



## **EAST COUNTY CITIZENS ADVISORY BOARD (ECCAB)**

### **Wednesday September 4, 2024 Meeting Summary**

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

**Guests Present:** **Sophie Aldrich**, Sharon Brown, Acting 3District Commander Jason Cokinos, Eric Copland, Eileen Finnegan, Ken Jones, Charlotte Kern, Peter Lowet, Rob Richardson, Margie Goergen-Rood, Ed Weiler and Chris Wilhelm.

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

**Welcome and Introductions:** The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by Chair Peter Myo Khin. Board members, government officials, and public members introduced themselves. Jewru Bandeh welcomed new board members BJ Dawkins and Tina Oyenya.

**Approval of Meeting Summary:** The meeting summary for the June 5, 2024 meeting was approved with no objections.

**Police Report.** Acting MCPD/3District Acting Commander Jason Cokinos introduced himself as the new Commander for Police District 3. He thanked the community for being engaged, which is important to have effective policing. He indicated the following:

- Violent crime is down. There have been three homicides this year compared with 10 last year, Shootings are down 50%.
- The 3<sup>rd</sup> District is working to intercept people who have guns illegally.
- The 3<sup>rd</sup> District is working on quality of life issues: retail burglary, car thefts, and assaults (which have increased). They have increased checks on businesses (stopping in to say “hi” and determining if there are any issues), increased patrols, and traffic/parking issues.
- He encouraged everyone to call 911 when they observe something suspicious.
- The county continues to be short of officers. The 20% signing bonuses is helping. A new academy class starts next week.
- In response to a question from Eileen Finnegan, he will look into getting a report on District 3 crimes out to the public faster than the county-wide report. She pointed out that it will help citizens know what is going on so they can report something they see that could help the police.
- He was responsible for getting the drone program started. The Police Department is

planning to expand it throughout District 3 and countywide. Presently, the county has the largest drone program in the country.

**Presentation/Discussion:** Richard Madaleno, Montgomery County Chief Administrative Officer, made a presentation and answered questions:

- He indicated that all county employees in the Executive Branch, except three, report to him.
- The Executive Branch includes libraries and the Department of Health & Social Services, which is not the situation in most other counties in the country. MCPS boundaries follow county boundaries in Maryland, which is not the situation in most states. Note: MCPS, Montgomery College and MNCPPC are not part of the County Government (personnel do not report to Richard) but they do get most of their funding from the county.
- The county has a AAA bond rating which means our interest rates are the lowest available. The County must have a balanced budget each year.
- He indicated that County Executive Elrich wants the development to occur in East County and they are having discussions with MCB Real Estate concerning Viva White Oak. He also supports Montgomery College opening a fourth campus in east county, supports expanded Flash/BRT service and increasing Ride On service. He noted that Dan Wilhelm had indicated the ECCAB's support for BRT along Randolph Road with connections to Viva White Oak, the college and hospital.

Roberta Goldberg indicated the ECCAB's position that affordable housing needs to be balanced throughout the county. With the large amount of market-rate affordable housing already in east county, this area doesn't need more affordable housing. That resulted in a discussion about the Planning Board proposal for attainable housing that is now being considered by the council. The proposal is to change the zoning for about 82% of the single-family housing in the county so that any individual house can be converted to two, three, or four units. Richard indicated that the Executive has concerns about the proposal. Peter Myo Khin said he personally likes the idea but their location needs to be controlled. Dan Wilhelm indicated that the county doesn't actually build housing (and commercial) so property owners/developers decide where and what to build as allowed by the zone. Under attainable housing, the multiple units will often be in the same building. Under that scenario, development would be allowed "by right" so only a building permit is required – without review by the Planning Department, or citizens. Richard noted that the council is holding listening sessions around the county. The one in east county, he said, is September 17 and we should voice our position as individuals (not as part of ECCAB).

There was a question about the Enclave in White Oak. Richard indicated that various departments in the county and Councilmember Mink are there almost every day to address issues. It was stated that the Enclave needs some \$100M worth of repairs and with such a high cost that one possible solution is to demolish them and building something new.

There was a question about Burnt Mills ES. There is a lack of resources for the large number of non-English speaking students who attend the school, which affects students, school wide. This is apparently a major issue with many Burnt Mills ES families.

**Election of ECCAB Officers.** The ECCAB board members held elections first for the four Board Officers and then for the chairmanship of the two committees. In all cases, there was only one candidate nominated and then elected. The people elected are:

- ECCAB Chair: Peter Myo Khin
- ECCAB Vice Chair: Radwan Chowdhury
- ECCAB Parliamentarian: Fisseha Adugna
- ECCB Secretary: Dan Wilhelm

The positions for the two **ECCAB Committees** were filled, as follows:

- Planning and Economic Development Committee Chair: Dan Wilhelm
- Quality of Life/Services Committee Chair: Mark Pharaoh

Jewru will send out an email asking Board members to select which committee they will join.

### **New Business, and announcements**

- Chris Wilhelm reported for Councilmember Mink that has had many meetings since the last ECCAB meeting. One of the subjects has been the Burnt Mill ES, as reported above.
- Jewru Bandeh, East County Regional Office Director, reported the following:
  - Burtonsville Day is September 21.
  - The County Executive operating budget forum in East County will be on September 9 at 7:00 at the White Oak Community Rec Center.
  - There will be no ECCAB committee meetings in September.
  - He thanked Peter Lowet for his long service as the Executive Director of Mobile Med and wished him well in his retirement. He also welcomed Charlotte Kern as the new Executive Director.
  - The draft summary of the August 17 ECCAB Retreat was handed out. It was not discussed since there was insufficient time at this meeting. At the retreat, the Board selected seven priorities with focus areas for each of them.
- Sophie Aldrich, with the Planning Department, indicated there will be a Public Hearing before the Planning Board concerning the Technical Update to the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways. It will be held on September 12 at 6:30.
- It was reported multiple times that the council listening session in east county concerning attainable housing will be Sept 17.

**Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 9:02 pm.