

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

**The next in-person LABQUEST meeting will be April 10, 2024 at 12:30 in the trailer.**

The LABQUEST meetings were held in-person on Wednesday, March 13, 2024 beginning at 12:40 p.m. Chairperson Betsy Bretz presided. Everyone introduced themselves. Betsy welcomed Jackie Nichols to the meeting as it was her first time attending. She resides at Riderwood and is a retired nurse educator.

### **Amenities Meeting**

#### **Science Report**

Charles Warr indicated that since 1979 he has been interested in how medical science would develop and how that would affect humans. At the time we theorized that the human body would be transformed as much as evolution transformed man from a Neanderthal to the present human. He had an artist draw what the future human might look like. That image shows a much larger brain, along the line of the Asgard race on the Stargate TV show. Charles called the new human by the name Cogito Ergo Sum

Some of the first medical advances envisioned in 1969 are being realized. The FDA recently approved gene therapy for two conditions, one dealing with a liver condition. Experiments are underway that would allow quadriplegic patients to control their computer with their minds.

Charles also noted that FDA had collected data years ago about PFASs. The data showed that PFASs are everywhere – in all our food and in our bodies. As a result, FDA has been able to obtain industry agreement to eliminate PFAS from food packing. Since industry has agreed, FDA doesn't need to issue a regulatory requirement.

Charles indicated that largest airplane ever built is about ready to start flying. It is designed to take spacecraft high in the atmosphere and from there launch them. This will greatly reduce the cost and size of rockets since much of the fuel today is used to reach that altitude. Also, Space X is in advanced testing of their new Starship rocket, the largest ever built.

#### **Viva White Oak**

Carlos Banner indicated they are still targeting March/April 2025 to start construction of the three master planned roads. He also reported that they are searching for a consultant to address innovative Life Science needs.

#### **Transportation**

DOT held a virtual public information meeting on March 12 where they showed three alternatives for enhancing bike lanes along Cherry Hill Rd. The presentation can be found at: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/dot-dtenc/projects/CherryHillRd/index.html>. The three alternatives are:

1. Two-way separated bike lanes on the south side achieved by eliminating an existing eastbound lane
2. Maintain the existing travel lanes while still providing two-way separated bike lanes on the south side – it would provide a buffer between the bike lanes and vehicle lanes.
3. Maintain the existing travel lanes while providing bike lanes for each direction of travel, but it would add buffers between the bike lanes and vehicle lanes.

Everyone agreed that Alternative 1 would severely impact existing traffic and impact Viva White Oak and Montgomery College Planned development.

Dan Wilhelm, Cicero Sallis, and several MCB traffic engineers were on the March 12 call. The MCB engineers are going to start discussing this proposal and improvements that Viva White Oak needs on Cherry Hill Rd. Dan Wilhelm will provide his comments to Carlos; he is looking for a consistent position that will be provided to MC DOT. MC DOT asked for comments by March 29.

### **White Oak Medical Center**

Rob Jepson thanked Charles Warr for the March 8th Science Report which referenced the two awards the WOMC had received: Blue Distinction Specialty Care award by Blue Cross Blue Shield for quality maternal care and Birthing-Friendly award by the US Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. Rob said the WOMC delivered approximately 1800 babies last year.

Rob indicated they are working hard to add the 30 beds on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor. That work includes the actual construction, outfitting the rooms and hiring staff. They are aiming to complete that effort by year end.

### **Hospital Regulation in Maryland**

Rob Richardson raised the issue again about the state limiting the number of beds that hospitals can have. The lack of bed is one reason for a long wait to be admitted and ambulances often operate in a code orange or code red condition. (See the LABQUEST October 11, 2023 minutes for details, including an October 2 council committee worksession on this subject.) After much discussion, the conclusion was that LABQUEST members, as individual citizens, should meet with our state and county representatives to communicate the problem (WOMC will not be involved). Rob is taking the lead to pull together charts that explains the problem.

### **Hillandale Gateway**

Shane Polin reported that construction continues on that facility. He once again pointed out that it will contain a resilience hub that could be used by the public in the event of a prolonged commercial power outage. People will be able to use the facility to charge their portable devices and store medicine, mother's milk and other items that need cold storage. They will have sufficient battery backup to last during a storm cloudy period. Solar panels would recharge the batteries assuming the commercial power remains out for an extended period.

## **We Achieve**

Rob Richardson reminded everyone that Daphne reported at the last meeting that they had run into a roadblock with the county concerning getting approval to install their new sign, which is the same size as the old one. Cicero Salles will look into the issue.

## **Government Meeting**

### **GSA**

Rudy Ramirez represented GSA at the meeting. He indicated that Ed Mooney had been named as the senior GSA representative for the site. They will plant more trees in the spring. They are also planning a “Child to Work” day and a “Bike to Work” day.

### **FDA**

Andrew Dempster reported that he monitors the number of parking spaces used each business day. The peak day so far has is 3500 spaces.

An MCPS science fair will be held at the FDA under the large atrium. Set-up will occur the evening of April 5 and judging will occur on April 6.

Submitted by Dan Wilhelm