



EAST COUNTY CITIZENS ADVISORY BOARD (ECCAB)

Eastern Montgomery Regional Services Center
3300 Briggs Chaney Road
Silver Spring, Maryland 20904
Tel # (240) 777-8414

Summary of ECCAB Virtual Board Meeting - Wednesday, October 6, 2021

ATTENDANCE

ECCAB Members Present (14):

- Rachael Evans
- Bill Bentley
- Sebastian Smoot
- Chris Bolton
- Larry Edmonds
- Ken Flemmer
- Fisseha Adugna,
- Samantha Blizzard,
- Raju Chebium,
- Roberta Goldberg
- Len Newman
- Susan Price
- Kimberly Price-Evans
- Lucille Smith

Members Absent: Dawn Hill, Tamar Ruth

Elected Officials:

- Congressman John Sarbanes
- District 14 Delegation: Senator Craig Zucker, Delegate Anne Kaiser, Delegate Eric Luedtke, Delegate Pam Queen
- District 20 Delegation: Senator Will Smith, Delegate David Moon, Delegate Jheanelle Wilkins, Delegate Lorig Charkoudian

County Agencies:

- East County Regional Services Center: Jewru Bandeh (Director), Linda Cooper
- Planning Department: Brian Anleu (Senior Advisor to Planning Board Chair)
- Police Department: Commander Nicholas Augustine (4th District)
- County Council: Julio Murillo (Councilmember Tom Hucker's office), David Lorenzo-Botello (Councilmember Evan Glass' office)
- Public Libraries: Tina Deifallah (Branch Manager, Burtonsville Library)

Community Members:

- Nicole Drew (President, Commission for Women)
- Jeremiah Pope
- Margie Goergen-Rood
- Shana Davis-Cook
- Ed Weiler
- Eileen Finnegan
- Sam (no last name provided)
- Vikki Garcia

Welcome: The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m.

Approval of Meeting Minutes: Meeting minutes from September 2021 were approved without comments. The board requested the Secretary to provide minutes from May and June for formal approval at the next meeting.

PRESENTATIONS BY SPECIAL GUESTS

Congressman John Sarbanes

Congress was able to pass a budget via “continuing resolution” and prevent a government shutdown for the next two months. Next big challenge is to raise the debt limit; recently passed the house, awaiting senate approval. Other legislative priorities include:

- [INVEST IN AMERICA ACT](#): largest infrastructure investment ever in transit, transportation, internet, clean water.
- [BUILD BACK BETTER ACT](#): investments in transportation, education, childcare to help people re-enter the workforce.
- [FREEDOM TO VOTE ACT](#): national standards to protect voter rights.

Questions:

- Bentley: What is Congress doing to address housing affordability? Sarbanes: Congress is working to increase rental assistance to those impacted by pandemic.
- Smoot: any discussions of repealing the Faircloth Amendment, so that HUD can spend money to expand housing inventory? Sarbanes: Housing affordability is a nationwide crisis. Congress is looking at all available tools. Discussions continue to evolve.
- Larry Edmond: What is the outlook on immigration reform? Sarbanes: Dreamers, TPS, Essential workers, Farm workers. Congressional Democrats are attempting to achieve meaningful immigration reform via reconciliation as part of the “Build Back Better” Act. Congress is also working on broader legislative reforms aimed at balancing the needs of border security, humanitarian efforts, and economic resiliency.

State Delegation

Del. Luedtke:

- East County is well represented in Annapolis, with elected officials in high-ranking positions:
 - Senator Zucker: Chair, Capital Budget Subcommittee
 - Delegate Kaiser: Chair, Ways and Means Committee
 - Delegate Luedtke: Majority Leader; Chair, Revenue Subcommittee (Ways & Means)
 - Delegate Pam Queen: Chair, Banking, Consumer Protection, and Commercial Law
 - Senator Smith: Chair, Judicial Proceedings Committee
 - Delegate Moon: Chair, Criminal Law and Procedure Subcommittee (Judiciary)
 - Delegate Wilkins: Chair, Election Law Subcommittee (Ways and Means)
 - Delegate Charkoudian: Economic Matters Committee & Public Utilities

Subcommittee.

- D14 is north of Randolph Road, D20 is south of Randolph.
- Board of Elections recently approved White Oak Community Center on 1700 April Lane as a new early voting site. The BOE proposed to remove Burtonsville Early Voting Site a few years ago but backtracked after massive pressure from community and local/state officials.
- County Executive issued a request for developer proposals for the Burtonsville Park and Ride lot; the deadline was a few days ago. Related, the D14 delegation secured \$5 million investment to cover some of the cost of a parking garage to replace the surface lot.
- Good news for state budget: Brought a lot of money to state from federal covid relief bills. Opens opportunities for PAYGO projects. D14, D20 looking to earmark money for long-awaited state projects such as improving safety and transit on US 29 and MD 198.

Sen. Zucker

- Thanks to the community for the recent job fair.
- Passed bill to make Burtonsville eligible for economic development fund.
- Luedtke and colleagues are writing a letter to SHA urging safety and pedestrian improvements for the 198 and 29 corridors.
- Next session will look at reforming Marijuana legislation
- Estimates project a \$2.5 billion surplus in the state budget.

Sen. William Smith:

- Police Parole and Immigration reforms: went into effect October 1st.
- JPR: juvenile justice, so juveniles are treated fairly and given opportunities for rehabilitation. Firearm safety: regulating ghost guns, strawman purchases. Marijuana reform: giving Marylanders the opportunity to decide via voter referendum.

Del. Lorig:

- Thanks to ECCAB for volunteering at community events (food distribution, vaccination, and national night out)
- Focusing on food security issues. Established food resiliency council. Seeking to encourage local markets to increase access to food and provide opportunities for small businesses and nonprofits. Using the CHI center on New Hampshire Avenue (White Oak) for economic development.
- Pushing for a more efficient and responsive state unemployment system.
- Seeking to expand other safety net services, such as utility assistance and family leave.
- Climate and energy: working on legislation to expand clean energy and build resilience for worsening impacts caused by climate change.

Del. Moon:

- There will be a special Session before the normal legislative session. Veto overrides for the following:
 - Prevent local police from asking immigration status
 - Closing ICE detention facilities
 - Eliminating harsh penalties for drug paraphernalia. There is a 4-year prison sentence for syringes, which increases likelihood
 - Maryland has one of the lowest fees for evictions.
 - Legal assistance for tenants facing evictions

Del. Wilkins:

- Looking at the next session to complete efforts started during this four-year term.
- Justice in policing: 2021 legislation was a good start for ensuring accountability.
- Would like to develop legislation to hold police officers liable for egregious violations of constitutional rights, including withholding pensions for officers convicted of serious crimes.
- Voting rights: proud that White Oak Community Center became an Early Voting site.
- Implementation of permanent mail-in voting list. In 2021, made a change to allow voters to opt-in to receive a ballot for every election.

- Wants to expand protection for renters. Encouraged support for Bill 30-21 to limit rent increases during the pandemic and economic recession caused by pandemic.
- Plans to reintroduce bill to offer renters support to avoid eviction during the pandemic.

Del. Queen:

- Working on wealth creation, especially for communities of color. Looking to lessen the disparities between White and Black homeownership (~70% vs ~50%, respectively). The Legislative Black Caucus found that Black families are twice as likely to be denied credit for a mortgage. Considering creation of a tax-free savings account to assist families with down payments.
- Economic Stability Workgroup: helping people who are getting out of poverty, stay out of poverty. One of the key obstacles found was childcare. Federal guidance recommends childcare costs be below 7% of gross income. Delegation is seeking ways to expand access.

Del. Kaiser:

- Notes that Senator Zucker spearheaded the major \$1.5B pandemic relief bill.
- Sports betting was recently allowed in Maryland. Suggests that sports betting will not raise a lot of money for the State, esp. compared to tables or slots.
- Working to increase security of elections. Term is “risk-limiting audits”.
- Only 20% of eligible people for tax credits apply for them. Kaiser wishes to expand communication, outreach, and ease of application so that people that need assistance can get it.

Questions from the Advisory Board:

- Evans: Can we expect any major changes to congressional and state legislative districts? Wilkins: D20 delegation wishes to continue to represent a portion of East County. Redistricting process will start in January 2022. Kaiser: D14 does not anticipate major changes to our district. Luedtke notes he serves on the Legislative Redistricting Advisory Commission and adds that the Montgomery County hearing is November 5th at the Universities at Shady Grove. November 15th is a statewide zoom hearing.
- Bentley: to what extent are police reforms a priority for delegation vs. individual lawmakers? Moon: before police reform was in the national public spotlight, all of us have been drafting legislation. For example, body cameras, no-knock warrants, use of force standards, Anton’s Law. Wilkins: In addition to federal qualified immunity, there is also “state immunity” in Maryland state law that officers can use to protect themselves from being penalized for fraud, corruption, violation of civil rights, etc. The delegation would like to hold officers accountable for committing crimes. Smith: notes that monumental progress has been made in the past session. Also recommends “Above the Law” by Ben Cohen to learn more about accountability. Lorig: we also want to ensure that communities are not traumatized by over-policing, and providing more mental health resources, training, and restorative justice in schools to reduce the need for police involvement.
- Raj: Car meetups are a growing nuisance not only in East County, but across the state. Luedtke: We do not wish to prohibit car meetups that are safe and following the law, but we do recognize the need to curtail drag racing and dangerous driving. State police normally would not be involved, except for counties that only have a sheriff and not a full. Smith: there are three draft bills that would establish criminal penalties for drag racing and other dangerous driving.
- Smoot: are delegations considering re-introducing bills to expand the use of automated enforcement? Moon: these were debated last year. Lower speed limit bill passed, but an amendment prohibited automated enforcement on low speed limit roads. The bill to move enforcement authority from police to departments of transportation failed. It is uncertain
- Evans: Are there plans for improving pedestrian safety on state roads? For example, Stewart

Lane at US 29. Charkoudian: at the request of the community, state delegates often host events to inspect dangerous crossings. Stewart Lane has been looked at for nearly 10 years. SHA did recently extend the duration of the walk signal. She is planning on a bill to require SHA to spend a minimum amount of their budget on safety and provide interim short-term fixes. Wants to reform the SHA so that safety fixes are implemented proactively, as opposed to only when under persistent pressure from the community and elected officials. Notes that SHA installed fencing on the median of US 29 at Oak Leaf Drive (Enclave Apartments) to prevent people from crossing there to reach the bus stop, making it more dangerous for pedestrians, and the state delegates successfully pressured SHA to remove the fencing. Luedtke adds that communities all across Montgomery County are requesting more investments for pedestrian safety, and notes that the

NEW BUSINESS

Elections were held for the ECCAB board positions.

- Rachael Evans was nominated for the position of Chair. No other nominations were made. Rachael Evans was elected to the position via majority vote.
- Bill Bentley was nominated for the position of Vice Chair. No other nominations were made. Bill Bentley was elected to the position.
- Sebastian Smoot was nominated for the position of Secretary. No other nominations were made. Sebastian Smoot was elected to the position.
- Chris Bolton was nominated for the position of Parliamentarian. No other nominations were made. Chris Bolton was elected to the position.

UPDATES FROM COUNTY OFFICIALS

Commander Nicholas Augustine, 4th District: seven homicides so far this year, and violent crime is on the rise. Robberies and aggravated assault are on the rise. Many shootings have been reported. The fourth district is facing staffing shortages: there have been 14 resignations this year, compared to 5 last year, and 2 the previous year. Over 100 officers are due for retirement in the next three years. This year's academy has 17 recruits for the entire county. In previous years, MCPD had 1,500 applicants, but recently there are 400 applicants per year; only a few of which. Len Newman noted his anecdotal experience hearing that morale is at an all-time low. Cmdr. Augustine notes that violent crimes are on the rise throughout the entire DMV region. A senior at Blake HS was shot at his house a few days ago.

Julio Murillo, Councilmember Tom Hucker's Office: Council extended free fares for Ride On until January 2022. Thanks to the community for supporting the White Oak voting site.

David Lorenzo, Councilmember Evan Glass's Office: Evan canvassed the Castle Boulevard community to learn about community concerns, which mainly included economic insecurity, disputes with landlords, crime, and parking.

COMMUNITY COMMENTS

Rachael Evans notes that tractor trailers have been parking overnight throughout White Oak, especially in Sears parking lot and on Old Columbia Pike. She asked the county council to address the issue. Len Newman noted that regulations limiting the amount of time drivers can work can result in them being forced to take stops in unplanned locations.

Sebastian Smoot offered to bring information to the next ECCAB meeting regarding the proposals received for the Burtonsville Park & Ride RFP so that ECCAB can provide input to the County

Executive. A MOTION was made for the board to take on this issue next meeting; motion PASSED.

OLD BUSINESS

None

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 9:09 p.m. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.