



## **EAST COUNTY CITIZENS ADVISORY BOARD (ECCAB)**

### **Wednesday December 4, 2024 Meeting Summary**

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

**Guests Present:** Police Lt. Gregory Chmiel, Lt Tony Galladora, Lt Brandon McCloud, Erik Copeland, Eileen Finnegan, Maribeth Guarino, Rob Richardson, Ed Weiler, and Chris Wilhelm.

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

**Welcome and Introductions.** The meeting was called to order at 7:08 p.m. by chair Peter Myo Khin. Board members, government officials, and public members introduced themselves.

**Approval of Meeting Summary:** The meeting summary for the November 7, 2024 meeting was approved without any objections.

**Police District 3:** Lt Gregory Chmiel gave an update for Montgomery County Police District 3:

- Problems continue at the Enclave. There were four small fires set in the stairwells that did little damage.
- There have been two commercial snatch and grab incidents: one in the Cherry Hill shopping center and one in downtown Silver Spring.
- Theft from autos continues, largely taking tires/rims and airbags (especially from Hondas)
- Thefts of autos, especially at hotels and parking lots/structures, also continue. Special police units (non-uniformed) are patrolling those areas.
- Metro fare avoidance is occurring, and many of the people being caught are armed.
- He introduced Lt. McCloud as the new Community Resource Officer and indicated how great a job he is doing with the youth.

Mark Pharaoh, ECCAB, asked what is the funding source for uniforms for youth teams. Lt. McCloud indicated he would need to research that question.

Ed Weiler, a community member, indicated he felt that rental properties, such as the Enclave, should be required to provide security officers when the calls for police resources becomes excessive. Later in the meeting, Chris Wilhelm indicated that Councilmember Mink is drafting legislation to do that.

**Presentation/Discussion.** Police Lt. Tony Galladora gave a presentation on the existing pilot drone program. The program started in October 2023, initially in downtown Silver Spring and Wheaton, but has since been expanded to two other locations. It operates five days a week, largely in the evening when the 911 call volume is the highest. They must adhere to the FAA DC-area flight restrictions, which limit altitude to under 400 feet. They fly in an area about 1.2 miles around the launch point, which must be manned at the time of launch.

The drones are designed for commercial use, not military use. They travel up to 34 mph and have a thermal camera as well as a regular one. The department has incorporated practices into its procedures to protect privacy.

Each drone is always ready to fly so they can be launched as soon as they receive a call where its use is appropriate. It only takes some 70 seconds to respond, while the priority response time is five minutes, which occurs after the 911 operator has taken the call information and dispatched an officer. The drone operator can listen to the 911 call to glean more detailed information and to talk directly with the 911 initiator to insure they are watching the person who committed the crime and follow the suspect until an officer arrives. In some cases, the situation has resolved itself and the officer dispatch can be canceled. The drone program provides real-time information, allows more efficient use of officers, and increases the chances of making arrests immediately after the crime occurred.

The video of all flights is posted on line so anyone can see what actually occurred, thus increasing public confidence in the program. The police hope the knowledge of this capability will deter crime.

**FY Operating Budget Recommendations Letter to the County Executive.** Both ECCAB committees (Planning/Economic Development and Quality of Life/Services) met jointly on Wednesday, November 13 to collect recommendations for inclusion in this letter. That discussion used the December 2023 letter as the starting point. Peter collected recommendations at the meeting and some individuals provided suggested text. Peter and Dan Wilhelm drafted the letter, which was reviewed, then updates were provided first by the Executive Committee and then the entire Board. The resulting draft was presented at the December 4 meeting. The only real discussion on December 4 related to support for expanding the drone program in east county, focused on which part should first receive the service. It was decided that the location should be driven by the number and severity of 911 calls. The Board concurred with the proposed letter without objection.

**Committee Reports.** In addition to the discussion concerning the above letter, the Planning Staff gave a presentation to the joint committee on November 13 concerning their Strategic Plan.

**Jewru Bandeh, East County Regional Director reported the following:**

- On December 3, the Council elected Councilmember Kate Stewart as President and

Councilmember Will Jawando as Vice President.

- The Council and County Executive are inviting community service providers and residents to join them at the United in Service and Support Community Resource Fair on Sunday, Dec. 8 from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. at the Executive Office Building in Rockville. Based upon expected changes coming at the federal level, Montgomery County is committed to ensuring that all residents have access to information about essential community services. This free Montgomery County resource fair will provide residents with a wide range of information about public health and wellness, including reproductive rights; job skills training and contracting; and available resources so that residents understand their rights.
- There will be a groundbreaking event in January for the new Burtonsville Elementary School.
- There has been a study concerning the amount of air pollution caused by a concrete recycling facility in the area.
- A large fire damaged several buildings in the Arcadian Apartments on December 3. One building was condemned. The residents have been taken care of by the Red Cross and county organizations.
- Jewru pointed out that the next regular meeting is on January 1. Accordingly, it was decided to reschedule it to January 8 and that both committees would meet on January 17.
- Jewru will be going on vacation to Africa and return on January 11.

**Erik Copeland, with the Recreation Department, reported:**

- There will be a fair on Jan. 11 at the East County Community Recreation Center, where families can start planning for the 2025 summer camp season.
- There will be a Strathmore concert at the Good Hope NRC on Saturday December 14. A free spaghetti and meatball dinner will be provided at 6:30.

**Old and New Business:**

Rachel Evans asked about the status of having the Sears Building reused since Mark Elrich at the Friends of White Oak meeting indicated that efforts are moving forward. The AutoZone store will occupy the old auto building. There have been discussions with Transform Co., who acquired all the Sears stores nationally. The State Legislature approved \$2M last spring to help get the large building occupied. Transform would like to take advantage of this \$2M. Discussions are continuing but, like most efforts dealing with real estate, it will not be discussed publicly until all decisions have been made and they are ready to make a public announcement.

There was a question about the Quality of Life Committee effort last spring to have a community meeting about youth violence. What effort will be undertaken, if any, will be up to the new committee chair and members.

**Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 8:50 pm.