

## **LABQUEST Minutes for Wednesday, July 9, 2025**

**Announcement: The next in-person LABQUEST meeting will be Wednesday, August 13, 2025 at 12:30, in the GSA Trailer.**

Betsy Bretz thanked everyone for coming and asked everyone to introduce themselves. Rob Richardson facilitated the remainder of the meeting.

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

Theresa Stegman represented MCB at the meeting since Carlos was on vacation. She reported that the day before, July 8, the council held a second hearing on the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) – they had failed to provide proper notice for the first hearing. David Bramble was one of the two speakers, A member at the LABQUEST meeting commented that his presentation was very good. The other speaker at the council hearing was Barry Wides who also spoke at the first hearing. Barry indicated support for the TIF but again urged that the needed infrastructure for the broader area be provided. After the hearing, the Council voted unanimously to approve the creation of the development and TIF districts. Council president Kate Stewart indicated that the approval of the districts allows the work associated with the financial aspects to get started. That will include a request to the Planning Board to identify projects needed to satisfy the adequate public facilities ordinance (APFO).

Dan Wilhelm noted that he had a document ready to send out to the Planning Staff that identifies the projects he felt are needed to meet the APFO, independent of how they are funded. The projects could be funded by the TIF or through the typical county Capital Improvements Program (CIP). Dan agreed to send the document to Theresa for review. (An aspect of this subject was also covered in the June minutes.)

Theresa indicated that the Planning Board has up to 180 days to respond to the council request but MCB needed the TIF approved much faster. She felt the fastest the council could decide would be October 2025. MCB is waiting to undertake the necessary engineering efforts to get building permits until they are certain the TIF will be approved. MCB needs the approval in a timely manner.

Theresa said she would share some information with LABQUEST. She indicated the TIF could support \$320M long-term but that the initial amount was \$100M, based upon projected early development.

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

Anthony Stahl reported the following:

1. WOMC passed an unannounced survey by the Joint Commission that lasted for three days and was undertaken by four surveyors. The approval means that the WOMC is certified for another three years.
2. WOMC was recognized by Beckers as among hospitals with the lowest rates of Central Line-Associated Blood Infections (CLABSI) – they are within the top 5% nationally.
3. They received the prestigious Medicus Integra award for their physician wellbeing program.
4. The additional beds on the eighth floor have allowed them to reduce ambulance diversions by 50%. Previously, they were diverting ambulances 70% of the time. More ambulances come from PG county than Montgomery County and those from PG County come whether or not they are in diversion.

Dan Wilhelm, Rob Richardson and Peter Myo Khin have a document ready to email to D14, D20 and D21 representatives explaining the situation with hospitals across the state, especially at WOMC. The cover letter asked that they meet with us. The two major issues are the limitation of beds and the overly restrictive state control of hospital budgets. We have been working with Katie Echert and Karman Brown, with whom Anthony put us in touch. There was a lengthy discussion on this when Anthony was asked if he had any update. The following was communicated:

- With the federal government pulling out of the Maryland system at the end of the year, there are wild swings from the state occurring every day as to the way ahead.
- Some 40% of the hospitals across the state are under water financially. More than likely those in Baltimore are doing fine. WOMC is operating with less than a 1% margin, which is not healthy.

After the meeting, we asked Katie and Karman whether we should still send out our email and they confirmed we should.

## **Science Report**

Charles highlighted the following items from his science report, including:

- Stools usually sink to the bottom of the toilet, but it is normal for poop to float every now and then. If most of the stools float, then that is an indication that you are getting enough fiber in your diet.
- TSA has removed the requirement to take off shoes during screening. TSA stated publicly that technology has improved so they could change the rule. However, Charles indicated that technology has not changed. More than likely they just changed their view on this subject.
- While the US is reducing its efforts to remove PFAS from drinking water, Europe continues with its efforts to remove it. WSSC does a good job removing it.
- He showed us a small laser device that can kill fungus under our nails in about three dozen 7-minute exposures, followed by about a month of allowing for natural clearing of nail cloudiness. No nail polish or lacquer can be used during exposure or recovery. A doctor should first be consulted.

## **We Achieve**

Daphine Pallozzi reported that they had renovated the cafeteria to satisfy a quick need and are now using it as an event room. Silver Oak, a child care organization, has been using We Achieve facilities for about half of their needs, and has decided that their entire operation will operate in We Achieve.

## **FDA**

Andrew Demster, FDA, reported that some 5000 people are now back working on campus during the peak of each week. This is somewhat lower due to summer vacations. FDA now has 240 van pools, which is higher than the 180 van pools they had before the pandemic.

## **Montgomery County**

Jewru Bandeh reported the following for the East County Gov't Center.

- The Montgomery College briefed the East County Citizens Advisory Board on June 11 concerning the steps they are required to undertake to select a site for the new east county campus. They also held a community meeting at the ECEC that covered much the same information. The state board of education must approve the site.
- The new fiscal year of the county started on July 1.
- Jewru is compiling a list of projects funded by the state legislature in April that benefits east county.
- There will be a job fair on July 16. The job situation has improved over what it had been with the addition of new businesses.
- The county is evaluating the impact on the county of the passage of the federal Big Beautiful Bill.
- Flash will be extending into Howard County.
- Montgomery County Planning reorganized their three planning divisions: Upcounty, East and West. East County now goes from DC to Howard County and about half way to the northwest county line, so all of the area covered by the East County Gov't Center is now handled by one Planning Division.

Chris Wilhelm indicated that DHCA has reached an agreement with the property owner on Lockwood Dr (next to the self-storage) to participate in the façade improvement program. State funding is being used for this project.

Submitted by Dan Wilhelm