

## **Minutes LABQUEST Meeting of Wednesday, November 13, 2024**

**Announcement: The next in-person LABQUEST meeting will be Wednesday, December 11, 2024 at 12:30 in the trailer.**

The LABQUEST meeting was held in-person on Wednesday, November 13, 2024 beginning at 12:35p.m. Betsy Bretz welcomed everyone and asked them to introduce themselves. Rob Richardson helped facilitate the meeting. Kristin Mink, our 5th district council member, was in attendance.

### **Amenities**

#### **Viva White Oak (VWO)**

Carlos Bonner, with MCB, reported that the Council on Tuesday, November 12 approved the provision that continues the exemption from impact taxes for Qualified Opportunity Zones (QOZ). In our area of the county, that includes most of the area between Cherry Hill Rd, New Hampshire Ave, US29 and the County line (Viva is in that area). Councilmember Mink indicated that census tracts were also added to designate the QOZs should the federal program expire. She was able to have the council add the census tract on the west side of New Hampshire Avenue that would cover Hillandale Gateway and Transit Union properties.

MCB attended the Friends of White Oak (FOWO) meeting the evening before on November 12 to inform the community about their plans for Viva White Oak. He reported the meeting was well-attended (well over 100 people) and the project well-received. County Executive Marc Elrich and Councilmember Mink attended that meeting. Marc indicated he was moving forward with the utilizing some structure for a special tax district. MCB has been providing the needed documentation for the Executive to evaluate. Concerns about traffic came up at the FOWO meeting.

Carlos indicated that they have one signed letter of intent from a potential anchor tenant and another letter of intent has been presented to an additional potential anchor tenant. Rob Richardson asked about possible restaurants. Carlos indicated they have a list of restaurants they plan to contact and will be commencing discussions. Rob indicated a desire to have Coastal Flats as one of the restaurants and Carlos said he would add it to their list.

Carlos reported that the review before the Planning Development Review Committee (DRC) is proceeding for the Sketch Plan. The Preliminary Plan has been submitted but not yet accepted as complete by the DRC so that it can start its review. MCB is putting together the additional information requested by the Planning Department.

#### **White Oak Medical Center (WOMC)**

Ada Baklouti, Director, Infection Prevention, was present to administer flu shots to the five people who wanted them.

No other person from the WOMC was present. However, Rob Richardson indicated he had spoken to Rob Jepson at the FOWO meeting the night before about getting together in January to

discuss what can be done to allow the WOMC to add more beds to meet the needs of the community. As reported last month, WOMC is adding 30 beds in December 2024 with patient additions in January. After that addition of 30 beds, WOMC still needs some 60 beds to meet current demand and that demand will increase in the future as Viva and the college start to be occupied.

## Science Report

Charles reported on the following from the November 8 science report:

- FDA, EPA, and other federal agencies are completing “final rule” decisions, which will make it harder for a Trump Administration to change the decision. These are noted in red in the Science Reports.
- FDA has approved EBGLYSS (lebrikizumab-lbkz) from Eli Lilly for the treatment of moderate-to-severe atopic dermatitis (Eczema).
- FDA and EPA have collaborated on the successful EPA registration of the first antimicrobial product to treat pre-harvest agricultural water. This registration marks the first ever approval of a direct treatment for use against foodborne pathogens, such as Salmonella and E. coli, in the agricultural water used to grow produce. Farmers are not *required* to treat their agricultural water, but the treatment can serve as one option to help protect the safety of produce. If they do not treat the water where they know contamination exists, they are much more legally liable.
- One in three US adults has prediabetes but many people do not know they have it.
- FDA has directed the removal of oral (not spray) phenylephrine as an active ingredient that can be used in Over-The-Counter (OTC) drug products for the temporary relief of nasal congestion because they have shown it to be ineffective. Charles is not aware that the FDA has previously directed the removal of any OTC drug for being ineffective.
- In the UK, 354-foot-long wind turbine blades are being installed in 100 turbines that each will provide 14MW of power. The resulting total of 1.4 GW is enough to power 1.2 million homes.
- Black plastic kitchen utensils have been linked to banned toxic substances and therefore he suggested discarding ones you may have.

Charles also suggested that LABQUEST needs to be prepared to support the FDA if the Trump administration follows through with his threats against the work the agency does. FDA cannot lobby but LABQUEST can. It was pointed out that past Republican administrations have appointed good and knowledgeable administrators. Jonathan Genn suggested that we act now to be prepared. Councilmember Mink indicated the county will want to protect jobs at FDA, NOAA, NIH, NIST and other federal offices in the county. We would surely need to work with the county, state, congressional reps plus big pharma in a lobbying effort. FDA regulation is most often wanted by pharma because it provides credibility for their marketing claims and shields them to some degree from liability claims. Charles also pointed out that much of the FDA funding for the regulatory approval of drugs and devices comes from user fees.

## **We Achieve**

Daphne Pallozzi reported they are painting and making other improvements to the building. She also reported that children from the Silver Oaks Coop are using the back part of the building, which many years ago was a public-school building.

## **Government**

### **FDA and GSA**

Andrew Dempster, FDA, reported the following:

- The number of people working on-site remains unchanged since last month.
- They can accommodate more employees working on-site, up to a point.

### **Montgomery County.**

Jewru Bandeh, Regional Director, reported that:

- The County Executive is collecting recommendations for items to include in his operating budget submission to the Council next March.
- At the White Oak Town Center, the First Watch restaurant, Dave's Hot Chicken and Starbucks are now open. Jersey Mike's will be opening soon.
- More stores will be opening soon at the Burtonsville Crossing Shopping Center, including Eggspectation, Haraz Coffee House, and MyEyeDr.
- Yesterday the council approved the Growth and Infrastructure Policy and Impact Tax Policy changes.
- Work Force Montgomery is having a job fair on December 3 between 10:00 and 1:00 at the East County Community Rec Center.
- Some 17-18 county agencies are engaged to address problems at the Enclave, including code enforcement, youth problems and eviction of some newly arrived immigrants. The immigrant issue is also occurring at other residential buildings in the area.
- Concerning the Sears site, the AutoZone store will occupy the old auto building. There have been discussions with Transform Co., who acquired all the Sears stores nationally. The State Legislature approved \$2M last spring to help get the site occupied. Transform would like to take advantage of this \$2M.

### **DHCA**

Kristina Ellis, DHCA, reported she is working to get façade improvements for the three buildings in the Hillandale Shopping Center. DHCA has an agreement concerning the building at the intersection with Powder Mill Rd and is close to getting agreements on other buildings. She is concerned that DHCA may not have the funding needed.

Submitted by Dan Wilhelm