



EAST COUNTY CITIZENS ADVISORY BOARD (ECCAB)

Wednesday March 5, 2025 Meeting Summary

Board Members Present: Fisseha Adugna, LaTonya Brooks, George Brown, Sheala Durant, Rachael Evans, Ken Flemmer, Roberta Goldberg, Metassebia Kefelegn, Peter Myo Khin, Len Newman, Mark Pharaoh, Kimberly Price-Evans, Susan Price, Calandra Tate Moore, and Dan Wilhelm. **Board Members Absent:** Radwan Chowdhury, Tina Oyeniya, and BJ Dawkins.

Present: Councilmember Andrew Friedson, Councilmember Kristin Mink, Capt. Jason Cokinos, Officer Doug Miller, Lt Brandon McCloud, Chris Howe-Smith, Claire Iseli, Andrew Resnick, Erik Copeland, Eileen Finnegan, Rebecca Salmon, and Ed Weiler, Mustafa Mansur.

County Regional Office Staff Present: Jewru Bandeh, Cicero Salles, and Ayanna King.

Welcome and Introductions. The meeting was called to order at 7:10 p.m. by chair Peter Myo Khin. Board members, government officials, and public members introduced themselves.

Approval of Meeting Summary: The summary for the February 5, 2024 meeting was approved without any objections.

Police District 3: Commander Capt. Jason Cokinos gave the following update:

- He reported that the Montgomery County Police District 4 crime trends were the same as District 3.
- For District 3, crimes so far in 2025 are down 19% compared with 2024. There have been no carjackings, and no homicides so far in 2025. Theft of auto parts is still on the rise.
- The department has recommended to the County Executive that the drone program be expanded to White Oak and Germantown. They will not know until March 15 whether the County Executive has included that in his proposed Operating Budget. The Council will make the final decision in May.

Presentation: Councilmember Andrew Friedson gave a presentation on a set of proposed legislation called “More Housing N.O.W.” which he and Councilmember Natali Fani-Gonzalez had introduced. The public hearing is set for March 11th. He provided a handout of his presentation. The six proposed legislative pieces are as follows:

- Zoning Text Amendment 25-02: The ZTA would allow more residential housing types on properties where the existing zoning is R-200 (20,000 sq ft or half acre), R-90 (9000 sq ft

or quarter acre), and R-60 (6000 sq ft). His presentation didn't include R-40 (4000 sq ft) zones, but it was included in the introduced legislation. The amendment adds an optional method of development that requires a 15% workforce housing requirement. The additional housing types are duplexes, triplexes, and small apartment buildings. The properties must be along roads classified as Boulevards and Downtown Streets that have at least a 100-foot master planned right-of-way and at least three built travel lanes. In East Montgomery County that means they would be allowed along US29 (only in the Burnt Mills segment), New Hampshire Ave and Randolph Rd (west of Fairland Rd).

- Workforce Housing Opportunity Fund: This would create a new \$4M countywide fund to incentivize the construction of workforce units.
- ZTA 25-03 Amendment: This ZTA would allow office-to-residential conversion in zones where not currently allowed. It would also provide for expedited approvals for commercial property with a long-term vacancy rate greater than 50%.
- Subdivision Regulation Amendment (SRA) 25-01. This SRA would provide regulations related to ZTA 25-03.
- Bill 2-25E: This bill would establish a payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT) for conversion of high vacancy commercial property to residential use. It would waive property taxes for 25 years, where the housing would have an affordability requirement.
- Budget: This proposes doubling the County's investment via the Housing Initiative Fund (HIP) from \$4M to \$8M. That fund provides assistance toward owning a house.

The Workforce Housing program is based on the county average sales price of a over \$1M for single family detached houses, which means a family needs to have an annual income exceeding \$340K. The Workforce Housing program is targeted for individuals earning up to 120% of the area median income (AMI), which for a family of two is \$148K.

The presentation also contained a chart showing that 5% of the middle-income residents are leaving the county or not locating here. That number is 7% for Howard County, 3% for Fairfax County and 3% for PG County.

Eileen Finnegan pointed out that some sections of New Hampshire Ave., where the map showed possible locations for the new housing types could go, are actually service roads, not thru travel lanes. Councilmember Friedson indicated they would not be allowed in sections with service roads.

Dan Wilhelm asked about assembling multiple properties since the ZTA didn't address this issue. The question was focused on using such an assembly to reach into residential communities; it is not an issue along the targeted roads. Councilmember Friedson indicated the lawyers felt assemblage would not be allowed to reach into residential communities in that the units must face the roads where the new unit types are allowed.

LaTonya Brooks pointed out that families with children don't want to live on major roads which would reduce the percentage of families willing to live in the multi-unit buildings.

ECCAB Planning and Economic Development Committee Report: Dan Wilhelm, Chair reported that the committee met on February 10. The Planning Department gave a presentation on the development review process. The Planning Department will be starting a community planning academy starting this summer which will provide a similar education to what we were given.

Dan also reported that the Transportation Department will be making two presentations at the meeting on March 10. One presentation will address Transportation Management Districts, and the other presentation will be an update on BRT studies for US29 Phase 2 and New Hampshire Ave.

ECCAB Quality of Life/Services Committee Report: Mark Pharaoh, Chair reported that the February 12th Quality of Life Committee meeting had been cancelled due to the weather. He indicated the March 12th meeting will be a presentation concerning the county's response to immigration enforcement activities/ICE Raids.

Jewru Bandeh, East County Regional Director reported the following:

- The proposed operating budget will be presented by the County Executive to the Council on March 15th.
- Amazon Fresh is coming to the White Oak Town Center, with a late March launch date.
- The renovation of the Domain Fitness & Performance center at the Burtonsville Crossing Center is progressing.
- Additional retail establishments in the region may be opening in March and April

Councilmember Kristin Mink reported that the council hearing on her Bill 5-25 is scheduled for March 18. That Bill would impose a \$20K tax when a permit is required to demolish a residential building. This would normally occur when a larger house is going to be constructed. An exception would be allowed where the owner would continue to live at the address.

Council staff Chris Howe-Smith reported that Councilmember Glass is tracking actions being taken by the Trump administration and is in close contact with the Maryland congressional delegation. A handout was provided that identified multiple state and county web sites that provide resources for federal workers in six assistance categories (unemployment, housing, food, job, utility, and healthcare). This is an off year for the CIP so there are few additions or amendments. One CIP change that was tentatively approved by the T&E Committee is to extend the US29 BRT to Howard County, with that county providing the funding. The council approved Executive Regulation 17-23AM, Building Energy Performance Standards.

Erik Copeland, with the Recreation Department, reported:

- There is a Recreation Job Fair at the White Oak Community Rec Center on March 22.
- Strathmore is having free music concerts at the Good Hope Rec Center on April 12, May 10, and June 14.
- County students can choose a free prom dress, suit, shoes or accessories at the Praisner CRC on April 5.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 8:55 pm.