



EAST COUNTY CITIZENS ADVISORY BOARD (ECCAB)

Wednesday, March 6, 2024 Meeting Summary

Board Members Present: Fisseha Adugna, Bill Bentley, LaTonya Brooks, George Brown, II, Radwan Chowdhury, Sheala Durant, Ken Flemmer, Roberta Goldberg, Gertrude Jones, Metassebia Kefelegn, Dr. Calandra Tate Moore, Len Newman, Mark Pharaoh, Kimberly Price-Evans, Susan Price, and Dan Wilhelm. **Board members absent:** Rachel Evans and Peter Myo Khin

Guests Present: Councilmember Kristin Mink, David Lorenzo-Botello, Capt. Gregory Chmiel, Ed Weiler, Rob Richardson, Eileen Finnegan, Sharon Brown, Robin Riley, Ken Jones, Heather Bois, Abdul Kamus, and Sydney Wilson-Hunter

County Regional Office Staff Present: Jewru Bandeh and Ayanna King

Welcome and Introductions: The meeting was called to order at 7:12 p.m. by Vice Chair Ken Flemmer as Chair Peter Myo Khin was unable to attend the meeting. Board members, government officials, and public members introduced themselves.

Approval of February 2024 ECCAB Meeting Summary: The meeting summary of the February 6, 2024 meeting was approved with no objections.

Police Update:

- Capt. Gregory Chmiel, from District 3, reported major crime dropped from 70 incidents to 40 over the last several weeks. It is too soon to tell if this is a trend. The Silver Spring district has the most major crimes of any district within the county. For the year ending on February 23, there were 414 major incidents in Silver Spring district compared to 1348 county wide. There are currently major problems in the White Oak Shopping Center. District 3 has increased the number of patrols, had the overgrowth removed near the closed Sears Store, and mental health professionals are active there. Eileen Finnegan indicated that problems are also occurring in the Hillandale retail area. In response to a question, Captain Chmiel confirmed that the number of traffic stops are fewer now than before the pandemic.
- There will be 3-on-3 basketball over four Fridays starting at the end of April between policeman and teens in the area.

Discussion on Building an Equitable Out of School Time (OST) System in the County. Guest Speaker Sydney Wilson-Hunter gave a verbal presentation about developing

and implementing after school activities for young people in Montgomery County. She is the OST Program Director with the Montgomery County Collaboration Council for Children, Youth and Families. OST was launched in October 2023. OST is working with 20-30 other groups that are focusing on this issue, including MCPS and Recreation.

- Since the groups don't have a common vocabulary, they are developing an agreed to set of definitions.
- They are developing a set of recommendations that will address gaps in the current activities available to young people. The recommendations will be presented to the council for approval and funding.
- Transportation is a common problem for this community. The program, once developed, will be free to everyone.

Discussion/Presentation on Food Systems Resilience. Heather Bois Bruskin is the Director of the County's Office of Food Systems Resilience (OFSR), which was launched in February 2023. She gave a presentation using a handout, which is incorporated in these minutes.

- Before the creation of OFSR, food was not looked at as a separate issue.
- There are some 110 organizations that deal in one way or another with food.
- Their mission is to develop and implement interagency budgetary, regulatory, and operational strategies to build a more equitable, efficient, resilient, and sustainable food system in Montgomery County
- The Office defines "resilience" as the capability of individuals, communities, and the county to withstand and rapidly recover from food systems disruptions, stresses, and changes.
- The vision of the OFSR is to create a community where all residents can obtain healthy, nutritious, and culturally appropriate foods without fear of financial stress.
- Some 323K people live in households that have income below the self-sufficiency standard. A map of the census tracks shows east Montgomery County has many people who live with food insecurity.
- The county used \$20M-\$30M, mostly federal funds, to address food insecurity during the pandemic. The task now is to put programs in place outside of an emergency to address food insecurity, The lack of farm labor is but one area.
- They are looking at using the "We Achieve" (Formerly CHI) in Hillandale as a place to create a place for food that requires cold storage.
- MCPS is considering switching federal programs – from Free and Reduced Meals (FARMS) to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The SNAP program targets people at a lower income level: 130% below federal property level (FPL) rather than 185% below FPL. The FARMS focus is on each child while SNAP looks at the whole family. As a result of this shift, some schools will lose their Title 1 status, which then affects teaching resources.

Old Business: None

New Business:

- ✓ **ECCAB Letter of Support Approval:** Formal Board approval was given without objection to a letter approved and distributed by the Executive Committee. The letter was sent to our congressional representatives supporting County Department of Housing and Community Development request for funds to provide commercial property façade

improvements in the White Oak area. This was the same letter the Board supported a year ago, but with a few minor edits.

- ✓ **Quality of Life/Services Committee Report:** Roberta Goldberg, Chair, reported that the committee has set up a subcommittee to focus on holding the forum later this year on the issue of youth violence that the Board approved last month. Present thinking is that planning for the forum will occur this spring and the actual event will be held in the fall.
- ✓ **County Report: Jewru Bandeh, East County Regional Office Director** reported on the following:
 - Montgomery College East County Education Center: The ribbon cutting event is still being planned for late April 2024. Jewru will send out a notice of the event shortly before it happens.
 - TJ Max_will open in the Burtonsville on March 9.
 - Cherry Hill Road Bikeway Project. A flier from County DOT was handed out announcing a virtual public information meeting on March 12 concerning the project.
 - Board vacancies and meeting attendance. He indicated that the terms for several Board members are expiring and that applications to reapply need to be received by March 22. He also indicated that Board members are allowed three absences per year before being reported to the County Executive and action. If needed reimbursement is available for board members for child care and transportation. Forms are available for those wanting to submit.
- ✓ **Robin Riley, Director of the Department of Recreation** reported the following Recreation department news:
 - Friday 3-on-3 basketball will be held on Fridays
 - Senior meals will start on April 1.
 - Spring and summer camp registration is underway
 - Silver Spring Recreation and Aquatic Center is now open
 - Recreation is hiring part-time, seasonal employees for the summer season.
- ✓ **Councilmember Kristin Mink** reported the following:
 - ZTA23-10 was approved by the Council. It eliminates parking requirements within a half-mile radius of a Metro or Purple Line station, and quarter-mile radius of an existing Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Station or a BRT Station that is funded for construction in the current Capital Improvements Program. This will reduce the cost of new housing that can take advantage of the change.
 - Funding for the Montgomery College East County Campus is in the Executive's proposed CIP and is being considered by the council.
- ✓ **David Lorenzo-Botello** reported for Councilmember Glass the following:
 - Councilmember Evan Glass will host a forum on Combating Opioid Overdose Deaths on March 9 in the council office building.
 - The Transportation & Environment (TE) Committee discussed a report from DOT on March 4 concerning the White Oak Local Area Transportation Improvement Program (LATIP). DOT had updated the 2017 costs that were \$101.8M and are now projected to be \$277.5M (a 180% increase). Rather than address this now, the TE Committee will take up the issue after the budgets are approved, likely in June.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm.