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Transcript of Meeting

Date: May 22, 2019

Case: Meeting/Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services

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DEPARTMENT OF PERMITTING SERVICES
FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

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In Re: :
PUBLIC COMMENT SESSION :
-----x

Recorded Meeting
Silver Spring, Maryland
Wednesday, May 22, 2019
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Transcribed by: Sheila Martin

1 Recorded meeting of Montgomery County
2 Department of Permitting Services at the offices of:

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6 SILVER SPRING CIVIC CENTER

7 One Veterans Place

8 Silver Spring, Maryland 20910.

9 (240) 777-5350

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18 Pursuant to agreement, before Michael Pawela,

19 Notary Public for the State of Maryland.

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(None Entered)

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 MR. KATZ: Good evening, everyone. We'd
3 like to start. This is the County Executive
4 Montgomery County Marc Elrich.

5 MR. ELRICH: Let's see. Is this something
6 I should be using?

7 MR. KATZ: That's for them. That's not --
8 that's not going to make it any louder.

9 MR. ELRICH: Okay. I'll pretend I never
10 touched that. I didn't play with the thing --
11 microphone. Okay. So what are we doing? This is
12 our fifth --

13 MR. KATZ: Yes, you got it right.

14 MR. ELRICH: Yay. I got it right -- first
15 time. Fifth listening session. And what we've been
16 doing, we've been going around the county and we're
17 asking people to tell us what kind of issues you run
18 into if you're trying to start a business. What do
19 you encounter in the regulatory environment? If
20 you're trying to expand the business, what are you
21 dealing with? And more importantly, what do you
22 think you deal with here that's different than any
23 place?

24 AUDIENCE: WE can't hear you.

25 MR. KATZ: You're going to have to speak

1 up.

2 MR. ELRICH: Is that mic working?

3 UNKNOWN WOMAN: That's the recording mic.

4 MR. KATZ: There is no mic.

5 MR. ELRICH: There is no mic.

6 MR. KATZ: All right. So you're just
7 going to have to --

8 MR. ELRICH: Okay. So yelling is not my
9 forte. So we are trying to listen to people. We've
10 heard -- I certainly heard during the campaign and
11 we've probably heard for years on the Council that
12 we're a difficult place to do business and we do
13 things that other people don't do. We've never
14 actually asked the question of what are those things.

15 So we decided what we would do -- and I've
16 asked Sidney to join me on this -- is we're going
17 around and we're asking people who either operate
18 businesses or tried to start businesses in Montgomery
19 County what do you encounter here that's different
20 than anyplace else? What do you encounter here
21 particularly if it's worse than anyplace else?

22 If you're in construction and you're
23 renovating a building and it's a building made, you
24 know, that was built in the 60s, 70s, 80s, 90s, does
25 Montgomery County require things that other

1 jurisdictions don't require? In other words, would
2 you have to fix something or repair something in
3 Montgomery County that if you were in the district of
4 Fairfax or Frederick they wouldn't make you do?

5 We're trying to understand if we're
6 regulating the environment in a way that other people
7 aren't regulating their environments. And our goal
8 is pretty straightforward. As we learn about this
9 stuff, by the end of the year, we'll issue a report
10 that leads us to creating legislative changes or
11 changes in policies and that will bring us in line
12 with outside jurisdictions.

13 So if it's not something we can do
14 procedurally, it's something we have to do
15 legislatively, we'll do that. If there are code
16 issues that are different here than other
17 jurisdictions, we'll look at changing the building
18 codes so we bring ourselves in line with the codes in
19 surrounding jurisdictions.

20 So I don't expect anybody to love us but
21 at the end of the day I don't want you to think we're
22 any worse than anybody else. That would be the bar
23 for normal for us. And that would be a good place to
24 get to. So we're looking at doing, you know, changes
25 also as they come up. So is this a good example?

1 MR. KATZ: This is it. This is the old
2 one; this is the new one.

3 MR. ELRICH: So we heard people talk about
4 how difficult it is to do contracts in Montgomery
5 County so here's the form that people dealt with
6 before. It looks like this. Ash Shetty, who's in
7 the back of the room, was at a listening session.
8 He's the Director of Procurement. He said, maybe it
9 should look like this. And so this is what we're
10 putting out now. So we're not going to wait. For
11 things we can change that don't require change in
12 regulation or the law we'll change them as quickly as
13 possible. Things that we have to do that are more
14 related to law or regulation, we'll change them as we
15 can change them. But easy stuff like this, we'll do
16 routinely.

17 So we look forward to your comments. If
18 you don't make comments and you don't want to make a
19 comment publicly then you can make a comment in
20 writing. And if you don't want to be identified, you
21 don't have to be identified. We've had people raise
22 the issue of not wanting to be identified with
23 certain complaints because of concerns that you might
24 have difficulty in the future with people in the
25 county. We want to make sure that you don't feel

1 that way. We don't want anybody not talking to us
2 because they're afraid to talk to us. So I just want
3 to make sure I put that out on the table. Mr. Katz.

4 MR. KATZ: Thank you very much. Before I
5 begin I wanted to announce that my colleague,
6 Councilmember Tom Hucker is in the back of the room.
7 This is his jurisdiction. He's the councilmember
8 from this area. And before we even begin anything
9 else, could we get a round of applause for Kefa Cafe;
10 is that the way you say it? Kefa Café. Marc and I
11 became friendly because he would in my office and eat
12 my cookies. Let me tell you. I would be there all
13 the time. I tell everybody I'd turn vegetarian and
14 eat nothing but cake and cookies.

15 But Marc already touched on the idea that
16 we heard about the procurement and we start working
17 on that and I actually applaud Ash and his team for
18 doing this.

19 The other thing that we talked about or
20 that we heard during some of these sessions was was
21 about -- a landscaper told us of the issues that he's
22 having and that he would -- the zone that he should
23 be allowed in and he's not. And Tom and I -- Tom has
24 already drafted this and I'm a co-sponsor -- has
25 drafted some legislation -- not that it's passed yet.

1 I mean, we have to go through the process. But we
2 passed -- we drafted some legislation to take care of
3 that if we can. So we've heard that one.

4 And then the other night when we were in
5 Wheaton, we heard about the parking concern about
6 during the construction and what not for the
7 businesses in Wheaton and how they were concerned
8 about us raising the prices for parking there while
9 this was going on and all that sort of thing. And
10 Councilmember Nancy Navarro, whose district that is
11 located in, had already started working on that but
12 we took care of that as well. We've already said
13 during this time of turmoil for those businesses
14 we're not going to -- we changed the parking
15 regulations. So we are hearing things as we go
16 along.

17 The -- we also have many, many different
18 departments who are here today. And I think that
19 that speaks well not only of the county but they too
20 want to hear directly from everybody. I also wanted
21 to point out that Joy Nurmi, who's representing Gabe
22 Albornoz, who's councilmember-at-large, is here as
23 well. And so we're very pleased that they're joining
24 us tonight.

25 And what we're going to do is we're going

1 to -- we ask everybody to please keep your remarks to
2 three minutes. I have a world-famous timer on my
3 telephone. And so I'll tell you when you have about
4 two and half minutes left so you can finish up your
5 statement. And then if we -- if we have extra time
6 afterwards, we're happy to listen but we want to make
7 certain that not one person dominates. We want to
8 hear from as many people as would like to give us
9 their thoughts and suggestions. And with that, if
10 it's okay, we're going to ask Jane Reddicker please
11 come forward and be the first speaker.

12 MS. REDDICKER: Thank you. Good evening.

13 MR. KATZ: Good evening.

14 MS. REDDICKER: I'm here on behalf of many
15 of our members.

16 MR. KATZ: You might want to turn the mic
17 the other way. There you go.

18 MS. REDDICKER: Is that good?

19 MR. KATZ: Yeah.

20 MS. REDDICKER: Okay. I'm here on behalf
21 of a lot of our members. We advertised this through
22 our newsletter and through some other venues and had
23 a lot of people reach out to me and say some of the
24 things that you said. They didn't want to go on
25 record so they asked me to be their mouthpiece

1 tonight. Some of them didn't really want to write.
2 Some of them don't believe anything will happen. I'm
3 glad to hear changes are happening already so I'll
4 take that back. And some of them were afraid of
5 retribution.

6 A lot of this comes back to what one of
7 our members, Julie Veradi (ph), said in the Source of
8 the Spring interview that was just published this
9 week. A lot of this has to do with the culture and
10 the feeling of Montgomery County versus, for example,
11 Prince George's County. And she described it in the
12 article as the stark difference between her dealings
13 with Price George's, where she's about to open, and
14 Montgomery County was that Prince George's County --
15 everybody she dealt with felt warm and embracing.

16 And she said this even though some of the
17 things were more expensive -- she had to jump through
18 a few more hoops. The way that she was handled and
19 the way everything happened, it was like when you're
20 -- when you're interested with folks -- or when
21 you're interacting with folks you don't feel like
22 it's us versus them. You feel like even though
23 Montgomery County's more transparent and the new
24 website for DPS is great. But when you talk to
25 somebody, she said you get the attitude of, well,

1 you're bothering me.

2 I got that same attitude from one of our
3 members who owns a yoga studio who went through a
4 whole lot of hassles in terms of how far is it from
5 the end of this wall to the fire escape and is it
6 more than 100? He had four people who measured it
7 under 100 but nobody from DPS came out to measure it.
8 They insisted. So he finally said, okay, I'm going
9 to put a bookcase in the corner then nobody can stand
10 back there. Okay, that was fine. But it took three
11 months to get to that process and every time he went
12 back in it was like, oh, it's you again.

13 So a lot of this I think has to do with
14 the fact that businesses at least feel like we're not
15 necessarily wanted here. I've heard similar things
16 -- we had one member who recently just bought
17 property in Frederick County. He said they rolled
18 out the red carpet when he walked in there. The
19 mayor, the economic development person was there.
20 And from those folks down to the guy in the parking
21 lot where he had to park next door said, you know,
22 answered their questions before they had the
23 questions sometimes.

24 So I think that's something that, you
25 know, if we could get to a culture where we're

1 rolling out the red carpet, where we understand that
2 business is not the enemy; business is here to really
3 support everything else we want to do in this
4 community, it would help.

5 I only had three minutes so I'm not going
6 to go through the litany of examples that I have but
7 I will send them to you in writing.

8 MR. KATZ: Please.

9 MS. REDDICKER: At a recent ribbon
10 cutting, though -- until you cut me off here -- I'll
11 tell you about the owner of one of the franchises
12 that has several coffee shops in the area, several --
13 multi-jurisdictional. Said that there's no other
14 place that he's had to lose part of his seating area
15 because he had to put in a second bathroom.

16 MR. KATZ: Thirty seconds.

17 MS. REDDICKER: Okay. Anyway, those are
18 the kinds of stories that it just seems like we go
19 too far. Our members want to abide by the law. They
20 want to do what's right. They want to be an asset to
21 the community. And we just need a little bit better
22 attitude from the folks who are working in the county
23 to be helpful and say we want you here. Let us help
24 you get to yes. So thank you for listening.

25 MR. KATZ: Thank you. Thank you for

1 sending in the other information

2 MS. REDDICKER: Absolutely.

3 MR. ELRICH: Let me point out something.
4 You see these around at the seats? This lets you
5 submit a written comment if you don't want to say
6 something. And it has an email address on there if
7 you want to send it in via email, just use the
8 address on this piece of paper and send it in by
9 email.

10 MR. KATZ: Next we'd like to hear from Dr.
11 Drena Valentine please.

12 DR. VALENTINE: Good evening. I am Dr.
13 Drena Valentine. I am a small business owner located
14 in Montgomery County as well as the interim executive
15 director for the Maryland Black Chamber of Commerce.
16 We have hundreds of members across the state of
17 Maryland. The most of our members are actually
18 located in Montgomery County.

19 And what we do for our members is we
20 connect them other businesses. We -- and to other
21 corporations. We educate them on how to do business
22 in the state of Maryland -- all the counties
23 including Montgomery County as we know it today. And
24 we also advocate for our members. So County
25 Executive Elrich and Councilmember Katz, I'd like to

1 thank you on behalf of our members for having this
2 forum to allow them to advocate for themselves.

3 Now you've seen me up at the podium a
4 couple of times. And after the first event that I
5 attended, Judy Stevenson said, well Drena, what do
6 you think about the initiative? And my honest answer
7 was I have a healthy dose of skepticism. Why? It's
8 because the businesses in Montgomery County have been
9 going through these challenges in the county much
10 longer than this administration.

11 But after being able to talk to both of
12 you and having an extended conversation with Chief
13 Procurement Officer Ash Shetty, I can honestly say
14 today that I am very optimistic that we will have
15 positive changes in this county and wanted to let you
16 know this evening that the Maryland Black Chamber of
17 Commerce supports your efforts and we are here to
18 help you and to make sure this initiative is made
19 possible.

20 MR. KATZ: Thank you.

21 MR. ELRICH: Thank you very much. I did
22 want to point out, Drena, that this is the first time
23 that we've actually had music for one of these. Just
24 wanted you to know.

25 DR. VALENTINE: And the food is better

1 too.

2 MR. KATZ: And the food is better.

3 Listen, I agree with that. Next is Susan Peterkin.

4 MS. PETERKIN: Peterkin.

5 MR. KATZ: Yes, please.

6 MS. PETERKIN: Good evening. Thank you
7 for having us here today. So as -- my name is Susan
8 Peterkin. I'm a small business owner here in
9 downtown Silver Spring, Jaha Hair Studio. I have
10 been here in Silver Spring for 22 years. So concern
11 Purple Line construction is coming. We have no sense
12 of financial assistance that will be given. We have
13 gotten technical assistance and we appreciate and we
14 thank everyone from [inaudible] who helped us to get
15 technical assistance.

16 But we can have all the marketing,
17 technical assistance but if the streets are closed,
18 if the parking -- there's no parking, if all the
19 sudden the contractors who are doing the work, you
20 know, blocking the streets or the water is turned off
21 or something get interrupted, which has been
22 happening to us for the past five years with the
23 building of the library and other buildings around us
24 -- you know, a very small block -- it impacted our
25 business. And something as humongous as the Purple

1 Line it would be on a larger scale.

2 So, you know, the continuous projects and,
3 you know, we have survived but how do we survive? We
4 need a plan. You know, we need some commitment from
5 the county. You know, we need financial assistance
6 because even though we are going to -- you know, I'm
7 a small business owner. That's all I know how to do
8 to get in there, get in the trenches and do what I
9 need to do.

10 But I can do everything that I need to do
11 but if there's no one coming into my business, how do
12 I survive? How do I feed my family? How do I pay my
13 mortgage? We are -- and on Bonifant Street, I say we
14 are not even small businesses; we are mom and pop
15 businesses like directly -- the money we make every
16 week pays our bills. How do we survive? We need
17 financial assistance.

18 MR. KATZ: Thank you very much. I did
19 want to say that we've been joined by my colleague
20 Will Jawando -- County Councilmember Will Jawando as
21 well.

22 And thank you for sharing with that. You
23 know, that's my background was that I was a small
24 business owner and I was a part-time mayor at the
25 same time. And believe me, I love small businesses

1 and I understand there's good days and bad days in
2 it. And if you don't have business that day then
3 it's a bad day. I mean, you can't -- you can't
4 survive unless you're ringing that register.

5 Next is Mike Houston. And I apologize
6 when I mess up everybody's name because I'm not good
7 at this. But go ahead, please.

8 MR. HOUSTON: I've got an easy one. My
9 name's Mike Houston. I'm the general manager of the
10 Takoma Park Silver Spring Food Co-op. I've been
11 involved in food businesses in Montgomery County for
12 the last seven years previously working as the store
13 manager at Dawsons Market in Rockville.

14 Operating business in Montgomery County
15 offers population density, access to diverse base and
16 workforce and a higher than average household income
17 than other parts of the county -- country. However,
18 there are regulatory hurdles that while well-meaning
19 can create undue hardships. HHS regulations in the
20 county hold that anyone that wants to sample or sell
21 food to the public outside of their licensed facility
22 must complete a temporary food service license and
23 pay a fee.

24 These forms can either be turned in
25 physically to HHS in Rockville or faxed; there's no

1 online option. The option to fill out the permit
2 information online and process payment online would
3 be a huge help to businesses planning offsite events.
4 Sometimes invitations to participate in festivals and
5 summer events come with short notice causing
6 businesses to incur a late fee with their HHS permit.
7 An online application would be very welcome for those
8 of us in East County for whom a trip to Rockville is
9 difficult but who want the certainty that our
10 application was received and reviewed before the
11 event.

12 The typical fee for a one-day event is
13 \$70. A local vendor coming to a co-op event to
14 sample, such as our Earth Day celebration, must also
15 pay \$70 on top of the product that they give away.
16 When the co-op sells at an offsite community event,
17 our first \$70 in profit go to pay for that permit
18 which is true of all the food businesses who attend
19 the same event. Perhaps one fee for each event
20 instead of per business could be implemented.

21 Food service facilities are already
22 required to have a food service manager present at
23 all times meaning most businesses have several people
24 who've undergone the proper training. If businesses
25 had a food service manager present at offsite events

1 perhaps their knowledge and training could reduce the
2 need for inspections and therefore lessen the cost.
3 This change in regulation could incentivize more
4 businesses to get their staff members food service
5 safety training increasing knowledge and awareness
6 throughout the county.

7 I appreciate your willingness to hold
8 these sessions for the business community and look
9 forward to doing business in the county for many more
10 years to come.

11 MR. KATZ: And we look forward to seeing
12 you. We saw you at Dawsons all the time. Let me ask
13 you, do you know what Howard County would be charging
14 for this or some other place? We'll research it.

15 MR. HOUSTON: I don't off the top of my
16 head.

17 MR. KATZ: Okay. Thanks. Next we're
18 going to hear from Cherie Hope.

19 MS. HOPE: Hi. I want to thank you for
20 doing this because I've been in business 27 years in
21 the county and this is the first time anyone has ever
22 asked me my opinion about anything. I started a
23 small business on 17 credit cards many years ago.
24 I've been through ups and downs. I had a place in
25 Wheaton that the county put a Day Labor Center next

1 to -- a children's facility -- and within six weeks
2 we went from 600 kids to 20 kids. They shut me down.

3 I have a place in Silver Spring. I have a
4 place in Gaithersburg and it just seems like every
5 time I turn around, Silver Spring -- we lost \$120,000
6 before they could do a common-sense change of the
7 traffic pattern for that bridge. It almost put me
8 out of business. I employ mostly young people at my
9 gymnastics facility. A lot of them it's their first
10 time working. I can't afford to train people
11 anymore.

12 I have to hire people -- I mean, the
13 minimum wage for a first-time kid coming who knows
14 nothing and sometimes don't even know how to use a
15 broom. And I've got to pay them such wages. The
16 only thing that's keeping me in business is prayer.
17 I just don't know anymore. I just -- I am so
18 frustrated and every time the county comes out to
19 inspect me, every time, it's a different thing.

20 Like if they come out and do a fire
21 inspection, oh you need to change this. The next guy
22 comes out, you need to change that back. It's never
23 consistent. And when you try to talk to them, they
24 act like you've done something wrong. I want to
25 work. I want to employ people. I want to teach

1 children and I want -- I want to pay my taxes and I
2 want to do the right thing. But every time I turn
3 around it's something different.

4 And it just -- I -- I just don't know how
5 much longer with everything that's going on. My
6 rent's going up. My labor cost is going up. I can't
7 raise my rates for gymnastics to even break even.
8 Every year from the last six years we have made less
9 and less money and have more and more kids. So it
10 just -- it just seems like we don't get any relief.
11 And that bridge --

12 MR. ELRICH: Which bridge?

13 MS. HOPE: The Brookfield Bridge that they
14 closed for six months. That was just a travesty that
15 they allowed that to go on for so long. People
16 couldn't come to bring their kids to my camp and they
17 couldn't come pick their kids up. And I lost a
18 tremendous amount of business that I won't get back
19 because they went somewhere else. And I just -- I
20 just don't know what to do anymore. I feel like I'm
21 just under water just barely breathing.

22 MR. KATZ: Thank you. And we're sorry
23 you're going through this -- we are. And of course,
24 all this is being recorded as well. So we've heard
25 you loud and clear.

1 MR. ELRICH: The issue about consistency
2 in inspections has probably been repeated at every
3 forum we've gone through. So this is going to be a
4 high priority.

5 MS. HOPE: It would help if they would
6 work with you instead of -- like the first thing they
7 say -- I mean, when they come in -- well we're going
8 to shut you down, you know, if you don't comply with
9 us. You know, I've been in the same building for 26
10 years and the last guy that came in last summer said,
11 oh you have to put -- we have really high ceilings.
12 You have to put ceilings on your closets.

13 I'm like, no, I'm not -- I just angry with
14 him. I said no, I'm not doing it. The guy before
15 didn't say I had to do it and the guy before him
16 didn't say I had to do it. I'm not doing it. So he
17 ended up calling up to the county and talking to the
18 guy who inspected it the time before. And he was
19 like, you need to leave this lady alone. That's
20 exactly what he said.

21 MR. KATZ: We hear you loud and clear.
22 Next please is Laura Barclay.

23 MS. BARCLAY: Good evening. I'm Laura
24 Barclay. I run the Old Takoma Business Association
25 in Takoma Park. Good evening. I'm here representing

1 the small business. We have a combined commercial
2 district of Takoma Park, Maryland and the Takoma
3 neighborhood of Washington, D.C. And I've collected
4 data from our businesses that they wanted me to share
5 with you this evening.

6 The first thing, the permitting process
7 which I think ties into the previous speaker here.
8 Our small businesses have found long delays for
9 approvals which have led to months of paying rent by
10 the small businesses without any income coming in.
11 We have inconsistencies with permitting
12 representatives. And they feel that there's been
13 punitive and expensive change process -- processes
14 and there's an inability to expediate.

15 From a permitting requirement standpoint,
16 our businesses are finding that the requirements are
17 excessive for small businesses. Our businesses are
18 all small, locally owned, independent businesses.
19 The requirements don't take into account the
20 limitations with our small historic commercial stock
21 and -- or the small operations of these businesses.
22 And I'm going to be providing you with detailed
23 examples --

24 MR. KATZ: Please.

25 MS. BARCLAY: -- from specific businesses.

1 In addition, our businesses are feeling the weight of
2 the cumulative impact of county requirements. So
3 related to the \$15 minimum, the earned sick and safe
4 leave law, required county certifications like the
5 allergy awareness class which requires staff to have
6 -- be out of the building, the office or the shop.
7 And obviously, increased property taxes which we're
8 all feeling. These combined have a cumulative effect
9 on our small businesses with no -- nothing to turn
10 to.

11 And what we've seen on the D.C. side of
12 our commercial district, there's small business
13 grants and many of them. We've got two examples that
14 I've printed out information for you. There's the
15 Great Streets Grants in D.C. which has given up to
16 \$50,000 to some of our small businesses on Carroll
17 Street Northwest. So a block over they have access
18 to \$50,000 as a small retailer, as a small restaurant
19 that Carroll Avenue does not have access to.

20 The other is a more recently released
21 grant called the Robust Retail Grant -- \$10,000 grant
22 and the idea is helping the retail business pivot.
23 It's a tough time for retail. I don't need to tell
24 you that. This \$10,000 could just be the infusion
25 that gets them to change their business up to be more

1 competitive.

2 MR. KATZ: Thirty seconds.

3 MS. BARCLAY: Thank you. So I have those
4 examples that --

5 MR. KATZ: And you're going to share --
6 okay. Good.

7 MR. ELRICH: Thank you.

8 MR. KATZ: Thank you. Next is Paul
9 Grenier for Ada -- you'll know what you're for.

10 MR. GRENIER: Hi. Yes, I'm Paul Grenier
11 and I'm here on behalf of the Long Branch Small
12 Business Association. I'm going to start with three
13 points that Ada Villatoro, who's the head of El Golfo
14 Restaurant, asked me to bring to your attention.
15 She, like everyone else, is grateful for you holding
16 this session.

17 But the first thing Ada wanted to bring to
18 your attention is that there's increasing -- a
19 persistent but increasing problem of beggars and
20 drunks and homeless people in the business district
21 of Long Branch. And she'd like to see more police
22 presence and a police substation if at all possible
23 in the area that has been in the area before. That
24 is not just Ada's point. I hear this from a lot of
25 businesses. There's some of the small businesses in

1 Long Branch that are paying out-of-pocket every night
2 to have off-duty police police their property because
3 otherwise there'd be chaos. So this is -- multiple
4 requests on that one.

5 A homeless facility is something that --
6 another thing she requested. Having worked in this
7 area myself, I'll add that it seems to me that having
8 a dedicated homeless outreach person might be more
9 realistic in the short term and more affordable but
10 would be very useful for that and similar
11 neighborhoods near us.

12 The -- the final point that Ada wanted to
13 bring up was just to request as much marketing and
14 promotional support from the county as the county can
15 do particularly during the construction period which
16 is the same as Bonifant Street. We also hear a lot
17 of that from Bonifant.

18 I do want to add parenthetically on my own
19 that Planning and Parks Department in the county are
20 doing really terrific work including in Long Branch.
21 So it's like the county is already doing some great
22 stuff there. Do I have any time left?

23 MR. KATZ: You have another minute.

24 MR. GRENIER: Okay.

25 MR. KATZ: And what I'm going to do --

1 rather than interrupt you -- I'm going to stop it for
2 a second. Rather than interrupt you, I'm just going
3 to hold my finger up so when you have 30 seconds
4 left. I feel strange interrupting everybody. So go
5 ahead, please. I'll let you know when you have 30
6 seconds left.

7 MR. GRENIER: There's some additional
8 ideas that businesses will want to provide to you on
9 infrastructure needs. I won't take up time there.
10 We'll just email that to you.

11 MR. KATZ: Please.

12 MR. GRENIER: The -- another big issue
13 which goes probably beyond the purview of today's
14 discussion is if it would be good as a longer-term
15 project to look into facilitating small businesses
16 owning their own real estate. That's a whole big
17 issue, obviously.

18 And then finally, there's a huge need for
19 cost reduction across the board for mom and pop and
20 small businesses. Their costs are going through the
21 roof. This is for all businesses. This isn't just
22 for what -- the one I was originally talking about.
23 Their costs constantly go up. The utility costs and
24 the size of their spaces are for an older era. There
25 needs to be change in the way things are zoned and

1 the way things are redeveloped to reflect how small
2 business works today. And they can't afford those
3 huge spaces anymore. They need smaller spaces.
4 Thank you.

5 MR. KATZ: Thank you very much. Next we're
6 going to hear from Tony -- you want to try that one?

7 MR. ELRICH: Parchment.

8 MR. KATZ: Parchment, there you go. You
9 know how to say it.

10 MR. PARCHMENT: Hi. My name is Tony
11 Parchment. I'm here from the Maryland Black Chamber
12 of Commerce. I run an infinity group called the
13 Montgomery County Black Business Council. I've grown
14 up in the county. I live in the county. I've been
15 an entrepreneur for 21 years. And my first business
16 was based in Rosslyn. My newest business was based
17 in the county.

18 One of the things I wanted to make sure
19 you guys thought of as you're passing legislation and
20 coming up with policies is thinking about the fact
21 that you have a lot of business owners that have
22 great intentions not only for the business but for
23 the community. I'm also on the executive committee
24 of my PTA. I'm doing other things in the county. I
25 want the county to grow and thrive but a lot of times

1 I feel like it's an us versus them type of mentality
2 when it comes to either county politics, media.

3 Everybody seems to be coming down on
4 business owners and everybody needs to realize we're
5 community members also and we want to try to do the
6 right thing by our businesses and by the community.
7 A lot of us also compete across jurisdictions. So
8 any time you pass legislation that impacts us as a
9 Montgomery County business, you have to think about
10 the fact that we're competing with other people in
11 other jurisdictions that may have less restrictions
12 or may have more latitude to do different things that
13 we can't do in the county. So please keep that in
14 mind as you think about policies to implement in the
15 future.

16 The only thing I'd ask from the Black
17 Business Council perspective is help us -- let us
18 know how we can help you get the word out about our
19 really great local black businesses. And help us
20 find ways to educate black businesses. And lastly,
21 there's so many entrepreneurs and great business
22 owners and a lot of corporate experience in the
23 county. If there's a way for us to link that
24 experience with business owners that need mentorship
25 and coaching, it would be great if we could find a

1 way to make that happen. And we are there and ready
2 to help you guys with that.

3 MR. KATZ: Thank you. Next is --

4 MR. ELRICH: Rafael --

5 MR. KATZ: Rafael --

6 MR. ELRICH: -- Arcila.

7 MR. KATZ: There you go.

8 MR. ARCILA: Thank you for your time. I'm
9 a chef and manager of a small restaurant here --
10 right here in downtown Silver Spring. And we
11 recently made an inquiry about obtaining a beer and
12 wine license. I'm not sure if the restrictions apply
13 to the county or state or how big it goes, but we
14 learned that we are unable to obtain a beer and wine
15 license because we only have one bathroom. So from
16 what I've read and what we're told it says that we
17 need a bathroom for each sex.

18 MR. ELRICH: [inaudible] change.

19 MR. ARCILA: Yeah. And for us we view it
20 as a big potential loss. You know, with the
21 increasing minimum wage and being a small restaurant,
22 you know, we would like to be able to maximize our
23 profits in another way rather than just having to
24 increase our sales. I don't know what's possible in
25 the future or how that can change but, you know, me

1 being a chef as well, I'd like to, you know, the
2 possibility to open more restaurants. And if they're
3 the size of the one that I'm currently running, you
4 know, I'm going to have to find something with two
5 bathrooms for everyone that I want to serve beer and
6 wine with.

7 Overall we just see it as kind of a
8 potential loss as well because being right in the
9 heart of Silver Spring -- we're right on Fenton
10 Street right by the Fillmore -- you know, not being
11 able to sell beer and wine, you know, it's kind of a
12 disadvantage for us in our location as well if we
13 ever look to sell. So we would like to see if
14 there's a way that we can change that ruling so that
15 small restaurants, especially mom and pop
16 restaurants, could benefit in the future.

17 MR. ELRICH: So I'll look to see if
18 there's anything at the state level that prohibits
19 it. Otherwise, we can put legislation in allowing
20 unisex bathrooms.

21 MR. ARCILA: Perfect.

22 MR. ELRICH: Other people are doing it.

23 MR. KATZ: And we have someone where from
24 the Department of Liquor Control. Jocelyn -- yeah,
25 she's here. Do you know of the rule or you don't?

1 MS. RAWAT: It depends on the type of
2 license but it is true that certain licenses do
3 require a certain number of bathrooms and they are
4 regulated by state law, not county law.

5 MR. ELRICH: Even the bathrooms are
6 regulated by state?

7 MS. RAWAT: Uh-huh.

8 MR. KATZ: Well, we're going to look into
9 it, obviously, and we'll figure out how we can help.

10 MR. ARCILA: Okay. Thank you. I
11 appreciate it.

12 MR. ELRICH: We can take this to the state
13 delegates also. We can just ask them to put a bill
14 in on this.

15 MR. ARCILA: Perfect. I appreciate it.

16 MR. KATZ: Thank you. Next is Liz Brent.

17 MS. BRENT: Good evening. Thank you for
18 inviting us here. I'm the broker/owner of Go Brent
19 Real Estate. I'm also the founder of the non-profit
20 Silver Spring Cares. I have very few dealings with
21 the county personally in my own business. And I'm
22 just so fortunate that it's -- what I hear from
23 everybody else is -- I want to echo Jane's comments
24 that business owners are literally scared of their
25 government specifically DPS -- specifically the

1 retribution.

2 I talked with a non-profit business
3 manager just yesterday about a problem. And I said,
4 call Hucker's office, call Hans' office. They will
5 help you. She said, I don't know if it's worth it,
6 maybe it will be worse. I have to deal with DPS
7 essentially forever. This is a very, very severe
8 problem. I called Hucker's office. I think he's
9 here.

10 MR. KATZ: Here's here somewhere.

11 MS. BRENT: I called Hans office. They
12 were both very helpful. One of them called DPS on a
13 situation that I was little bit involved in just
14 because I cared. They heard one thing from DPS which
15 is entirely different than the business owner had
16 heard. It's really, really a problem. People have
17 heard the threats that they will shut you down if you
18 don't do this even though last year or in the last
19 ten years no one has said that you have to do this.

20 There are three things that I hear most
21 often from business owners and I know a lot of them
22 in downtown Silver Spring. The two biggest problems
23 -- liquor monopoly, DPS. The solution, frankly, for
24 those that can afford is Prince George's County.

25 MR. KATZ: Thank you. We're sorry that

1 you're having that experience but we're going to try
2 our best to change it.

3 MS. BRENT: But, sir, it's not me.

4 MR. KATZ: I'm not saying you.

5 MS. BRENT: Okay.

6 MR. KATZ: The -- that you're referring
7 to.

8 MS. BRENT: So I want you to hear. I'm
9 terrified for the county that I have lived in and run
10 a business in for 24 years. I'm damn lucky. I don't
11 have the problem that everybody else has in this
12 room. But I don't get the sense that people are
13 really listening either.

14 MR. KATZ: Well, I'm sorry you're getting
15 that sense. I can tell you we are listening. Next
16 is Samira Cook Gaines.

17 MS. GAINES: Good evening, everyone.

18 MR. KATZ: Good evening.

19 MS. GAINES: I am Samira Cook Gaines and I
20 have a very brief statement. I'm the new economic
21 development manager for the city of Takoma Park. My
22 background is that I've been doing business
23 development in Washington D.C. for 15 years. The
24 disparity in the treatment of the businesses
25 comparatively businesses are seen as a gem, as an

1 anchor, as an asset in the community.

2 Here we've not just seen from the county
3 the struggle and the issues with permitting and the
4 kind of bureaucratic issues but we've even seen it
5 from the residents who are -- who kind of have an
6 anti-business sentiment. There's not a lot of --
7 there's not a lot of joint or collective discussion
8 about what the community is.

9 And I definitely feel, and again this is
10 from my personal experience, not from the city
11 directly. But I definitely feel like that comes from
12 somewhere. And if you have permitting folks coming
13 through and saying we'll shut you down in a punitive
14 way and people who are not receptive to the
15 challenges, my question is are we equipped capacity-
16 wise to actually help businesses grow. Because what
17 I've done for 15 years is help businesses grow. I've
18 literally created millionaires. And for me I don't
19 see that same pathway here.

20 And I've not been here long enough to see
21 any hardcore barriers. But every contact I have with
22 a business is, one, the fearful nature and, second,
23 when I've looked for resources. So the city of
24 Takoma Park is small. So we are looking to the
25 county for resources. The biggest difference in D.C.

1 is what our Old Town Business Association just
2 brought up.

3 The difference in those grants -- D.C.
4 wants you to start a business. They want those
5 businesses to grow and we see it right in Takoma park
6 with Busboys and Poets and that's their fifth
7 location, you know? Again it's in D.C. but that's a
8 -- that was a small business that has now expanded to
9 a way that we all know Busboys and Poets, you know,
10 and it's the preferred. Developers literally look
11 for them when they -- literally look for them when
12 they're building new locations.

13 The last thing I'll say is about the
14 Purple Line. So I've worked on the H Street
15 Lightrail and one of the major challenges that we saw
16 there was that construction. Construction has the
17 potential to completely decimate a small business
18 corridor. We've seen it and then there's turnover
19 and gentrification.

20 I am specifically interested in New
21 Hampshire Avenue corridor. Those businesses have
22 been there for generations. They are immigrant run
23 businesses. They are our international businesses
24 and they deserve the same treatment as other
25 commercial corridors. And that's financial

1 assistance. It may not just be county. I think it
2 may also be state. Thank you very much.

3 MR. KATZ: Thank you. Next is Stacey
4 Brown.

5 MS. BROWN: I've written my comments so
6 that I stay brief. Before I provide my comments, I
7 just wanted to thank you for actually embarking on
8 this. I've never been a part of something like this
9 where we're actually asked for feedback, so I'm happy
10 to be here. And I'm very hopeful that the outcome
11 will be that we -- you have more understanding of the
12 businesses, more respect and that we're more -- that
13 we are engaged more.

14 Before I provide my specific comments, I
15 want to tell you a little bit about myself to provide
16 the right context to what I have to say. So I've
17 lived in Montgomery County for over 14 years. I'm
18 the owner of Signarama Silver Spring and I just
19 celebrated my ninth year in business. I'm involved
20 in the county and I where many hats.

21 On the civic side, I'm a former PTA co-
22 president, NAACP Parent Council chair. I've served
23 on the Silver Spring Citizen's Advisory Board for
24 nearly five years and was a former chair of the
25 Commercial and Economic Development Committee for

1 three years.

2 On the business side, I'm an active member
3 of the Maryland Black Chamber of Commerce and the
4 Greater Silver Spring Chamber of Commerce. I also
5 serve as one of the two business Purple Line CAT
6 representatives for the Lyttonsville sector. So I
7 say all of this to exemplify that I know the county
8 and I'm involved on all fronts and can speak as both
9 an engaged resident and business owner.

10 In general as a resident, I feel that the
11 county does a good job in engaging the community and
12 proactively reaches out to the community to get
13 feedback. I feel respected when I'm wearing that
14 hat. When I'm wearing my business hat, that's not
15 the case. In fact, my overall feeling is that our
16 opinions and insights are not respected nor included,
17 at least not without a fight.

18 I -- for example, how I've experienced
19 this firsthand is I was active in all four. The
20 minimum wage increase -- the initial legislation as
21 crafted had very unrealistic time frame and did not
22 take small businesses into account at all. It was
23 only after many meetings, testimony and back and
24 forth that a more sound approach was put forth.

25 The Lyttonsville Section Plan -- the

1 initial plan included creating a floating mixed-use
2 zone which would have decimated the viable Brookville
3 Road district that is home to over 475 businesses
4 employing approximately 3000 people. It was only
5 after debate, petitions, testimony and engagement
6 that this was rescinded. Again, a fight.

7 Paid Sick Leave Act -- again, similar to
8 the minimum wage, there was no consideration for
9 small business in the original bill. Once more
10 debate, testimony, another fight.

11 Closing the Lyttonsville Bridge due to the
12 Purple Line construction -- this was truly a great
13 example of how many businesses almost went out of
14 business and some are still struggling. In a
15 nutshell a workaround was agreed that would be a
16 hardship for both residents and businesses but
17 without loss of life or livelihood. A last-minute
18 change to the agreement put businesses at risk of
19 going out of business. And again, we had to be --
20 fight to be understood and heard and had to take it
21 all the way to the county executive.

22 We seem to be all grouped as these big,
23 bad businesses who are somehow against the common
24 good. We live here, we work here. We deserve to be
25 treated as if we and our issues matter. We're tired

1 of the fight after the plans have already been laid
2 and ask that you bring us to the table. Create focus
3 groups that include a diverse cross-section of
4 businesses, reach out to us to understand our few of
5 what will happen if. We may not agree but I believe
6 that we can reach common ground if we really listen
7 without judgment. Thank you.

8 MR. KATZ: Thank you for being here.

9 Thank you. Next is --

10 MR. ELRICH: Sophia Maroon.

11 MR. KATZ: No, this one. Juan --

12 MR. ELRICH: Juan Holcomb.

13 MR. HOLCOMB: Good evening.

14 MR. KATZ: Good evening.

15 MR. HOLCOMB: My name's Juan Holcomb, a
16 lifelong resident of Montgomery County. And I was
17 asked so nicely by the lady, did you want to speak so
18 I was not sure of this format. Like the others, I'm
19 very glad to see you engaging the community. My
20 situation and things are a little different than
21 folks here.

22 But one of the things I'd like to ask that
23 I -- in the business that I'm in is how do we judge
24 the outcome? How do we judge the implementation?
25 How do you know that you've done well in it? Is it

1 when you run for office again and you tell me that
2 the percentages went up? And most businesses and
3 small businesses go day by day.

4 I'm in the construction management
5 engineering consulting business -- professional
6 services, prime contracts. There's cranes
7 everywhere. I guarantee you the majority of them are
8 not from here and they're making billions, millions -
9 - Purple Line. You know, we tried to get in on all
10 these projects. And that's very disappointing. And
11 I've paid taxes in this neighborhood 50 plus years.

12 And so we really need to have some measure
13 of how what we're doing tonight, you know, it takes
14 people gas, time, effort. They had to close down to
15 come to attend these things. And so how do you
16 measure it? How do -- what -- you know, this is very
17 nice when you all go home. But what should we
18 expect?

19 You come back in three months, give us a
20 report saying that, you know, the outcomes from what
21 we said, that the people who need to add a bathroom
22 don't have to add it now or, you know, they're going
23 to get more information on road closures. So how do
24 we measure you and, you know, what do we know that
25 they're a success going forward?

1 MR. ELRICH: I just say that one way to
2 measure it -- we'll put out a list of what we
3 changed.

4 MR. HOLCOMB: Okay.

5 MR. ELRICH: So you'll be able to look at
6 a list of what questions people asked us and if we
7 take action on it you'll see what the legislative
8 changes are. And if it's been -- if it's a state
9 issue we'll let you know we've taken this issue to
10 the state delegation asking them to work there.

11 I think some stuff we can measure
12 complaints within departments, and I would certainly
13 not want to hear from people about people threatened
14 on inspections and things. I would look at that as a
15 tangible reduction in people coming out and saying
16 this happens to me.

17 So I think there are ways to measure
18 things tangibly. Some of it's going to be people
19 just talking to us because I suspect the same people
20 that are afraid of being identified aren't going to
21 be looking for a letter to them publicly printed
22 saying we dealt with your problem inspection-wise.
23 So we are looking to what we do.

24 The other thing is we -- I should've
25 mentioned in the beginning. One of the things we're

1 doing is developing a local preference for
2 purchasing. So we're going to go from not having a
3 local preference to having a local preference. Most
4 of the surrounding jurisdictions preference local
5 businesses. We're going to do the same thing --
6 preference the local businesses.

7 We realize that if we spend a little more
8 on a local business and that money stays in
9 Montgomery County, it's worth more than spending a
10 little less on something and wind up with all that
11 money going to Virginia or to Pennsylvania. So I'm a
12 big believer in spending local and so we're going to
13 develop legislation that people will be able to see.
14 So along with simplifying the contracting process,
15 we're going to make sure you actually have a better
16 chance of getting a contract in Montgomery County.
17 It is a problem. I agree.

18 MR. KATZ: I can tell you we're not doing
19 this to do nothing. I mean, we wouldn't -- we're
20 doing six of these. And this is the fifth one of the
21 six. And I can tell you speaking -- and I have
22 colleagues in the room. If I'm wrong, they'll jump
23 up and tell me. But all of my Council colleagues --
24 including Marc, the County Executive -- all of us
25 want a better life for our businesses and the public

1 and everybody else in general.

2 And many times I get a better life for the
3 public is to have a better business so they enjoy
4 going there. And many times you have a better
5 business because the public enjoys going there. So
6 this goes hand and glove and we're going to get
7 there. After we go through the list, if you're not
8 on the list --

9 UNKNOWN: I have a follow up question on
10 Mr. Elrich's comment on local preferences. Is that a
11 charter amendment to the legislation or is this
12 something that can be done?

13 MR. ELRICH: No, just a new legislation.
14 We've got a minority set aside but that doesn't
15 really do the job.

16 UNKNOWN: You'd never hit the mark.

17 MR. ELRICH: No, even if you did hit the
18 mark. If the mark is below the percentage of
19 minority population of the county. So missing --
20 making that mark doesn't mean necessarily you're
21 getting a fair share of business. So I don't want to
22 have a minimal standard. I want a process which lets
23 us have as many local competitiveness win as is possible
24 to win.

25 MS. HOPE: Can I say something real quick?

1 Three years ago we didn't have to pay for fire
2 inspection. Now we have to pay to have them come out
3 and we have to pay for them to come out again. So
4 they're always going to find something to come out a
5 second time and that's a big problem.

6 MR. KATZ: Next is Sophia Mar -- I'm not
7 sure -- it's M-A-R -- yes.

8 MS. MAROON: Like the color.

9 MR. KATZ: Maroon.

10 MS. MAROON: I'm Sophia Maroon. So I am a
11 resident here in the county. I'm also a small
12 business owner. I founded my company here seven
13 years ago and I have a food business. I have three
14 quick points to make about food because it's not
15 prioritized as an economy and I think it ought to be.
16 I think food, it's -- I know it's becoming so but it
17 hasn't been. And food is essentially recession
18 proof. And so looking at as an economic sector is a
19 very important thing.

20 There are three things that I think the
21 county could do to help small businesses. One is
22 access to capital. It's very hard --

23 MR. KATZ: Can you all hear her?

24 AUDIENCE: [inaudible].

25 MR. KATZ: Can you speak up a little bit,

1 please?

2 MS. MAROON: Yeah. So I was saying there
3 are three things that the county can do to help small
4 businesses. One is access to capital. One is access
5 to customers which, if there's going to be a local
6 preferences, then I have only two points to make.
7 But the third is infrastructure because right now
8 there isn't a lot of infrastructure in the county to
9 help food businesses grow. And we hit a ceiling. I
10 don't manufacture my product here because I can't. I
11 manufacture it out of state and employ a lot of
12 people in that state. And so I think that if we had
13 infrastructure here, we're able to support and keep
14 those dollars here.

15 Those are my three points that I wanted to
16 make. I feel like listening to the other business
17 owners here, a lot of these ideas don't apply just to
18 food. But one thing that is specific to food is what
19 Mike said about the sampling license which \$75 to
20 just let people try your product -- they might buy
21 it, they might not -- is a big hindrance. It's a
22 little thing that can make a big difference.

23 MR. KATZ: Candidly, it's not such a
24 little thing. I mean, you know, \$75 mounts up.

25 MS. MAROON: Well, it's 150 if you find

1 out the day before that you're going to be admitted
2 into that event.

3 MR. KATZ: Right.

4 MS. MAROON: So it can be -- it can be
5 onerous.

6 MR. ELRICH: I just want to say. I was
7 very interested in a co-packing facility and into the
8 incubator kitchen. We thought we were on the road to
9 get that and then I didn't do it. I fully intend to
10 do more than one incubator kitchen and we're working
11 on one project, possibly two, that'll have an
12 incubator kitchen, incubator restaurants and a
13 training facility for people. I'm trying to work out
14 a deal where I may get a building that has a kitchen
15 already that's an institutional kitchen that I would
16 also make into an incubator kitchen.

17 And I do want to build a co-packing
18 facility because we would be able to serve not only
19 local manufacturers in the county but local
20 manufacturers in the region. So I know that the
21 study was done. You and I talked about this ages
22 ago. It made sense ages ago. I'm glad to be in a
23 position where I can actually make the effort to make
24 it happen.

25 MS. MAROON: I agree. Thank you.

1 MR. KATZ: Dave Giacomini.

2 MR. GIACOMINI: Hey, guys. How are you?

3 MR. KATZ: Good.

4 MR. GIACOMINI: Sorry, I came in late. I'm
5 not totally down with the format. I'm just throwing
6 some stuff out to you.

7 MR. ELRICH: That's the format, sir.

8 MR. GIACOMINI: Is that --

9 MR. ELRICH: The format is that you talk
10 to us.

11 MR. GIACOMINI: Yeah. So first of all, I
12 do appreciate this. It takes a lot to get up here in
13 front of people and just get pounded. So I
14 appreciate that.

15 MR. KATZ: Welcome to elected life.

16 MR. GIACOMINI: Especially with the close
17 election so, you know, I do appreciate you coming
18 out. Anyway, my name's Dave Giacomini. My wife and I
19 own a small business in downtown Silver Spring called
20 Up. Jackie's Restaurant, if you guys know it, we own
21 the whole second floor of that. What we do is we
22 change people's lives through healing, wellness and
23 adventure. We run yoga, aerial yoga, rock climbing.
24 We work with vets with PTSD. We've got a lot of
25 different stuff going on. But the core business of

1 us is yoga, you know, and daily classes. People come
2 and get their wellness on.

3 I've got so much stuff. Three and a half
4 years I've been at this. We just celebrated our two-
5 year anniversary. We struggle every day. A year
6 half to open a yoga studio. If you want to hear our
7 experience, NPR did a whole story on our experience
8 and how crazy it was. Probably 50 grand in the hole
9 with county stuff that we didn't have to do. You
10 guys made us get compliant, you know, to our code on
11 staircases you never checked -- 20 grand there. You
12 know, it was crazy to open a yoga studio. Okay? I'm
13 not going to pile on on that.

14 I've got other concerns. I'm trying to
15 stay open. Okay? That's where we are now. We're
16 trying to struggle and I think I heard that -- a lot
17 of people. We're just trying to keep the doors open
18 right now. I have a unique experience down in south
19 Silver Spring -- I think that's what they call that
20 area. I'm going to call it what I call it -- it's
21 the pee pee bridge. I don't think I need to go any
22 further. We know what we're talking about. What
23 happens -- you know, it's funny; not funny -- funny,
24 not funny. So what happens in my business is that
25 I've got, you know, a lot of great stuff happening

1 downtown but I also have to deal with competitors
2 down there.

3 So my really business depends on people
4 coming from East-West Highway and feeling comfortable
5 with coming under that bridge to my business. I
6 don't have a lot of beefy, burly guys who typically
7 come to yoga studios. They're usually people that
8 are a little more timid about their security. And so
9 that's a real issue for me. And so I really rely on
10 these apartment -- tons of -- I mean, that's why we
11 set up in Silver Spring is because of demographics.
12 Right? But they don't feel comfortable coming under
13 that bridge.

14 And I've tried to work with the county a
15 lot. Just three weeks -- invited over to a meeting
16 at Progress Place. I was told that my views don't
17 match up with the county's. I was told that I don't
18 have the same vision as the county. I just want to
19 back up and say my wife's a social worker for the
20 D.C. government. She runs the ACE program. Three
21 minutes? Okay.

22 Let me just stop then. First of all, is
23 Society the largest customer for the Montgomery
24 County beverage? Can anybody answer that?

25 MR. KATZ: Is what?

1 MR. GIACOMIN: Society Nightclub. I bring
2 them up because it seems like they just keep slapping
3 us around down there. They get noise violations, one
4 after another; nothing's done. The violations keep
5 coming.

6 You know, let me fast forward. I have a
7 business right now -- I have another business that
8 we're looking at possibly putting in downtown Silver
9 Spring. Right now the same type of business puts 700
10 people a night in Rockville behind the Marlo
11 Warehouse if you know where that is.

12 MR. KATZ: Yeah, sure.

13 MR. GIACOMIN: You know the business I'm
14 talking about. Right now we have potential to bring
15 that kind of a pull to downtown Silver Spring. Why
16 would I want to do that right now when I've gone
17 through all this stuff and I get nothing but hassles
18 from the county? I'll let you guys answer that. But
19 why would -- and this is what we're talking about.
20 I'm looking at putting it over by the Target in D.C.
21 and just taking all that draw. What is preventing me
22 from just going the Montgomery County route and not
23 just going a couple of blocks over and still
24 benefitting from the county? It's just walking a
25 couple of more blocks but I'm in D.C. I don't want

1 to have to go that route.

2 But what is helping me -- when I see that
3 no one can rent anything out there George Avenue.
4 You know all that retail. They can't rent any of
5 that stuff. I have a guy underneath me who's been
6 begging for months. We've got problems.

7 I'm hoping that we can solve them. I'm
8 open to ideas. I'm down here in the trenches
9 fighting it out every day, paying my rent to a guy
10 who's just taking all my money really because I'm not
11 profiting. I work a 12-hour -- anybody else work a
12 12-day in here the past couple of weeks? Anybody
13 else?

14 MR. KATZ: Mr. Gia -- we're doing to --
15 we're going to --

16 MR. GIACOMIN: This is a hard-working
17 community. You guys work too. We're good people.
18 We're try -- so anyway. That's enough from me. I
19 hope that we can --

20 MR. KATZ: Well, first, it's not enough
21 from you because we're going to -- we're going to --
22 you're going to hear from us. Don't forget your
23 cookies. But we've heard you loud and clear and
24 we're going to have to figure out the answers to it.
25 For the -- one thing about the liquor, I've never

1 even heard of the -- I would sincerely doubt if
2 they're our biggest liquor person. But anyhow, we're
3 going to get back to you.

4 MR. GIACOMIN: I'd love to know that
5 because they're slapping us around.

6 MR. KATZ: Well, there's somebody from
7 liquor control here. We're find out. Next is Toch
8 -- T-O-C-H-U-K -- there we go. We've met before.
9 You're my friend -- the music guy.

10 MR. OYI: That's one of my -- I hope you
11 enjoyed the music.

12 MR. KATZ: I did. I did.

13 MR. OYI: You did. Okay. So my name is
14 Tochukwu Oyi. I'm the CEO of GE Records which is a
15 music coming that specializes in soul and R and B
16 music. I raised up a couple of issues the last time
17 I came about encouraging local talent here in the
18 county and giving them platforms to perform music.

19 But that's not really why I'm here. I
20 also run a business -- a new business called GMD,
21 Grace Medical Distribution. So our goal is to
22 partner with local hospitals back in my home county
23 starting -- well, all of Africa is the goal -- but
24 starting in my home country, Nigeria, the south,
25 south. And so partnering with the hospitals there

1 with the focus on mental health, supplying them drugs
2 to combat mental health and sicknesses from American
3 pharmaceuticals here.

4 And when I started to look, people told me
5 that I shouldn't do anything with American
6 pharmaceutical companies. I should rather work with
7 the Chinese companies. But I chose to partner -- try
8 and partner with American pharmaceuticals because I
9 felt that there are more regulations and possibly
10 better products produced by the pharmaceutical
11 companies compared to what we have in China.

12 So my question is what I've discovered is
13 there are no discounts, there are no kind of like
14 tariffs given for people like myself who want to buy
15 in bulk and export back to other countries which I
16 think is a great business for America because you
17 guys are getting -- especially in this -- so I don't
18 know if it's something you can do on the local level
19 --

20 MR. ELRICH: No.

21 MR. OYI: -- or something on the federal
22 level.

23 MR. ELRICH: No, they can't even control
24 the drug prices for Americans.

25 MR. OYI: Okay. Back to my last one then

1 -- back to my last question. Well, I also did a
2 little research of my own looking at the Fillmore
3 just right here. And I studied for about 20 days the
4 acts that came in. And I discovered that it was --
5 the only acts that claim to be from here was this
6 [inaudible].

7 But for the 20 days about 50 to 60 of the
8 acts that came through, none of them were from here.
9 That is not a slap to them. They're making their
10 money; they're good. At the same time, they're
11 taking that money, yes, they may have to pay at the
12 end of the next year -- like two percent to you guys.

13 But I'm talking about artists that are
14 from here that leave here that will pay taxes here if
15 they get bigger and bigger. What pl -- I mean, I was
16 walking in here. I don't know -- many of us may have
17 walked in here, we saw the band that was playing. I
18 mean, I heard them play Hotel California. It
19 reminded me of the Eagles.

20 It's like these are talented people here.
21 The gifts, the talents are just so enormous here.
22 How [inaudible] to tap into that, to encourage that,
23 to view their platform. For businesses like myself
24 that have record companies to encourage us to sign
25 these acts to develop them and to push them globally.

1 Thank you.

2 MR. KATZ: Okay. That is something I
3 don't think we need legislation for. It's just the
4 way we can do business. We hear you. Next is Emmett
5 -- yeah, there you go, Emmett. Thank you.

6 MR. ACQUOI: How are you doing, County
7 Executive?

8 MR. ELRICH: How are you doing?

9 MR. ACQUOI: Councilman. So my name is
10 Emmett Acquoi and I am a resident of Montgomery
11 County. I've been here going on 23 years this year.
12 I'm originally from Liberia. I have an IT consulting
13 business in the county that I have opened up back in
14 2006 but just went into it full-time in 2015.

15 Just a little background. I'm a former
16 PTA president of Piney Branch Elementary School.
17 I've, you know, been account executive for a few
18 things. I'm also a part of Montgomery County Black
19 Business Council and [inaudible]. So one of the
20 things that I've seen is that as a small business
21 owner, one of my goals is to grow the business and to
22 be able to hire locally.

23 As a Liberian being an African I know I
24 have the African Advisory Council that advise the
25 county executive that the goal of that council is to

1 try to work and ensure that the African community
2 receive, you know, an equal share of what's going on
3 in the county. And one of the things that I intend
4 to do is to try to -- because there are a lot of
5 young Liberians and Sierra Leonians and other folks
6 that [inaudible] are in the community that can
7 benefit from employment.

8 There's a school right downtown in Silver
9 Spring here called [inaudible]. I met them back when
10 I was doing some networking. And during that time
11 what I did was -- when I learned what they were
12 doing, which is getting people who didn't have any IT
13 backgrounds -- background or either had a little bit
14 of experience but wanted to transition into IT did
15 not have the money to go and pay for a school. They
16 were taken through this rigorous process. And once
17 you get accepted, you get a full training and it's
18 all free.

19 I refer a few people to it. And I one of
20 the things that I know that they are willing to if I
21 were to say, hey I'm going to go ahead and give this
22 person employment after they get training, that
23 person has a better chance of going through the
24 program. I actually took two individuals back, I
25 think, 2014 on a project that I had from that program

1 and kind of trained them -- some wiring things and
2 different networking stuff.

3 But I would like to grow. I would like to
4 do more business with the county. I'm a part of the
5 local small business, the Montgomery County Local
6 Small Business -- I forgot the acronym. At the end
7 of the day I have not gotten anything from there. So
8 I know that the governor of Maryland, they passed
9 some legislation to make it easy for small businesses
10 to be able to work with procurement.

11 And I will ask if there is any way -- I
12 know someone mentioned having a focus group that can
13 try to communicate with small businesses to see how
14 best you -- you know, and leverage getting them some
15 contracts. If anything can be done to ensure that
16 small businesses like mine can do businesses with the
17 county -- because one of the things when I checked
18 about two years ago, there was the CATs contract that
19 came out. I missed the deadline to apply for it
20 while a lot of companies on there were big. I know
21 they would struggle to get them to cooperate with
22 local businesses.

23 So if there's any way that, you know, for
24 IT company coming up -- one or two-man shop -- to be
25 able to have these opportunities of growth, I think

1 that would be good for the county.

2 MR. ELRICH: So something we're actually
3 working on. I don't know if you were in the room
4 when we talked about doing local preference for
5 contractors -- goes beyond the small business set
6 aside who actually will preference local businesses.
7 Unbundling contracts is meant to make contracts
8 available to more people and making sure we don't
9 make contracts that are so big that only large
10 companies can apply for them is another thing we're
11 looking at.

12 But I've got to say this because it's
13 true. If I gave one contract to everybody -- if I --
14 for every contract I gave out, if every contract I
15 had went to a different person, there are more
16 businesses in Montgomery County than there are
17 contracts to give out. And so we're going to change
18 our processes but it's no guarantee that everybody
19 will get a contract. So people have got to
20 understand that that is not a possible outcome. But
21 we can change it so nobody feels like you had too few
22 bidders, the contracts were too large, no one small
23 ever wins.

24 One of my big things is that only large
25 companies get these contracts and then you only get

1 to be a sub. And then we turn around and say, well,
2 you can't get a contract until you've had a direct
3 contact with the county or you've had to have a
4 contract with the county for the last five years.
5 That's all nonsense and those things we can change.
6 So our -- we're determined to try to level this
7 playing field so everybody's at least got a shot at
8 it.

9 MR. ACQUOI: If I can have one more thing.
10 I was thinking about it back there. You have the
11 incubator. I tried to get into the incubator and
12 that is more focused it looks like towards folks that
13 are inventing things.

14 MR. ELRICH: Which incubator?

15 MR. ACQUOI: I know that I tried Rockville
16 and I believe Bethesda. But each one I went to was
17 the same thing. It's like you have to be inventing
18 stuff, be a medical pharmaceutical -- whatever it
19 was. But my point is, if there was a way for local
20 businesses like mine because right now I'm actually
21 in a conversation of another IT business doing the
22 same thing -- a Nigerian gentleman for us to
23 collaborate.

24 If there was a way that you can, you know,
25 businesses like mine can come in an incubator, what

1 you just mentioned in terms of contracts, you don't
2 have to worry about getting contracts on individual.
3 We can partner and go after opportunities.

4 MR. ELRICH: So my goal is to have more
5 incubators. I mean, I'll be blunt. We have one good
6 incubator in Montgomery County that's the biotech
7 incubator in Germantown. The one in Rockville
8 provides virtually no business assistance. So if you
9 know what you're doing and you've got a reasonable
10 opportunity for success, we offer you cheap rent. We
11 don't offer you business training. We don't offer
12 you marketing. So we don't offer you anything
13 that'll make you grow.

14 And the one under the pee pee bridge -- on
15 the other side of the pee pee bridge -- we are
16 managing that so badly that we have HOC occupying
17 half the space in there which has nothing to do with
18 being an incubator because we don't program it right
19 and we haven't thought about it right. We used to
20 have somebody in charge of incubators.

21 When the previous executive changed the
22 economic development stuff and set up the Economic
23 Development Corporation, he transferred all the money
24 from Montgomery County economic development to the
25 Economic Development Corporation which had no

1 intention or mission to do incubators. So there's
2 still somebody who's working on it but it's not a
3 person who, you know, is dedicated to manage it and
4 it only.

5 I want to bring back an economic
6 development department inside the county, keep the
7 Economic Development Corporation. But there's plenty
8 of stuff to do at the local level that I think ought
9 to be done by the county. And so I'm determined to
10 try to bring some of this stuff. And if the Council
11 is supportive, we'll have more stuff directly under
12 control of the county government and you can hold us
13 accountable then.

14 MR. ACQUOI: That would be great. Thank
15 you.

16 MR. KATZ: And I did want to point out
17 once again that the head of procurement, Ash Shetty,
18 is in the room. This shows, candidly, that he cares
19 to hear what people are saying. He's handing you his
20 card. He hadn't handed me his card but he's handing
21 it to you.

22 MR. ELRICH: Half the people on the back
23 wall are county people.

24 MR. KATZ: Yeah, that's right. And none
25 of them are here to hurt you. Believe me, they're

1 here to figure this out. Next is Ethio -- Amer --
2 the Chamber of Commerce.

3 MR. MOHAMED: Hello. My name is Tesfaye
4 Mohamed and I'm a volunteer with the Ethiopian
5 American Chamber of Commerce.

6 MR. KATZ: Oh, I see. Okay.

7 MR. MOHAMED: First, I would like to thank
8 you, Mr. Elrich and Mr. Katz, for this wonderful
9 opportunity. And just letting -- you know, knowing
10 that someone is listening to you helps a lot. So I
11 want to -- I want to raise three issues. Those are
12 changes, information and grants. So the Ethiopian
13 community is scared of certain changes that are
14 taking place in Silver Spring.

15 And they're scared because of what
16 happened to them in D.C. So in D.C., as you all
17 know, the Ethiopian community invested a lot on U
18 Street, 18th Street and they were left out. When
19 grants came, opportunities were not presented to them
20 and they got pushed out. So where did they come to?
21 Montgomery County, Silver Spring and they're thriving
22 around just back here. And they're scared that the
23 same thing is happening to them here as well.

24 As you all know the train is mainly
25 affecting the Ethiopian community. The Ethiopian

1 businesses are greatly affected by the --

2 MR. ELRICH: Purple Line.

3 MR. MOHAMED: -- by the Purple Line. And
4 they also see other stuff like big businesses coming
5 in and they're scared they might be left out. And
6 that is why they would like for you to listen to
7 them, pay attention to them and help them out.

8 The second thing is information. There's
9 a lot of language barriers when it comes to
10 businesses owned by Ethiopian community so they don't
11 really have a lot of freely available access to
12 information. So we would like for you to come up
13 with ways to communicate with us better about
14 opportunities that are available and, you know,
15 information that could be helpful to us, to the
16 community.

17 And then lastly, grants. When it comes to
18 grants, a lot of us -- a lot of the businesses, they
19 don't know where they're at. They don't even know if
20 there's, you know, grants are available. They're
21 happy to just work, create businesses, open
22 businesses as long as -- they're used to the
23 government not helping them out.

24 They would like for you to find ways to
25 communicate with them about grants that are available

1 and help them grow their businesses. So those are
2 three things that I was asked to deliver to you. I
3 thank you for this opportunity and thank you
4 everybody.

5 MR. KATZ: Thank you.

6 MR. ELRICH: So you're in a difficult
7 situation -- revitalization of Silver Spring,
8 revitalization of any place -- because as soon as
9 something becomes more valuable the property owners
10 just jack the rents.

11 MR. MOHAMED: Exactly.

12 MR. ELRICH: I'm a bel -- you know, if you
13 know anything about me, I'm a -- I believe in
14 residential rent stabilization and I believe in
15 commercial rent control. I would make sure that if a
16 developer is getting high density and they get to
17 build a big, tall building that they should be
18 required to leave spaces on the ground floor
19 affordable to some existing businesses so I don't
20 displace everybody.

21 MR. MOHAMED: Exactly.

22 MR. ELRICH: So when I talk about that --
23 I invite you to come to the County Council because
24 I've raised this issue before on the Council. I
25 couldn't even get anybody to have a discussion with

1 them about commercial rent control. But I think the
2 truth is you folks are all toast. And I've said this
3 before. It would be nice if we revitalized the place
4 and let the people who are good enough to be there
5 before, let them stay there afterwards.

6 MR. MOHAMED: Exactly.

7 MR. ELRICH: So that's -- but that's a
8 tough issue. If it was up to me, I'd just wave my
9 magic wand and do it. Grants are a tough thing
10 because if you can't get a loan from a bank, asking
11 the county to put taxpayer money at risk is a tough
12 thing to do. So I'd like us to partner more with the
13 Small Business Administration.

14 One of the things we're talking about
15 doing is moving more of our deposits into what are
16 called local banks or community banks. And if we can
17 do that, I would extract agreements for them to make
18 more loans into the community because PNC doesn't
19 need my money. But if we've got local banks that
20 have a reputation for helping the community, if we
21 can make an arrangement where they are more
22 supportive of the community, I'm happy to move some
23 of our deposits in that direction.

24 I do feel -- and I'm -- I don't know. I
25 think I was alone on this on the Council before. But

1 we tried to get the state to pay for the Purple Line
2 disruption and the state said no. The Council feels
3 -- at least has felt in the past -- it was the
4 state's responsibility. I actually think it's
5 Montgomery County's responsibility --

6 MR. KATZ: It is.

7 MR. ELRICH: -- because the state wouldn't
8 have built the Purple Line if we hadn't asked them
9 to. They would have been more than happy not to do
10 it. We're the ones that made all the noise and made
11 all the political mess that got them to build it.
12 And I feel if I made the mess I kind of own it. I
13 just can't say, well it's a state project and so my
14 hands are clean. I know my hands aren't clean. So I
15 will be looking for ways.

16 You know, me and -- I think Tom Hucker's
17 gone. But me and him both intervened on the
18 businesses on George Avenue when the development went
19 in behind and they shut the alley and it took away --
20 so we intervened to provide financial support for
21 those businesses. We're doing the same thing in
22 Wheaton behind the new Park and Planning building.

23 I'm willing -- I've got to find some money
24 because we don't have a lot of money right now. But
25 I'm willing to look for some funds that we can

1 support people hopefully before we start tearing up
2 the street. I do feel a moral obligation to do
3 something.

4 MR. KATZ: And let me just say about --
5 the whole thing about the local banks. The local
6 banks want the county to do this. This is something
7 that would help them and therefore they can -- we're
8 helping them and they're helping the public. They're
9 helping the small business and everybody for the
10 capital. Because if a small business doesn't have
11 capital, you're not going to get business. You don't
12 have any inventory to get business. So we have to do
13 it. And they want to do it.

14 Marc and I have talked about this before.
15 There are several local banks that want to do this.
16 So that's another thing that we're working on. And
17 it really wouldn't cost the county anything because
18 we have -- we're putting the money somewhere anyhow,
19 you know.

20 MR. MOHAMED: Exactly.

21 MR. ELRICH: They all pay interest.

22 MR. KATZ: They all pay interest. That's
23 right. We have to make certain that we're getting
24 the right amount but we're -- and then that -- this
25 is the whole listing. Thank you. Thanks for -- but

1 there are a few other questions and we're not going
2 to be able to an -- we're already -- we're close to
3 that 8:30 mark.

4 But I did want to put on the record so
5 that someone is looking into this. There was a card
6 that said the fire alarm permits, the process is
7 difficult. So we're going to look into that.

8 This is -- how can small businesses access
9 government staff. They're very hesitant to return
10 phone calls. It should be an honor to meet with
11 Montgomery County businesses -- and it is. By the
12 way, that was my comment. And it's harder to get a
13 meeting in Montgomery County than the State
14 Department. I don't know about that. I've never
15 tried to get ahold of the State Department. But
16 anyhow, we've heard you.

17 And then the last thing is about what
18 we've heard a couple of times tonight about the
19 Purple Line mitigation and businesses -- for
20 assistance. We're going to work on that one as well.
21 Just one real quick. Okay. You'll be the last
22 speaker if that's the case. You're going to have to
23 come forward though so we can hear you.

24 MS. BRUSKIN: No, I was on the list and I
25 didn't get called.

1 MR. KATZ: Oh, really.

2 MS. BRUSKIN: So I just wanted to make
3 sure there weren't others in the boat.

4 MR. KATZ: What is your name? Go ahead,
5 please.

6 MR. BRUSKIN: Okay. So apologies.

7 MR. KATZ: What is your name?

8 MS. BRUSKIN: I'm Heather Bruskin.

9 MR. ELRICH: Yes, you are. No apologies.

10 MS. BRUSKIN: And I think some of my
11 colleagues have already shared some feedback but
12 thank you again for the opportunity to share feedback
13 tonight. My name's Heather Bruskin. I'm the --

14 MR. KATZ: You were on the list. I
15 apologize.

16 MS. BRUSKIN: -- executive director of the
17 food council. So the food council is a community-
18 based non-profit that serves as a convener of food
19 system partners in Montgomery County. And we work,
20 as many of you know, closely with over 100 food and
21 beverage businesses in the county through our MoCo
22 Made program which is an opportunity to highlight
23 that vibrant sector in our communities and also
24 connect them to some of the resources that they need
25 in order to succeed.

1 And so we've had lots of opportunities
2 over the past couple of years to get feedback from
3 them on what they need from the government not only
4 to start their businesses but to grow and sustain
5 those businesses here in the county. These are
6 businesses that are owned by residents. They started
7 their business here because this is where their home
8 is and their kids go to school and they want to stay
9 here.

10 So a few key points to highlight for
11 tonight. Again, the need for new or improved food
12 preparation facilities. We talked about a kitchen
13 incubator but as those businesses get bigger, they
14 need access to larger operating -- facilities as well
15 -- larger commercial kitchen space, cut and wash
16 facilities and a co-packing facility which I'm really
17 excited to hear about is potentially moving forward
18 because as they expand they need to move elsewhere in
19 the DMV or potentially even out of state.

20 The businesses share that they need
21 additional educational opportunities around two main
22 things. The first, as has been shared before, is
23 financing options and access to capital. And the
24 second is food licensing and food safety
25 requirements. Again, the need to fax or hand deliver

1 forms as opposed to being able to email them or do
2 them online is just really difficult for these
3 businesses.

4 Having additional guidance like workshops
5 or print resources on licensing and food safety
6 requirements and then finally evaluating those costs.
7 And so it's already been shared tonight about those
8 \$70 one-time licenses.

9 But as an example, we had an event, MoCo
10 Made Expo in February where we had 20 food businesses
11 come together for a two-hour event. They paid the
12 county government \$1400 just for the ability to give
13 buyers samples of their products. And so these --
14 the ability to share products is critical for them to
15 access new and wider audiences.

16 And the final piece that I think applies
17 to food but also to every -- all the businesses that
18 are in the room and in the county is increased local
19 and sustainable procurement by the county government.
20 And so for food specifically, incorporating products
21 from our farms and other producers into our menus at
22 county food service facilities or anywhere where the
23 county is buying food and then also incentivizing
24 purchases from local food and beverage businesses and
25 agencies small expenses so that is sort of an

1 exemption from any of the incentives that are there.

2 But the food that's here tonight which is
3 not only delicious but is local and those investments
4 -- they seem really small but they add up and they
5 make a big difference to those businesses as they're
6 growing. And it establishes local businesses as a
7 priority not only for our -- for local food as a
8 community priority and more importantly it serves as
9 a model for the private sector to do the same. And
10 if the county government isn't doing it then what's
11 the private sector going to do it for? So thank you
12 for those --

13 MR. KATZ: Thank you.

14 MS. BRUSKIN: -- for the opportunity. I'm
15 sorry to jump in at the last minute.

16 MR. KATZ: No, it was my fault that I
17 skipped you.

18 MS. ROPER: I thought I was on the list
19 too.

20 MR. KATZ: Well, what's your name?

21 MR. ELRICH: Karen Roper.

22 MS. ROPER: Karen Roper.

23 MR. KATZ: I don't see you but go ahead,
24 please.

25 MS. ROPER: Thank you. I'll make it

1 really quick.

2 MR. KATZ: Okay.

3 MS. ROPER: I'm Karen Roper, one of the
4 founders of Fenton Village, Inc. whose mission is to
5 protect and preserve the nearly 200 small independent
6 businesses in Fenton Village -- 80 percent of which
7 are minority; almost 40 percent owned by women.
8 Right now Pepco is holding them hostage. As you may
9 be aware, they're replacing the line down Fenton
10 Street. They were supposed to do one block at a time
11 for three months and move on. That's just what they
12 tell you. They're doing four or five blocks at a
13 time. They're unnecessarily blocking several
14 driveways.

15 DPS is acting as their PR man. The
16 businesses that have complained have now been
17 ghosted. They now won't even respond to me. They've
18 called us liars. Businesses are reporting abuse by
19 the subcontractor that they feel is coming from their
20 ethnic and racial background. This is insane. We
21 have got to lobby the state to give us local control
22 over Pepco. We need to -- the county can't do
23 anything. They have cart blanche.

24 So everything we do for small businesses
25 is being wiped out right now and they've got another

1 year they're going to be doing this to these
2 businesses. And unless we can fine them something in
3 the five, \$600,000 range, they're not going to stop.
4 And they're treating them that way and it's getting
5 ugly and they're terrified of retaliation.

6 They're blocking their business. If they
7 complain, your business is blocked. Thank you very
8 much but we've got you to -- we've got to get on the
9 state to do this. I've lobbied for this for a year
10 and a half. No response from the state. I need the
11 county to back it up. Thank you very much.

12 MR. KATZ: Thank you. Thank you all very,
13 very much for being here. This is the biggest
14 meeting we've had up to this point. We have one more
15 so you can break the record next week if you like.
16 Thank you very much.

17 MR. ELRICH: And I assure you, we're
18 serious about this.

19 MR. KATZ: Wait. Marc had one other thing
20 to say, please.

21 MR. ELRICH: We really are serious about
22 this. We're not doing this for fun. And we want to
23 get to a better place.

24 MR. KATZ: Thanks. Good night.

25 MR. ELRICH: Good night.

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1 (The Recorded Meeting was concluded at
2 p.m.)

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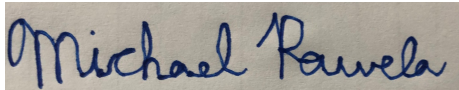
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1 CERTIFICATE OF COURT REPORTER - NOTARY PUBLIC

2 I, Michael Pawela, the officer
3 before whom the foregoing proceedings were taken, do
4 hereby certify that said proceedings were
5 electronically recorded by me; and that I am
6 neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by
7 any of the parties to this case and have no
8 interest, financial or otherwise, in its outcome.

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11 _____

12 Michael Pawela, Court Reporter

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CERTIFICATE OF TRANSCRIBER

I, Sheila Martin, do hereby certify that the foregoing transcript is a true and correct record of the recorded proceedings; that said proceedings were transcribed to the best of my ability from the audio recording and supporting information; and that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by and of the parties to this case and have no interest, financial or otherwise, in its outcome.

Sheila Martin

SHEILA MARTIN
May 27, 2019

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