

December 12, 2023 GCCA Meeting DRAFT

Attendees: Dan Wilhelm, Marguerite Raaen, Noel Gregos, Ed Weiler, Pat Corey, Mark Panko, Ida Jenkins, Mary Owens, Barbara Buchanan, Ron Leung

Approval of November Minutes: November minutes were approved.

Accept the November Treasure's Report: There was no change from November. Dan told Noel that he dropped off a couple checks that need depositing. And he said that he will also look for at PayPal for names of the individuals who paid.

Community Updates:

Marguerite said that the website had not been updated for a couple of years and did not include the minutes, Clarion or zoom info for meetings. Marguerite is now driving members to the website which will include any additional information regarding local community affairs. She also said the website is written in a web development language that is pretty much defunct and may need to be converted sometime in the future. She encouraged us to look at it and let her know if anything needs to be updated or changed. Dan is also going to look at the minutes that were sent. They may include the draft as well as the final minutes. It was suggested that the minutes be sent as a PDF.

Ron stated that the two Airbnb houses are still being used for occasional parties which is against their current policy. The response by police is spotty and Airbnb said they will contact owners, but there is no way to know if that is being done.

The subdivision application for the property on Octagon Lane is still on hold by Planning Staff because it is waiting for a payment to start the application process. The Planning staff is aware of the current objections to this proposal by neighbors. WSSC is also involved in road repair after water main breakage.

News from other Groups: East County Citizens Advisory Board (ECCAB):

- Marc Elrich on November 15th conducted a forum at the White Oak Rec Center to collect citizen input for the operating budget. He compared us with Fairfax County and pointed out that the commercial property taxes were higher in Fairfax County and he wanted to try to raise them in Montgomery County where personal and commercial property taxes rates must be the same per state law. This would provide more tax revenue for infrastructure including roads. Governor Wes Moore was also talking about the need to reduce the budget for transportation because income from gas taxes have been reduced due to electric vehicles. Elrich also stated that taxes were down due to the current real estate market. He also said that the developer impact tax was not working because of the large upfront money needed. Currently, this tax is close to \$100,000 before any residential building starts. He stated Municipal Bonds for expansion are not currently viable because of the lack of a constructive tax revenue to float the bonds. He also cited that the Federal Govt. funded \$20 Million a year for the Food Stamp program and Montgomery County adds another \$12 million. He also cited Montgomery County spending \$22,000 per student this year with a historic increase of about 5,000 students each year.
- The December ECCAB Board meeting had a presentation by Brad Stewart from the Montgomery County Economic Development Association discussing high income workers leaving the county being replaced by lower income workers and that the commercial office space vacancy was still increasing, both of which reduce county revenue.

- Vandals apparently flooded the vacant Sears building basement. However, options on the lease are now being discussed because part of the lease agreement was that some percentage of the sales by Sears is now lost. Police also discussed the shortage of officers with District 3 being down 16% and 22% in District 4. They stated that they are making up for the shortage with overtime which provides a minimal operating staff for each shift. There is still a problem recruiting officers and maintaining senior level staff.

Safety:

A major crime investigation is taking place on the Fairdale Road shooting in October where a burglary in progress was reported and an individual was killed. A suspect fled the scene in a car striking a police vehicle and both drivers were transported to the hospital. Suspected second and third persons were also found shot near the site and transported to the hospital. The residence wherethis took place in is a suspected drug house. Which is across the street from Fairdale Elementary School. AR-15 rifles were used in the shootings and an assault rifle was also found the next day discarded in a dumpster at the school. After the shooting at Best Wings Restaurant in White Oak where the victim was killed, video searches resulted in an arrest. Commander McBain discussed the bomb threats at Springbrook High School.

Going Business:

Proposals for modification of the Property Tax Credit Bill for residents over 65 and military retirees is being considered that would contain income restrictions. Currently residents living for 40 years in same residence received a 20% discount of property taxes for 5 years. Another amendment is being considered to reduce the minimum number of parking spots near Metro Rail, Purple Line and BRT Stations.

- Burtonsville Crossing: Showing lots of progress.
- Viva White Oak. The Viva White Oak team is still updating their agreement based upon the due diligence effort that just completed. Expectations are that development plans will be presented to Park and Planning early next year. The first plan will address transportation.
- White Oak Medical Center is proposing a second medical office building with parking. The hospital, as well as the State, has a shortage of beds and several solutions have been debated and are being evaluated by the commission.
- NH BRT Study: Nothing new on the current New Hampshire BRT.
- Transit Reimaging Study. No update since Dan sent in letter last month.
- Fairland Master Plan. Was approved by the Council.

Updates to Growth and Infrastructure Policy is being formulated by the Planning Staff.

Submitted by Pat Corey.