



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

### **Wednesday October 2, 2024 Meeting Summary**

**Board Members Present:** Fisseha Adugna, LaTonya Brooks, George Brown, Radwan Chowdhury, BJ Dawkins, Sheala Durant, Rachel Evans, Ken Flemmer, Peter Myo Khin, Mark Pharaoh, Calandra Tate Moore, Tina Oyenya, Kimberly Price-Evans, and Dan Wilhelm.

**Board Members Absent:** Roberta Goldberg, Metassebia Kefelegn, Len Newman, and Susan Price.

**Guests Present:** Somer Cross, Muriel Cooper, Eric Copland, Margie Goergen-Rood, Ana Martinez, Councilmember Kristen Mink, Ed Weiler, Dianne Whitaker, Rob Richardson, Abdul Kamus, and Sharon Brown.

**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 meeting summary for the September 4, 2024 meeting was approved without any objections.

**Presentation/Discussion.** Somer Cross gave a briefing on affordable housing in the county to educate the board and public on the subject. She is the Chief of Housing, within the Department of Housing and Community Affairs. She emphasized that affordable housing is different than the Planning Board proposed Attainable House strategy, which, to her knowledge, they do not contend will produce affordable housing. Rather, it would produce more housing if enacted.

She indicated the following relative to affordable housing in the county:

- The average sale price of a single-family house is \$608,500. The buyer in today's market would need to pay \$6598 per month (including taxes and insurance), assuming 3% down and a 6.5% interest rate. They would also need to be able to afford utility costs and where applicable HOA fees. This means that the buyer would need a \$237,500 annual income to avoid becoming housing burdened (>30% of income on housing). The income of most families in the county is lower than that, thus the need for housing assistance. For rental units where the average two-bedroom rate is \$2188, the income would need to be \$88,600 to avoid becoming housing burdened.
- She provided a list of typical starting salaries, which included \$62,558 for a teacher and \$70,970 for a hospital nurse.

- The county provides assistance in three broad categories which target different populations (income and individual situations): production (4 programs), preservation (4 programs) and ownership (3 programs).

- These programs are often tied to the average median income (AMI). Below is the AMI for several family sizes and the income level to qualify for a moderately priced dwelling unit (MPDU):

Family Size	AMI	MPDU Income Limit
1	\$108,290	\$ 76,000
3	\$139,330	\$ 97,700
5	\$170,170	\$117,000

- As one of the production programs, the MPDU program was created in 1973 and targets those up to 70% AMI. New development with over 20 units must create either 12.5% or 15% of the units as MPDUs. They also must be scattered throughout the development to avoid labeling the occupants as low-income. HOC and other organizations that provide affordable housing can purchase up to 40% of the MPDUs; the remainder are available to people on the DHCA purchase waiting list.
  - Another production program is the Housing Initiative Fund, which provides loans to developers of affordable housing.
  - There is a Home Accessibility Rehabilitation Program (HARP) that provides up to \$20K to those over 65 to renovate their house to provide for their needs as seniors.
  - There is a program to provide funding to replace appliances that are more than 10 years old.
  - HDCA offers an 8-hour class to teach people about the various aspects of purchasing a house. This class is available to anyone, but those receiving house purchasing assistance are required to take it.

**ECCAB Retreat and Committee Meetings.** The ECCAB held a retreat on August 17th where the priorities for the coming term were decided upon. Seven priority areas were identified and under each of them issues that needed to be addressed were identified. A handout was provided that identified all the priorities and issues discussed. The priorities in order of importance, number of issues and the ECCAB Committee that they fall under are as follows:

- Economic Development/Workforce Development (9): PED
- Housing (7): QLS
- Public Safety (8): QLS
- Health and Human Services (9): QLS
- Transportation (7): PED
- Parks and Recreation (TBD): PED
- Environment (TBD): QLS

(PED is Planning and Economic Development and QLS is Quality of Life/Services)

Peter Myo Khin, ECCAB Chair read the issues for the first seven priorities. The issues for the last two priorities were not identified at the August Retreat. It was decided that there would be a joint committee meeting on October 9 (there was no October 7th meeting) and that part of that meeting would be to identify the issues for the last two priorities.

Jewru Bandeh, East County Regional Director indicated he had received additional input/comments from within the county government and community about the issues as follows:

- Need for an Annual (East County) Regional Event (similar to other regional events County-wide) that highlights the region as a desirable destination to live, work and play.
- Advocate for the new Montgomery College campus. (They emphasized this should be the most important item.)
- Need to advocate for continuing and expanding park and recreation programs during the summer months.
- Need to take advantage of our working relationship with District 14 and 20 to get capital funding needed to support east county.

The 90-day state legislative session begins in early January and if the ECCAB wants to ask for any funding from the state then we need to get that request to our District 14 and 20 delegates and senators by the first of December. A second agenda item on October 9 will be to identify funding the ECCAB would like.

A Committee Evaluation and Review Board Survey (questionnaire) was received from the County's Boards, Commissions and Committees Office for ECCAB to complete. The purpose of the questionnaire is to evaluate the function, structure, staff impact and effectiveness of the ECCAB per county code 2-146(c). This questionnaire was sent to every board in the county. The questionnaire was the third agenda item, and input from the board on each of the 15 questions will be collected at the October 9th meeting.

In response to a question about the planned youth summit, that topic will be discussed next week at the October 9th meeting.

## **Reports.**

Councilmember Kristin Mink indicated that the council had its last listening session about the Planning Board proposed Attainable Housing Strategy and that she would be happy to meet with any group on that subject. She also indicated that another version of the covid vaccine is available.

Ana Martinez, Aide for Councilmember Mink, reported on the eviction issue affecting some 40 families who are living in the Enclave apartments (located at Lockwood and New Hampshire Avenue). This is a high priority item now for the county and there are multiple issues including:

- There is insufficient funding available from the county, state and federal governments combined to fully address the need.
- The out-of-state landlord is difficult to work with.
- The property is in the process of being sold with a contract to purchase it. As reported at the September meeting, the Enclave needs over \$100 million worth of repairs.
- There is a need to provide stability for the children relative to education.

Dianne Whitaker, with the Montgomery County Public Library department indicated they will be welcoming a new director next month.

Jewru Bandeh reported the following:

- A very successful Montgomery College Community Fall Fair was held on September 28th at the East County Education Center on Broadbirch Road.
- A successful Burtonsville Multicultural Day Parade and Festival was held on September 21st.
- Hillandale Gateway Development Groundbreaking occurred on September 18th.
- He urged everyone to take the County's 2024 Online Community Survey, which has been extended.
- The Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) is partnering with the State to celebrate "Walktober," a month-long series of activities in October promoting walking and highlighting its commitment to enhanced pedestrian safety.

Cicero Salles reported that:

- The developer who had planned to build townhouses in part of the Burtonsville Park and Ride Lot has found that the proposed plan is not economical.
- The MCB Sketch Plan application for Viva White Oak has been accepted by the Planning Staff as complete so they can start the evaluation. A Preliminary plan application has been submitted and is being reviewed for completeness. MCB will next submit the site plan. MCB expects to break ground next summer.

Mark Pharaoh reported that the fire in the Spencerville Seventh Day Adventist Church on August 9th was caused by an electrical problem. The fire was so extensive that the building will likely be demolished.

**Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 8:55 pm.