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***Please note, our March general meeting will be on March 18th.
We are moving the date for one time, only, because the County
Executive is holding the Budget Town Hall for District 3 on 3/11/26***

Vice President's Message

Deception

From the very first time we heard Governor Wes Moore speak about redrawing Maryland's congressional district map, he used the term "a fair map" as the desired reason for embarking on that process outside of the regular, every ten-year, cycle that we have traditionally followed. He also repeated that term, "a fair map," so many times that I lost track of the number times that he used the term.

Now a dictionary definition of the word "fair" would be along the lines of "free from favor toward either or any side," and Maryland's current congressional map, which features seven safe Democrat districts and one Republican district, does not fit the dictionary definition of fair. But Governor Moore has a novel definition of fair. Maryland's current voter registration breakdown shows 51.75 % registered Democrats, 23.9% registered Republicans and the remainder, 24.3%, registered as independents or third-party voters. Under the dictionary definition of "fair," Maryland should have two congressional districts that tilt Republican, two districts that could swing either way, reflecting independents' preferences, and four clearly Democratic districts.

When Governor Moore created the Congressional Redistricting Commission, he appointed four Democrats to the commission and one Republican. Again, where was the "fairness" in that sort of partisan breakdown.

The map this commission recommended to the Maryland General Assembly created eight districts that were all comfortably aligned to the Democratic party, including an Eastern Shore district that traveled across the Chesapeake Bay and included part of Anne Arundel County. Prior court rulings have cautioned against spanning a large body of water, like the Bay, when

creating an election district, but that did not stop this commission in its quest for fairness, as interpreted by Governor Moore.

So far, the map has hit a difficult juncture in its road to final approval because Senate President, Bill Ferguson, along with many individual senators, have expressed an unwillingness to bring the map up for a vote. Ferguson is worried that the map will not survive a challenge in court. Recently the pressure is being applied on a national level. Congress Minority Leader, Hakeem Jefferies, paid a visit to Senator Ferguson, and Jefferies made his case on why the senate should take up a vote on the map.

Our House of Delegates chamber in the Maryland General Assembly did not share Ferguson's concerns, and they approved the map along a party line basis. Here locally, Delegates Guyton (Dist. 42 B), Cardin and Stein (Dist. 11) all voted in favor of the new map. I guess those three did not care about true fairness, or maybe they share the same skewed understanding of fairness that our Governor advocates.

I won't forget about this on election day in November, will you?

Eric Rockel

County Council Approves Several Measures Concerning Immigration

As the national dialogue over immigration enforcement grows louder and more distressing, the Baltimore County Council has approved several pieces of legislation on the subject. Bill 97-25, sponsored by Councilmen Patoka, Jones and Young created an Office of Immigrant Affairs in the County. Prior to the bill, dealing with immigrant affairs issues was managed by a three-person staff operating out of the Executive Office. With the passage of this law there will be a distinct funding source for the office, and an increase in the number of county employees working to address immigration matters. The second bill, Bill 98-25, sponsored by Councilmen Patoka and Jones, is called the "Protections for Non-U.S. Citizens Act." That bill prohibits the County from discriminating based upon citizenship status. This second measure limits employees, agents, or officers of the County from assisting the federal government in investigation or enforcement of immigration laws under certain circumstances. Both of these measures passed the Council on purely a partisan vote. Councilmen Young, Patoka, Ertel and Jones all voted for these two bills, but Councilmen Marks, Kach and Crandell did not.

A third bill, Bill 14-26, was introduced on an emergency basis by County Executive Klausmeier, and it was sponsored by Councilmen Jones, Patoka, Ertel and Young. This legislation grew out of a rumor that space at 201 International Circle, in Hunt Valley, was being leased by the Federal government, and it would be turned into a detention center. A report from WIRED magazine lent some credence to this rumor. Yet, the Department of Homeland Security would neither confirm or deny the validity of the rumor at first, and eventually it was reported that the office space would be used for administrative and legal personnel. Bill 14-26 prohibits a detention center within the permissible uses in the zoning regulations, and it passed the Council by a 6-0 vote, with Councilman Crandell being absent from the emergency session.

Councilman Wade Kach said he was very upset by some of the testimony associated with Bill 14-26, and he went on to say that “seems to me that some of the testimony is very one-sided, and the testimony ignores the fact that we have a real problem in this country in that we have dangerous people...”. County Executive Klausmeier’s statement following the vote, said in part, “protecting the safety, dignity, and the rights of our communities is our top priority. ... The presence of such facilities can disrupt local businesses, strain public safety resources, and create significant disruption for surrounding communities.”

A fourth bill, Bill 18-26, sponsored by Councilman Patoka would prohibit all law enforcement personnel from wearing a mask in the performance of their duties, except for a few limited circumstances, and it would require all personnel to display appropriate identification, such as badges. The bill would have no impact on whether federal officers wear masks, or not, and Councilman Crandell questioned why even introduce such a bill when there have been no complaints about local law enforcement officers wearing face masks. For Councilman Crandell, and in his opinion, the proposal is an election year gimmick to garner support for the bill’s sponsor, who is running for the County Executive’s position. Only one citizen spoke on this bill during the public testimony for the bill, and there will be a second work session to examine the bill.

Rising Utility Bills

As Marylanders grapple with high energy bills, the Maryland Freedom Caucus of the Maryland Republican Party point to “radical energy policies” coming out of Annapolis as a cause of part of the higher costs. The Caucus points out five specific State actions that have exacerbated costs. An objective assessment of these five specific factors indicates that it is not just the legislature that has enacted these five specific actions, but private non-profits, such as the Sierra Club, who have sued to enforce regulations related to the Clean Air Act, which have contributed to the overall cost of energy within the state.

The Freedom Caucus points to the EmPower Maryland, enacted in 2008, as one of the factors causing costs to rise. Under that law, Maryland’s five largest electric utilities charge their customers a variable fee that is then available to be used by households and businesses to save on energy through energy audits, weatherization and energy efficient systems and appliances. Secondly, the Freedom Caucus blames the Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022, which by even objective standards is one of the most ambitious climate change laws in the country. That law seeks to reduce greenhouse gases by 60% in 2031 compared to 2006-baseline. That act dedicates funding to climate-friendly programs and requires that drastic changes take place in the vehicles that you drive, the heating and cooling plants that your homes and offices use, and in the power plants that generate energy around the state. The Freedom Caucus also criticizes the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, which is a voluntary regional emission reduction program entered into by ten states, including Maryland. These participating states set a limit on CO2 emissions, and they require facilities that emit CO2 to buy allowances equal to their emissions. Maryland has used a portion of the funds generated by this initiative to provide rebates to local customers of these utilities. However, the total rebates are far less than the total amounts collected by this initiative. Finally, the Freedom Caucus believes the last four coal-powered electric generation plants that were closed in the state have exacerbated consumer costs because supply has been

reduced. These four coal-powered plants were located in Allegheny, Prince Georges, Charles and Montgomery Counties. Plus, the Brandon Shores generating plant is scheduled to close in the future.

So, what are the estimated costs associated with the factors cited above? Well, the Freedom Caucus took a “theoretical” bill of \$541.51 per month. They estimated that the EmPower Maryland Act contributed \$33.06 to the bill. The Climate Solutions Now Act accounted for \$50.08. RGGI added \$25.24 to the bill, and the power plant closures, plus future closure of Brandon Shores accounted for \$47.00. In total that amounts to over \$155.00 on this theoretical bill. That is over 28% of the bill being the result of legislation and litigation supporting green energy.

Education News and Notes

School Superintendent, Dr. Myriam Rogers presented a \$2.49 billion operating budget proposal for the 2027 Fiscal Year. She declared that the proposal would maintain strategic investments, move the school system forward and bolster student success.

This proposed budget represents a \$57.3 million increase over the current fiscal year budget (a 2.8 percent increase), and it includes the projected increase of \$19.9 million that County Executive Klausmeier has pledged for the system. Salary increases for all staff have been prioritized as part of this budget proposal.

A Board of Education public hearing on the proposed budget was held in January, and the Board held two budget work sessions on the budget. In the last week of February, the Board finally approved the operating budget. However, Dr. Rogers acknowledged that the funding provided in this budget may lead to incrementally larger classroom sizes, and she also indicated that teaching and administrative personnel would be reduced because of funding limitations. The adopted budget will now go to the county executive for approval, as well as final approval by the County Council.

In an unexpected move following the budget approval, Dr. Rogers announced she would be retiring from her position as superintendent as of July 1, 2026. Rogers started her career as a teacher in Baltimore County schools, and she will end that career as superintendent. The reason suggested that she wishes to retire and spend more time with her family including her 2 year-old grandchild.

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Stella Wong, a 9th grader at Dulaney High School, has been selected as Baltimore County’s Public Schools “Young Soloist” for 2026. As winner of the Young Soloist award, Ms. Wong will perform the “Violin Concerto in E Minor,” by Mendelssohn, at a March 27 concert at the Meyerhoff Symphony Hall, accompanied by members of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra.

Wong has played the violin since the age of seven, and she joined the Baltimore Symphony Youth Orchestra, String Orchestra in the fourth grade. She has competed in many youth competitions prior to winning the current award, and in 2023 she won first place in the state-level OPUS Music Competition. CONGRATULATIONS Stella!

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The quest to allow the inspector general of Baltimore County to review the activities of Baltimore County Public Schools may be losing some momentum, according to Amy Adams, Baltimore County Parent and Student Coalition. The County Council approved the measure by a 6 to 1 vote previously, and now the General Assembly must pass the measure before it becomes official. Ms. Adams indicates that when the Baltimore County delegation heard the matter, many residents turned out in support of the change. Yet a recent hearing among Baltimore County’s state senators drew only three members of the delegation, and she is worried that behind the scenes pressure is being applied to discourage passage of the measure. If you support this measure, please email your state senator and delegates to voice support.

Moore Administration Attempts to Further Corrode Local Zoning Controls

Known as the “Starter and Silver Homes Act of 2026,” House Bill 239 had its first committee hearing before the Economic Matters Committee. This bill would replace certain local laws that are in effect regarding minimal and maximum lot size, building setbacks and type of home to be constructed in the future by Maryland state standards that may be at odds with county standards. For example, in Baltimore County zoning regulations, there are several zoning classifications that require a minimum lot size greater than 10,000 square feet. Under HB 239, the largest lot size that can be imposed after the passage of this act would be no more than 5,000 square feet. So theoretically under this bill, if enacted, a lot with an existing home located on it could be subdivided into three, 5,000 square foot lots, if that original lot contained 15,000 square feet. A companion part of this legislation states that front yard and rear yard building setbacks will be reduced to no more than 10 feet, and the bill also allows for townhomes to be located in areas zoned for only single-family homes. Again, theoretically, a single-family lot with an existing single-family home on it could be subdivided into three lots, and the two newly created lots could support two townhomes under this legislation.

Since this bill was introduced at the behest and with the support of the governor, there were many supporters who testified in favor of the bill. However, unlike some past bills that had the governor’s support, there were many opponents of the bill who also testified. Officials from Prince George’s and Montgomery Counties, including Montgomery County Executive Marc Elrich, testified against the bill. From their perspective, those counties already are active in promoting the development of “affordable housing”, and this bill would actually undo some of their efforts. Other opponents pointed out that just a few years ago the State was genuinely concerned about storm water runoff, including implementing the so-called “rain tax” at one point. If this bill became law, one of the consequences would be an increase in impervious areas on all lots, which would exacerbate the runoff situation. Housing Secretary Jake Day tried to downplay the impact of that runoff, but his testimony was not considered creditable by many of

the opponents. Many of the smaller municipalities around the state also opposed this bill, and one delegate reported that he has received more negative comments about the bill than any bill in recent memory.

At this point the bill is still being evaluated by the Economic Matters Committee, but the governor's influence is great, and the public will have to wait to see the bill's outcome. If you are concerned, please email your legislators and ask them to vote against the bill.

County Council Begins Evaluating Repeal of Pension Bill

The County Council is considering whether to repeal legislation passed in 2024 that allows Council members who retire to have their pensions recalculated based on future salary increases. The original bill, sponsored by Councilman Wade Kach, and it allowed for future pension calculations to include future salary bumps for the Council. The Maryland General Assembly currently uses that procedure. At the time of the bill's passage in 2024, the measure did not seem to be overly generous, but the confluence of other events has brought the measure to be viewed differently.

When voters approved the referendum measure that expanded the size of the Council from seven districts to nine districts, the measure also carried a provision that stated the Council members job would be considered a full-time position rather than a part-time position. Secondly, the independent Personnel and Salary Advisory Board recommended that council members' salaries be increased from \$69,000 per annum to \$140,000 per annum. The board's recommendation has not yet been approved by the Council, and Councilman Kach stated that if he knew that the board would have recommended such a sizable increase, he would have never proposed the legislation passed in 2024.

County Executive candidate Nick Stewart and others have criticized the Council regarding this matter, pointing out that, under the law passed in 2024, if council salaries rise to \$140,000, the pensions of two outgoing councilmen not seeking re-election could more than double. Both Councilman Kach and Councilman Crandell indicated they never contemplated that the pension increase could potentially be so large, and there seems to be overwhelming sentiment to undo the 2024 legislation.

What Happens in the City May Not Stay in the City

The Office of Inspector General in any jurisdiction is charged with seeking out waste, fraud, and abuse in that jurisdiction. Not all localities have an Office of Inspector General, but an on-going dispute happening in Baltimore City may have ramifications for all such offices in the State of Maryland. Baltimore City's Inspector General, Mercedes Cummings, is currently suing the office of the Mayor of Baltimore because Mayor Brandon Scott has refused to honor a request for records. The lawsuit says that the city has refused turn over information outlined in some subpoenas, and the city has tried to claim that these requests are subject to the limitations

of the Maryland Public Information Act. Cummings further contends that the city charter expressly authorizes her to issue subpoenas in seeking information.

In response Mayor Scott claims that he has information from the Maryland Office of Attorney General that supports his position, but the Attorney General's Office has been clear that it did not issue a legal opinion on the topic, rather it just forwarded sections of the Public Information Act to the city.

However, if Ms. Cummings loses her fight in court, that ruling could have implications for the Baltimore County Office of Inspector General, as well as other offices around the state. Such a ruling could undermine the independence and integrity of any inspector general.

A Listing of Candidates Who will Run in the Primaries

1.) Second Congressional District

- a.) John Olszewski, Jr. (D)
- b.) Clint Spellman, Jr. (D)
- c.) Nnabu Eze (R)
- d.) Dave Wallace (R)

2. State Senate

- a.) 11th District – Shelly Hettleman (D)
- b.) 42nd District- Paul Henderson (D), Eric Heyssel (D); Paul Konka (D) Stephanie Popescu (D); Kevin Ford (R) Matt Fox (R); Adam Wood (R)

3.) House of Delegates

District 11B- Jon Cardin (D)
Dana Stein (D); John Gordon (R)

District 42 A- Jyoti Mohan (D); Alex Harlan (R)
Dan Katz (R); Charles Murphy III (R)

District 42B- Michele Guyton (D)
Jeff McDonald (R)
Larry Novak (R)

4.) County Executive

Julian Jones (D); Izzy Patoka (D)
Pat Young (D); Mansoor Shams (D)
Nick Stewart (D); Patrick Dyer (R)
Kimberley Stansbury (R)

County Council, District 5 (formerly D. 3)

Nino Mangione (R)
Theaux Le Gardeur (R)
Shawan McIntosh (D)

The following candidate is registered as an independent candidate for County Executive, and he will only run in the general election, not the primaries: Rob Daniels

Due to the County Executive's Budget Town Hall Meeting on March 11, the next GTCC General Meeting will be held on March 18th, at 7 PM in the Vista Room at the Maryland State Fairgrounds.

Our agenda for the March 18th meeting will include a chance to learn about new Precinct 7 (Cockeysville) Police Captain- Chad Miller- , hear from four candidates for office: Baltimore County State's Attorney, Scott Shellenberger, two candidates for State Senate, Dist.42,- Kevin Ford and Adam Wood, and a candidate for County Executive, Pat Dyer.

Calendar of Events

- 1.) Gem & Jewelry Show, Maryland State Fair, Exhibition Hall
March 6, 12PM to 6PM; March 7, 10 AM to 6PM; March 8, 11 AM to 5PM
- 2.) Maryland Fire Museum, Family Safety Day – Free Admission- 1301-R York Road, March 7, 10AM to 4PM
- 3.) Cat Show, Maryland State Fair, 4H/Home Arts Bldg. March 14 & 15

