



EAST COUNTY CITIZENS ADVISORY BOARD (ECCAB)

Wednesday April 2, 2025 Meeting Summary

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

Present: Councilmember Kristin Mink, Capt. Jason Cokinos, Lt Rebecca Innocenta, Sierra Cray, Chris Wilhelm, Erik Copeland, Sharron Brown, Eileen Finnegan, Margie Goergen-Rood, and Ed Weiler, Mustapha Mansur.

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

Welcome and Introductions. The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by chair Peter Myo Khin. Board members, government officials, and public members introduced themselves.

Approval of Meeting Summary: The summary for the March 5, 2024 meeting was approved without any objections.

Montgomery County Police, District 3: Commander Jason Cokinos and Lt. Innocenta gave the following update:

- Capt. Cokinos introduced Lt. Rebecca Innocenta as new to District 3, replacing Lt. Chmiel. She provided most of the remaining updates.
- Overall crime is down compared to last year but there have been some hot spots. Street robberies are up, especially along Lockwood Dr, north of MD650. Auto theft continues to be up. Theft from autos and carjackings are down. The first homicide occurred over the last month and appears to have been targeted.
- District 3 will be receiving six new graduates from the Police Academy on April 20 and the district has assurances they will remain within the district after the field training is completed.
- A safety stop campaign occurred on April 2 on US29 between 9 AM and 2 PM and 271 citations were issued.

A member of the ECCAB reported that some drivers on Fairland Rd were at times driving on the wrong side of the road. More detailed information was provided outside of the meeting so the police could be watching for that behavior.

Presentation: Councilmember Kristin Mink gave a presentation on the County's capital and operating budgets:

The following was provided for the capital budget:

- There is a Capital Improvement Program funding that was approved several years ago to provide \$40M as the County's share of the cost for the three master-planned roads within Viva White Oak. The expenditure had been at the end of the current six-year period but has been moved up to the first three years to match the developer's estimate of when the funds would be needed. A total of \$30M is included in FY26.
- The CIP for the new college campus remains at \$60M, but \$5M for the first year has been slid one year to match the college's request.
- The new Burtonsville ES is scheduled to open in the Fall of 2026, with groundbreaking in May 2025

The following was provided for the operating budget:

- The Council approach to the budget will be different this year. The starting position will be what the Council Executive recommended, then councilmembers can propose additions or subtractions to it.
- Schedule:
 - Committee work sessions: now through May 1
 - Full council work sessions: May 2-14
 - Reconciliation by full county (decisions made): May 15
 - Staff prepares final legislation: May 15-May 21
 - Formal approval: May 22
- MCPD requested funding to add drones in Germantown and White Oak, but the County Executive only proposed funding for Germantown. Some possible changes to the program are being investigated that may allow the proposed funding to also cover White Oak. (Get Federal Aviation Administration approval to not require a person on the roof while a drone is flying.)
- Ride On - proposed to become fare-free.
- Worksource Montgomery Summer Rise Program – proposed at \$100K
- The Montgomery County Public Schools new Superintendent (Dr. Thomas Taylor) is working much better with the council than his predecessors on the budget. He is providing much more information about how funds are spent and the effectiveness of various programs. He also has a priority list of programs, ranging from must-have to nice-to-have.
 - Some 44.6% of the students county-wide qualify for free or reduced-price meals, which is an increase from 38% into 1990s and 2000's.
 - \$180M is slated for increased employee compensation

- \$7.4M is slated for early childhood education, increasing the number of schools by 10, to 28.

There were many questions and comments from the Board and community, including the following:

- Opposed tax increase for multiple reasons: many residents already struggling, and it would encourage high income families to move out of the county.
- A limited number of schools in east county are being upgraded.

ECCAB Committee Reports.

Planning and Economic Development Committee: Dan Wilhelm, Chair, reported that the Transportation Department made two presentations at the meeting on March 10. One presentation addressed Transportation Management Districts (TMDs) and the other presentation provided an update on BRT studies for US29 Phase 2 and New Hampshire Ave.

There have been five Traffic Demand Management (TDM) programs for many years (Friendship Heights, Downtown Silver Spring, Downtown Bethesda, North Bethesda, and Shady Grove). The White Oak TDM was only activated in the last several years and covers the White Oak Science Gateway Master Plan area. Under TDM, every employer with 25 or more full or part-time employees must submit a TDM Plan to the county. Employers must also participate in a periodic TMD commuter survey and submit an annual report of employer actions to assist with reducing traffic congestion by helping employees with their commutes. The next survey is just getting underway.

Quality of Life/Services Committee: Mark Pharaoh, Chair, reported that the March 12 meeting was a presentation concerning the county's response to immigration enforcement activities/ICE Raids. ICE has 24 agents for all of Maryland and DC, which is the smallest office in the entire country.

Jewru Bandeh reported the following:

- The terms of six board members expired on March 31, 2025 and they have been notified that they need to reapply if they want to continue, assuming they have not reached their term limit.
- A ribbon cutting ceremony recently occurred for Amazon Fresh in the White Oak Town Center.
- The ECCAB letter with our operating budget priorities has been sent to the Council.
- There will be a US29 BRT Phase II public meeting on April 8 starting at 6:00
- There will be a career fair on April 16 at the Silver Spring Civic Building from 10:00 AM to 2PM
- Jewru handed out a 19-page presentation from the Maryland Department of Labor that documents facts about federal employee and federal contractor employment. It shows that there are tens of thousands federal employees in the county and over \$11.5B in prime federal contract dollars spent in the county, both the largest of any Maryland Counties.
- The County Executive will be collecting recommendations for the next CIP (FY27).

The session in east county will be May 5 from 7:00 – 8:30 at the White Oak Recreation Center. The Board voted that this meeting would constitute the meetings for both committees in May.

- The PED and QLS Committees will meet jointly on Wednesday, April 9 with MCPS Superintendent Dr. Thomas Taylor as the featured speaker. There was a discussion by the Board on the primary topics we want discussed. The possible topics were collected at the meeting and after the meeting the Executive Committee decided which were the five primary topics. Those would be shared with Dr Taylor so he would come prepared to address them.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 9:02 pm.