "safe" for the next year, it was clear that she was not "wanted" by the Klausmeier Administration and some other key figures in Baltimore County Democratic Party circles. Councilmen Julian Jones and Pat Young, both of whom are running for county executive, had already voted in favor of replacing Ms. Madigan. So, when Madigan learned that Howard County was looking to set up an Office of Inspector General for its local government, she resigned in Baltimore County and accepted the position working for Howard County in the new year.

I always found Executive Klausmeier's lack of support for Madigan to be perplexing. As we have seen over the last six months, the public had a very positive opinion of the job that Ms. Madigan was performing. Additionally, Madigan had received an award from a national association of inspector generals for her work in Baltimore County. Plus, Ms. Madigan had not investigated any actions by Klausmeier or her appointees in the Executive office. So why did the County Executive choose to jettison this inspector general?

I don't have a definitive answer to this question, but I suspect that Madigan had made an enemy out of John Olszewski, Jr., and part of the deal for Olszewski's support for Klausmeier was that Madigan would be replaced. Madigan investigated several cases that could have embarrassed Olszewski, who promoted a reputation of being a progressive leaning reformer. The most embarrassing case involved Olszewski's uncle, who was also a county employee, using his county-owned car to visit his nephews' campaign headquarters and carry out campaign activities. Other cases involved the allegations that the Olszewski administration was involved in questionable pension payment to the brother of an Olszewski friend. Madigan's referral of

Olszewski's chief of staff to the Office of Law for possible legal actions, and the County Executive's involvement in expediting a building permit for an influential developer. Other than the case involving Olszewski's uncle, none of the other matters showed definitive wrongdoing by the parties investigated, but they did somewhat tarnish the image that Olszewski has tried to cultivate as a reformer.

At the end of the day, Madigan's resignation indicates that factions in Baltimore County do not want an aggressive and transparent inspector general who is committed to seeking out waste, fraud, and abuse. In the 2026 election we will have a referendum question asking voters to support an independent Inspector General Selection Board. I hope that all of our readers and members will support this selection board as a way to show that the citizens want a new inspector general who holds the same characteristics as Ms. Madigan.

Eric Rockel

Speaker of the House of Delegates

Adrienne A. Jones started serving in the House of Delegates in 1997, and six years ago she rose to the position of Speaker of the House of Delegates, as the first Black person and first woman to ever hold the post. Yet in December she announced that she was stepping down from her post as speaker, although she will remain a delegate representing the 10th District of Baltimore County, which includes Owings Mills, Randallstown and part of southwest Baltimore County.

Her time in leadership at the House of Delegates was highlighted by leadership that built coalitions without a lot of fanfare, nurtured talent of new, young members and practiced her leadership with integrity. Former speaker Michael Busch was affectionately referred to as "Coach" for the way he mentored and counselled many of his fellow Democrats, and Adrienne Jones is said to have followed that same pattern. Although she is decidedly liberal in her beliefs, she never looked for the spotlight, and she is restrained when discussing political matters.

Delegate Dana Stein, who served as speaker pro tempore in 2024 under Jones, said that she always counselled him to "just be you and don't ever change" and said that this type of mentorship is "very reaffirming and supportive. I appreciate her friendship in addition to her leadership."

Delegate Joseline Pena-Melnyk, who represents parts of Anne Arundel and Prince Georges Counties, has been elected to replace Delegate Jones as speaker. Both Ms. Pena-Melnyk and her husband are attorneys by profession. In addition, her husband has written a book advocating green energy, specifically windmills, and he has been a lobbyist for the windmill industry.

Maryland's Economy and the Housing Market, Part Two

Last month we wrote about Maryland Comptroller's report on housing as it affects the Maryland economy. This month we present some actual statistics to compare Maryland with other states around the country. The statistics come from Redfin, the Census Bureau, the American Communities Survey from the Census Bureau, and the Wharton Residential Land Use Regulation Index.

Maryland: median home price- \$446,000 ; monthly homeowner costs- \$2,389; median rental cost- \$1,721 ; new housing units since 2000- +21% ; rank as most regulated for residential development- 6th.

Pennsylvania: median home price- \$324,800; monthly homeowner costs- \$1,775; median rental cost- \$1,252; new housing units since 2000-+ 12%; rank as most regulated for residential development- 14th.

Delaware: median home price: \$364,000; monthly homeowner costs- \$1,821: median rental costs- \$1530; new housing units since 2000- +39%; rank as most regulated for residential development- 12th.

Virginia: median home price- \$465,900; monthly homeowner costs- \$2,149; median rental costs- \$1,646; new housing units since 2000- +29%; rank as most regulated for residential development- 25th.

West Virginia: median home price- \$247,900; monthly homeowner cost- \$1,272; median rental costs- \$883; new housing units since 2000- +3%; rank as most regulated for residential development- 42nd.

South Carolina: median home price- \$390,400; monthly homeowner cost- \$1,627; median rental cost- \$1,272; new housing units since 2000- +44%; rank as most regulated for residential development- 39th.

Texas: median home price- \$346,400; monthly homeowner cost- \$2,211; median rental cost- \$1,475; new housing units since 2000- +55%; rank as most regulated for residential development- 30th.

School Board to Retain Leadership, and other BCPS News

The current chair and vice chair of the Baltimore County Board of Education will retain their leadership roles for the 2026 year. Jane Lichter, chair of the Board, and Robin Harvey, vice chair, served in those capacities for the 2025 year, and since no nominee for either position received the requisite seven votes from the Board for the 2026 year, the current chair and vice chair will serve another year in their posts due to state regulation.

Ms. Lichter, a resident of Pikesville, was a thirty-seven-year educator for BCPS before retiring in 2021. She served as a special educator, curriculum specialist and elementary school principal, among other responsibilities before her retirement. She has been on the School Board

since 2022. Ms. Harvey, who resides in Windsor Mill, has also been on the School Board since 2022, and she currently serves as the executive director of the Office of Licensing and Monitoring within the Maryland Department of Human Services. She also holds a master’s degree in Social Work.

* * * * *

Two local seniors in high school have been selected to serve in the student page program at the Maryland General Assembly. Maeve Cirillo-Brinkley, from Dulaney H.S., and Sophie Vijayan, from Towson H.S., will be part of the program. Each page in the program will serve for two weeks as a page, one week in the first seven weeks and a second week in the final six weeks of the session.

* * * * *

The State Department of Education is giving local school systems some flexibility in their inclement weather policies. BCPS has announced that when schools are announced as closed for the full day due to inclement weather that the first three days of the year will be traditional closures with no instructional activity. For day four and onward, the system will have the flexibility to require virtual learning after a two-hour delay. In such circumstances students are warned to bring home their devices, chargers, and instructional materials. Such virtual days will count towards the required 180-day school calendar.

Governor Moore’s Congressional Redistricting Commission

Stating that he just wants to see a “fair congressional district map,” Governor Wes Moore has convened a five-member redistricting commission. Despite his pronouncement, Governor Moore has never clarified, or defined, what constitutes a “fair” map. The commission composed of four Democrats and one Republican hardly seems “fair” in light of the fact that voter registration in the state is about one-third Republican. Members of the commission include Senate President Bill Ferguson, who has already stated that he does not support re-districting at this time for fear that the federal courts may overturn any map that seeks to create all Democratic majority districts, Senator Angela Alsobrook, and former attorney general Brian Frosh.

The first of four public hearings by the commission, all of which have been done virtually, featured more Republican speakers. Many Democrats decried the fact that President Trump was encouraging redistricting efforts outside of the ten-year census cycle and urging Maryland to oppose those efforts by redistricting itself as a counter measure. Many Republicans, on the other hand, pointed out that based on voter registration, Maryland should have two or three Republican congressional districts.

Meetings two, three and four featured decidedly more Democratic speakers than Republicans. The arguments were much the same as the first meeting, with much of the ire directed towards Trump by the many Democratic proponents. The final public hearing took place on December 12th, and the Commission held a closed-door meeting on December 18th that would

have not received any attention had not Senate President Bill Ferguson blown the whistle just a short time before the meeting. Ferguson disclosed that the decision had already been made before the closed-door meeting to produce a new congressional district map. What actually transpired during the meeting is not known because of the closed-door nature. So, some unnamed person, presumably in the Department of Planning will produce a map, and reportedly the public will have two opportunities to react to that map. The final decision will be in the hands of the legislature. At this juncture, it would seem that the Senate of the General Assembly is much more divided on the governor's proposal than the House of Delegates, who seem more supportive. One thing is certain, with the secrecy that has been exposed after the 4th public hearing, the Moore Administration has demonstrated that it does not believe in transparency and open deliberations. Both the president of Common Cause, Maryland, and the League of Women Voters, neither of which could be mistaken as a right-wing organization, condemned the way that this commission conducted its business.

Baltimore County's Library Head Removed

Sonia Alcantara-Antoine, the CEO of Baltimore County's Public Library system, was removed from her office as of December 9, 2025. The removal of the CEO was the decision of the Board of Library Trustees, and announced by the chairperson of the board, Yara Cheik. At the point of her termination, Ms. Alcantara-Antoine had an annual salary of \$243,000.

It appears that the firing was largely precipitated by earlier firings, and then rehiring's, of 14 part-time employees in the library system without full transparency to the board of trustees. Critics of the former CEO also point out that she had created several high-salary positions at the central office level, juxtaposed against the firings of low-level employees.

Councilman Julian Jones acknowledged that the firings of the part-time employees were a mistake, but he defended the former CEO for her hard work in the position. It is anticipated that the Board of Trustees will conduct a nationwide search for a replacement.

County to Update Development and Permitting Process

County Executive Kathy Klausmeier announced that the development and permitting process would see several improvements under one umbrella so that a new online platform will make access easier for the development and permitting applications. "We're making the development process simpler and more responsive," stated the County Executive. The new approach, under the title "Baltimore County Builds," is structured around three main pillars: technology modernization, process efficiency and regulatory updates/revisions. When fully launched, users will be able to conduct all of this online.

The technology modernization will use a new portal, featuring two programs so that processing is faster, with shorter wait times and streamlined reviews. The County will also have

an ombudsman to resolve problems in a more timely manner. The first phase will cover plumbing, gas and electrical permits and is expected to launch in late summer 2026.

Under the process efficiency pillar, the County is streamlining the development review procedures. This includes better integration between DPWT and PAI, tracked and monitored response times, and expanded staff to answer phone call and emails.

Finally, Ms. Klausmeier did not fully explain the regulatory updates envisioned by this process. She mentioned recent Council legislation creating artisan districts, but that is a very small part of the total framework of regulatory impacts to development.

Can You Hear it Now?

Recently the GTCC Board received a request for help related to a noise complaint. We wanted to update readers on the procedure for filing a noise complaint and the troubles one resident is experiencing.

Originally, noise complaints were addressed by both the State and the County, but in 2012 the legislature placed all noise enforcement responsibilities in the hands of the County. State legislation still sets the allowable standards for noise levels, measured by decibel levels, and there are many programs available to convert your cell phone to a decibel meter should you choose to do so.

The State regulations warn that noise levels emanating from a construction site or demolition site may not exceed 90 dBA during the day. Those regulations also state that the regulations do not apply to household tools, lawn care tools, blasting or quarrying operations, aircraft, rapid rail and similar operations during the daytime hours. Typical commercial operations are permitted under the State statute to have daytime decibel levels of 67 dBA or nighttime (after 10 PM) levels of no more than 62 dBA. For residentially zoned receiving land uses, the decibel limits are 65 dBA during the day and 55 dBA during the night, after 10 PM. In a case where a commercial property is impacting a residential property, the residential “receiving” land is the level to be considered.

If the noise impact is one residential property’s impact on another residence, the complaint should be registered with Baltimore County Police, notifying the non-emergency number of 887-2222. When the officer responds, if he or she believes a noise violation has occurred, the first step is to issue a verbal warning to the offending party. Subsequent offenses will then be documented, and a civil or criminal citation can be issued based on the officer’s judgement. When three or more reports are filed on the same address within a 60-day period, the owner/landlord will be issued a citation for each subsequent offense, but the owner/landlord must be sent a written notification by the Police prior to any enforcement action.

For commercial or industrial violations that impact residential properties, we were told by the Police at two different levels that the complainant should contact Code Enforcement of the Department of Permits, Approvals & Inspections. A Code Enforcement Inspector will then be

assigned and if a violation is determined, the offending party would appear before Code Enforcement Court. However, in actual practice a complaint with Code Enforcement did no result in a violation notice. We will keep our readers informed when we receive an explanation from Code Enforcement.

Governor Moore Keeps On “Keeping On”

Governor Wes Moore told a gathering of State and County officials on December 12th that he does not plan to raise State taxes in the coming legislative session. According to Maryland Matters, he also went off script to talk about one issue- housing. Maryland Matter stated that “the governor and the association (MACO) were at odds in the 2025 legislative session over an administration bill that was aimed at sparking construction of affordable housing...”.

Moore was unsuccessful in that 2025 push, but he intends to bring the bill back in 2026. In contrast, several local officials from around the State complained that there have been few substantive talks with the Department of Housing and Community Development. Despite the disagreement with some local officials, Moore told his audience that “I’m not going to stop pushing this housing,” according to Maryland Matters.

Baltimore County Police Involved Shooting in Essex

The Maryland Attorney General’s Independent Investigations Division recently identified four police officers who were involved in a fatal shooting of an armed man in the Essex area. All of the four officers had between one and two years of service in the Police Department, and those officers have been placed on administrative leave pending the outcome of the investigation.

According to the investigation, those four officers responded to a reported stabbing of a female victim, and they encountered a male who was armed and menacing the officers before they opened fire. Both the male and the female victim were taken to the hospital after the incident, but the male was pronounced dead at the hospital.

Other fatal police shootings in the County include two incidents in Dundalk and one incident in Arbutus during this year.

Rising Energy Costs Demand Action

Mary Kane, the president and CEO of the Maryland Chamber of Commerce, recently wrote an opinion piece in the Baltimore Sun with the same title as this article. Ms. Kane states that “...Marylanders are feeling the strain of higher energy costs. And those costs don’t just stretch monthly budgets- they influence where people choose to live, where employers choose to invest and how competitive our state can be.” She points out that older power plants are being retired faster than new ones can come online, and that while many see renewable energy as a key

part of this state's future, there are so many obstacles, including permitting backlogs, construction challenges, financing difficulties or grid interconnection waits, that supply continues to tighten while prices rise.

Ms. Kane states that Maryland must be realistic about maintaining a reliable and affordable energy grid in the immediate future. Renewables cannot meet our needs in the immediate future, and natural gas-powered electricity must remain a necessary source because of its abundance, its reliability, and its ability to stabilize the grid when demand spikes because renewables cannot provide instant demand. Even richly blue New York and Massachusetts are adjusting their renewable-sourced timelines.

Although she was generally supportive of the Moore Administration's attempts to examine energy readiness, she urges Maryland to act with urgency and balance, and she believes we can build a system that supports affordability and strengthens the state. She also failed to mention Governor Moore's veto of SB 116, a bill that would have authorized a half a million-dollar study of the impact of data centers on Maryland's economy and energy readiness. That bill had it been signed into law, and the legislature overturned the Governor's veto, will give the legislature additional facts to judge the impact to our electric grid.

Shopping Center to get Facelift

That shopping center in the 2000 block of York Road, at the southeast corner of Belfast Road, is under new ownership and will be undergoing a facelift. The popular Maria's Carryout is among the most well-known tenants in that center, and among plans for the remainder of the property is the possibility of a fast-food drive-thru at the northern end of the property. The owner of the center, Axios York, LLC, has not indicated that a tenant for the fast-food site has made a commitment yet, and given that the Sonic on the opposite corner is now closed, it remains to be seen whether a fast-food tenant would find the location attractive. As was the case with the Sonic, some neighbors on Belfast Road are unhappy with the prospects of added traffic on Belfast Road but given that the property has a commercial zoning classification that allows a drive-thru, the prospects of discouraging the use are limited.

Please Join Us for the Next General Meeting on January 14th!!

We will hear from Officer Bull of the Cockeysville Precinct, and an extended Question and Answer session with Councilman Izzy Patoka, a candidate in the Democratic Primary for County Executive, as well as All the Latest News impacting Our Area.

Councilman Patoka's Proposal Will Prove Controversial

At the December 15th session of the County Council, Councilman Izzy Patoka introduced two bills that may be controversial. The first bill would establish an Office of Immigrant Affairs within the County Executive's office. That office would distribute assistance to immigrants, provide counseling and advocate on behalf of the County's immigrant community. The second bill would prohibit any County employee, department or agency or department contractor from sharing information about an immigrant or his/her status. According to the Baltimore Banner, it does not appear that either of Patoka's proposals would change the County's current Memorandum of Understanding with ICE concerning the corrections department from holding an individual who has an immigration detainer, but the Banner only reviewed a draft copy of the legislation and did not circulate the drafts to attorneys for legal analysis.

Patoka stated the motivation behind these proposals is his faith. "One of the core tenets of my faith is to welcome the stranger," Patoka declared at the Council meeting. The public will be able to voice its opinions on the bills at two worksessions, one on January 13, and a second on January 27.

Special Session Results in Override of Gov. Moore's Vetoes

At its special session on December 16th, the Maryland Legislature overrode many bills that had previously been vetoed by Governor Moore. Moore felt that these bills were too costly at a time when Maryland is faced with budget shortfalls, but the Legislature felt otherwise.

One veto override that passed along strict party lines was a bill to study reparations to victims and families of black victims during the period 1877 to 1965. The bill establishes a Reparations Commission that will make its recommendations to the legislature. Those recommendations are not scheduled to be released until after the 2026 election. Every Democrat who attended the special session voted to override the governor's veto on this bill.

Three of the overrides were related to climate and energy sufficiency. The first will establish an energy planning office, while another provided funds to study the growing data center industry and its impact on the electric grid in Maryland, and the final one will analyze the total cost of climate change in Maryland. "The legislature is sending a clear message that protecting ratepayers can't wait," stated Democratic Senator Katie Fry Hester, who sponsored two of the three bills at the initial, regular session.

The data center study seems long overdue given the controversies that have been sparked by proposed electric transmission lines in Baltimore and Carroll Counties, and it was sponsored by both a Democrat and a Republican. However, the other two overrides appear to perpetuate the green energy agenda that have spiked consumer's costs in this State.

Calendar of Events (All events at Maryland State Fairgrounds)

1. January 3,4- Gem Show, Exhibition Hall, 9AM to 4PM
2. January 10- Maryland's Biggest Wedding Expo, Exhibition Hall, 11AM to 4 PM
3. January 16-19- Jurassic Quest, Cow Palace
January 16, 1PM-8PM; January 17, 8 AM-8 PM
January 18, 9 AM-8 PM; January 19, 9 AM- 4 PM
4. January 23-25- World Pet Expo, Cow Palace, January 23, 2 PM-8 PM.
January 24, 10 AM- 7 PM; January 25, 10 AM- 5 PM
5. February 5-8- Chesapeake Bay Boat Show, Cow Palace, February 5, 12 PM to 6 PM (VIP) ; February 6, 10 AM-6 PM; February 7, 10 AM to 7 PM; February 8, 10 AM to 4 PM.
6. February 28- Maryland Spicy Con, "All things HOT" Exhibition Hall , 12 PM to 5 PM