

Spotlight on District 4

July, 2003

Dear Neighbors:

This was a year of challenges for our County, with citizens facing upheavals both at home and abroad. In October, we faced a nameless enemy who stalked our community, terrorizing us for 22 days during a killing spree that left 14 people dead.

A cold, snowy winter was capped off by a brutal three-day storm in February, which left the area snowbound for days. By the end of March, our Country was embroiled in a war in Iraq.

Each crisis reverberated throughout our national and local economies at a time when they were already pinched by a prolonged downturn, leaving governments facing serious fiscal challenges.

County Budget

Our own County had to close a \$320 million gap when working through the Fiscal Year 04 operating budget. We pared county programs and services, deferred employee pay raises and increased energy, telephone and income taxes. I reluctantly voted for these tax increases, because cutting programs and services or raising taxes alone would not close the significant fiscal gap the County was facing. But I did not support a further increase in property taxes, given the State action to increase this tax.

The Council was able to restore funding for fire and emergency protection and



See Budget, Page 2



Children enjoy the Mid-County Neighborhood Initiative Community Fair that was held at Fairways, Grand Bel Manor and Grand Bell II in April.

Major Changes Being Considered to AGP

The Planning Board has taken the Council's directive to conduct a comprehensive review of the Annual Growth Policy (AGP) and is currently evaluating options for major changes. It is important for you to know that these changes, if adopted, may have significant consequences on the pace of development throughout the County. Among the changes being considered:

- Reducing the number of policy areas or doing away with them entirely in favor of a smaller number of larger geographic areas;
- Adopting "simpler" limits on the pace of development by having the Council establish rates of growth at each biennial AGP review (the Planning Board is suggesting a 1% growth rate); there would be no areas in moratorium, but a number of factors would be considered in guiding growth to certain areas of the County;
- Redefining infill properties;
- Changing the adequacy test for schools;
- Linking the AGP to impact taxes;
- Allowing developers to move forward after paying a fee to the County;

See AGP, Page 5

Spotlight on District 4



Join a winning team! Montgomery County Recreation Department is looking for teen and adult volunteers to help make a difference in the lives of children and adults with special needs. Learn a new skill, gain work experience, or share your creative talents. Student Service Learning Credit is available for teens. Call the Volunteer Coordinator in Therapeutic Recreation at 240-777-6976.

Budget, Cont.' from Page 1

provide for critical health and human service needs. We protected our schools, approving a \$1.5 billion budget, 99 percent of the school system's request.

Unfortunately, we still face potential budget cuts from the State, which has experienced its own severe fiscal crisis and the FY 05 operating budget also appears to be problematic.

I have deep concerns about the Council's decision this spring to defer an increase in the impact tax, which developers pay to help defray the costs of new roads and intersection improvements. The Council also voted to delay imposing an impact tax on developers that would have helped to pay for school construction.

I supported going forward with both impact taxes because our roads and schools are already overburdened and development should help pay for itself. Unfortunately, five Councilmembers supported deferring a vote on these taxes until October, when the Council will discuss our Annual Growth Policy, which sets the guidelines for pace of development in the County.

Because of this delay, the County will forgo at least \$7 million that could have been used for schools and ap-

proximately \$3 million that could have been spent on roads and other transportation improvements during our budget actions.

Transportation Budget

Although the Council funded \$22.2 million in "Go Montgomery" transportation projects, critical maintenance functions, such as road repaving, tree replacement, street lighting, pedestrian safety measures, traffic safety studies, as well as public transportation and intersection improvements are not receiving adequate attention. Also, there are sometimes lengthy delays in responding to local transportation safety problems.

For instance, I pushed to bring the Department of Public Works, the Police Department and community members to the table to discuss the recently completed safety study on East Randolph Road and review potential solutions. I believe that timely improvements on this road are especially imperative, given the construction of the grade-separated interchange at US 29 and East Randolph/Cherry Hill Roads, as well as plans for the Randolph Road and Georgia Avenue intersection. Getting projects such as these back on track will be one of my top priorities.

Community Involvement

While this was a year of great challenges, it was also a year of great successes for the communities of the East County. Citizen involvement continues to make a positive difference.

I remain grateful to the citizens of District Four for their support and input. The many letters, faxes, and phone calls my office receives are a testimonial to the importance of local government in all of our lives. Your thoughts and comments on the issues that are important to you will help me make the tough decisions which lie ahead.

***Councilmember
Marilyn J. Praisner***

Your Schools

The Council's budget action protected our investment in recent initiatives to reduce class size, expand all-day kindergarten, and improve teacher training.

However, I am disappointed that the County Executive did not honor the Council's intent to set aside money generated by last year's recordation tax increase to pay for school construction we know is necessary in 2005 when the next comprehensive Capital Improvements Program will be considered. Council President Michael Subin and I worked hard to restore these funds, but it was not possible, given the fiscal challenges and other priorities.

School Construction/Traffic

Page Elementary School will reopen in August completely modernized and expanded to accommodate lower class sizes in kindergarten through second grade. The new gym at **Drew Elementary School** should be ready by February 2004.

Traffic conditions around **Paint Branch** and **Blake High Schools** and **Banneker Middle School** should improve significantly by the time school opens in the fall. Look for these changes:

Old Columbia Pike: A school zone encompassing both **Paint Branch High School** and **Banneker Middle**



Students at Wheaton Woods Elementary School work in the media center as Councilmember Marilyn Praisner looks on.

School will be established on Old Columbia Pike. Yellow-green fluorescent "School Zone" signs will be posted between Old Briggs Chaney and Greencastle Roads, as well as signs indicating that double fines are in effect from 6:30 AM-4 PM. There will be "No Stopping School Days, 6:30 AM-4PM" along both sides of the road from Duvall Road/Airy Hill Lane to Miles Road/Hollyhock Drive.



Paint Branch High School: Over the summer MCPS will also re-configure on-site parking and circulation patterns at Paint Branch in order to improve traffic flow and to enhance pedestrian safety in the area. Please be alert to changing traffic patterns in that area and observe all new traffic regulations.

Blake High School: The Department of Public Works and Transportation has completed its study of traffic conditions near Blake. Recommendations for any needed improvements should be made by fall.

Pedestrian Safety: This year, the County enhanced pedestrian safety at one-quarter of its high schools and drafted a strategy for making improvements to the remaining schools. These improvements include traffic calming measures to slow traffic, new or restriped crosswalks, relocated bus stops, new signs, and more crossing guards. County Police have also stepped up enforcement at all County schools.

Downcounty Consortium

Planning continues for the Downcounty Consortium, comprised of Blair, Einstein, Kennedy, Northwood, and Wheaton High Schools. Reopening of Northwood in 2004 means students will have the choice of attending any one of the five participating schools. The Board of Education recently decided base areas for each school. Students will be guaranteed assignment to their base school, if it is either their first or second choice. Additional information about the assignment process is available at: www.mcps.k12.md.us/departments/planning/CommunityInfo/htm.

Spotlight on District 4

Dog Park a Big Hit with Pooches



Opening day in Wheaton Regional Park's new dog park pleases kids as well as pooches.

The Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission in January celebrated the grand opening of its first dog exercise/play area in Wheaton Regional Park, near the outdoor skating rink. There are nearly 25,000 licensed dog in the County.

Montgomery County Dog Owners Group, a newly formed organization, helped select possible locations compatible with the surrounding neighborhoods and develop ground rules for operation. Dogs using the exercise area must display current license and rabies vaccination tags and must be more than

four months old. These and other rules will be posted at the dog exercise area and can be found online at www.mcmncppc.org.

Later in this year, the Commission plans to open similar dog exercise areas at Black Hills Regional Park in Boyds and the soon-to-be-opened Ridge Road Recreational Park in Germantown.

The Commission encourages the participation of all individuals in its programs and facilities. For assistance with special needs, please contact Marion Joyce, 301-495-4600.

New Show "Tertulia" Premieres Tertulia es el primer programa en español del Canal 6

County Cable Montgomery Channel 6 debuted "Tertulia," on Sunday, March 23. The 30-minute program, geared for the County's Hispanic residents, features host Wanda Resto Torres, the County's Hispanic Liaison. Residents will be able to enjoy features on the County's Latino Health Initiative, discussions with Latino youth, library services and ways to get involved with schools. "Tertulia" means an informal chat or dialogue on various topics and will provide educational programming for the Spanish-speaking community. The show airs on Wednesdays at 9:30 p.m. For additional showtimes, go to: www.montgomerycountymd.gov and click on News. The cable schedule is updated weekly.

El domingo 23 de marzo el Canal 6 de televisión por cable del Condado de Montgomery estreno su programa "Tertulia". El programa de 30 minutos, dirigido a los ciudadanos Latinos del condado, es presentado por Wanda Resto Torres, Enlace Hispano de la Oficina Ejecutiva del Condado. La Comunidad podrá disfrutar de temas informativos como las Iniciativas de Salud para los Latinos, entrevistas con jóvenes Latinos, servicios de biblioteca y formas en las que se puede participar activamente en las escuelas. El programa es presentado los miércoles a las 9:30 p.m. Para horarios adicionales por favor visite: www.montgomerycountymd.gov y haga clic en *News* (Noticias). El horario de la programación por cable es actualizada semanalmente.

East County Science and Technology Center comes to Fairland

Montgomery County will build its newest science and technology center on a 115-acre site off Route 29 in North Silver Spring currently owned by the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC). Early in the process, I urged the Department of Economic Development to consider Site II for this project, as it seemed an appropriate reuse of the property. It will certainly be wonderful to see the former Site II become a positive force for economic development in our community. The County selected Republic Properties Corporation, a privately owned, full-service real estate development and management firm, to bring its extensive experience in biotech facilities operation to the development. Tentatively named the East County Center for Science and Technology (ECSST), the Center will be modeled after the Shady Grove Life Sciences Center. We expect the ECCST, along with the ongoing FDA consolidation at White Oak, to serve as a catalyst for technology development in Eastern Montgomery County, particularly considering its proximity to I-95 and its prime location between Washington DC and Baltimore. Preliminary plans for the ECCST include approximately 800,000 square feet of development focusing on the needs of the biotechnology industry, including laboratory and bio-manufacturing buildings, a technology business incubator facility, a higher education facility, a telecommuting center, child-care center and several built-to-suit sites that the County will use to attract strategic technology companies.

AGP, Cont' from Page 1

- Exempting certain types of development (i.e., affordable housing, corporate headquarters, and strategic economic development projects) from impact taxes.

Because of the magnitude of the changes being proposed, the Planning Board delayed sending their final recommendations to the Council until August. For more information on the AGP review, go to www.mc-mncppc.org, look under "What's New," and click on Annual Growth Policy staff recommendations.

Some of my colleagues indicated during the budget discussions that they were waiting for the AGP process before deciding whether or not to support increases in the

development tax for transportation and the newly proposed impact tax for schools. While there may be some relationship between these taxes and the AGP, there was an even stronger relationship to the budget. As we move forward with our discussion of the AGP, we need to be certain that whatever changes we adopt lead to a reasonable rate of growth, a good balance between jobs and housing and infrastructure improvements that finally begin to alleviate overcrowding on roads and in schools. I urge you to participate in the public hearings and follow the discussions when the Council reviews the Planning Board's final recommendations. Councilmembers need to hear from you!

Counting on Pedestrian Safety

Downtown Wheaton received two of the five Countdown signals installed in the County. These traffic lights provide useful information to pedestrians, indicating how much time is available for them to cross the street. They are



especially helpful for those crossing large, urban intersections. The two in Wheaton are located on Georgia Avenue at Reedie Drive and Arcola Avenue at Lambertson Drive. As a member of the County's Pedestrian Safety Advisory Committee, I was extremely pleased that we could make crossing these two busy intersections safer.

**PLEASE VISIT US ON THE WEB AT:
www.montgomerycountymd.gov
OR EMAIL US AT:
Councilmember.Praisner@montgomerycountymd.gov**

District 4

Transportation

InterCounty Connector

At the Governor's request, the InterCounty Connector (ICC) was selected to be part of a federal pilot program designed to accelerate federal review of transportation projects. An additional \$19.1 million in federal funding to complete planning, begin design work and purchase needed right-of-way for the ICC was also announced. Montgomery County resident Sam Raker has been named special assistant for community outreach on the ICC project. The project will be co-managed by Wesley Mitchell and a private consultant, Alan Strauss. Mr. Mitchell can be reached toll free at 1 (800) 548-5026, (410) 545-8542 or wmitchell@sha.state.md.us.

Here's the latest on other Transportation projects in District 4.

MD 28/MD 198 – from Norbeck Road (MD28) @ Georgia Avenue (MD 97) to the I-95 corridor in Prince George's County - The State Highway Administration (SHA) has retained three alternates and one option for detailed study and engineering: a Master Plan Features Alternate (widening called for in the local master plans), a Transportation Systems Alternate (spot and safety improvements to address the most serious concerns) and a No-Build Alternate (normal maintenance and safety improvements currently planned as parts of other projects). The option under study consists of a southerly shift of existing MD 198 through the Spencerville area, while generally maintaining the master plan features. SHA expects to release the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and hold the Location/Design Public Hearing this fall. At this time, funding is available to carry the project through the Final Environmental Impact Statement and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) approval. The project is not funded for final design, right-of-way acquisition or construction.

The project manager, Mr. Shawn Burnett, can be reached at 1(800)548-5026, (410)545-8531, or sburnett@sha.state.md.us.

Burtonsville Loop Road – This is a proposed road defined in the Fairland Master Plan to respond to the impact of traffic and the MD 198 widening on Burtonsville businesses. The concept is a new road running north of and parallel to MD 198 from the Burtonsville Elementary School Access Road for approximately 950 feet along the back side of existing businesses to reconnect to MD 198 between the Burtonsville Shopping Center and Seibel's restaurant. This project is currently in Phase I facility planning and will be designed in close coordination with SHA in the MD28/

MD198 study. For more information, contact Michael Mitchell, in the Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPWT) at (240) 777-7262.

Old Columbia Pike Sidewalks –this project was changed during budget deliberations to restore a roundabout at the Old Columbia Pike/Perrywood Drive intersection. The DPWT contact is Bruce Johnston at (240) 777-7210.

Briggs Chaney Road East of US 29 – Construction to widen Briggs Chaney Road from US 29 east to Gentry Ridge Court is scheduled to begin in October of this year. The project is divided into two sections: 1) reconstruction of Briggs Chaney Road as a four-lane, divided, closed-section roadway from Automobile/Castle Boulevards to Aston Manor Drive; and 2) improvements of Briggs Chaney Road from Aston Manor Drive to Gentry Ridge Court as a two-lane, undivided, closed-section arterial.

This project includes a sidewalk along the north side, a new Class I Bikeway on the south side from US 29 to Olive Branch Drive, and streetscaping between the project's western limits and Robey Road. Streetlights will be provided for both this project and the Briggs Chaney Curve Improvement project. Construction is expected to be completed by October 2004. For more information, contact Jeff Knutsen at (240)777-7295.

Fairland Road – Conceptual engineering continues for reconstructed three-lane Fairland Road east US 29 to Briggs-Chaney Road. A public information meeting is planned for early fall. For information, contact the project manager, Michael Mitchell, at (240) 777-7262.

US 29 Sidewalks – Design is almost complete for sidewalks on the east side of US 29 from Burnt Mills Avenue to Crestmoor Drive. Retaining walls and guardrails are planned to reduce impacts to adjacent homeowners and increase pedestrian safety. Construction is expected to begin in spring 2004. Wayne Christiansen at (240) 777-7266 is the overall project manager.

Muncaster Road – This project is in the final design phase. A public hearing will be scheduled for this fall. Plans currently include horizontal and vertical realignment, widening and streetlights for 3700 feet of Muncaster Road from Hollingsworth Drive to east of the entrance to the Agricultural History Farm Park. The project also includes replacement of the existing bridge over Rock Creek. For more information on this project, contact the DPWT Design Manager Jerry McCauley at 240-777-7282 or visit the website at www.dpwt.com/EngSvcDiv/.

State Highway Administration (SHA) Projects:

US 29 @ Randolph Road – Construction continues on this grade-separated interchange including a temporary by-pass road slightly to the north of the former inter-

section in order to allow traffic to continue to move through the intersection during construction. The new interchange will be a single point urban diamond with “diamond” ramps that run along both sides of US 29 to carry traffic between US 29 and East Randolph Road/Cherry Hill Road. Retaining walls will be located between US 29 and the ramp, and on the outside of the ramps along northbound US 29, before the intersection. Retaining walls will also be located along the southbound off-ramp on the outside between the ramp to East Randolph Road and the future ramp from Musgrove Road.

The intersection will be widened to accommodate the turning lanes at the signal with the ramps, as well as to accommodate bike compatible outside lanes. There will be intersection improvements at Old Columbia Pike/East Randolph Road and Cherry Hill Road at Prosperity Drive. A bike path will also be constructed between the intersection of Prosperity Drive and Cherry Hill Road to Deer Park Drive.

I have requested that SHA provide landscaping and berms to reduce noise impact both during construction and when the interchange is complete.

US 29 @ MD 198 – SHA is constructing a grade-separated interchange as part of relocated US 29. Roadway improvements consist of placing US 29 on new alignment from north of Dustin Road to south of MD 198, and construction of new grade-separated interchanges at the existing at-grade intersections of US 29 with MD 198 (US 29 on dual bridges over MD 198) and Dustin Road (Dustin Road over Relocated US 29). Relocated US 29 roadway will be a divided highway with a 50-foot median. MD 198 will be widened as required to provide the necessary turn lanes. Dustin Road will be rebuilt to meet the new bridge elevations. Off-ramps will be built for US 29 northbound and southbound to Blackburn Road, and a new traffic signal will be placed at the existing US 29/Blackburn Road intersection. At my request, SHA is reviewing proposed turning movements at the Blackburn Road intersection. Additionally, I have requested replacement of the vegetative buffer along the ramps.

At MD 198, there will be diamond ramps to and from US 29 northbound, as well as an on-ramp from MD 198 to US 29 southbound; the existing signal at the US 29/MD 198 intersection will be rebuilt to accommodate this on-ramp. A new signal will be built where the northbound ramps intersect with MD 198. Ramps to and from the north will be built at Dustin Road, with a roundabout as a traffic-calming device at the intersection of the southbound off ramp and Dustin Road.

US 29 @ Briggs Chaney Road –Construction will soon begin on a grade-separated interchange at this intersection. Roadway changes include lowering US 29 approximately 12 feet and raising Briggs Chaney Road approximately 12 feet. Briggs Chaney Road will cross over US 29 on a bridge at its current location. Diamond ramps will be

parallel to northbound US 29 and are separated by a retaining wall. A retaining wall is also planned between the ramps and the adjacent property owners to minimize impacts. The southbound ramps will be a Partial-Cloverleaf in the north-west quadrant. The proposed bikeway south of Briggs Chaney road has been eliminated. The bikeway north of Briggs Chaney Road will end at Greencastle Lakes.

Briggs Chaney Road will be modified with turn lanes, a new median, bike-compatible outside lanes, a 5-foot sidewalk and an 8-foot bike path. The project also includes minor widening at the intersection of Old Columbia Pike and Briggs Chaney Road.

Melinda Peters is project manager for all three of the US 29 grade-separated interchanges. She can be reached at SHA at (410) 545-8772. Information is also available on the web at www.sha.state.md.us.

Veirs Mill Road (MD 586) and Aspen Hill Road

– Widening will begin at this intersection in August 2003. SHA plans to install triangular concrete islands at Adrian Street coupled with “No Left Turn” signs at Adrian Street/Baltic Avenue to prevent cut through traffic. The project engineer, Colbert Stephen, can be reached toll-free at (888) 228-5092 ext. 8899, (410)545-8899 or cstephen@sha.state.md.us. DPWT and the Planning Board are conducting preliminary engineering for a hiker-biker trail bridge over Veirs Mill Road near Aspen Hill Road. Contact Dilip N. Pandya at (301)495-2469 or Dilip.Pandya@mncppc-mc.org for further information.

Georgia Avenue (MD 97) @ Norbeck Road (MD28)

– SHA is seeking federal location-design approval of a grade-separated interchange at this intersection. The interchange is funded for final design. SHA design manager is **Brian Young** at (410) 545-8863.

Georgia Avenue (MD 97) @ Randolph Road

– SHA is also in final design for a grade-separated interchange with Randolph Road below Georgia Avenue (MD 97). SHA project manager is Wesley Mitchell at 1 (800) 548-5026, (410) 545-8542 or email him at: Wmitchell@sha.state.md.us.

Muncaster Mill Road Improvements (MD 115)

– The project addresses safety concerns from Muncaster Road to MD 28 (Norbeck Road). The realignment of MD 115 at Avery Road has been pulled out as a separate project and will begin in August 2003. Other improvements including profile adjustments and turn lanes at Grist Mill Drive; addition of a center turn lane, sidewalks, and pedestrian crosswalk at Redland Middle School; and left turn lanes and hiker-biker trail on the south side of MD 115 from Lisa Drive to Applewood Lane will begin construction in Spring 2004. The road will also be resurfaced with high friction asphalt from Muncaster Road to Needwood Road and from Emory Road to MD 28 (Norbeck Road.) For more information contact SHA project manager, April Stitt, at 888-204-7656, 410-545-8831, or at astitt1@sha.state.md.us.



Councilmember Marilyn J. Praisner
Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

PLEASE VISIT US ON THE WEB AT:
www.montgomerycountymd.gov
OR EMAIL US AT:
Councilmember.Praisner@montgomerycountymd.gov



Please Contact Us...

Councilmember Marilyn J.
Praisner
Council Office Building
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

(240) 777-7968
fax: (240) 777-7989
email:
councilmember.praisner@montgomerycountymd.gov

AGP TEACH-IN

AN IMPORTANT OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN ABOUT THE BIG CHANGES
PROPOSED FOR THE COUNTY'S ANNUAL GROWTH POLICY AND
HOW IT COULD AFFECT YOUR COMMUNITY'S SCHOOLS, ROADS,
AND GROWTH.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2003

COUNCIL OFFICE BUILDING

CAFETERIA

9 A.M. REGISTRATION

9:30 A.M. - 1 P.M. PROGRAM