

LABQUEST Minutes for Wednesday, December 10, 2025

Announcement: The next in-person LABQUEST meeting will be on Wednesday, January 14, 2026 at 12:30, at the WOMC on the 2nd floor of the Medical Pavilion.

Everyone introduced themselves. Rob Richardson facilitated the meeting. We thanked the WOMC for allowing us to meet in one of their conference rooms. Cicero Salles invited Alan Bower to the meeting. Alan asked to be added to our mailing list, which was agreed.

White Oak Medical Center (WOMC)

Anthony Stahl indicated the following:

- Adventist Healthcare has signed the ahead model that regulates federal insurance. The Maryland Health Services Cost Review Commission (HSCRC) will continue to regulate commercial insurance.
- The Adventist Health Care system received an award from Newsweek for being one of the trustworthy companies in American for 2025. The system also received an award from the Washington Post as a top workplace for 2024 and Top Workplaces for Nursing for 2025 from Energage and Nurses.com
- WOMC has state approval to build out the 8th floor of the pavilion for rehab services.
- WOMC has been able to reduce the average length of stay in the hospital by one day, which is a major accomplishment and translates to increased revenue and better use of staff and facilities.
- The additional 30 beds and other process improvements undertaken since the first part of the year have resulted in the door-to-doctor measure being reduced by 50%. That measure is a crucial process measuring the time in the ER from a patient's arrival to their first assessment by a doctor. It is a key quality metric aiming to improve safety, reduce overcrowding, and speed up care by getting patients seen faster. The beds allow patients to be moved from the ER faster thus freeing up ER staff from needing to continue to treat those patients.
- WOMC still needs an additional 70 beds to accommodate the current demand and will need more in the future to support VWO. Their long-term plans for the site include a second 200 bed tower. They also have county approval to build an outpatient surgical building.
- Parking is still a current problem, especially on Wednesday.

Viva White Oak (VWO)

Rob Richardson talked with Carlos Bonner and Theresa Stegman and learned that MCB has eliminated a layer of management and as such Carlos is no longer with them. Theresa is taking on overseeing the Viva White Oak development. She was unable to attend the meeting due to illness.

The near-term effort is the council hearing on January 13 at 1:30 concerning the Tax Incremental Financing (TIF). The focus is to get the maximum limit approved and then get the council to approve Phase 1 funding. There are multiple issues that need to be discussed relative to subsequent phases, but those can be addressed while MCB is constructing Phase 1. Chris Wilhelm indicated that two council committees will take up the TIF after the hearing: Economic Development and Government Operations & Fiscal Policy.

Science Report

Charles Warr highlighted several items from his December 5 report, including the following:

- A recent study found that microplastics are changing gut bacteria to look the same as colorectal cancer or depression.
- According to the European Environmental Agency, air pollution, extreme temperatures, and toxic chemicals are linked to 20% of cardiac deaths. Also, according to Swedish researchers even short-term exposure to both low and high temperatures increases the risk of death due to heart failure.
- Dark chocolate (>70% cacao, no milk additive) in moderate quantities may actually reduce blood sugar spikes after meals.
- Work is increasing work tempo on the 20-year DC project in boring tunnels. This project will reduce combined sewer and stormwater overflows that, when complete, will reduce overflow events from 77 per year to one or two. This is a very costly project but critical to cleaning up the rivers in the area to the point where swimming will once again be allowed.

GSA

Dan Wilhelm talked with Ed Mooney who is director of the White Oak Campus Federal Research Center. Ed indicated three things.

- First, they had inspected soft spots in the floor of the trailer used by LABQUEST and they concluded the continued use of trailer is unsafe (someone could fall thru the floor). Thus, the floor needs to be replaced but they don't have any funds to make the repairs and are not likely to get them. As a result, we need to identify other meeting places. Also, since LABQUEST is the only group using the trailer, we should get our stuff out before it is damaged due to mold and mildew.
- With the change in government priorities, only certain uses have priority for maintenance funds. That means some of the FRC is not a priority. He must keep reminding his management that the FRC is a campus and funding is needed to maintain all of it.
- The Maryland Office of Economic Development has worked a deal for another organization to acquire part of FRC property adjacent to VWO. Chris Wilhelm indicated that Kristin Mink's office had been contacted and that the new organization will meet with LABQUEST and ECCAB early in the new year. Other than learning this effort is in the works, we have no details. Chris indicated that MCB is aware of this.

FDA

Andrew Dempster indicated more than 4000 people are now working on campus on the peak day of each week. He expects this will grow to some 5000 after the first of the year. FDA is still looking to consolidate people at the campus so they no longer need some of the leased facilities.

Montgomery County

Chris Wilhelm reported that Natali Fani-Gonzalez was elected as the new council president and Marilyn Balcombe the new Vice President. The council also appointed Shebra Evans to fill the temporary council position for one year that was vacated when Gabe Albornoz resigned effective December 1, 2025.

Alan Bower, with the Greater Silver Spring Democratic Club, indicated he had approached the Parks Department about planting two trees as a memorial for Maryland State Senator Ida Ruben and State

Delegate Sheila Hixson. Alan said that the process would be very long and bureaucratic and is wondering if there might be other options.

Submitted by Dan Wilhelm